



Association of
Independent Schools
of South Australia

Children and young people's sexual behaviour in Schools and Early Learning Centres:

A guide for parents and carers

Children and young people's safety and wellbeing in Schools and Early Learning Centres

Educators and support staff are responsible for keeping children and young people safe to support their development.

They are required to follow legal procedures when responding to an incident or concerning behaviour and this may involve parents and carers, professionals and authorities such as police and child protection authorities.

Children and young people's sexual behaviour

Children and young people may show different sexual behaviours at different ages and stages of their development.

Developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour

Most children and young people show developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour, which is typical and expected for their age and/or developmental stage.

The developmental abilities of children and young people with a disability and additional needs might be different from other children and young people the same age.

Concerning sexual behaviour

Some children and young people show concerning sexual behaviour. This means behaviour that is not typical for their age and/or developmental stage.

Harmful sexual behaviour

A very small number of children and young people display harmful sexual behaviour which is developmentally inappropriate for their age and/or developmental stage. This type of behaviour is likely to be harmful to the child themselves and may be abusive to another child, young person or adult.

Concerning or harmful sexual behaviour might be against the law or classed as sexual abuse.

Responding to sexual behaviour in Schools and Early Learning Centres

Educators need to make sure that children and young people understand behaviour expectations and develop the right skills for respectful relationships.

Children and young people need to learn and understand that some behaviour is not okay.

When responding to sexual behaviour in children and young people, educators and support staff should remind children and young people about privacy and behaviour expectations.

Reminders about behaviour expectations help most children and young people learn what is okay and not okay. If your child's School or Early Learning Centre is concerned about your child's sexual behaviour they will talk to you about their concerns.

If your child is displaying concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, a different response is required.

Behaviour support plan

If your child *has shown* concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, the School or Early Learning Centre may suggest a Behaviour Support Plan. The plan helps to make sure everyone is safe and your child is supported to have their needs met.

Support and safety plan

If your child *has been affected* by the concerning or harmful sexual behaviour of another child or young person, the School or Early Learning Centre may suggest a Support and Safety Plan. The plan helps to make sure the right supports are in place for your child to be and feel safe.

Child protection and police

Sometimes specialist services need to be told about children and young people's sexual behaviour so they can offer expert guidance.

Reporting to the Child Abuse Report Line

In some circumstances Schools and Early Learning Centres are legally required to report to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL).

The requirement to report is when they *suspect sexual abuse* (even when it is by another child or young person), or if they believe a child or young person is at *risk of harm*.

The Department for Child Protection might contact you about concerns or involve another service that can help.

Reporting to police

Schools and Early Learning Centres must report the following to police:

- *all alleged or suspected rape*, regardless of the age of the child or young person who has allegedly raped another child or young person
- all other alleged or suspected sexual offences where the child or young person alleged to have committed the offence is *10 years of age or older*.

When parents and carers are told about sexual behaviour

If your child was directly involved in, or saw concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, you will be told as soon as possible by the School or Early Learning Centre.

If your child was *not directly involved in or did not see any* concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, you will usually not be told about it.

However, sometimes there are good reasons for all parents, or groups of parents, to be told. This will usually be by letter and you will be invited to contact a staff member if you have concerns for your child.

Privacy and confidentiality

You have the right to know what the School or Early Learning Centre is doing to support your child and keep them safe. You do not have the right to any information about other children and young people.

Suspension and exclusion

Sometimes Schools and Early Learning Centres may need to suspend or exclude a child or young person – this is not a punishment. This allows for plans to be put in place to keep everyone safe.

When police are investigating a potential criminal offence, sometimes a School or Early Learning Centre cannot suspend or exclude the young person who has allegedly committed the offence. This is because they have the right to know why they are being suspended or excluded and respond, which would interfere with the police investigation.

In this instance, the School or Early Learning Centre will talk to you about the necessary measures to be put in place to keep your child or young person safe. If you are worried for your child's safety, talk to the School or Early Learning Centre about your concerns.

Helping your child

If your child has shown concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, it may be upsetting to hear about what your child has done – you may feel angry, or not believe it. You may be worried about where they learnt the behaviour.

If your child has been upset or hurt by another child's concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, you may feel angry and be concerned for their safety.

Any of these situations can be very difficult for all children and families involved.

The best way to help your child is to *stay calm* and talk with staff and/or the include leader at your child's School or Early Learning Centre. There are also external services available to support your child. These include:

[Kids helpline](#) - 1800 55 1800

[Headspace](#) - 1800 650 890

[Lifeline](#) - 13 11 14

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(CAMHS\)](#) - 1300 222 647

[Adolescent Sexual Assault Prevention Program \(ASAPP\)](#) - 7117 3800

[The Australian Parenting Website](#) - raisingchildren.net.au

[Relationships Australia](#) child sexual abuse counselling - 1800 408 408

[1800Respect](#) national sexual assault and domestic violence counselling service - 1800 737 732

[SHINE SA](#) sexual health and relationship wellbeing services - 8300 5300

[Uniting Communities](#) sexual abuse or sexual assault counselling - 1800 615 677

[Yarrow Place](#) rape and sexual assault service - 1800 817 421

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