



# Incident Notification Policy and Procedures

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## 1. Introduction

Edmund Rice Education Australia Victorian Schools Limited (EREA VSL) is the proprietor and governing authority of six Victorian Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition. EREA VSL is responsible for maintaining oversight of the operations of the schools it governs and ensuring that minimum standards for school registration are attained and maintained.

Some incidents that occur in EREA VSL schools are of sufficient significance to require reporting to EREA VSL as the governing authority.

This document details EREA VSL's policy and procedures in relation to the identification, escalation and response to incidents that occur in schools. These incidents include:

- a. child safety matters (Child Safety Incidents)
- b. situations involving injuries and accidents, near misses, property and equipment damage, health and safety issues, security breaches and misconduct (Notifiable Incidents).

Incident reports document what happened, the actions taken, supports in place and where relevant, strategies to mitigate risks and harm.

## 2. Purpose

The EREA VSL Incident Notification Policy and Procedures provides direction to EREA VSL schools for the identification and reporting of incidents to EREA VSL as the governing authority.

Reporting to EREA VSL, in accordance with this policy and procedures, does not displace or discharge any school or individual's obligation to act in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

## 3. Scope

This policy and procedures apply to all schools and school boarding premises that are owned, operated and governed by EREA VSL.

## 4. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Board or EREA VSL Board</b>	The company Board of EREA Victorian Schools Limited.
<b>Child Safety Incident</b>	<p>Any incident or allegation of child abuse, including actions to protect children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.</p> <p>All child safety reports including protective notifications and reportable conduct must be submitted using the <b>Child Safety Incident Report Form</b> (via school-specific form on Assurance).</p>
<b>EREA VSL</b>	Edmund Rice Education Australia Victorian Schools Limited, its schools, boarding premises and related educational institutions, as well as its Boards and Committees.
<b>Minimum Standards</b>	Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration.

Term	Definition
	Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Boarding Premises Registration.
<b>Ministerial Order 1359</b>	Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises. Ministerial Order No. 1359 defines the actions schools and school boarding premises must take to meet the requirements of the eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards.
<b>Notifiable Incident</b> (other than a Child Safety Incident)	Any significant incident which will, or may, adversely impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of students, staff, volunteers or contractors, or the financial, legal, property, reputational standing of the school, or other adverse matters, including relating to conduct, privacy, school operations continuity or school registration.  All Notifiable Incidents must be submitted using the <b>Notifiable Incident Form</b> (via Assurance).
<b>School or EREA VSL School</b>	A registered school (including school boarding premises) owned, operated and governed by Edmund Rice Education Australia Victorian Schools Limited.
<b>VCEA</b>	Victorian Catholic Education Authority.
<b>VRQA</b>	Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.

## 5. Principles

When considering incident notification and management, guiding principles include:

Principle	Description
<b>Good governance</b>	<p>EREA VSL is committed to good governance practices and stewardship in accordance with legislative requirements for not-for-profit and charitable bodies.</p> <p>The notification of incidents to EREA VSL from schools is critical to enabling support, mitigating site and strategic risk, and timely reporting to the Board and regulatory authorities when required.</p>
<b>Incident management processes</b>	EREA VSL recognises that incidents will occur in the normal operations of its activities. Where they do, EREA VSL seeks to minimise the impact of incidents to each stakeholder. In many cases, incidents will occur with little notice or predictability. As such, EREA VSL operates incident management processes that are responsive, transparent and provide an opportunity for effective oversight by relevant authorities and governance bodies.

## 6. Policy

### 6.1 Reporting Obligations

- Schools must report incidents, as required, to jurisdictional authorities in accordance with legal or regulatory obligations.

- Schools must notify EREA VSL, as the governing authority, of certain incidents in addition to the school's obligation to manage and report incidents in accordance with emergency and critical incident management, and child safety policies and processes.

## 6.2 Incident Types

- There are two incident types that must be reported to EREA VSL via the appropriate form in Assurance: *Child Safety Incidents* and *Notifiable Incidents*.
- Schools must notify EREA VSL of any:
  - *Child Safety Incidents* within **24 hours** of becoming aware that an incident has occurred
  - *Notifiable Incidents* within **48 hours** of becoming aware that an incident has occurred.

### 6.2.1 Child Safety Incidents

#### Reporting to authorities

- School staff have a range of reporting and legal obligations to report suspected child abuse and provide ongoing appropriate support. These include:
  - mandatory reporting
  - criminal offences – failure to disclose and failure to protect
  - duty of care
  - responding to student sexual offending
  - responding to significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child
  - Child Safe Standards
  - Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- School staff must follow the Four Critical Actions when responding to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse.
- As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed school staff must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse to the relevant authority as soon as practicable. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.
- The *PROTECT reporting template* must be completed and filed in accordance with the school's Responding to & Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns Policies and Procedures and Child Safeguarding Record Keeping Policy and Procedures.

#### Reporting to EREA VSL

- Reports made to the following authorities must be notified to EREA VSL via the *Child Safety Incident Report Form* on Assurance **within 24 hours of becoming aware that an incident has occurred**. The completed PROTECT report template must be submitted as part of the notification to EREA VSL.
  - The Orange Door
  - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) (Child Protection)
  - Victoria Police including Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) or SANO Taskforce (Sexual Crime Squad - Historical Investigation Team)
  - Commission for Children and Young People (Reportable Conduct Scheme notification)
- Schools log a 'point in time' notification to EREA VSL via the Assurance platform when an incident occurs. The notification includes the authority the report was made to, the school's response and supports in place.
- Following the initial Assurance report, school staff continue to case manage incidents (as needed) and log updates via their internal systems.
- Schools are **not required to update EREA VSL** via Assurance each time follow-up actions are taken for previously reported incidents.
- Principals are responsible for school-level child safety responses to cases that arise.

## 6.2.2 Notifiable Incidents

### Reporting to EREA VSL

- **Notifiable Incidents** must be notified to EREA VSL **within 48 hours** of becoming aware that an incident has occurred.
- Notifiable incidents include incidents which have, or are likely to have, a significant impact on the health and safety of students, staff and others in EREA VSL schools, incidents which can have a serious impact on the financial and business operations of schools and their property, or have major legal, regulatory or reputational impacts.
- They include the following categories:
  1. Severe injury or fatality
  2. Fraud or corruption
  3. Health and Safety – Student
  4. Health and Safety – Non-student
  5. Legal
  6. Parent conduct
  7. Police involvement (Non child safety)
  8. Privacy
  9. Property damage
  10. Reputation
  11. School operations continuity
  12. School registration
  13. Solvency
  14. Staff conduct
  15. Student conduct
  16. Unauthorised presence or disturbance
  17. Volunteer or contractor conduct.

## 6.3 Record Keeping

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring all Child Safety Incidents and Notifiable Incidents are recorded, filed and retained in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

# 7. Procedures

## 7.1 Making a Notification

1. EREA VSL has established online forms via Assurance for schools to report Child Safety Incidents and Notifiable Incidents. These are the:
  - a) **Child Safety Incident Report Form** (school-specific)
  - b) **Notifiable Incident Form**.
2. Schools should use the appropriate form, depending on the nature of the incident.
3. Incident Forms must:
  - a) be submitted using the correct form and category

- b) meet requirements for notification to EREA VSL
- c) include sufficient detail to enable approval (see 7.3 below)
- d) include only information relevant to the specific incident.
- e) include any relevant documents as attachments (Note: any relevant CCTV footage should be retained by the school).

## 7.2 Timeline for Notification

1. The Principal (or their delegate) must notify EREA VSL, via the Incident Form listed above, of a:
  - a. *Child Safety Incident* within **24 hours** of becoming aware that an incident has occurred
  - b. *Notifiable Incident* within **48 hours** of becoming aware that an incident has occurred.

## 7.3 EREA VSL Approval Process

1. When an Incident Form is submitted via Assurance, the following EREA VSL staff receive an email notification:
  - a) Child Safety Incident – Director, Safeguarding
  - b) Notifiable Incident – Risk and Compliance Manager.
2. Within 1 business day of receipt, Incident Forms will be reviewed by the EREA VSL Director, Safeguarding (for Child Safety Incidents) or the EREA Risk and Compliance Manager (for Notifiable Incidents).
3. The EREA VSL Director, Safeguarding or EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager may approve and close the notification, request further information regarding the incident or reject the notification. EREA VSL will communicate with the notifier prior to a rejection.
4. Forms can be updated with notes and documentation by the person who submitted the form or the approver, as a record of all management actions. The ‘approver’ for Notifiable Incident reports is the EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager. The ‘approver’ for Child Safety Incident reports is the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding. In the absence of either EREA VSL staff member, permissions are set for either to ‘approve’.
5. Once approved and closed in Assurance, schools should continue to document the management of the incident using internal systems. The EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding or the EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager will liaise directly with the school if further information about an incident is required.
6. The Child Safety Incident Report Form and the Notifiable Incident Form are not intended to be a mechanism for requesting support or advice. School-based staff must liaise directly with the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding or EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager for this purpose.

## 7.4. Other Reporting Requirements

1. The VRQA has appointed the VCEA as the review body for Catholic schools.
2. Under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the VRQA and VCEA, EREA VSL is required to report to VCEA:
  - a) Any actual or significant breaches of the Minimum Standards that may have arisen from complaints or concerns related to the care, safety and welfare of students, including Ministerial Order 1359, that may become public knowledge or attract media or parliamentary attention
  - b) Any cases of school emergency relocations (e.g. due to fire or flood) within 7 days of becoming aware of the emergency that necessitates relocation.

3. Upon reviewing a notifiable incident, EREA VSL may consider if the matter meets the requirements of the MOU and provide a notification to the VCEA.

## 7.5 EREA VSL Contacts

1. For queries about the Notifiable Incident Form, please contact the EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager.
2. For queries about the Child Safety Incident Report Form, please contact the EREA VSL Director, Safeguarding.

## 7.6 EREA VSL Incident Notification Summary Guidance

1. The EREA VSL Reporting Child Safety & Notifiable Incidents Summary Guidance (**Appendix 1**) provides a summary and overview of the types of incidents that must be notified to EREA VSL.

## 7.7 Internal Reporting

1. The reporting of incidents enables EREA VSL to maintain oversight, identify trends, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies.
2. The log of incidents reported through both the Child Safety Incident Report Form and the Notifiable Incident Form provide the basis of regular reports to the EREA CEO and the EREA VSL Board, through the Risk and Child Safety Committee.

# 8. Roles, Responsibilities and Reporting

Role	Responsibilities	Reporting
EREA VSL Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall responsibility for compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359</li><li>• Approve this policy</li><li>• Maintain oversight of child safety and notifiable incidents reported by schools to EREA VSL through quarterly data reports</li><li>• Receive child safety, serious incident and emergency notifications via the Board Chair through the EREA VSL CEO</li><li>• Place child safety as a recurring item on the Board's agenda to enable any key concerns to be raised and risks and strategic decisions are discussed</li><li>• Ensure this policy is reviewed and updated as needed</li></ul>	



Role	Responsibilities	Reporting
<b>EREA VSL Risk and Child Safety Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review quarterly data from child safety incidents and notifiable incidents notified by schools to EREA VSL</li> <li>Ensure child safety reporting procedures contribute to risk mitigation and the Board's zero appetite for abuse and harm to children and young people</li> <li>Ensure notifiable incidents reporting procedures contribute to risk mitigation</li> <li>Recommend actions the Board may take to strengthen the organisation's child safe culture, policies and codes of conduct, and ensure effective systems for managing risks and reporting are in place to ensure compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359</li> </ul>	EREA VSL Board
<b>EREA VSL CEO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve the Summary Guidance: Reporting Child Safety Incidents and Notifiable Incidents and related Procedures</li> <li>As soon as possible, notify the Board Chair of any critical or high-risk incidents, particularly regarding child safety, student and staff health or safety, school operations continuity, solvency, fraud or corruption, legal matters, police involvement, media or reputation</li> </ul>	EREA VSL Board Risk and Child Safety Committee
<b>EREA VSL Director, Safeguarding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop procedures and guidance to support schools to implement child safety reporting procedures to comply with the Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359</li> <li>Support schools as required to manage child safety incidents in accordance relevant policies and procedures</li> <li>Ensure child safety policies are implemented including an annual review (or following a serious incident) of Child Safety Risk Registers</li> <li>Report significant child safety incidents to EREA VSL CEO and/or Board Chair</li> <li>Provide quarterly child safety incident data reports to the Board</li> </ul>	EREA VSL CEO Risk and Child Safety Committee
<b>EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop procedures and guidance supporting adherence with this policy</li> <li>Ensure that this policy and procedures are implemented</li> </ul>	EREA VSL CEO Risk and Child Safety Committee

Role	Responsibilities	Reporting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide regular incident reports to the Board</li> <li>Report to EREA VSL CEO on significant matters</li> <li>Manage all notifiable incidents in accordance with this policy</li> </ul>	
<b>Principal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the Incident Notification policy and procedures are implemented, managed, and reported upon within their school</li> </ul>	EREA VSL CEO  Director, Safeguarding  Risk and Compliance Manager
<b>School staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check whether an incident meets the threshold for reporting to EREA VSL and if so complete and lodge the relevant Child Safety or Notifiable Incident form in Assurance</li> </ul>	Principal

## 9. Review

- This policy and procedures will be reviewed every two (2) years, or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, regulations, other requirements or after any significant incident.
- The Summary Guidance (**Appendix 1**) will be reviewed annually or after the occurrence of an incident that impacts on EREA VSL's responsibilities.

## 10. Supporting Documents and Related Policies

This policy and procedures should be read in conjunction with the following related documents:

### **Supporting documents**

- Appendix 1 – EREA VSL Reporting Child Safety & Notifiable Incidents Summary Guidance

### **Related policies**

- EREA VSL Code of Conduct
- EREA VSL Child Safeguarding Framework
- EREA VSL Reportable Conduct Policy
- EREA VSL Risk Management Framework
- EREA VSL Compliance Management Framework

## 11. Legislation and Standards

*Australian Privacy Act 1998 (Cth)*

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*

*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*

*Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)

Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration

Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Boarding Premises Registration  
Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse  
in schools and school boarding premises  
*Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*