

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### CONTENTS

#### Section 1: Rationale, Policy Principles and Definitions

- Rationale
- Policy Principles
- Principles for managing complaints and allegations
- Policy Definitions

#### Section 2: Responsibilities of Members of The TVCS Community

- TVCS Association and Board of Management
- The Principal
- Deputy Principals, Welfare Coordinators and Chaplain
- Teachers
- Non Teaching Staff
- Parents

#### Section 3: Preventative and Proactive Practices

- Propriety Checks for recruitment of staff members, volunteers and other service providers
- Contractors Agreement
- Indicators of Compliance
- Criminal history costs and information keeping
- Staff and Volunteers Training and Induction Procedures
- Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers
- Curriculum and Student Pastoral Care Programs
- Family Court Orders and Restraining Orders
- Risk Assessment and Management
- Child Protection Officers / Welfare Coordinators
- Communication and Awareness of Policies and Procedures
- Policy and Procedure Evaluation

#### Section 4: Responsive Practices and Procedures

- Mandatory Notification
- Response to allegations
- Procedures response to allegations
- Reporting details to Child Abuse Line
- Responding at allegations involving TVCS staff
- Communication to the Community

#### Attached Appendices

- Preventing harm to students
- Preventing students self harm
- A letter for Parents – TVCS Enrolment Pack
- Child Protection – Information for Students at TVCS (Information for School diary)
- TVCS Code of Conduct for Staff
- Background Information to Abuse
- Policy Terms and further reference
- Behaviour Incident Report

## SECTION 1: RATIONALE, POLICY PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

*Jesus said: Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Mark 10: 14*

*Jesus said: Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 18:10*

### RATIONALE

This Child Protection Policy of Torrens Valley Christian School is based upon Biblical values of freedom and justice for all people, and an underpinning belief in the dignity and uniqueness of every human being.

Torrens Valley Christian School strives to be a child safe school and has a strong commitment to the implementation of a safe and well-ordered learning environment, creating a sense of belonging and well-being for the students in its care. We believe learning and personal development are enhanced in such a culture.

While we recognize education is relational and interactive, we understand we have a Duty of Care to our students, ensuring every possible effort is made to protect their safety and well being while attending school or taking part in activities authorised by the school. It is recognized that the primary responsibility for a child's care and protection lies with the child's family, and, while at school, staff act in locos parentis. However, the School's legal responsibility of Duty of Care is paramount to all Child Protection matters.

This policy is intended to direct both staff and volunteers in their work with students of the school. It provides in writing, details of the processes and procedures relating to the appropriate conduct of Torrens Valley Christian School staff, volunteers and students that accord with legislation applying in South Australia and the care and protection of children. It also includes guidelines for preventative and proactive practices.

The School will comply with legislative requirements on child protection, including the Children's Protection Act 1993. This includes requiring teachers and the Principal to report to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL), any suspicion on reasonable grounds that a student has been or is being abused or neglected.

### Policy Principles

This policy aims to build and foster a genuinely protective environment for all students at Torrens Valley Christian School. It is framed upon the Educational Creed and Focal Points of Torrens Valley Christian School. These are to:

- Prepare, equip and empower students to be image bearers and stewards of Jesus Christ in this world.
- Provide harmony in all relationships across the school community.
- Train the child in the use and development of his God given talents, to serve God and others.
- Assist parents in the education of their children.
- Respect and uphold all legitimate authority, in particular the authority of family, church and state and to encourage this respect in the child.

TVCS Child Protection is guided by the following principles:

- Safety, a basic human right, is a pre-requisite for Torrens Valley Christian School to be able to carry out its mission to educate.
- Safety and protection from all forms of abuse are fundamental rights of all children.
- Children are the least powerful people in society. They are venerable to exploitation and victimization by those who are more powerful.

When dealing with allegations, as a Christian School, we believe:

- We continue and extend Jesus Christ's ongoing redemptive work of reconciliation.
- Each person is a unique intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual human being, created in the image of God.
- We are called to interact with others through love and mutual respect.
- The results of ministry are the empowering, encouragement and edification of people, where the fruit of the Holy Spirit is growing and displayed.
- That abuse of any kind must not be tolerated.
- That our students must be treated with dignity and respect.
- That all people should be offered compassion and justice.

## Principles for managing complains and allegations

Any allegation or complaint must be dealt with in a manner reflecting the Biblical Worldview of Torrens Valley Christian School and the School's *Grievance Procedures Policy*, which is based on the Biblical principle outlined in Mathew 18:15.

Reconciliation should be sought through the Biblical model rather than an adversarial approach or through the legal system, however, where there are allegations warranting reporting to CARL and/or the Police, Mandatory Notification procedures must be followed.

### Policy Definitions

Definitions of terms referred to throughout the policy and procedures are outlined as follows:

- A **child** is a person under 18 years of age.
- A **student** is any person regardless of age who is enrolled at the school.
- A member of **staff** is anyone employed on a casual or permanent basis to provide the services of Torrens Valley Christian School - including teachers, administration and non-teaching staff, grounds and maintenance staff.

**Harm** is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
- Sexual abuse or exploitation; or
- Domestic or family violence.

**Abuse or neglect** in relation to a child is defined by the Child Protection Act (1993) as:

Sexual abuse of the child; or

Physical or emotional abuse of the child, or neglect of the child to the extent that:

- the child has suffered or is likely to suffer physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's well-being; or
- the child's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy.

At TVCS, a Class Helper includes parents or grandparents, who are directly supervised by a teacher or administration staff.

**Class Helper** activities may include:

- Classroom Art / craft activities
- Classroom reading
- Pencil sharpening, book covering, filing, photocopying
- Special events e.g. Fair, Fun Day, Sports Days

At TVCS, a **Level 1 Volunteer** is defined as parents working with small groups of students, who may or may not be working in full view of a teacher, but is directed or supervised by a member of staff.

**Level 1 Volunteer** activities may include:

- Multi-lit programme assistance
- Electives Activities in the Middle school.
- Athletics activities.
- Musical ensembles
- Junior Primary, Primary swimming, swimming carnivals assistance

At TVCS, a **Level 2 Volunteers** are defined as parents or grandparents working with groups of students unsupervised by a teacher.

**Level 2 Volunteer** activities may include:

- Excursions / outings, escorting and or transporting groups of students.
- Musicals – assisting backstage.
- Coaching, umpiring and / or managing sports teams.
- Coaching debating teams.
- Attending School camps.

See Appendix 7 for further information re policy terms and supporting documents.

## **SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS OF THE TVCS COMMUNITY**

### **Responsibilities of the Torrens Valley Christian School Association and Board of Management**

The School's Board of Management on behalf of the School Association has a responsibility to:

- Develop, monitor and review the policy in accordance with legal requirements.
- Ensure resources are available to facilitate ongoing training and support for mandated notifiers.
- Ensure resource allocation for child protection education and programs.
- Provide representation on appropriate child protection committees of AISSA and other bodies.
- Ensure that Torrens Valley Christian School is a place where children are safe and feel safe.

### **Responsibilities of the Principal**

The Principal of TVCS has a responsibility to:

- Ensure school personnel understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures for verifying and notifying suspicion of child abuse and neglect.
- Allocate training resources for personnel to assist in the delivery of professional development programs for mandated notifiers.
- Provide advice and support for school personnel dealing with issues of child abuse.
- Encourage school personnel to review on a regular basis their legal obligations under the Act.
- Ensure that a whole school approach to the management is fostered and supported.
- Provide current information on child protection issues.

### **Responsibilities of Deputy Principals, Student Welfare Coordinators and Chaplain**

Staff in these positions have responsibility to:

- Provide a safe school environment which ensures that children are protected.
- Ensure they and school personnel, understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures for verifying and notifying suspicion of child abuse and neglect.
- Support school personnel directly involved with the handling of disclosure and notification.
- Ensure that policies and organizational procedures provide children with a safe school environment.
- Promote models of behaviour between school personnel and children based on mutual respect and consideration.
- Ensure that student management practice respects the dignity of children.
- Provide training and development for school personnel in child protection and abuse prevention curriculum.
- Initiate and support the implementation of child protection and abuse prevention curriculum at the classroom level to ensure that all children have access to these programs throughout their school years.
- Monitor and evaluate child protection and abuse prevention within the School's Pastoral Care Programme.
- Ensure appropriate confidentiality of information concerning children in cases of suspected abuse or neglect.
- Support staff dealing with allegations of abuse.
- Support families and students as appropriate.

### **Responsibilities of Teachers**

All teaching staff at TVCS have responsibility to:

- Ensure they, and volunteers in their care, understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures for verifying and notifying suspicion of child abuse and neglect.
- Ensure that student management practice their own classroom management and respect the dignity of children.
- Initiate and support the implementation of child protection and abuse prevention curriculum at the classroom level to ensure that all children have access to these programs throughout their school years.
- Ensure appropriate confidentiality of information concerning children in cases of suspected abuse or neglect.
- Ensure the School's *OHS* and *Camps and Excursions* Policies are upheld in planning and supervising school events.

For further reference see Appendix 5 – TVCS Staff Code of Conduct

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF NON-TEACHING STAFF (INCLUDING ADMINISTRATION AND GROUNDS STAFF)**

All non-teaching staff members of TVCS have responsibility to:

- Ensure they understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures for verifying and notifying suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

- Provide a safe school environment which ensures that children are protected.
- Ensure they and school personnel understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures for verifying and notifying suspicion of child abuse and neglect.
- Support school personnel directly involved with the handling of disclosure and notification.
- Ensure that policies and organizational procedures provide children with a safe school environment.

Promote models of behaviour between school personnel and children based on mutual respect and consideration.

### **Responsibilities of Parents**

All parents within the TVCS community have responsibility to:

- Aim to develop and live out a Christian Worldview, in line with the teachings of the Bible (see *TVCS Focal Points for Members of our Learning Community*).
- Be actively involved in a church community that belongs to the Christian Faith.
- Indicate agreement of their faith commitment as stated in the Nicene Creed (see *TVCS Enrolment Prospectus*).
- Ensure a strong level of harmony exists between TVCS and the home.
- Provide well maintained and appropriate uniform items (see *TVCS Uniform Policy*) and provide appropriate foods for their child(ren) while they are at school (see *TVCS Nutrition Guidelines*).
- Support the Policy statements of the various policies that underpin the management of the school and student body.
- Provide the School with information and support that will assist in the care, learning and well being of their child(ren).
- Ensure financial obligations to TVCS are met on a regular basis.

See the *TVCS Volunteers Policy and Procedures* for further information regarding the roles and responsibilities of volunteers at tvcs.

### SECTION 3: PREVENTATIVE AND PROACTIVE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

#### Propriety Checks for recruitment of staff members and prescribed volunteers of TVCS

It is acknowledged the TVCS has a responsibility to assess information to determine the risk of harm a person may pose to children. TVCS is to ensure that information about the criminal history contained in reports obtained under the *Children's Protection Act 1993* is dealt with in accordance with the Act's standards. As at 1 July, non-government schools are the only non-government organizations required under legislation to obtain criminal history reports on all employees, volunteers, agents, contractors and subcontractors who work in prescribed positions, before a person is appointed to, or engaging to act in, a prescribed position. The following practices for employing staff and prescribed volunteers will be upheld:

- Informed consent is required before obtaining a criminal history report on an employee or volunteer, with the individual understanding the purpose of obtaining criminal history reports and how this information will be dealt with by the School, and the likely outcomes of giving consent (See Standard 2 of the Child Safe Environments Standards).
- Any person, or agency, to which the criminal history information will be disclosed to the applicant/volunteer.
- Any law which requires that their personal information be collected and the consequences of not complying must be disclosed.
- Offences / criminal history will be considered relevant when they present a potential risk of harm.
- All teaching staff of TVCS must have a current SA Teachers Registration Board certificate. This will include a current Criminal History check and Mandatory Reporting Training Certificate.
- All other paid staff, including administration and grounds staff, are required to present a current Criminal History check before employment at TVCS can be confirmed.
- All Level 1 and Level 2 Volunteers of TVCS are required to present a Criminal History check as part of the Volunteers Level 1 & 2 application process.
- All paid staff positions will also require 2 referees with the employment application. Reference checks will include the question: "Do you have any reservations regarding this person working with children?"
- The School will preclude from employment or Level 1 or 2 Volunteer role, any person who is not willing to consent to, or does not have a valid check of their criminal history report.

#### Contractors Agreement

A Contractors Agreement including Child Protection and Duty of Care matters will be made with contractors providing services such as building and maintenance within the School grounds where there may be possible regular contact with students. This process is to be overseen by the School Business Manager.

#### Indicators of Compliance

According to the Families SA *Child Safe Environments Standards* issued by the Chief Executive, Department for Families and Communities (Section 8A, *Children's Protection Act 1993*), when considering the criminal history of the potential employee, volunteer or contractor, the School should consider:

- The nature of the duties and responsibilities attached to the position / undertaken by the individual
- How the definitions of regular contact and close proximity on a regular basis applies to the School's roles, functions and responsibilities
- The likelihood of the position requiring the incumbent to work regularly in close proximity to children, particularly without other adults present

#### Criminal history costs and information keeping

- Criminal history information must be managed at all times to protect the privacy of applicants / employees / volunteers and the confidentiality of the criminal history information.
- The School must keep the storage of criminal history information separate from other information about the applicant / employee / volunteer.
- Storage must be in a lockable / secure filing system, with restricted access.
- The costs of Criminal History checks will be met for school volunteers – see the *TVCS Volunteers Policy & Procedures* for further information
- All existing staff and potential staff are required to meet the costs of Criminal History Checks themselves as part of their on-going Teacher Registration requirements.
- Criminal History Certificates for non teaching staff / potential employees / volunteers will be kept strictly confidential with all records stored securely by the appointed School Personnel.
- Criminal History checks are valid for a maximum period of three years.

The School will provide Mandatory Training for all staff as part of its Staff Professional Development Plan every three years and in accordance with regulations of the SA Teachers Registration Board.

The School requires all Volunteers to be trained through the Volunteer Induction Program. The Volunteer Induction Program applies to Level 1 & 2 Volunteers in the Torrens Valley Christian School community. A volunteer is someone who is working with and assisting students with or without the supervision of a staff member. This may be in the classroom or another area of the school. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure the safety and protection of all.

For further reference on the following:

- Staff Induction: please refer to Staff Handbook and New Staff Induction Policy
- Volunteers and Sport coaches training: please refer to the TVCS Volunteer Policy
- Instrumental Staff procedures: please refer to The TVCS Instrumental Teachers Policy

### **Code of Conduct for TVCS Staff and Volunteers**

Torrens Valley Christian School is a child-safe school. We also support the rights and well-being of our staff and volunteers and uphold *The National Safe Schools Framework*. Therefore, we encourage the active participation of staff and volunteers in building and maintaining a safe environment for all the school community. Staff and Volunteers must adhere to the School's policy in Transporting Students in Vehicles and *Occupational Health and Safety*. See the named policies for further reference.

The *TVCS Staff Code of Conduct* outlines expected appropriate and professional behaviour from all staff members. See Appendix 5, *TVCS Staff Code of Conduct*, and the *Volunteers Policy-Code of Conduct* for further reference.

### **Curriculum and Student Pastoral Care Programs**

A three yearly curriculum audit will be undertaken to establish what is provided in the curriculum to inform, educate and equip students in the area of emotional and physical well-being, including Protective Behaviours. Specific topics linked to the School's Pastoral Care program are to be reviewed and updated regularly.

The Welfare Coordinators in conjunction with the Sub-School Coordinators and will direct the School's Student Welfare Program content, responding to specific issues as they arise, but also being proactive in Child Protection issues.

### **Family Court Orders and Restraining Orders**

Each 'Enrolment Pack' given to parents when their child commence at TVCS includes a 'Student and Family Master Record' which asks for information regarding any Court or Restraining Orders in operation. A Blue Alert field with details of Family Court Orders or Access details is in place on PC Schools for administration records.

It has been recommended to TVCS by the Legal Services Commission that the school does not act as a mediator in matters of child access therefore when no access arrangements are stated or written permission from the residential carer has not been received, we will be deny access to children where a parent is not named as the residential carer.

- If there is a Family Court Order or Restraining Order operating at the time of a student's commencement at TVCS, a copy of the order is to be filed in the Principal's file.
- If a Family Court Order or Restraining Order becomes operable during the time a student attends Torrens Valley Christian School, a copy is to be filed in the Principal's file. The Sub-School Coordinator, Class Teacher and Chaplain (if appropriate) should be notified.

### **Risk Assessment and Management**

All staff and volunteers will take reasonable steps to provide a safe experience for the students. This will happen:

- during the planning stages of an activity, including camps, excursions, sport and out of hour activities;
- when there are changes to routine e.g. staff changes, reduced staff numbers, change of location; during policy and procedure reviews;
- when concerns are raised by someone in the school community;
- during the debrief/review process following a 'near accident / incident';
- when new legislation is communicated to the school.

See other related policies for further reference: *TVCS Camps and Excursions Policy*, *OHS Policy*, *Student Transport Policy*.

### **Child Protection Officers / Welfare Coordinators**

TVCS will provide both male and female Welfare Coordinators as reference points for students, parents and staff in regard to Child Protection issues.

The Role of the Welfare Coordinators include:

- being trained in and keeping up to date with the issues of child abuse and neglect, including nature, indicators and prevention of child abuse.
- keeping staff and volunteers informed of any new information and training.
- taking responsibility for communicating this policy to the school community
- taking responsibility for ongoing evaluation, consultation and review of this policy in conjunction with the Coordinator of Studies and the Principal.

### **Communication and Awareness of Policies and Procedures**

The *TVCS Child Protection Policy* will be regularly communicated to the parent body, staff and students. This will happen through:

- access on the Intranet and School's Web site
- an abbreviated version in the student school diary
- reference to the policy in the Prospectus and Enrolment Pack
- updates when appropriate through the TVCS Newsletter and in Staff Meetings.
- regular information sessions and professional development to staff

The School will communicate to the parent body, staff and students to make them aware of changes to legislation, policy and procedures concerning Child Protection issues through the School newsletters and or parent letters as appropriate. Information communicating the School's Child Protection Policy will be included in the School' Enrolment Pack – See Appendix 3. Students will be made aware of the School's Child Protection Policy through curriculum and the Pastoral Care Program. Statements on Child Protection, Bullying and Harassment will be published each year in the School Student Diary. See Appendix 4 for Student Diary information.

### **Policy and Procedure Evaluation**

This *TVCS Child Protection Policy* and its outlined procedures and practices will be evaluated annually. Methods for evaluation will include:

- staff feedback through specified agenda items at staff meetings
- feedback from students
- feedback from parents
- reviewing any cases dealt with during that time
- information and advice from bodies such as AISSA
- new / updated legislation



## SECTION 4: RESPONSE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

### Mandatory Notification

Under Section 11 (1) and (2) of the Children's Protection Act 1993, the following persons who may be involved in school are obliged by law to notify the Families SA Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected and suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties:

- a teacher
- a registered or enrolled nurse
- any person whom is an employee of a school, or volunteer in a school, who is engaged in the actual delivery of health, welfare, education, child care or residential services to children, *or*
- any person who holds a management position in the school, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or has direct supervision of, the provision of these health, welfare, education, child care or residential services to children.

The purpose of this legal obligation is to protect children and young people from further harm. Therefore, TVCS will ensure staff and volunteers are made aware of their legal obligations, and educated in the area of child protection and mandatory notification. All staff and volunteers will have Mandatory Notification training every three years. Appropriate training will be offered for volunteers and provided annually.

See Appendix 1 *Preventing Harm to Students* for further information.

### Response to allegations

At TVCS, the following Key Principles will guide response to allegations of abuse:

- The safety and care of the child is paramount
- Concerns are to be addressed expeditiously
- Mandatory notification requirements are to be followed
- Risk of appropriate behaviour in the future must be considered and addressed
- Allegations are to be addressed fairly having regard to the interests of all involved
- Responses by TVCS are to be guided by due consideration, not emotion
- Recognition that TVCS has an ongoing duty of care responsibility to all students, not only the student(s) covered by the allegations
- Details regarding alleged abuse will be kept confidential for the sake of the victim and alleged offender wherever possible. Exceptions will be when non-disclosure could pose a risk to the safety of other children or the Child Abuse Report Line or the Police have advised that disclosure is appropriate.

### Procedures in response to allegations

Where a reference is made to 'providing a written report' in the following procedures, the listed details are to be included in the TVCS Incident Report Form – Refer Appendix 8.

- The name of the person giving the report;
- The name, gender and (if known) age of the student making the complaint;
- Details of the basis for the maker of the report becoming aware, or reasonably suspecting, that the student has been abused/harmed – sexual, emotionally, physically;
- Details of the actual or suspected abuse/harm;
- Particulars of the identity of the alleged perpetrator of the abuse/harm (if known); and
- Particulars of the identity of any other person who may be able to give information about the abuse/harm (if known).

### If a student discloses an incident to a school employee or volunteer, the employee or volunteer should:

- Reassure the child he/she is not to blame, and the School will do all it can to protect them;
- Not ask leading questions
- Not push the child to give details of the abuse;
- Remain calm and not show horror
- Not give guarantees of confidentiality to the child;
- Make notes of the disclosure as soon as possible (Use the TVCS Incident Report Form);
- Follow mandatory notification requirements and contact the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL telephone 131478)
- Advise the Sub-School Coordinator or Principal as soon as possible; or Board Chair as appropriate.
- Keep the disclosure confidential.

### **If a school parent raises a concern, the school employee or volunteer should:**

- Accept the concerns as valid
- Not comment on the likelihood of an incident having occurred;
- Advise the parent that the employee or volunteer is required to take further action;
- Follow mandatory notification requirements and contact Child Abuse Report Line on **131478**
- Arrange a discussion with the appropriate Deputy/ Coordinator, Principal or Board Chair as soon as possible;
- Keep the disclosure confidential.

### **Reporting details to Child Abuse Line**

The school will not undertake an investigation whilst the Child Abuse Report Line or the Police are conducting an investigation. If the Police or the Child Abuse Report Line are to interview a student, it is their responsibility to determine when a parent or guardian will be informed. If the Child Abuse Report Line wish to remove a child from school, an order from the Youth Court is required to be presented. The Principal will sight and read this document and make a copy for school records. The School may undertake an investigation if the Child Abuse Report Line or the Police are not going to conduct their own investigation or their action has concluded. The adult to whom the student confided will not be present at any interviews with the child. All reports and actions will be documented and securely stored in a discrete file with the Principal, Deputy or Board Chair.

### **Discussions with the Child Abuse Report Line should include:**

- Details of the victim, offender, ages, birth dates (if known), addresses, parents contact details, description of the abuse/offence (Incident Report should be prepared)
- What appropriate action the school needs to take
- Whether an investigation will be conducted, by whom and how?;
- Advising the parents/guardians of the child – who, how, when, where?
- When the alleged offender can be told – who, where, how?

### **Responding to allegations involving employees of Torrens Valley Christian School**

Where serious, reportable allegations are made, the school is able to suspend an employee named in an allegation on full pay pending the matter being resolved.

The following actions should be taken in any cases relating to harm or suspected harm against a student:

- Record details of all allegations (complete the TVCS Incident Report Form: see Appendix 8 ). Be careful not to taint the evidence of the student or respondent. Record information exactly as it is presented to you.
- Decide whether the allegation should be reported to authorities: see SECTION 3 of the Policy: Procedures for Reporting Harm. If so, report it to the Principal or Board Chair and/or Child Abuse Report Line (CARL).

At this point the Principal / Board Chair will take the following action:

- Investigate the allegations. **Note:** if the allegations have been reported to police, the Principal / Board Chair must not begin the investigations until the police investigation is complete and the police inform you that they have decided not to charge the respondent.
- If no Police investigation is required, the Principal / Board Chair should provide details of the allegation to the respondent
- Inform the TVCS Board. Before taking the following steps, the Principal / Board Chair may seek further advice from AISSA (Association of Independent Schools of South Australia). If there is unacceptable risk, suspend the respondent.
- Inform the student's parents
- Offer counseling referral to the student and the respondent.
- Inform TVCS' insurers.
- Attend to public relations.
- Keep the parents, student and respondent informed as the matter proceeds as appropriate.

Where less serious allegations are made against a staff member, the staff member should be made aware of the allegation and pending investigation.

The School may then:

- issue specific written directions to the employee, such as: the behaviour the school considers to be inappropriate;
- require the staff member not to have contact with certain members of the school community
- request a change of duties in the staff member's role at the School

Any written directions will include a statement that if the employee breaches the directions, it will be considered misconduct. The employee is entitled to natural justice before any disciplinary action is determined, including the right to respond, make submissions on any proposed course of action and be represented. The School's Grievance Procedures Policy will be followed, seeking to bring restoration to the situation wherever possible.

See the *TVCS Grievance Procedures Policy* for further information on non-mandatory reportable allegations.

### **Communication to the Community**

Where a serious allegation is made, the School will develop strategy to communicate with the following community members as deemed necessary:

- the alleged victim's family
- the alleged offender and his/her representative
- senior management
- school employees
- TVCS students
- other members of the school community

Records must be maintained of all these communications and stored securely. In such a situation, the goal would be to maintain confidentiality, but recognizing that in a large school community this may not be maintained, or it may become appropriate to advise others as part of the School's Duty of Care.

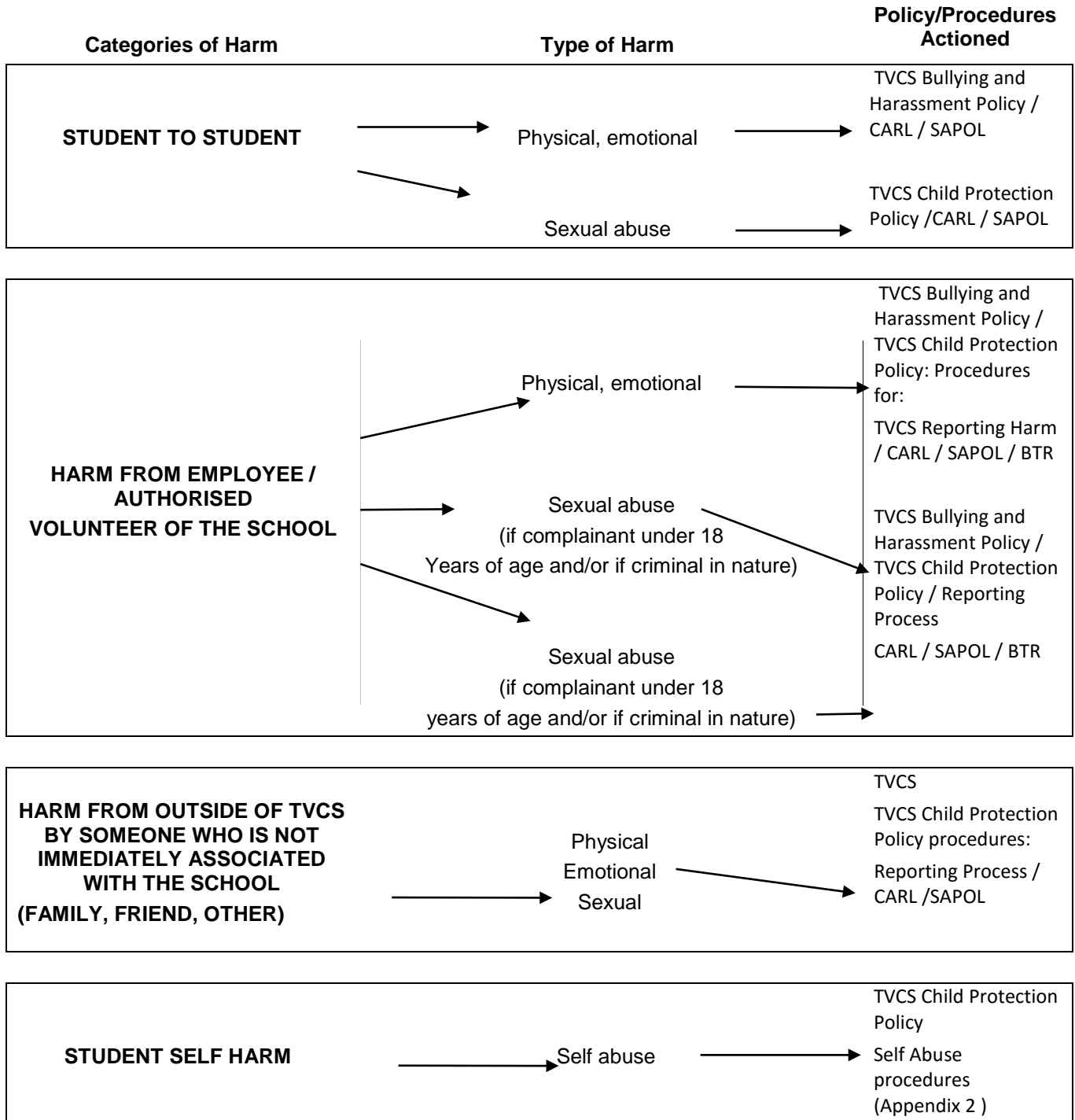
If the School is contacted by the Media, a strategy will be made to include who is authorized to release information. A general media release will be prepared in case the media becomes aware of the issue. The Principal, or in his/her absence, the Board Chair or appointed School Deputy will be responsible for this. All other members of the School Community and employees will be asked not to speak to the media without authorization.

**FIGURE 1: SUMMARY FOR RESPONDING / REPORTING HARM AND / OR ABUSE**

**APPLIES TO:**

- harm of any student of TVCS who is under 18 years at the time the harm was caused; and
- behaviour of a staff member that a student considers is inappropriate.

**SUMMARY GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF STUDENT HARM:**



## APPENDIX 1

### Preventing Harm to Students

Over 85% of children are harmed by someone they know and trust – a parent, sibling, other relative, family friend or care provider. Employees should be aware of the physical, emotional and behavioural indicators of risk of student harm. These indicators are more significant if they are severe and/or consistent over time.

**Indicators of Harm may include some of the following:**

#### Physical abuse and excessive punishment

- student presents with bruises, burns or fractures at a frequency which is inconsistent with normal activity;
- students offer explanations for an injury which appear inconsistent with that injury;
- student or other person advise that he/she has been subjected to or threatened with physical harm;
- reluctance/refusal to participate in swimming or other activities where getting changed or wearing more revealing clothes may show signs of harm;
- excessive absenteeism.

#### Emotional abuse and/or deprivation

- poor peer relationships/withdrawn;
- inclined to seek adult company and/or students who are older or younger;
- avoiding going home on a regular basis;
- learning difficulties, including poor concentration;
- attention seeking behaviour such as stealing, lying, running away, disrupting classes repeatedly.

#### Physical neglect and/or inadequate supervision or care

- students appear underweight for age or body type;
- inadequate clothing;
- asking other students for food or money or not bringing food to school;
- excessive absences from school and/or high frequency of illness/infection;
- student often arrives at school early and/or leaves late.

#### Sexual abuse

- bruises, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, arms, lower abdomen or thighs;
- bruises, scratches or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury;
- difficulty walking or sitting;
- persistent headaches or recurrent abdominal pain;
- unexplained pain in genital area;
- torn, stained or bloodied underwear;
- itching, soreness, discharge or unexplained bleeding;
- painful and recurrent urination;
- recurrent urinary tract infections;
- signs of sexually transmitted diseases;
- pregnancy in adolescents where the identity of the father is vague or secret.

**It is the employee's responsibility to report suspected abuse and neglect – it is not the responsibility of the employee's supervisor or Principal. (See *Mandated Notification booklet*)**

Where an employee has concerns or is unsure whether or not observations should be cause for concern, it is mandatory that they discuss their concerns with the Child Abuse Report Line.

CARL will decide whether the information constitutes a matter warranting CARL/SAPOL response.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Preventing Student Self Harm**

During their schooling, some students may be at risk of harming themselves. This harm may occur with or without suicidal intent; or may be symptomatic of, or associated with, a known medical condition or intellectual disability.

#### **Self-harm with suicidal intent**

Youth suicide rates in Australia are among the highest in the industrialized world. Common risk factors include:

previous attempts at suicide (most powerful risk predictor).

- depression;
- drugs and alcohol abuse;
- conduct disorder;
- disruptive and unsupportive family background;
- relationship conflicts;
- poor coping skills;
- psychiatric illness;
- ready availability of lethal means to commit suicide;
- copycat behaviour after an incident of self-harm by another person.

#### **Other risk factors may include:**

- recent bereavement;
- chronic physical illness;
- anniversary phenomenon (of past losses or major life events);
- early loss experiences;
- school failure;
- perfectionism and overachievement as a result of students having high expectations of themselves;
- relationship breakdown.

Threats of self-harm or actual evidence of self-harm e.g. cutting by a student, should be taken seriously and reported to the School's Welfare Coordinators / Sub Section Coordinator / Principal immediately.

#### **Self-harm without suicidal intent**

Not all cases of self-harm relate to suicidal intent. Students may engage in a variety of high-risk behaviours, such as alcohol/substance abuse; drug taking; promiscuity; cutting/burning oneself. These behaviours will warrant intervention and direction from existing TVCS Behaviour Improvement policies.

All school employees are expected to act to prevent all high-risk behaviours occurring within the school, and support other interventions undertaken to reduce the risk of such behaviours occurring outside the school.

Employees who are aware that a student is engaging in, or is at risk of engaging in, high risk activities should consult with the school counselor/welfare co-coordinator for further advice and report their concerns to the Principal.

#### **Self-harm as a symptom of a medical condition or intellectual disability**

Where it is known that a student has a propensity to engage in self-harm that is symptomatic or associated with a known medical condition or intellectual disability, the school Principal, in cooperation with other qualified school staff and external treating professionals (where applicable) will develop an individual program of management to prevent or reduce the likelihood of the student engaging in self-harm at school.

The program will complement any other management procedures adopted outside the school setting to address the self-harm behaviour.

The program of management will be monitored on an ongoing basis and modified as appropriate to maximize socially adaptive behaviour.

## APPENDIX 3

### A letter for Parents – TVCS Enrolment Pack

Dear Parents / Caregivers

#### **Child Protection at Torrens Valley Christian School**

Torrens Valley Christian School recognizes that protecting students from harm and risk is fundamental to maximizing their personal and academic potential. For this reason the welfare and best interests of the children within TVCS will always be a primary consideration.

We expect our students to show respect to our staff and volunteers and to comply with safe practices. It is also expected that employees ensure that their behaviour toward and relationships with students, reflect proper professional standards of care for students, and are not unlawful. TVCS will respond diligently to a report of suspected or actual harm, or risk of harm to a student resulting from within TVCS or from outside TVCS.

#### **What does TVCS mean by harm?**

Harm is defined as:

- any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.

Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse or exploitation; or
- Domestic or family violence.

#### **How does TVCS protect students from harm?**

TVCS has a comprehensive Child Protection Policy, which covers the actions to be taken if a member of staff or a parent of the school becomes aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been done to a student of the school by TVCS staff, its volunteers, people outside TVCS or by other students.

#### **What should you do if you become aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused to a student of TVCS by a member of staff, someone outside the school or by other students?**

You should report your concerns to the Principal or Deputy Principal or to any other member of the school staff.

#### **What will happen next?**

If you report your concerns to a member of staff other than the Principal, the member of staff will report it to the Principal immediately, or to the Chairperson of the TVCS Board of Management. If the Principal or the Chairperson of the Board of Management receives a report of harm or suspected harm to a student of TVCS The report may be handed onto the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) if appropriate; or it may be dealt with internally using other policies and procedures if the matter does not require mandatory reporting to an outside body.

#### **What happens about confidentiality?**

Your report will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal (where it does not relate to him/her) and those directly involved. Chairperson of the TVCS Board of Management may also need to be informed. It is the School's policy that confidentiality between TVCS and parents will be respected as much as possible and any concerns raised by parents will not adversely affect their children. Each person who has access to information regarding suspected or disclosed harm has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality. However, TVCS is unable to promise absolute confidentiality since steps of the policy will require disclosing certain details involved in responding to the report, internally and externally. State authorities can require people to give evidence about actions under the policy and to produce documents. You would be fully informed if information you provided were to be passed onto a third party. Any action, which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of an allegation not requiring police intervention, would be handled confidentially within TVCS.

### **How will TVCS help my child?**

The Principal will ensure that the following actions are taken to reduce harm occurring:

- Ensure that each staff member understands and fulfils their obligations under this policy and the procedure for reporting abuse.
- Ensure that there is an acceptable reference for each staff member from his/her previous employer engaged following the commencement of this policy.
- Ensure that each staff member and volunteer who has contact with children understands and fulfils his/her obligations under this policy and the procedure for reporting abuse.
- Police checks and Mandatory Report Training are now compulsory for the acceptance and renewal of teacher registration.
- Employment contracts to staff are only offered subject to the employee being able to provide documentary evidence that a police check clearance has been obtained.

If the Principal receives a report of harm about your child, he/she will support the child by:

- responding rapidly and diligently to the report;
- reassuring the student;
- protecting the child's confidentiality as much as possible;
- offering continuous support; and
- providing referral for counseling if requested.

### **What should I do if I need more information?**

Torrens Valley Christian School's complete Child Protection Policy is available from the school's Administration Building. Parents and students can have access to this policy at any time. You may also make an appointment to discuss the policy with the Principal if you wish to clarify any matters.



## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Child Protection – Information for Students at TVCS (Information for School diary)**

Every student has the right to feel safe and free from harm while at Torrens Valley Christian School. We expect you to respect your teachers and other students and we expect that you will receive the same respect in return. You must never allow yourself to feel unsafe without reporting it to someone you trust.

#### **Who should I tell if I am not feeling safe at school or at home?**

Anyone on staff including the Welfare Coordinators and the School Chaplain. If you do not feel comfortable talking to a member of staff you may write him/her a letter.

If you would prefer to talk to somebody outside of the school on a confidential basis, you can also call Kids Help Line which is a free call – 1800 551 800

#### **What will happen if I report what is happening to a member of staff?**

If the concern is worrying you but not causing you immediate harm, then the member of staff will discuss with you ways to solve your problem. If the concern is serious and the member of staff believes that you are being harmed or in danger of being harmed, he or she will report it to Child Abuse Report Line (CARL).

#### **What if I don't want the member of staff to tell others?**

The member of staff will try to keep your concerns confidential as much as possible. However, if the member of staff is aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of TVCS then the law states that the matter must be reported to Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) and it may have to be reported to the Police. If the staff member has no choice about reporting what you have told them to someone else, he/she will explain to you exactly what will happen next.

**Remember the most important thing is that you feel safe and free from harm. You must tell someone if you are being harmed or are afraid that you will be harmed.**

## APPENDIX 5

### Torrens Valley Christian School Staff Code Of Conduct

The safety and well-being of our students and employees is of paramount importance. It is the policy of TVCS to prohibit harassment and/or inappropriate actions with regard to employees and students.

This Code of Conduct is especially important at TVCS given our faith-based mission and commitment to Christian care of everyone associated with our school. In order to ensure that this policy is carried out, every employee, supervisor, administrator, teacher or volunteer (hereinafter "Employee") of TVCS must comply with the following rules and regulations.

- No employee shall show favouritism to, or discrimination against, any student or fellow employee solely on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or other legally protected characteristic.
- No employee shall harass any student or fellow employee for reasons of age, ethnicity, race, religion or other legally protected characteristic.
- Every employee interaction with students (on and off campus) shall be conducted in a mature and professional manner respecting appropriate boundaries between student and employee.
- When interacting with students in any setting, all activities, materials or references of an improper sexual nature are strictly prohibited.
- Private conferences between employees and students shall take place in appropriate work spaces. Except in special circumstances, such conferences shall be conducted with a door open to a public space and/or visibility available via an uncovered window. When the above is not feasible, two adults should be present in any private conference between an employee and a student wherever possible.
- Except in emergencies, an employee may not, without parental consent, transport a student in a vehicle that is not owned by TVCS and not being used in the school's official capacity.
- While acting in a professional capacity with students, no employee shall use or be in possession of alcohol, or be under the influence of alcohol.
- No employee shall use or possess illegal/illicit drugs.
- Smoking or use of tobacco products by employees is prohibited.
- Employees shall not use, or tolerate the use of profanity.
- Employees who handle funds on behalf of TVCS shall take all necessary steps to ensure that such funds are properly accounted for and remitted.
- Employees must abide by the TVCS Employment conditions as signed at the commencement of employment at TVCS.
- Any employee who is aware of a violation of the above rules and standards shall immediately report this violation to the Principal, or the Chairperson of the TVCS Board of Management.
- Violation of this Code of Conduct by any employee is grounds for disciplinary action including possible termination of employment.

## APPENDIX 6

### Background Information to Emotional / Physical / Sexual Abuse

In a study conducted by Richard Wortley, Assoc. Prof. School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University, Only 5% of the 350 sex offenders fitted the classic stereotype of the chronic pedophile. Of the offenders, 85% were heterosexual and 95% of the offences occurred between people who knew each other. More than half of the group had committed serious offences, including burglary and armed robbery.

The Australian Child Protection organization, Child Wise reported on its website:

*It is now well known that sex offenders seek employment in organizations where they can gain access to vulnerable children. They will often seek out positions which not only provide them with access to children but also a professional subterfuge to conceal their abusive activities. Unfortunately it is not easy to identify a child sex offender. There are no reliable psychological tests or profiles to assist identification and police checks are severely limited as only 1-5% of sex offenders have criminal convictions.*

The Child Wise web site is <http://www.ecpat.org/>

### Grooming Behaviour

Sexual misconduct includes 'grooming behaviour', or patterns of behaviour aimed at engaging or 'grooming a child' as a precursor to sexual assault. Grooming may involve a person identifying particularly vulnerable children, eg isolated, unhappy or needy children and using tactics to establish trust with the child for inappropriate purposes.

### What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse doesn't just mean sexual intercourse. It can also involve a range of sexual activities including touching a child on their breasts or penis, masturbating in front of a child, flashing or oral sex.

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult, or someone bigger than the child, uses his or her authority or power over the child, or takes advantage of the child's trust and respect, to involve the child in sexual activity.

The offender often uses tricks, bribes, threats, guilt and sometimes physical force to make the child take part and to stop the child from telling anyone about it.

### Child sexual abuse is a crime

In 85% of child sexual abuse cases the child knows the offender.

- The offender is usually male and can be related to the child. They can often work with children or be a family friend.
- The sexual abuse will continue until someone stops it.
- Boys and girls of any ages can be sexually abused.
- Children very rarely lie about sexual abuse.

### Telling children about child sexual abuse

Knowing about sexual abuse helps keep children safe and protects them from it. When adults talk openly with children about sexual abuse, and discuss what the child can do if they are in a threatening situation, then they give the child permission to tell

Children who are sexually abused often find it difficult to tell someone what is happening to them. The offender actively works to make the child keep it a secret.

## **APPENDIX 7 - POLICY TERMS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

### **CARL Child Abuse Report Line 131 478**

#### **Cultural Diversity**

Refers to the complex concept of culture and its many manifestations within Australian society.

#### **Empower children**

Teach and discuss the concept of rights particularly in relation to personal safety and teach problem solving skills.

#### **Family**

Refers to units consisting of parents or care-givers and children. Parents may be biological, adoptive or foster and the units may consist of blended and extended families, single parent families, families with children in respite or foster care or relatives with the care of children. Children are defined as those who are under the age of 18 years.

#### **Legally Mandated**

Persons obliged by law to notify the Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) and school Principal of his/her suspicions of child abuse.

#### **Natural Justice**

Basic rules and procedures to be followed by any person or body charged with the responsibility of determining disputes. The rules of natural justice require an adjudicator to act fairly, in good faith and without bias or conflict of interest.

#### **Protect children**

Refers to providing an environment where children are safe and feel safe.

#### **Protection and abuse prevention curriculum**

All arrangements made by the school within its formal curriculum to teach students their right and responsibility to protect themselves and others.

#### **Reasonable grounds**

Includes when:

- a child says he or she has been abused
- another person says a child has been abused
- the observations of a child's behaviour or injuries lead school personnel to suspect that abuse is occurring.

#### **Safe environment**

A place where adults take reasonable measures to ensure that:

- children are protected from harm
- children know that adults will act on their behalf.

#### **SAPOL South Australian Police**

#### **Supporting Documents**

- Children's Protection Act 1993
- Families SA, 2007 Child Safe Environments: Dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children
- Families SA, 2007 Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice

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