

SILVER TREE STEINER SCHOOL



# Child Abduction Policy and Procedure

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2016

This procedure is applicable to: Teachers, Parents and Students

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## **CHILD ABDUCTION POLICY**

Silver Tree Steiner School considers the safety and security of its students to be of the utmost importance. When parents/guardians deliver their child to school they have an expectation that they will be protected at all times.

The Administrator/Principal is responsible for the daily management and control of the school grounds, including all persons on the premises. This is in order to provide for the safety and welfare of students and staff on the school premises.

Even though abductions from Schools are rare, it is still a risk that needs to be managed. Parents can help by keeping the School informed of any parental issues or special family arrangements and by engaging with their family and discussing personal safety. Help your younger family members with learning about the importance of making good decisions and about putting safety first. Walk with them to school, help them when crossing the road, assist them with being bus safe, alert them to dangers, and be positive with your own actions and decision making.

## RELATED POLICIES

Other policies that should be read in conjunction with this policy are:

- Child Protection Policy
- Emergency Management Plan
- Family Court Orders and Violence Restraining Order Policy
- Playground Supervision Policy

## TYPES OF ABDUCTION

The term child abduction conflates two legal and social categories which differ by their perpetrating contexts: abduction by members of the child's family or abduction by strangers:

- Parental child abduction: a family relative's (usually parent's) unauthorised custody of a child without parental agreement and contrary to family law ruling, which largely removes the child from care, access and contact of the other parent and family side. Occurring around parental separation or divorce, such parental or familial child abduction may include parental alienation, a form of child abuse seeking to disconnect a child from targeted parent and denigrated side of family.

By far the most common kind of child abduction is parental child abduction and often occurs when the parents separate or begin divorce proceedings. A parent may remove or retain the child from the other seeking to gain an advantage in expected or pending child-custody proceedings or because that parent fears losing the child in those expected or pending child-custody proceedings; a parent may refuse to return a child at the end of an access visit or may flee with the child to prevent an access visit or fear of domestic violence and abuse.

- Abduction or kidnapping by strangers (from outside the family, natural or legal guardians) who steal a child for criminal purposes which may include:
  - extortion, to elicit a ransom from the guardians for the child's return
  - illegal adoption, a stranger steals a child with the intent to rear the child as their own or to sell to a prospective adoptive parent
  - human trafficking, a stranger steals a child with the intent to exploit the child themselves or by trade in a list of possible abuses including slavery, forced labor, sexual abuse, or even illegal organ trading
  - murder

(Source: Wikipedia - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child\\_abduction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_abduction))

## ATTENDANCE MONITORING

There are certain legal responsibilities involved in attendance at the School. In particular, a student may not leave the grounds for any purpose during the day without special leave from the Administrator/Principal or from those to whom he/she delegates his/her authority.

School students must be signed out by a parent / guardian at administration. All parents are asked to note the protocols relating to student absence. On the day of the absence please inform the School using one of the following methods:

1. Send an e-mail to the School via - [welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au](mailto:welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au)
2. Telephone the School on 9295 4787

Please ensure you include the name and class or room of your son/daughter.

Parents may be contacted should it be noted that a student is absent without permission.

### **CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE PLAN**

Typically this plan would be initiated by a child reporting an incident to a Teacher or a parent.

**Child** makes a report:

Reports may be of an attempted abduction, attempted assault or actual assault, stalking behaviour (with or without a camera), or behaviour of a sexual nature such as an adult exposing themselves to the child/children.

**Teacher** receives the report:

Teacher should immediately inform the Administrator, passing on all information reported by the child/children. The information would include what actually happened and descriptions of any persons involved. Teachers who believe that a matter is sexual in nature may also need to submit a formal Mandatory Report. **TEACHERS ARE NOT TO SPEAK WITH THE MEDIA OR WITH ANY PEOPLE NOT DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE ISSUE.**

**Administrator/Principle** should:

Ascertain, as best as possible or practicable, the validity of the report. The School can utilise the WA Police Facebook Page or make contact with local police to determine level of threat and gauge credibility of the report. As soon as practicable call the Police (131 444) to lodge a formal report.

The school would then contact the parents if they have not already been informed. The Chair of the Board should also be advised of the situation.

The Personal Assistant to the Executive Director of Association of Independent Schools – WA (AISWA) also needs to be notified by email so that other Administrators/Principals of other AISWA schools in the area, the Catholic Education Office and the regional office of the Department of Education can be informed. Obtain an Incident Report number or CAD Reference Number, as this is required when notifying AISWA. The Administrator/Principle should seek guidance from the attending police officers if they believe that the incident should be reported to other schools.

AISWA will assist with any calls to the Association by the Media or will, if requested, provide assistance to the School.

The School Psychologist may be contacted to assist the child/children and families concerned.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH MEDIA**

Media attention can severely inhibit Police investigations and under no circumstances should any staff discuss the matter with any form of media. It should be encouraged that the Parents and child/children concerned also refrain from any discussions with the media.

The media should be referred to the Administrator/Principal for him/her to manage. If need be the Executive Director for AISWA can be contacted through the PA on 9441 1611 for assistance in dealing with the media.

### **CONTACTING PARENTS**

The School may need to advise the School Community of the incident by letter (sample letter attached to this policy). The decision to send a letter, following an attempted abduction event, is considered to be good practice by WAPOL (Western Australian Police) as it keeps parents and caregivers informed. However it is recommended that the Administrator/Principal liaise with the investigating Police before sending a letter to the school community as this may assist in assessing the risk to others and the advice to be given to parents. Whilst the Police want parents and students to be vigilant, they do not want a letter to cause unnecessary alarm. The Administrator/Principal may not wish to send a letter home if recent events have been such that the letter would serve no real benefit and perhaps cause unnecessary fear in the school community.

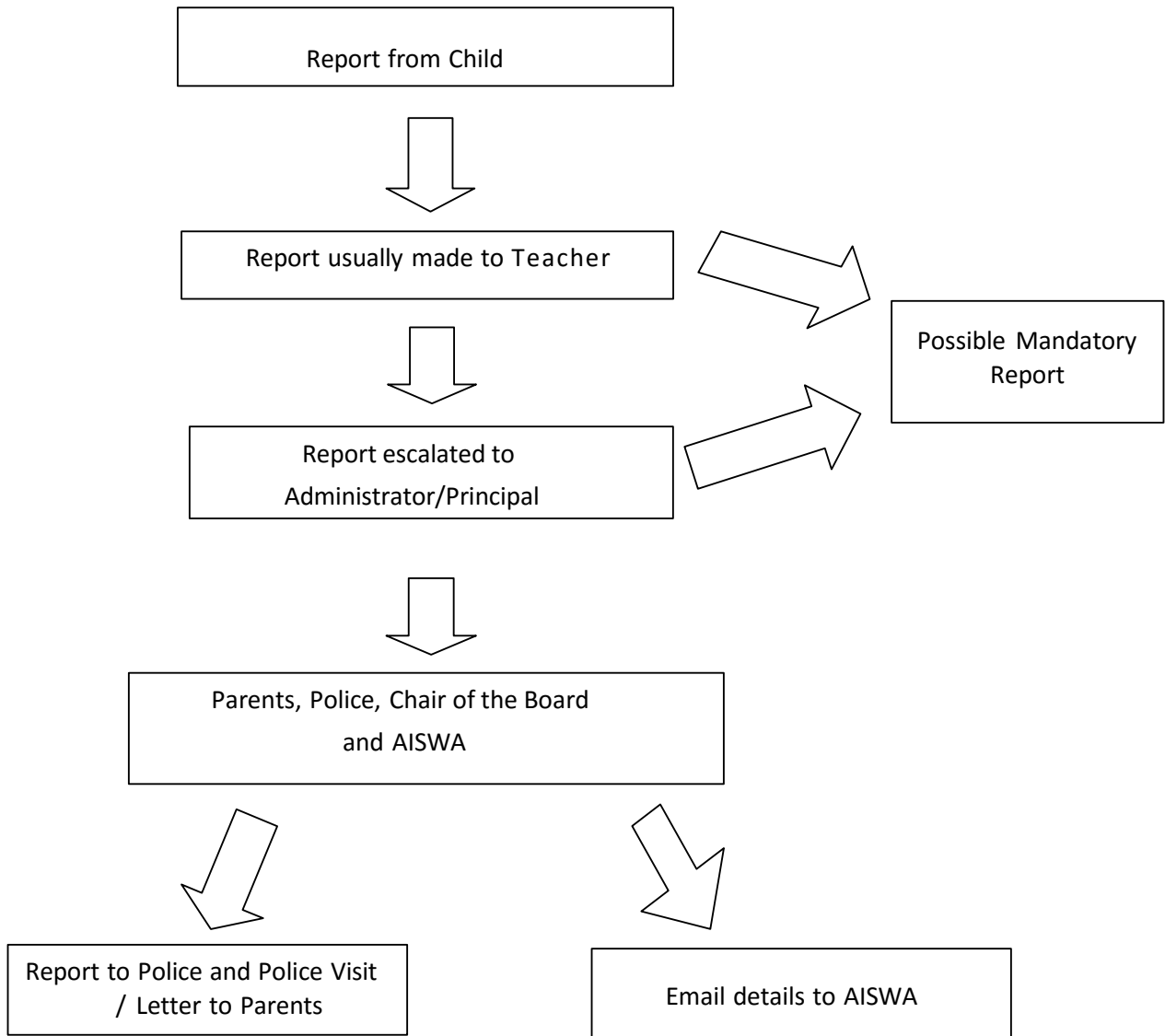
**NOTE THAT WHEN GIVING DETAILS OF AN EVENT TO PARENTS IN A LETTER THAT VEHICLE REGISTRATION DETAILS MUST NOT BE PASSED ON. THESE DETAILS SHOULD ONLY BE GIVEN TO POLICE.**

### **RECORD KEEPING**

Along with the notes taken by the Teacher/s and the Administrator/Principal, it is essential that schools record the name/s, contact number and incident report number given when the police attend.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT IN THE EVENT OF A SUCCESSFUL ABDUCTION, UNLESS A CHILD IS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM SCHOOL, THE POLICE WILL NOT ADVISE THE SCHOOL UNTIL PARENTS AND ALL OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITIES AND AGENCIES HAVE BEEN CONTACTED.**

**FLOW CHART**  
**Process to be followed in**  
**Child Abduction Response Plan**





## REFERENCES

AISWA Child Abduction Response Policy and Procedure Guidelines

Available: <https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/index.cfm?view=member&partof=114&fid=136>

Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984 and Regulations 1996

Available: <http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation>

## APPENDIX 1 – Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

The safety and security of all students at Child Side School is of the utmost importance to me and therefore I endeavour to keep parents informed of anything that may impact on your child's safety.

*Key phrases re the incident should be placed here:*

'Today, whilst walking to school a student has reported to have been followed spoken to ...

Alleged to have occurred (use terms such as alleged rather than definitive terms). Police are investigating this report. (this last line is crucial)

In light of this incident, we urge all students to take care when travelling to and from school, and to report anything suspicious to parents, the School and the Police – call 131 444 to report an incident to Police (only use 000 in an emergency) or 1800 333 000 to reach Crime Stoppers.

Here are some simple behaviours to help your child stay safe. Please discuss these with your child and ask your child to:

- Always travel in company
- Walk on the right hand side of the road so that he or she always faces oncoming traffic
- Wherever possible, leave space between themselves and the roadway
- Stay in areas that are well lit
- Stay in view – avoid going into areas that are hidden from view (such as parkland bush) and plan to avoid such locations
- Be alert-earphones and headphones can reduce their awareness considerably
- If a passing vehicle stops nearby, never get too close
- Do not hesitate to run from a situation in which they feel at risk

Provide the same advice to younger siblings and watch out for them wherever possible. Always report suspicious behaviours to parents, the School and the Police, noting number plates of vehicles and or clothing and distinguishing features of individuals.

If you have any queries regarding this matter, do not hesitate to contact the School or discuss your concerns with your child's Teacher.

Yours faithfully