

Osborne Primary School

Child Safe Standard 5



Identifying Signs of Abuse

*The following information is from the Department of Education and Training website

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/identifying.aspx#link75>

As a school staff member, it is critical to be able to recognise the physical or behavioural signs of child abuse. In many circumstances they may be the only indication that a child is subject to abuse.

You may be the best-placed or only adult in a position to identify and respond to suspected abuse. When identifying child abuse, it is critical to remember that:

- the trauma associated with child abuse can significantly impact upon the wellbeing and development of a child
- all concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer must be acted upon as soon as practicable.

Types of abuse

- Physical Child Abuse
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Grooming
- Emotional Child Abuse
- Neglect

- Family Violence
- Student Sexual Offending
- Sexual Behaviour in Children Under 10 Years

Physical Child Abuse

<p>What is physical child abuse?</p>	<p>Physical child abuse can consist of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. Examples of physical abuse may include beating, shaking or burning, assault with implements and female genital mutilation (FGM).</p>
<p>What are the physical signs?</p>	<p>Physical indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• bruises or welts on facial areas and other areas of the body, e.g. back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs• bruises or welts in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury, e.g. fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth• burns from boiling water, oil or flames or burns that show the shape of the object used to make them, e.g. iron, grill, cigarette• fractures of the skull, jaw, nose and limbs (especially those not consistent with the explanation offered, or the type of injury possible at the child's age of development)• cuts and grazes to the mouth, lips, gums, eye area, ears and external genitalia• bald patches where hair has been pulled out• multiple injuries, old and new• effects of poisoning• internal injuries.
<p>What are the behavioural signs?</p>	<p>Behavioural indicators of physical child abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• disclosure of an injury inflicted by someone else (parent, carer or guardian), or an inconsistent or unlikely explanation or inability to remember the cause of injury• unusual fear of physical contact with adults• aggressive behaviour• disproportionate reaction to events• wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries• wariness or fear of a parent, carer or guardian• reluctance to go home

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no reaction or little emotion displayed when being hurt or threatened • habitual absences from school without reasonable explanation • overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative • unusually nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive and destructive to self and/or others • poor sleeping patterns, fear of the dark or nightmares and regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting • drug or alcohol misuse, suicide or self-harm. • Please note that physical harm may also be caused by student fights and/or bullying.
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Child Sexual Abuse

<p>What is child sexual abuse?</p>	<p>Child sexual abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity • can include a wide range of sexual activity including fondling the child's genitals, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography. <p>Child sexual abuse may not always include physical sexual contact (e.g. kissing or fondling a child in a sexual way, masturbation, oral sex or penetration) and can also include non-contact offences, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking to a child in a sexually explicit way • sending sexual messages or emails to a child • exposing a sexual body part to a child • forcing a child to watch a sexual act (including showing pornography to a child) • having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner (including child sexual exploitation). <p>Child sexual abuse does not always involve force. In some circumstances a child may be manipulated in to believing that they have brought the abuse on themselves, or that the abuse is an expression of love through a process of grooming.</p>
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<p>What is child sexual exploitation?</p>	<p>Child sexual exploitation is also a form of sexual abuse where offenders use their power (physical, financial or emotional) over a child to sexually or emotionally abuse them.</p> <p>It often involves situations and relationships where young people receive something (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money etc.) in return for participating in sexual activities.</p> <p>Child sexual exploitation can occur in person or online, and sometimes the child may not even realise they are a victim.</p> <p>For more information on the prevention of child exploitation and grooming see: Prevention of child sexual exploitation and grooming</p> <p>For more information on sexting and the transmission of sexual images between students, see: Bully Stoppers - Sexting</p>
<p>Who is most at risk of child sexual abuse?</p>	<p>Any child can be victim to sexual abuse, however children who are vulnerable, isolated and/or have a disability are much more likely to become victim, and are disproportionately abused.</p>
<p>Who are the common perpetrators of child sexual abuse?</p>	<p>Child sexual abuse is most commonly perpetrated by someone who is known to, and trusted by the child (and often someone highly trusted within their families, communities, schools and/or other institutions).</p> <p>Perpetrators can include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a family member. This is known as intra family abuse and can include sibling abuse. • a school staff member, coach or other carer • a peer/child 10 years or over • a family friend or stranger • any person via a forced marriage (where a student is subject to a marriage without their consent, arranged for by their immediate or extended family - this constitutes a criminal offence and must be reported)
<p>What are the physical indicators?</p>	<p>Physical indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • injury to the genital or rectal area, e.g. bruising, bleeding, discharge, inflammation or infection • injury to areas of the body such as breasts, buttocks or upper thighs • discomfort in urinating or defecating • presence of foreign bodies in the vagina and/or rectum • sexually-transmitted diseases • frequent urinary tract infections

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pregnancy, especially in very young adolescents • anxiety-related illnesses, e.g. anorexia or bulimia
<p>What are the behavioural indicators?</p>	<p>Behavioural indicators of sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disclosure of sexual abuse, either directly (from the alleged victim) or indirectly (by a third person or allusion) • persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity, e.g. excessive masturbation or rubbing genitals against adults • drawings or descriptions in stories that are sexually explicit and not age-appropriate • fear of home, specific places or particular adults • poor/deteriorating relationships with adults and peers • poor self-care or personal hygiene • complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea without physiological basis • sleeping difficulties • regressive behaviour, e.g. bed-wetting or speech loss • depression, self-harm, drug or alcohol abuse, prostitution or attempted suicide • sudden decline in academic performance, poor memory and concentration • promiscuity • wearing layers of clothing to hide injuries and bruises.
<p>How can I identify perpetrators of child sexual abuse?</p>	<p>In addition to identifying the physical and behavioural signs of abuse within children, you can play a critical role in identifying signs that a member of the school community may be engaging in child sexual abuse, or grooming a child for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity.</p> <p>You should consider taking action if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel uncomfortable about the way an adult interacts with a child/children, and/or • suspect that the adult may be engaging in sexual abuse of a child/children, and/or • suspect that the adult is grooming the child/children for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity, and/or • reasonably believe that the adult is at risk of engaging in sexual behaviour with a child/children.

	<p>You must report suspected abuse, or risk of abuse regardless of any concerns about the risk to the reputation of the suspected perpetrator or school. A failure to report can result in criminal charges and your report could prove critical to protecting children in your care.</p>
<p>What are the behavioural indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse?</p>	<p>Behavioural indicators for perpetrators of child sexual abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <p>Family member (adult)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent • overprotective or volatile relationship between the child and one of their parents/family members • reluctance by the child to be alone with one of their parents/family members. <p>Family member (sibling)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child and a sibling behaving like boyfriend and girlfriend • reluctance by the child to be alone with a sibling • embarrassment by siblings if they are found alone together. <p>School staff member, coach or other carer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • touching a child inappropriately • bringing up sexual material or personal disclosures into conversations with a student/s • inappropriately contacting the student/s, e.g. calls, emails, texts, social media • obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the student/s (making them feel "special") • giving of gifts to a student/s • having inappropriate social boundaries, e.g. telling the potential victims about their own personal problems • offering to drive a student/s to or from school • inviting themselves over to their homes, calling them at night • befriending the parents themselves and making visits to their home • undermining the child's reputation (so that the child won't be believed). <p>*Unwanted sexual behaviour toward a student by a person 10 years or over can constitute a sexual offence and is referred to as student-to-student sexual offending. Please note that a child who is under 10 years of age is not considered to be capable of committing an</p>

	offence. Any suspected sexual behaviour displayed by children under 10 is referred to as problem sexual behaviour.
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Grooming

<p>What is grooming?</p>	<p>Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.</p> <p>Sometimes it is hard to see when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because some grooming behaviour can look like "normal" caring behaviour. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving gifts or special attention to a child or their parent or carer (this can make a child feel special or indebted to an adult). • Controlling a child through threats, force or use of authority (this can make a child fearful to report unwanted behaviour). • Making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling. • Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault).
<p>What is online grooming?</p>	<p>Online grooming is a criminal offence and occurs when an adult uses electronic communication (including social media) in a predatory fashion to try to lower a child's inhibitions, or heighten their curiosity regarding sex, with the aim of eventually meeting them in person for the purposes of sexual activity. This can include online chats, sexting, and other interactions.</p> <p>Online grooming can also precede online child exploitation, a form of sexual abuse where adults use the internet or a mobile to communicate sexual imagery with or of a child (e.g. via a webcam). Any incidents of suspected online child exploitation must be reported.</p> <p>For more information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Sexual Exploitation and Grooming • online grooming, see: Bully Stoppers - Online Grooming • sexting and the transmission of sexual images between students, see: Bully Stoppers - Sexting

What are the behavioural indicators that a child may be subject to grooming?

Behavioural indicators that a child may be subject to grooming include (but are not limited to):

- developing an unusually close connection with an older person
- displaying mood changes (hyperactive, secretive, hostile, aggressive, impatient, resentful, anxious, withdrawn, depressed)
- using street/different language; copying the way the new 'friend' may speak; talking about the new 'friend' who does not belong to his/her normal social circle
- possessing jewellery, clothing or expensive items given by the 'friend'
- possessing large amounts of money which he/she cannot account for
- using a new mobile phone (given by the 'friend') excessively to make calls, videos or send text messages
- being excessively secretive about their use of communications technologies, including social media
- frequently staying out overnight, especially if the relationship is with an older person
- being dishonest about where they've been and whom they've been with
- using drugs; physical evidence includes spoons, silver foil, 'tabs', 'rocks' etc
- assuming a new name; being in possession of a false ID, stolen passport or driver's license provided by the 'friend' to avoid detection
- being picked up in a car by the 'friend' from home/school or 'down the street'.

For information on the indicators to look for in suspected perpetrators, see the 'Child sexual abuse' table above.

Emotional Child Abuse

<p>What is emotional abuse?</p>	<p>Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence.</p> <p>It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person, to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health. Emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of abuse.</p>
<p>What are the physical indicators of emotional abuse?</p>	<p>Physical indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• speech disorders such as language delay, stuttering or selectively being mute (only speaking with certain people or in certain situations)• delays in emotional, mental or physical development
<p>What are the behavioural indicators of emotional abuse?</p>	<p>Behavioural indicators of emotional abuse include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• overly compliant, passive and undemanding behaviour• extremely demanding, aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour or anti-social and destructive behaviour• low tolerance or frustration• poor self-image and low self-esteem• unexplained mood swings, depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts• behaviours that are not age-appropriate, e.g. overly adult, or overly infantile• fear of failure, overly high standards, and excessive neatness• poor social and interpersonal skills• violent drawings or writing• lack of positive social contact with other children

Neglect

<p>What is neglect?</p>	<p>Neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health or physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk.</p> <p>In some circumstances the neglect of a child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• can place the child's immediate safety and development at serious risk• may not immediately compromise the safety of the child, but is likely to result in longer term cumulative harm.
<p>What are the physical indicators of neglect?</p>	<p>Physical indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• appearing consistently dirty and unwashed• being consistently inappropriately dressed for weather conditions• being at risk of injury or harm due to consistent lack of adequate supervision from parents• being consistently hungry, tired and listless• having unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care• having inadequate shelter and unsafe or unsanitary conditions.
<p>What are the behavioural indicators of neglect?</p>	<p>Behavioural indicators of neglect include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• gorging when food is available or inability to eat when extremely hungry• begging for or stealing food• appearing withdrawn, listless, pale and weak• aggressive behaviour, irritability• involvement in criminal activity• little positive interaction with parent, carer or guardian• poor socialising habits• excessive friendliness towards strangers• indiscriminate acts of affection• poor, irregular or non-attendance at school• staying at school for long hours and refusing or being reluctant to go home

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-destructive behaviour • taking on an adult role of caring for parent.
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Family Violence

<p>What is family violence?</p>	<p>Family violence is behaviour towards a family member that may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical violence or threats of violence • verbal abuse, including threats • emotional or psychological abuse • sexual abuse • financial and social abuse. <p>A child's exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse. This exposure can be very harmful and may result in long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Action must be taken to protect the child, and to mitigate or limit their trauma.</p> <p>The longer a child experiences or is exposed to family violence, the more harmful it is.</p>
<p>What are the physical indicators of family violence?</p>	<p>Physical indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speech disorders • delays in physical development • failure to thrive (without an organic cause) • bruises, cuts or welts on facial areas, and other parts of the body including back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs • any bruises or welts (old or new) in unusual configurations, or those that look like the object used to make the injury (such as fingerprints, handprints, buckles, iron or teeth) • internal injuries
<p>What are the behavioural indicators of family violence?</p>	<p>Behavioural indicators of family violence include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violent/aggressive behaviour and language • depression and anxiety and suicidal thoughts • appearing nervous and withdrawn, including wariness of adults

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• difficulty adjusting to change• psychosomatic illness• bedwetting and sleeping disorders• 'acting out', such as cruelty to animals• extremely demanding, attention-seeking behaviour• participating in dangerous risk-taking behaviours to impress peers• overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative behaviour• taking on a caretaker role prematurely, trying to protect other family members• embarrassment about family• demonstrated fear of parents, carers or guardians, and of going home• disengagement from school and/or poor academic outcomes• parent-child conflict |
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For older children and young people indicators can also include:

- moving away/running away from home
- entering into a relationship early to escape the family home
- experiencing violence in their own dating relationships
- involvement in criminal activity
- alcohol and substance abuse

Student Sexual Offending

<p>What is student sexual offending?</p>	<p>Student sexual offending refers to sexual behaviour that is led by a student 10 years and over which may amount to a sexual offence. For more information on what to do if you suspect a student of sexual offending, see: Identifying and responding to Student Sexual Offending</p>
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Sexual behaviour in Children Under 10 Years

<p>What is problem sexual behaviour in children under 10?</p>	<p>Most children and young people are likely to engage in some level of age-appropriate sexual behaviour as part of their development. Sexual behaviour can present itself along a broad continuum, with research suggesting that only a small number of children and young people develop problem sexual behaviour.</p> <p>For more information, see: Identifying and responding to Student Sexual Offending</p>
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