Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Responding to Requests from Victoria Police and Child Protection

PROTECT Procedure

1. Introduction

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) is committed to supporting schools to take a proactive role in the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

As law enforcement officers, Victoria Police have broad powers to investigate, question, search and detain. For the most part, Victoria Police will conduct investigations after they receive a report.

However, there will be rare circumstances in which Victoria Police may ask a school to seek further information.

The Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection workers also have wide powers to investigate and obtain information that is relevant to the protection or development of a child. At times, they may ask schools to seek further information to support their work.

2. Purpose

The purpose of these procedures is to assist principals to:

- respond to a request from Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection workers for extra information from or about students or an incident regarding child safety or wellbeing
- respond to a request from Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection workers to provide photographs of student injuries
- understand and comply with their legal requirements when a request is made by Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection workers regarding child safety and wellbeing; and
- manage situations which can be stressful and sensitive.

3. Scope

These procedures apply in all MACS schools, including specialist schools operated by MACS subsidiary, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools (MACSS) (**MACS schools**).

4. DFFH and Victoria Police requests

Under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), Victorian schools may share confidential information, including images, with authorised services, such as the DFFH or Victoria Police, to promote the wellbeing or safety of children, or to assess or manage family violence risk. The principal must, however, ensure that any information sharing does not compromise the safety or wellbeing of the child.

When DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police request information or material (including images) relating to a student or their family in relation to a child safety or wellbeing concern, the principal (or nominated staff) **must**:

- apply the Victorian government's **4 Critical Actions** by:
  - identifying child abuse
  - reporting child abuse
  - supporting students in the school
  - referring to community services
- prioritise the student's safety and wellbeing, including assessing whether seeking further information from, or engaging further with, the student may place them at risk

- determine whether to exclude parent(s) and/or carer(s) from providing information where there are reasonable grounds, including where:
  - there is a risk of harm to the child
  - parent(s) and/or carer(s) may be implicated
  - their involvement may compromise an investigation.
- respond in accordance with legal obligations under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), including:
  - complying with written directions from DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to provide relevant information (oral or written) or relevant documents on any matter concerning the protection or development of the child concerned
  - providing reasonable assistance to the authorised officer in relation to the child in need of protection or support.

The principal (or nominated staff) **must not**:

- compromise evidence, contaminate disclosures or interfere with any investigation
- conduct an independent investigation or seek to substantiate allegations beyond what is required to respond and report
- delay mandatory reporting actions when responding to requests.

Schools must ensure appropriate recordkeeping and documentation in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359 and MACS recordkeeping policies and procedures for information and records management, including documenting:

- the request received
- decisions made and rationale
- information shared
- with whom and when it was shared.

Recordkeeping templates and guidance are available on the CEVN website under *Student Support / Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms*. Schools may also seek clarity or further information from the MACS Legal about what to do regarding requests for further investigation.

4.1. Requests received for photos of student injuries

In addition to the considerations for responding to information requests, where DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police request photos relating to a student or their family in connection with a child safety or wellbeing concern, the principal (or nominated staff) **must also**:

- consider:
  - whether there are reasonable grounds to include the parent or carer in providing the photos
  - whether the student is mature enough to be able to provide the photos themselves
  - where neither is appropriate or possible, support the request and seek clarification from the requesting authority regarding requirements (e.g. whether the student needs to be identifiable in the photos)
- obtain the student's informed consent prior to any photo being taken, including ensuring the student understands:
  - what the photo will capture, who will take the photo, who will receive the photo and the purpose for which it will be used
- where the student's informed consent cannot be obtained, advise the requesting body accordingly
- where the student's informed consent is obtained, consider:
  - who the most appropriate person is to take the photo
  - that where possible, there be at least two adults present
  - that the photo be taken on a school device (not a personal device)

  - balancing the privacy of the location with the safety of the child and staff involved
- once the photo is taken and shared with the relevant authority and receipt acknowledged:
  - delete the photo and inform the student; or
  - if DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police request that the photo be retained by the school, it must be stored securely, with protected access requirements and then deleted when no longer required; and
  - retain the relevant details of the photo, when and to whom it was shared and, where applicable, the date the photo was deleted and other relevant information.

4.2. Requests for further information about a student

DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police may request additional information or documents relating to a student or their family to investigate a report or to assess risk to a child or young person relevant to the child's protection or development.

In responding to such requests, the principal (or nominated staff) should consider:

- whether the request falls under the CISS and/or the FVISS, and respond in accordance with those schemes where applicable; and
- legal obligations under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), including that DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may, by written notice, direct any person with relevant information to give information to the authorised person (orally or in writing), or provide documents on any matter concerning the protection or development of the child concerned. It outlines that reasonable assistance must be provided to the authorised officer in relation to the child in need of protection or support.

Schools may seek clarity or further information from the MACS Legal Unit about what to do regarding requests for further information.

5. Definitions

Refer to the Protect Policy or Glossary of Terms for definitions of terms used in this procedure.

6. Support

Legal Services team seeks to provide schools with support and advice on legal matters.
Phone: 9267 0228
Email: legal@macs.vic.edu.au

Student Wellbeing Information and Support Service (SWISS) seeks to address matters that impact the wellbeing and educational outcomes of young people using a solution-focused framework, and empower and enhance the capacity, competence and confidence of staff to address matters related to the wellbeing of young people.
Phone: 9267 0228
Email: swb@macs.vic.edu.au

Child Safety team supports schools with child safety and wellbeing matters and complaints handling.
Phone: 9267 0288

Reportable Conduct team supports schools with implementation of the Reportable Conduct Scheme and related matters.
Phone: 9267 0288

7. Related policies and documents

Supporting documents

Police or DFFH Child Protection interviews at school: PROTECT Procedure
Police or DFFH Child Protection interviews at school – Student Interview Template

Related MACS policies and documents

Child Abuse Identification and Response Policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy – Schools
Child Safety and Wellbeing Recordkeeping Procedures
Child Safe Recruitment Procedures
Code of Conduct for MACS Staff
Reportable Conduct Policy

Resources

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Child Information Sharing Scheme
Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms on the CEVN website
DET Mature Minors and Decision Making (2020)
Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
PROTECT | vic.gov.au
- Adult engaged by a Catholic school – PROTECT 4 Critical Actions reference sheet (PDF)
- Student-to-student – PROTECT 4 Critical Actions reference sheet (PDF)
- Family – PROTECT 4 Critical Actions reference sheet (PDF)
- Community – PROTECT 4 Critical Actions reference sheet (PDF)

PROTECT on the CEVN Website (schools only, log in required)

8. Legislation and standards

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)
Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)
Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises
Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001 (Vic)
Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)

Policy information table

Approving executive	Director, Education Excellence
Document owner	General Manager, Child Safety
Approval date	7 July 2026
Next Review by	July 2028
Publication	CEVN, Gabriel, School website
Related policy	Child Abuse Identification and Response Policy – PROTECT - 2026
Superseded documents	PROTECT Procedure: Responding to requests from Police and Child Protection for further information – 2023 PROTECT Procedure: Responding to requests from Police and Child Protection for further information – 2024 PROTECT Procedure: Responding to Requests from Victoria Police and Child Protection – V3.0 – 2025