



RECORDING & MANAGING SCHOOL INCIDENTS (including Emergencies) POLICY

Policy & Guidance

- This policy and associated guidelines and procedures apply to incidents at all government schools and to services delivered by school councils within the school environment (including outside school hours care, kindergartens delivered by school councils on school premises and VET programs delivered as part of a government school program).
- This policy and associated guidelines and procedures also applies to incidents that occur during travel to and from school, on camps, excursions or outdoor adventure activities, outside school hours, or online school environments.
- Schools must report and manage incidents in accordance with the guidance and procedures outlined in the Guidance tab.
- Incidents that are in scope for this policy and associated guidelines are any actual or alleged event or situation as defined below.
- Incidents that are in scope for this policy and associated guidelines are any actual or alleged event or situation that:
 - causes harm or creates a risk of causing harm to a student's health, safety and wellbeing either directly or indirectly while under the care or supervision of the school, including international students
 - impacts a student and is brought to the attention of the school, regardless of when or where it occurred, provided it is impacting on the student or other students within the school environment
 - causes harm or creates a risk of causing harm to an employee's health, safety and wellbeing either directly or indirectly in the work setting
 - affects or risks affecting the continuity of school operations, including matters of security, property damage and emergencies
 - requires police notification or involves matters of serious conduct
 - is a WorkSafe Notifiable Incident

Purpose

- To ensure Footscray North Primary School complies with legislative requirements and DET policy and guidelines.

Definitions

Notifiable Incidents

Under these Guidelines an 'incident' is any actual or alleged event or situation that:

- causes injury or harm, or creates a risk of causing injury or harm to a student's health, safety and wellbeing either directly or indirectly while under the care or supervision of the school, including international students
- impacts a student's health, safety or wellbeing and is brought to the attention of the school, regardless of when or where it occurred, provided it is impacting on the student or other students within the school setting
- causes injury or harm, or creates a risk of causing injury or harm or injury to an employee's health, safety and wellbeing either directly or indirectly in the work setting
- affects or risks affecting the continuity of school operations, including matters of security, property damage and emergencies

- requires police notification or involves matters of serious conduct
- is a WorkSafe [notifiable incident](#) (serious incident or dangerous occurrence)

School Environment

Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school or school council for use by a student during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a student's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events); and
- other outside of school areas including homestay accommodation accessed by an international student for which the Department has accepted responsibility for appropriate accommodation and welfare

Implementation

- The school will manage incidents according to the six stages of the Department's School Incident Management System (SIMS).

Roles & Responsibilities for the six stages for responding to school incidents

The following information provides an overview of the steps the Principals and /or delegate is required to take in response to an incident.

1. Identify and respond immediately

This stage describes how to identify an incident, and what immediate general actions the principal and/or delegate should take.

Respond to immediate needs of students, staff or any other parties to ensure safety:

- assess the safety of the situation
- remove the students and staff from any source of danger
- administer first aid and/or seek medical attention
- if necessary, contact emergency services on [000](#) and enact the school's Emergency Management Plan
- if a staff member or another student is accused or suspected of harming a student, separate them from immediate contact with the alleged victim
- provide support to any student or staff witnesses, see the Resources tab for further guidance and resources on supporting students and staff following an incident, such as the [Managing Trauma guide](#) and the [Recovery Tools form](#)

Contact emergency services on [000](#), if required.

Enact school's Emergency Management Plan (EMP), if required.

Preserve and record evidence, if appropriate (Refer to Note 1) including separating witnesses to preserve the integrity of their evidence.

Contact nominated family or carers, if appropriate.

Note 1: For incidents that are '[Notifiable Incidents](#)' to WorkSafe, the site must be preserved, except where there is an immediate need to protect the health and safety of persons, provide first aid to any injured persons or to take essential action to make the site safe.

2. Report the incident or hazard (Report for Support)

Following the immediate response to the incident, principals and / or their delegate are responsible for undertaking an assessment of the incident's severity rating, using the [Severity Rating Decision-making Matrix](#).

Incidents are rated as either:

- Extreme (Red)
- High (Orange)
- Medium (Yellow) or
- Low (Blue)

Reports to the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC):

Incidents rated as Extreme, High or Medium must be reported to the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on [1800 126 126](tel:1800126126) for immediate advice and coordination of Area-based supports; and recorded by the school on CASES21 or equivalent records management system.

Incidents rated as Low do not need to be reported to ISOC but must be recorded by the school on CASES21 or an equivalent records management system.

Reports on eduSafe:

The Principal and/or delegate will ensure all identified hazards and incidents involving employees, volunteers, visitors, contractors and members of the public are reported onto [eduSafe](#).

The Principal and/or delegate, in consultation with the affected person(s) and relevant health and safety representatives (HSR), are to close out the eduSafe report by developing and implementing an 'action plan' to address the hazard or incident in order to manage the risk and to prevent a reoccurrence.

Reports to WorkSafe:

Reporting notifiable incidents to WorkSafe and preservation of the incident site:

The Principal and / or delegate will contact WorkSafe on [13 23 60](tel:132360) to report Notifiable Incidents immediately after becoming aware that an incident has occurred and must provide WorkSafe with a completed [incident notification form](#) within 48 hours.

WorkSafe Victoria will provide a reference number on notification and will advise whether the incident site is to be isolated and / or preserved until a WorkSafe Inspector arrives.

Additional reporting obligations:

Depending on the nature of the incident, the Principal may have a number of other reporting obligations, including:

- Employee Conduct Branch for advice and support on allegations of serious misconduct, unsatisfactory performance, sexual harassment and to report any reportable conduct — refer to [Complaints, Unsatisfactory Performance and Misconduct — Teaching Service](#) and [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- DHHS Child Protection for mandatory reports or Child FIRST for other child protection concerns — refer to [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)
- Victoria Police for serious criminal conduct, including for allegations or suspicions that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. Refer to [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) and [Police and DHHS Interviews](#)
- Suspected fraud and corruption must be reported to the Department's Fraud and Corruption Control Unit, refer to [Fraud and Corruption Control](#)

3. Ongoing support and recovery

The Principal and/or delegate, is responsible for:

- managing all incidents in accordance with all policies to ensure safety and wellbeing of student and staff
- providing ongoing support to impacted students and staff.

For Extreme (Red) and High (Orange) incidents, the region and/or central will assist with the coordination and provision of supports.

The Principal and/or delegate can raise the severity of an incident if they require support.

Following an incident, schools must identify those most affected and vulnerable, address their physical and psychological needs and provide ongoing monitoring and recovery support, to try to offset the initial distress and responses.

For all severity level incidents, the school will plan to:

- take active steps to promote and protect students' safety and wellbeing
- develop ongoing risk management strategies
- support student(s) through any action they or their families take to seek justice or redress, including making a report to Victoria Police
- provide ongoing support to all affected students and staff, as their need may change. This may include assisting to access specialist support services, including treatment, counselling, or trauma and victim support services and debriefing for staff and student witnesses as part their recovery

Key ongoing actions in response to the incident should be documented on the relevant student(s)' file.

For incidents that are rated:

High and Extreme, the schools regional Area Executive Director (AED) or delegate will:

- contact the Principal to ensure confidence in actions undertaken and planned
- identify any needs and coordinate assistance to the school
- update the IRIS incident report

Low and Medium, the school can seek assistance or advice directly from region or central teams (Employee Conduct Branch, Legal Division, regional Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL), Employee Safety), as required.

4. Investigate

Some incidents may trigger investigations under other Department policies and legislative schemes (for example, privacy breaches should be reported in accordance with the [Privacy and Information Sharing Policy](#), mandatory reporting to DHHS). A preliminary investigation screening should be undertaken within two days of the incident being reported to the ISOC.

For WorkSafe Notifiable Incidents, the Principal and / or delegate are to conduct a formal incident investigation within 24 hours of the notifiable incident, where possible, using the [Hazard and Incident Investigation Template](#) or equivalent.

For the investigation, the Principal and / or delegate may decide to convene an incident investigation team, comprising school leadership staff, the school's HSR, affected employee and other employees, depending on the nature of the incident. The investigation should seek to identify the causes and any potential hazards, and provide recommended control and preventative measures.

5. Review and close

An analysis of all incidents should occur to identify what happened and the cause. This is to help determine whether an incident was managed correctly and to identify learnings to reduce the risk of similar events occurring in the future.

An incident review is discretionary and may be initiated by the Principal, Regional Director, area executive director or executive director within the Department. It is recommended that a review is facilitated by a peer who was not involved in the incident.

The review should seek to examine what was effective in the incident management, identify opportunities for improvement and develop recommended actions, focusing on:

- people
- process
- organisation
- systems, and
- training

Incident closure is a formal process of closing an incident. An incident is closed with comments in IRIS (for **Medium, High or Extreme**) or Cases21 or equivalent (for **Low**) once the responsible authority is confident that appropriate ongoing supports are in place and, if relevant, pending investigations are underway and/or reviews have been completed and recorded.

Authority to close an incident in IRIS is determined by the final severity level in which the incident is rated, as outlined in the Guidance section at the website below.

6. Analyse and learn

This stage provides an overview of the Department's data analysis framework for analysis of incident information.

Additional Information

The following information outlines how schools should rate incidents and the corresponding reporting requirements, based on the severity rating.

The [Severity rating Decision making matrix \(PDF\)](#) guides the severity rating of incidents and the reporting requirements at each level.

Schools should also refer to the [Overview of the Four SIMS Incident Severity Ratings Table \(PDF\)](#), which describes each of the four ratings, and outlines the corresponding reporting timelines required for schools, and the Department's response time following receipt of a report.

The four severity ratings and corresponding reporting requirements are:

- Extreme – requires immediate reporting to ISOC (within the hour)
- High – requires reporting to ISOC as soon as possible (within 3 hours)
- Medium – requires reporting to ISOC as soon as possible (within 1 working day)
- Low – must be recorded on CASES21 (or equivalent) but may be managed and governed locally

Note: The Principal should carefully consider the local context when assessing the severity rating, such as incident pattern or history, and student characteristics. These could include a student's possible vulnerability (such as age, culture, gender, history of trauma, physical/mental capacity, balance of power between involved parties and relevant medical history).

While the Principal is responsible for undertaking the initial incident severity rating, an incident severity rating should be updated by the responsible person to reflect any new material facts that come to light. The responsible person will be the DET staff member leading the incident response, which will either be the Principal, or a person from regional or central office, depending on the severity rating.

Incidents automatically rated as Extreme

Certain incidents should automatically be rated as Extreme. These incidents are:

- the actual, near miss or credible threats of death or permanent disability of students, or staff, that occur in the school environment
- the following acts, or allegation of the following acts, on a student, that occur in the school environment
- a sexual offence or groom for sexual conduct with a child under 16 years of age
- the infliction of a serious physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm; or
- serious neglect of a child
- the complete cessation of school operations
- employee misconduct that impacts a student
- Note: any incident involving child abuse, including allegations, that does not occur in the school environment should be rated by the Principal using the [Severity rating Decision making matrix](#).
- Note: **School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school or school council for use by a student during or outside school hours including a campus of the school, online school environment and other locations provided for a student's use (such as school camps, sporting events, excursions etc.)

Examples of incidents that impact or risk impacting on the health, safety and wellbeing of students or staff and are reportable to ISOC:

- death or suicide of a student, staff member or member of the school community
- self-harm/injury or threats of suicide
- injuries requiring treatment by a doctor, transport by ambulance or hospitalisation
- concerning mental health and traumatic incidents requiring peer, professional or clinical support
- incidents that did not lead to injury or death but very nearly did
- abuse or risk of abuse or neglect including online child abuse (mandatory reporting obligations may also apply — refer to the [Department's PROTECT program](#))
- missing student
- incidents involving the use of seclusion or physical restraint of a student, refer to [Restraint and Seclusion Policy](#)
- online bullying, inappropriate use of social media and/or mobile phones

Examples of incidents that impact on the continuity of school operations, including property damage and emergencies:

- damage to parts of a school building or its content
- loss of essential service
- emergency and warnings
- bomb threats

Examples of incidents that involve matters of serious conduct:

- alleged criminal activity
- aggressive and anti-social behaviour or actions
- forced marriage or human rights abuse
- family violence

- human trafficking
- sexual exploitation
- suspicious activity within or near school environment

Incidents not reportable to ISOC

The following incidents are not reportable:

- an insignificant impact or risk of impact on student health, safety and wellbeing, such as a grazed knee. These incidents should be managed locally and recorded in CASES21 or equivalent
- where school operations continue with slight interruptions, such as a 10-minute power outage
- Please refer also to the school's *Emergency & Critical Incident Management Planning Policy*, the *First Aid for Students & Staff Policy*, the *Restraint & Exclusion Policy*, the *Police & DHHS Interviews Policy*, *Banning Search & Seizure of Dangerous Items Policy* and the *Absconding/Going Missing from School Policy*.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late June 2020).

Mandatory for VRQA Purposes

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/reporting-and-managing-school-incidents-including-emergencies>