

GOVERNANCE & CHILD SAFETY

Complaints Handling Policy

Our school welcomes concerns and complaints. We listen to children, families and community members, act promptly, protect children from harm and use feedback to improve.

Document control

School	The School of Chinese Education
Policy owner	Principal / Complaints Officer, with oversight by the Management Committee
Approved by	Jun Ye (Principal)
Approval date / version	[12-6-2026] / Version 1.1
Next review	At least annually for contacts and regulatory scope; full review within 2 years, and earlier after an incident or legal/standards change
Public access	School website, enrolment information, student and staff induction, and on request
Compliance basis	National Principle 6; Victorian Child Safe Standard 7; current CLS accreditation and funding requirements

1. Purpose

This policy explains how The School of Chinese Education receives, assesses, resolves, records and reviews complaints. It is designed to implement National Principle for Child Safe Organisations 6 and Victorian Child Safe Standard 7 by making complaint pathways child-focused, culturally safe, accessible, prompt and understood by children, families, staff and volunteers.

It should be read with the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, Responding and Reporting Child Safety Concerns Procedure, Privacy Policy and staff/volunteer disciplinary procedures.

1.1 Frameworks used by this policy

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are the nationally endorsed framework. They guide good practice but do not replace Victorian law. This policy directly addresses National Principle 6 (child-focused complaints) and also supports Principles 2, 3, 4, 9 and 10 through child participation, family and community involvement, respect for diversity, review and documented procedures.

In Victoria, the 11 Child Safe Standards are compulsory for organisations that provide services or facilities for children. This policy directly addresses Standard 7 and supports Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 11. The school must maintain the full child-safety policy suite; this complaints policy alone does not demonstrate compliance with all 11 Standards.

1.2 Community language school regulatory position

A Department-accredited community language school is a community-based, not-for-profit supplementary language provider. Department accreditation enables access to the Community Language Schools Funding Program; it does not by itself register the organisation as a school or education provider under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

The Social Services Regulator is now the default Victorian Child Safe Standards regulator for organisations without a sector-specific regulator. A community language school registered to provide VCE language studies as a Single Study Language Provider is regulated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority for those senior-secondary services. A provider may have more than one regulator because of its legal structure or other activities. The committee must confirm and record its regulator(s) annually and after any service change.

Ministerial Order 1359 applies to registered schools and school boarding premises. It should not be presented as the direct legal basis for an ordinary community language school unless the organisation is separately within that regime. A community language school operating on a mainstream school site must still comply with its licence, host-site safety arrangements and the Victorian Child Safe Standards that apply to its own organisation.

2. Scope - who may complain and what is covered

This policy applies to complaints or concerns raised by:

- students and other children or young people, including children who communicate non-verbally or need support
- parents, carers, family members and authorised advocates
- staff, teachers, volunteers, contractors and committee members
- visitors, hirers, neighbours, partner organisations and other members of the public
- a person making a complaint for themselves, on behalf of someone else, anonymously or using a support person.

A complaint may concern teaching, communication, fees, access, decisions, behaviour, discrimination, bullying, privacy, facilities, a breach of school policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct, or any concern that a child is unsafe or has experienced abuse or harm.

A complaint does not need to be in writing, use the word 'complaint', or contain proof before the school responds. A child's disclosure or change in behaviour may also raise a concern requiring action.

3. Commitments and guiding principles

- **Child safety first.** The immediate safety, wellbeing and best interests of children take priority.
- **Listen and take seriously.** Children and adults will be heard respectfully, have their experience acknowledged and their account taken seriously, and be thanked for speaking up.
- **Accessible and culturally safe.** Complaints may be made in English or Chinese, verbally or in writing, with an interpreter, advocate or trusted support person. The school will respond respectfully to Aboriginal identity, culture and diverse backgrounds, abilities, family structures, genders and beliefs.
- **No retaliation.** No person will be disadvantaged, threatened or treated unfairly for raising a genuine concern or helping with a complaint.
- **Prompt and thorough.** The school will assess risk immediately, communicate expected timeframes, investigate appropriately and provide updates.
- **Fairness and privacy.** The school will act impartially, give people a reasonable opportunity to respond, manage conflicts of interest and share information only as needed or required by law.
- **Choice and participation.** Children will be involved in decisions affecting them as far as safe and appropriate, and told what will happen next in language they understand.
- **Continuous improvement.** Complaint information will be reviewed for patterns, risks and opportunities to improve practice.

4. Important definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction, concern or allegation about an action, decision, omission, service, person or conduct connected with the school.
Child safety complaint	Any complaint, concern, disclosure or allegation that a child has been harmed, abused, groomed, neglected, placed at risk, or affected by a breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
Complainant	The person raising the complaint, including a child, parent/carer, staff member, volunteer or external party.
Respondent	A person whose behaviour or decision is the subject of a complaint.
Support person	A trusted person chosen to provide emotional, communication or practical support. They do not determine the outcome.
External party	A visitor, contractor, service provider, hirer, neighbour, former family or member of the public who is not currently enrolled or engaged by the school.

5. How to raise a complaint

5.1 Children and students

A child may tell any adult they trust, including a teacher, the Principal, the Child Safety Officer, a parent/carer or another staff member. They may speak, write, draw, email, use the school's secure suggestion method or ask someone else to help. They may use English, Chinese or another language with assistance.

The child does not have to confront the person involved, complete a form or follow a hierarchy before being heard. If a child speaks to the 'wrong' person, that adult must help the child reach the right person and must act on any safety concern.

5.2 Parents, carers and advocates

Parents and carers may raise routine classroom matters with the teacher. They may contact the Principal or Complaints Officer directly for serious, sensitive, unresolved or child safety matters. A complaint about the Principal should be directed to the Committee Chair/President. A complainant does not need to approach the subject of the complaint directly.

5.3 Staff, volunteers and external parties

Staff and volunteers must promptly report child safety concerns, Code of Conduct breaches and other serious matters through the school's reporting procedure. External parties may contact the Principal/Complaints Officer using the public contact details below. Anonymous complaints will be assessed on the information available.

Principal	Jun Ye 0407188886
Child Safety Officer	Chang Zhou 0430479321
Committee Chair/President	Hong Zhu 0403154368
Postal / in-person address	6 Watts St, Boxhill VIC 3128

6. Complaint handling process

Step 1 - Receive and listen

Welcome the concern, listen without blame or interrogation, thank the person, clarify immediate needs and arrange communication or language support.

Step 2 - Protect and assess risk

Check whether anyone is in immediate danger. Separate people or change supervision where needed. Child safety concerns move immediately to the reporting pathway in section 7.

Step 3 - Record and acknowledge

Create a secure record using the school's existing complaint form or register. Confirm receipt and give the complainant a contact person, next steps and expected timeframe.

Step 4 - Triage and assign

Classify the matter, identify mandatory or external reporting, conflicts of interest and appropriate decision-maker. A complaint about the Principal goes to the Committee Chair; a complaint about the Chair goes to another unconflicted committee office-holder or external adviser.

Step 5 - Respond or investigate

Resolve straightforward matters early where appropriate. For disputed or serious matters, gather relevant information fairly. Do not ask a child to repeat their account unnecessarily or conduct an investigation that should be undertaken by Police, Child Protection or another authority.

Step 6 - Decide and communicate

Explain the outcome, reasons and actions in an age-appropriate and accessible way, while protecting privacy and employment information. Tell the complainant what review or external options are available.

Step 7 - Close, support, record and improve

Check the child's ongoing safety, provide support, complete required actions, securely close the record and consider whether policies, training, supervision or risk controls need improvement.

School service standards

Immediate	Respond to urgent safety risks and make required external reports without waiting for the internal process.
Within 2 business days	Acknowledge the complaint unless it was resolved immediately and acknowledgement is unnecessary.
Within 10 business days	Provide an update if the matter remains open.
Target: within 20 business days	Complete the matter where reasonably practicable; explain any delay, revised timeframe and interim safeguards.

These are the school's service standards, not limits on urgent reporting duties. Complex complaints may take longer, but the school will keep the complainant appropriately informed.

7. Child safety complaints, disclosures and allegations

A child safety concern must never be delayed while someone completes a form, tries informal resolution or exhausts the school's internal complaint steps.

Any staff member or volunteer who receives a child safety complaint or disclosure must:

- listen calmly, take the child seriously and use open, non-leading prompts only where needed to understand immediate safety
- not promise secrecy; explain that information will be shared only with people who need it to help keep the child or others safe
- take immediate protective action and contact Victoria Police on 000 if there is immediate danger
- record the child's words and relevant observations accurately as soon as possible
- notify the Principal and Child Safety Officer promptly, unless either is implicated; in that case notify the Committee Chair or an external authority directly
- follow the school's Responding and Reporting Child Safety Concerns Procedure and all legal reporting obligations
- continue supporting the child and keep them informed in language they can understand.

Depending on the concern, the school must report to Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, the Social Services Regulator (SSR) under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the school's Child Safe Standards regulator or another authority. Reporting to one body does not necessarily satisfy duties to report to another. Internal action must not interfere with a Police, Child Protection or regulatory investigation.

The Department's current Community Language Schools Accreditation and Funding Guide requires all accredited community language schools to comply with the Reportable Conduct Scheme and identify a Head of Organisation. The Head must notify the SSR within 3 business days after becoming aware of a reportable allegation and provide the required detailed information within 30 calendar days. Suspected criminal conduct must also be reported to Victoria Police, whose investigation takes priority.

Mandatory reporting applies personally to people in designated occupations, including registered teachers, principals, people with VIT permission to teach, registered psychologists, school counsellors and certain other professionals. All adults also have the separate failure-to-disclose obligation concerning a reasonable belief that an adult committed a sexual offence against a child under 16, unless a lawful exception applies. People in authority must take reasonable steps to reduce or remove a known substantial risk of child sexual abuse.

8. Support, participation and safeguards

- Offer a trusted support person, interpreter, communication aid, private meeting space or other reasonable adjustment.
- Ask the child what would help them feel safe; do not make the child responsible for deciding disciplinary or legal action.
- Explain who may need to know, what will happen next and when the child will receive an update.
- Manage contact, supervision, class allocation and online access while risks are assessed.

- Monitor for retaliation, exclusion, bullying or changes in wellbeing after a complaint.
- Provide referral information, including Kids Helpline or other culturally appropriate services, where helpful.

9. Procedural fairness and conflicts of interest

The school will give a respondent enough information to understand and respond to allegations, subject to child safety, legal, privacy and external-investigation requirements. Decision-makers must be impartial and base findings on relevant information using the appropriate standard of proof.

Anyone with an actual, potential or perceived conflict must disclose it and step aside where appropriate. The committee may appoint an independent investigator or adviser for serious, sensitive or conflicted matters.

Conduct that is aggressive, discriminatory or repeatedly unreasonable may be managed with proportionate communication arrangements. This will never be used to silence a child safety concern or avoid assessing new information.

10. Outcomes and remedies

Depending on the complaint, possible outcomes include:

- an explanation, acknowledgement, apology or facilitated discussion where safe and voluntary
- correction of a decision, record, fee, communication or administrative error
- additional student support, reasonable adjustment or change to class arrangements
- training, supervision, performance management, disciplinary action or termination of engagement
- changes to policy, procedure, risk controls, staffing or facilities
- a referral or report to an external authority.

Privacy or employment obligations may prevent the school from disclosing all actions taken against another person. The school will still explain the complaint's status, the decision affecting the complainant and any safety or service improvements it can appropriately share.

11. Review and external escalation

A complainant who is dissatisfied may request an internal review by the Committee Chair/President or another unconflicted reviewer. The request should identify what they believe was missed or unfair and the outcome they seek. The reviewer may affirm, change or return the matter for further assessment.

A person may contact an external body at any time. They do not need the school's permission, and urgent child safety reports must not wait for internal review.

Immediate danger	Victoria Police - 000
Non-urgent police assistance	Victoria Police - 131 444 or a local police station
Child at risk of significant harm	DFFH Child Protection intake for the child's home area; after hours 13 12 78
Accredited community language school complaint	Community Languages Victoria complaints process, usually after attempts to resolve the matter with the school; child-safety reports may go directly to authorities
Reportable conduct	Social Services Regulator — Head of Organisation notification within 3 business days; detailed information within 30 calendar days
Accreditation / program advice	Victorian Department of Education - community.languages@education.vic.gov.au
Independent support for a child	Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800

12. Privacy, records and information sharing

Complaint records will be accurate, factual, dated, securely stored and accessible only to authorised people. Records should include the issue raised, immediate risk assessment, people involved, decisions, reasons, communications, reports to authorities, support provided and completion of actions.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and as authorised or required by applicable privacy, child safety, information-sharing, employment and records laws. The school cannot guarantee complete confidentiality where disclosure is necessary to protect a child, investigate fairly or comply with law.

Complaint information will be retained and disposed of under the school's approved recordkeeping arrangements. Child safety records must not be altered or destroyed because a complaint is withdrawn or not substantiated.

13. Roles and responsibilities

ROLE	CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
Management Committee	Approve and review this policy; oversee serious or conflicted complaints; ensure resources, training and systemic improvements; confirm external reporting governance.
Principal	Receive and triage complaints; manage safety and process; communicate with parties; ensure records, reporting and follow-up.
Child Safety Officer	Support children and staff; advise on safety planning and reporting; monitor the child's wellbeing and complaint accessibility.
Staff and volunteers	Listen, act, report and record; maintain boundaries and confidentiality; complete training; never investigate beyond their role.

ROLE	CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
Students, families and community members	Raise concerns as early as they feel able, provide relevant information, treat others respectfully and tell the school if support or adjustments are needed.
Head of Organisation	Ensure Reportable Conduct Scheme notifications, updates and investigations are completed within statutory timeframes; liaise with the SSR and Police.

14. Communication, training and review

- Publish this policy and the child-friendly process, and make printed copies available.
- Explain complaint pathways during student, parent/carer, staff and volunteer induction.
- Provide bilingual or interpreted explanations suitable for the school's Chinese-speaking community and other language needs.
- Consult children, families and staff when designing and reviewing complaint processes.
- Ensure all staff, volunteers and committee members complete regular mandatory Child Safe training through Community Languages Victoria, and retain attendance evidence. Training must cover receiving disclosures, culturally safe and accessible communication, accurate records, immediate risk management and external reporting duties.
- Review complaints, concerns and incidents for trends at least annually without identifying individuals, and track improvement actions.
- Review this policy at least every two years and after a significant child safety incident or relevant change in law, standards or guidance.

15. Community language school implementation evidence

For Department accreditation and ongoing compliance, the committee should be able to produce the following current evidence:

- a Child Safe Policy signed by the Principal, a Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Principal's signed Code declaration
- a named and trained Child Safety Officer for every campus, plus a formally nominated Head of Organisation for the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- regular CLV Child Safe training records for all staff, volunteers and committee members
- current Victorian WWC Check or VIT registration records for all staff, volunteers and committee members, regardless of regular student contact
- a school charter containing the required Complaints Procedure and related safeguarding policies

- committee agendas and minutes showing an ongoing, meaningful commitment to the Child Safe Standards
- English versions, or full English translations, of required accreditation evidence; bilingual public-facing material should also be maintained for the Chinese-speaking community
- secure complaint, incident and reporting records, with actions monitored to completion and themes reviewed at least annually.

16. Related school documents

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Responding and Reporting Child Safety Concerns Procedure / PROTECT Four Critical Actions
- Privacy and Information Sharing Policy
- Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures
- Student Behaviour / Anti-bullying Policy
- Existing Complaint Form and secure Complaints Register
- Child-Friendly Complaints Process - English and Chinese.

Adoption note: Replace all bracketed fields; nominate the Head of Organisation and a trained Child Safety Officer for each campus; verify the school's current Child Safe Standards regulator(s); insert current contacts; consult children and families; and record committee approval before publishing. Recheck regulatory scope whenever the school adds VCE, preschool or another regulated service.

17. Official and authoritative references used for this template

- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations — Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Victorian Child Safe Standard 7 — Commission for Children and Young People](#)
- [Child Safe Standards and current regulators — Victorian Government](#)
- [Community Language Schools Accreditation and Funding Guide 2025 — Department-prepared guide](#)
- [Community language schools and complaints pathway — Victorian Government](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Scheme — Social Services Regulator](#)
- [Mandatory reporting — DFFH Child Protection Manual](#)
- [Obligations to protect children — Victorian Government](#)