



Divine Mercy College
326 Yangebup Road Yangebup WA 6164

Reg. Standard	Level of Care
	4.3
Version	1
Written	March 2024
Review Date	2026

CHILD ABDUCTION RESPONSE PLAN

Aim

“Child Abduction is the act of carrying off or detaining a child against his or her will by unlawful force.” (AISWA, 2024)

In recognising the grave implications and psychological trauma that such incidents inflict upon the child, their family, and the community, Divine Mercy College, in partnership with AISWA, the Department of Education (DoE), Catholic Education WA (CEOWA), and the Western Australian Police (WAPOL), is committed to implementing a robust and effective Child Abduction Response Plan. This plan aligns with the initiatives set forth by the Western Australian Police (Sexual Assault Squad) and is designed to outline clear and actionable steps to prevent, respond to, and recover from attempted or successful child abductions. It is crafted with the intent to safeguard our students within or in the vicinity of our school premises, ensuring a safe and secure learning environment.

Our Response Plan is rooted in the principles of vigilance, rapid action, and comprehensive support, ensuring a structured and effective approach to safeguarding our students. It encompasses immediate response protocols, ongoing prevention strategies, and a framework for community and authority collaboration, designed to foster a secure and responsive school environment.

Process

This plan would be initiated by a child reporting an incident to his/ her teacher or parent.

1. **Initial Reporting:** a child who experiences or witnesses an incident, such as attempted abduction, suspicious activity, assault, stalking (with or without a camera), or inappropriate sexual behaviour, is encouraged to report these observations to their teacher or parent immediately.
2. **Immediate School Response:** upon receiving a report from a child, the teacher must immediately inform the Principal of the incident, providing detailed information as reported by the child, including descriptions of any persons involved and the nature of the incident. Reference should be made to Eyes on the Steet – <https://www.crimestopperswa.com.au/report/>. For incidents of a sexual nature, a Mandatory Report may be required. Teachers are advised against communicating with the media or individuals not directly involved with the case. Depending on the nature and immediacy of the threat, a school-wide lockdown may be initiated to ensure the safety of all students and staff on the premises.

3. **Principal's Actions:** The Principal, or their delegate, should contact the police (131 444 for non-emergencies or 000 for emergencies) as soon as practicable to lodge a formal report, ensuring to obtain and record an Incident Report Number or CAD Reference Number for future reference. In cases where parents have not been previously informed, the school will contact the child's parents. The Chair of the School Board and, if deemed a 'Reportable Incident', the Department of Education will also be notified in line with Registration Standards. The Principal should inquire with attending police officers whether the incident warrants notification to other schools.
4. **Support and Follow-up:**
 - a. **Contacting Parents:** Before dispatching a letter to the community, the Principals will consult with the police officers involved in the case. This consultation can help in assessing the broader risk and shaping the advice provided to parents. If the Principal decides to contact parents, a formal letter will be sent, via post and email, informing them of the incident, the measures taken, and the steps forward (See Appendix A for a letter sample). Principals are tasked with ensuring the communication's content is factual and refrains from speculative language that might amplify fear or misunderstanding within the school community. For instance, an isolated report of a stranger's approach should not be hastily classified as an attempted abduction without thorough investigation and confirmation of the facts.
 - b. **Support Services:** The school may engage the school psychologist for advice on supporting the affected child(ren) and their families.
 - c. **Community Notification:** The Principal may decide to inform the school community about the incident through a letter, ensuring confidentiality and sensitivity.
 - d. **Record Keeping:** Maintain detailed records of the incident, responses, and communications related to the abduction or attempted abduction. E.g. the name/s, contact number and Incident Report Number or CAD Reference Number given when the Police attend.
5. **Police Collaboration:** the School is expected to assist the police with the investigation by:
 - a. **Confirming the attempted abduction through independent corroboration** (witnesses, consistent injuries, video surveillance).
 - b. **Arranging for the child to visit the Child Assessment and Interview Unit for a formal interview process as soon as practicable.**
 - c. **Facilitating the child's visit to the Forensic Imaging Unit for the creation of a composite image of the offender.**
 - d. **Supporting the verification of the child's account through retelling; investigating discrepancies to discern the accuracy of the report.**
 - e. **Coordinating with the Police Media Unit, which will work with the Police Education Liaison Officer and possibly the Education Department Media, especially if the incident involves a school-aged child or travel to and from school.**
 - f. **Informing nearby schools as appropriate, following police recommendations.**

Proactive Communication

To reinforce our commitment to student safety and to keep safety protocols at the forefront of our community's mind, a letter will be sent to all parents at the beginning of each semester (See Appendix B). The purpose of the letter is to remind students and parents of

the importance of being cautious and aware of their surroundings to and from school, and to provide updated advice and strategies for dealing with situations involving strangers.

Policies Linked

- Child Protection
- Crisis Management
- Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan
- OH&S and Risk Management

APPENDIX A: Sample Letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to inform parents and carers about a reported incident in the nearby community.

Edit the following paragraph as needed:

A student from our school / OR another local school (please do not name the school) reported that on the way to school on [day date] / OR on the way home from school on [day date] a male person / female person was acting suspiciously in the area of [street name/area]. The matter has been reported to police.

[Principals to note – do not include specific details of the incident such as number plates and identifying details of individuals unless you are specifically asked to do so by WA Police. Otherwise, police investigations and cases may be compromised.]

In light of this reported incident, I urge all children to take care when going to and from school, and to report anything suspicious to their parents, the school and the police.

You can call **13 14 44** to report an incident to WA Police (only use 000 in an emergency) or **1800 333 000** to reach Crime Stoppers.

Here are some suggestions to help your children stay safe:

- Always travel in a group
- Walk on the right-hand side of the road to face oncoming traffic.
- Wherever possible, leave space between you and the roadway
- Stay in areas that are well lit
- Stay in view – avoid going into areas that are hidden (such as parkland bush or behind shopping centres).
- Be alert – earphones and headphones can reduce your awareness considerably
- If you have a mobile phone, have it turned on and ready to dial an emergency number
- If a passing car stops nearby, never get too close
- Run from a situation if you feel at risk
- Give this advice to your brothers and sisters, especially if they are younger
- Report suspicious behaviour to your parents, school and the police
- If you can get it safely, try to photograph or remember the number plate of the car
- Report numbers plates of cars and the clothing or distinguishing features of individuals to police.

To get the latest community safety information from police, visit WA Police on Facebook www.facebook.com/WA.Police or online at www.police.wa.gov.au.

If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me at school.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE LETTER (At the beginning of each Semester)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

With the beginning of the school Semester 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,

Principal