

## **Child Safety Standards Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure**

This organisation has developed a Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure to receive and manage complaints and safety concerns from stakeholders including schools, children and their families. This document is a supporting document to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and, with it and other related documents, forms part of our child safety and wellbeing system. These documents can be accessed by email from [tarwin.lower.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:tarwin.lower.ps@education.vic.gov.au) on behalf of John & Anita Harris Pty Ltd or at the following weblink [www.tarwinlowerps.vic.edu.au](http://www.tarwinlowerps.vic.edu.au). It demonstrates our commitment to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement.

The objective of this policy and procedure is to ensure that:

- stakeholders including children, are aware of and understand our complaint handling process;
- complaints are considered on their merits and investigated promptly and impartially with a balanced view of all information or evidence; and
- steps are taken to actively protect personal information.

This policy is referenced for attention in our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct.

In this policy, a complaint means any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about the actions of managers or staff in this organisation in respect of children, including alleged breaches of the organisation's Code of Conduct.

All allegations of child abuse and harm/child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, it must be reported in accordance with this complaint handling policy.

**If an allegation involves a criminal offense, it must be reported to Victoria Police.** Criminal offences include grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years and failure to disclose a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age unless they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing or exemptions apply.

If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, an employee or contractor), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

All staff are required to cooperate with law enforcement in their investigation of any complaint.

*If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*

### **How to make a complaint**

Any complaints or concerns about child safety should be made to the School Principal [tarwin.lower.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:tarwin.lower.ps@education.vic.gov.au) or their authorised representative, and/or to the bus operator John & Anita Harris Pty Ltd by phone 0427 657 769.

A complaint should include the name and contact number of the person making the complaint, and a clear statement of what the complaint is about.

If children make complaints or report any concerns to staff or drivers, these should be listened to and brought to the attention of management.

### **How a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to and investigated**

All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly by an authorised person.

We will investigate all complaints thoroughly by finding out the facts, speaking with the relevant people and verifying explanations where possible.

We will:

- acknowledge and address the complaint as soon as possible;
- ensure that complaints are handled confidentially in accordance with privacy and employment law obligations;
- take appropriate action to ensure the child is safe and cared for during the complaint procedure; and
- ensure that any action required to adequately address the complaint is taken promptly.

If you are not satisfied with our response, you may escalate the complaint to the Commission for Children and Young People [telephone 1300 782 978; <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/contact/>] for further consideration.

### **Outcomes**

Under disciplinary policies, staff may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down with pay during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children while at work
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children while at work
- removing access to our IT system and facilities.

Contractors will be dealt with by corrective action on a case by case basis.

### **Support and assistance available to those making a complaint**

Anyone seeking to make a complaint will be supported to do so.

Any child making a complaint will be given time and space to do so, so that their issue can be heard, and they will be asked if they wish to have another child or person with them at that time for support.

Any adult making a complaint may have a support person with them. Support persons can provide moral support for the complainant but must not involve themselves in the complaint by acting as advocates for the complainant.

### **Support for those involved in the complaint process.**

We will treat anyone subject to the investigation of a complaint objectively, and:

- inform them of any complaint about their actions;
- provide them with an opportunity to explain the circumstances;
- provide them with appropriate support; and
- update them on the complaint investigation and the result.

### **Record keeping**

Records will be created and kept in accordance with our Child and Safety and Wellbeing Policy policy.

**Review process**

This Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least annually in accordance with our Child and Safety and Wellbeing Policy, along with our other related documents which form part of our child safety and wellbeing system.