

SILVER TREE STEINER SCHOOL



Child Abduction Policy and Procedure

2018

This procedure is applicable to: Teachers, Parents and Students

AUTHORISED BY:	Head of School
VERSION:	Version 4
DATE:	May 2018
REVIEW:	May 2020

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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 Head of School 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)

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

There are certain legal responsibilities involved in attendance at the School. A student may not leave the grounds for any purpose during the day without special leave from the Head of School 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
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, suspicious activity, 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:

The Teacher who received the report should immediately inform the Head of School, passing on all information reported by the child/children. The information would include what happened and descriptions of any persons involved. Please refer to Appendix B – ‘Eyes on the Street Incident Report’. 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.**

Head of School 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 or 000 if it is an emergency) to lodge a formal report. When an incident is reported to the Police, please ensure that an Incident Report Number or CAD Reference Number is given and noted. This will ensure that any police staff can locate the incident details.

Principals should also ask the attending police officers if they believe that the incident should be reported to other schools.

The school would then contact the parents if they have not already been informed.

The Chair of the School Board should also be advised of the situation. If the School deems this to be a 'critical incident' then the Department of Education Services (DES) must also be informed as per the Registration Standards 2016.

The Personal Assistant to the Executive Director of Association of Independent Schools – WA (AISWA), Niki Preston, also needs to be notified by email npreston@ais.wa.edu.au (cc to ndavidson@ais.wa.edu.au).so that other Head of Schools/Principals of other AISWA schools in the area, the Catholic Education Office and the regional office of the Department of Education can be informed.

The Head of School 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 Head of School for him/her to manage. If need be the Executive Director for AISWA can be contacted through the PA on 9441 1611 or npreston@ais.wa.edu.au for assistance in dealing with the media.

CONTACTING PARENTS

The School may need to advise the School Community of the incident by letter (see Appendix C: Sample Letter). The police have stressed that Heads of School ensure that they only use known facts. For example, a child reporting that they were approached by a stranger does not necessarily mean there was an attempted abduction. This interpretation may be incorrect and cause unnecessary alarm and fear amongst the community.

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 Head of School 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 Head of School 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.

Finally, when a parent receives a letter about the possibility of a person approaching children, it can cause great anxiety and ongoing fear- particularly if a report is unsubstantiated. Principals may wish to follow up with the relevant police officer to find out the outcome of the investigation and then it may be appropriate to send parents a brief letter to provide closure about the matter. Please refer to Appendix D.

RECORD KEEPING

Along with the notes taken by the Teacher/s and the Head of School, it is essential that schools record the name/s, contact number and incident report number OR CAD Reference 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.

EYES ON THE STREET

Appendix B – ‘Eyes on the Street Incident Report’ is a document that AISWA would encourage Schools to use. The document is self-explanatory as it allows the witnesses to an event to record their recollection of both the event and the person or persons involved. The Principal would be responsible for sending the Incident Report/s to Crime Stoppers. The Principal, or delegate, should still contact the Police if the School believes that the matter requires Police intervention. Please note that training in the use of the ‘Eyes on the Street Incident Report’ is required and schools may contact WAPOL as per the contact details below.

CONTACTS

Queries regarding these guidelines may be directed to:

Nicola Davidson, AISWA Workplace Relations: ndavidson@ais.wa.edu.au / 9441 1679.

Senior Sergeant Mark Fleskens,
State Coordinator Community Engagement Division: 9222 1063.

Sergeant Garry Corker, Police Education Liaison Officer, Community Engagement Division:
garry.corker@police.wa.gov.au or Garry.Corker@education.wa.edu.au / 9264 4531.

REFERENCES

AISWA Child Abduction Response Policy and Procedure Guidelines

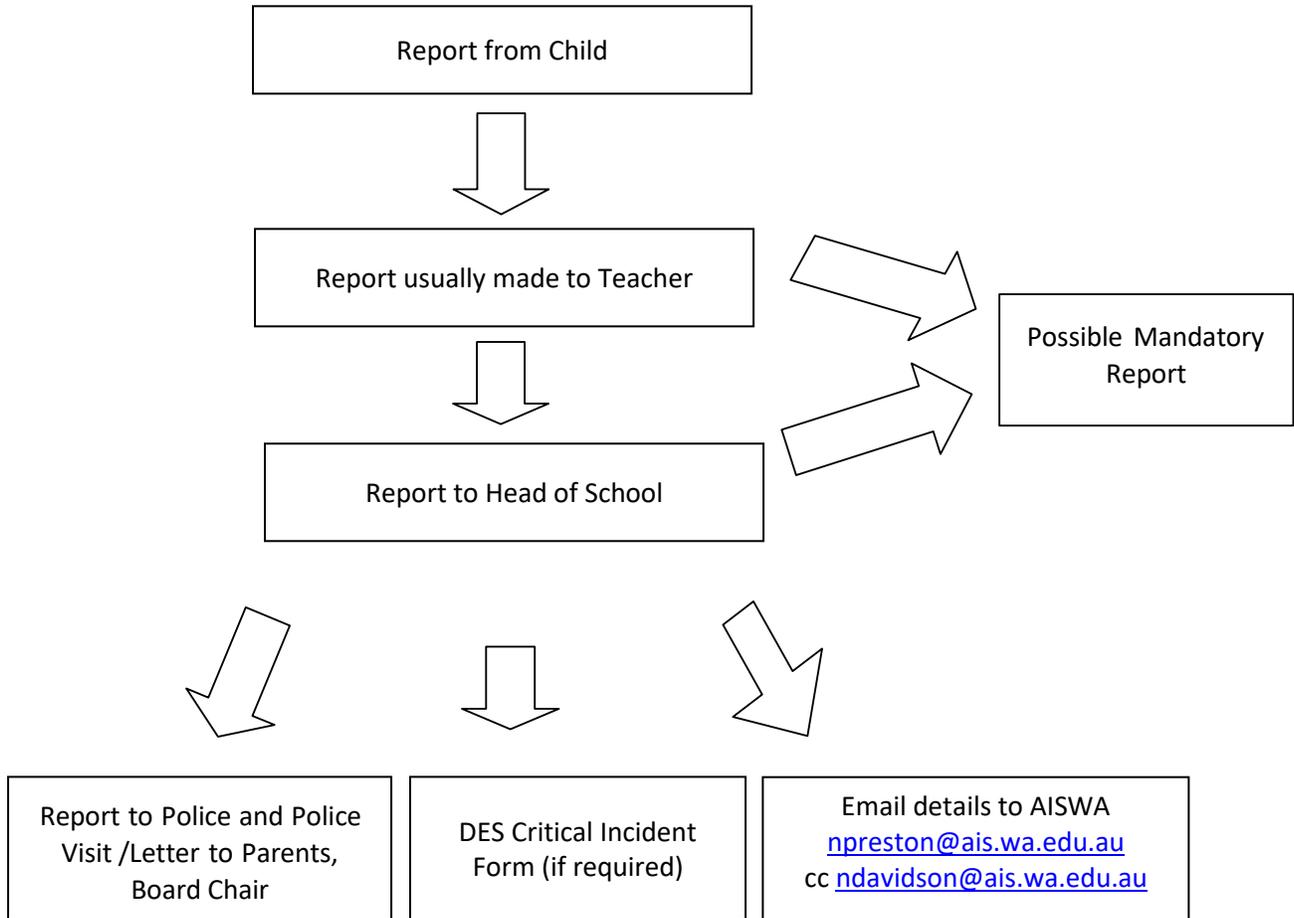
Available: <https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/index.cfm?view=member&partof=114&fID=136>

Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984 and Regulations 1996

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

APPENDIX A: Flow Chart

FLOW CHART
Process to be followed in
Child Abduction Response Plan



APPENDIX C: Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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

Head of School

APPENDIX D: Sample Letter Two

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to give you further information following the recent letter/report of a student/s being approached by a person/vehicle near our school on <date> and in <location>.

As you know, we take all reports like this very seriously in the first instance and notify parents and, if necessary, the Police.

In this case, the Police have investigated the report/s and I am happy to say that they have advised me there is no information about this matter that suggests there is an ongoing threat to the children/students in our school.

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,

Head of School

APPENDIX D: Sample Letter Three

(At the commencement of the new school year)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

With the beginning of the school year it is timely to remind students about Stranger Danger to and from school. Students need to let a trusted adult know of any concerns they might have as soon as possible.

Here are some suggestions for parents to talk about with your child for them to feel safe:

- Be alert - headphones and earphones can reduce your awareness considerably
- Stay in view –avoid going into areas that are hidden (such as parkland bush or behind shopping centres)
- If a passing car stops nearby, never get too close
- Run from a situation if you feel at risk
- Wherever possible leave space between you and the roadway
- Report suspicious behaviour to your parents, school and the police.

If you have any queries regarding these suggested Stranger Danger Safety Behaviours, please do not hesitate to contact the School or discuss your concerns with your child's class or form teacher.

Yours faithfully,

Head of School