

Child Safety-How do I respond?

Red Rock Christian College believes all children are fearfully and wonderfully made and therefore is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the safety and wellbeing of children involved in its community. All those entrusted with the care of children and young people have a duty of care to ensure their safety and at Red Rock, this includes having a zero tolerance for child abuse.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is an act which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. There are different types of abuse:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

The Effects of Child Abuse often include significant physical and psychological problems. The longer the abuse goes on the more severe the effects.

How do I recognise Child Abuse?

The symptoms of child abuse are many and varied. Below is a list of some of the symptoms that may be evidence of abuse. However, the presence of these symptoms may also be signs of other issues not related to child abuse.

- Visit www.dhs.vic.gov for a more extensive list of possible symptoms of child abuse: burns, bruises, fractures, bites
- fatigue, falling asleep in class
- distrust, fearfulness, excessive friendliness toward strangers, withdrawn, anxious
- problems with school work
- overly aware of sexual matters for age
- poor hygiene, frequent hunger, stealing food
- overly passive or aggressive
- significant changes in behaviour

How do I respond to a report of abuse?

Children will either disclose abuse directly by describing what has occurred or indirectly through behavioural signs and indicators. Discovering or suspecting that a child has been sexually abused can be a distressing experience. Most people feel a range of emotions including anger, sadness, shock, disbelief, disgust and helplessness. It is important to stay calm and not convey these feelings to the child as this may prevent the child from making further disclosures. The child's feelings about themselves may be influenced by your initial reaction to the abuse. If the child senses a horrified response, this may reinforce and perpetuate a child's feelings of guilt and shame.

- Tell the child you believe them
- Reassure the child that they haven't done anything wrong.
- Listen to the student without probing for details or asking leading questions
- Explain what you will do next. Do not promise confidentiality – its important the child knows you will have to tell the principal
- Those mandated to report – follow procedure
- If you believe the child is in immediate danger call **000**
- Report to the principal

What do I do if I have concerns?

- Document your concerns including any behavioural observations
- If concerned, call Child First: Supporting the wellbeing of children and vulnerable families.
- Talk with staff members or the principal
- Those mandated to report – follow procedure

Child First: 1300 786433 or 03 9302 6100