

Child Welfare Policy & Procedures

Purpose

Pickering Christian School is committed to providing a safe and welcoming school environment for all children and adults. The school has an important role to play in the prevention of child abuse and is responsible for the safety of everyone within its walls. This policy is to ensure that each child enrolled in Pickering Christian School is protected and safe by ensuring that it is a caring environment for their growth and development and that all employees and volunteers of the school fulfill their legal responsibilities with respect to the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, (the Act)¹.

Policy Description

The school has a custodial role in caring for the child which is delegated to it by the parent and is a primary duty of the school. It is specifically part of the duties of the Principal. Because of the amount of time a child spends here, the school is in a special position to become aware of indicators of abuse or neglect. It also can offer safety and security to the child who is a victim of abuse at home or elsewhere. The protection of the child is paramount. If there is any doubt regarding the reporting of child abuse, the school staff should err on the side of protecting the child.

Child abuse is when a parent, caregiver or another adult physically and/or psychologically mistreats a child causing injury or emotional damage to a child or youth. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse as well as exposure to domestic violence. It can also result from a parent or caregiver's failure to provide adequately for the child's basic needs (neglect).²

Pickering Christian School acknowledges that the state, as represented by police and in Ontario, the Children's Aid Society, has the authority to use all the means at its disposal to protect the child from abuse where necessary and that the school has a legal duty to abide by *the Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, 2017 and the *Regulations*, as well as every statute that may be substituted.

Pickering Christian School acknowledges every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect abuse of a child is required by the *Act* to report this belief as soon as possible to the Children's Aid Society and that this duty cannot be delegated to someone else.

This policy recognizes that the protocols and procedures to support the school, its employees, children and the parents are critical to any accusation of abuse that arises. The Board of Pickering Christian School therefore acknowledges that the school will adhere to the protocols and procedures described in the Pickering Christian School *Child Welfare Policy and Procedures Manual*.

Confidentiality is a core value in all matters related to abuse allegations and reporting. The school will not divulge any information in relation to these cases except to the proper authorities

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14>

² See "Definitions" in the Pickering Christian School *Child Welfare Policy and Procedures Manual* and the [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017](#).

and upon the instruction from the proper authorities. Although the school leader may often feel pressure to address incorrect information or explain decisions, confidentiality must remain an overriding principle.

The Principal of the school is responsible to the Board for the implementation of this policy and for the training of all school personnel outlined in the Pickering Christian School *Child Welfare Policy and Procedures Manual*.

Regulations:

1. On behalf of the Board, the Principal shall ensure that all employees, contract workers and volunteers are aware of definitions of child abuse and alert to the indicators.
2. Based on their roles and responsibilities, all employees and volunteers will receive training on procedures and protocols associated with reporting and investigating suspected child abuse before beginning to work with children and on an annual basis. The acknowledgement form will be signed following each training session and filed in the personnel files. These forms will be retained indefinitely in confidential files.
3. The dignity and privacy of the child must always be respected.
4. Employees and volunteers shall cooperate with Children's Aid workers and the police.
5. Employees to whom a disclosure is made and who report suspected child abuse shall maintain the appropriate documentation. All documentation shall be stored separate from the student's OSR in a secure location. Documentation shall be kept indefinitely.

Pickering Christian School **Child Welfare Procedures**

General Reporting Protocol for Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse/Neglect

Duty to Report

1. Under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*³, every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is in need of protection is obligated to report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based with the Children's Aid Society (CAS).
2. **Duty cannot be delegated.** The person suspecting the abuse is responsible for reporting to CAS and cannot rely on someone else such as the Principal to make the report. However, this person may ask to have a support person present when making the report.
3. **The duty to report is an ongoing obligation.** Even if a report regarding the abuse of a child has already been made, if there are additional grounds to support that the child may be in need of protection, this must also be reported to CAS.
4. **Failure to Report.** If an employee fails to report suspicions or knowledge of child abuse or neglect, they are liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$5000.
5. **Liability.** The Act protects employees who report suspicions of abuse from liability when the suspicions are reasonable and not made maliciously. The duty to make a report "overrides the provisions of any other provincial statute—that is, those provisions that would otherwise prohibit the professional or official from disclosing confidential or privileged information. In other words, a teacher or school Principal must report that he or she suspects that a child is or may be in need of protection even if he or she believes that the information to be used to support the report is supposed to be confidential or privileged."⁴
6. When an employee suspects that a child is a victim of abuse by an adult, or another child, including a child that attends the school, that employee shall inform the Principal or designate regarding the suspicion and the circumstances; however this should not unduly delay the report to the CAS (The Principal/designate should keep detailed notes at all stages of the process regarding their involvement).
 - a. **Where Reasonable Grounds Exist.** If after consultation, there are reasonable grounds to suspect abuse, the Children's Aid Society shall be contacted by the staff member who suspected the abuse or to whom it was reported.
 - b. **When Reasonable Grounds are Not Clear.** When school personnel are unclear about "reasonable grounds," that person shall discuss the circumstances of the suspected abuse with a CAS intake worker without using the name of the child. If after consultation, the intake worker advises that the situation must be reported, the staff member shall share all relevant information with the intake worker in accordance with the requirements of the Act.
 - c. **When the Student is Sixteen or Seventeen Years of Age.** If abuse is suspected in a child who is 16 or 17 years of age, the suspected abuse shall be reported to CAS. CAS is responsible to assess the reported information and will determine this child or any other child under the age of 16 in the home is in need of protection. The reporter may be directed by CAS to also call police.

In all cases, keep a record of the call to CAS using the *Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form*.

³ <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14>

⁴ [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, s 125 \(10\)](#)

Child Welfare Policy / Updated July 24, 2024

Investigations

1. **The role of the Principal and employee** is not to prove a child has been abused but to report it to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) when they have "reasonable grounds to suspect" that a child has been abused and is in need of protection. CAS and/or the police shall determine the appropriate course of action to follow. No employee/volunteer shall attempt to address the situation on their own.
2. **Questioning of the Student:** The school personnel should not conduct an investigation regarding the suspicion or disclosure and should question the student only to clarify the nature of the complaint.

Making the Report

1. **Report as soon as possible.** The report to the CAS shall be made **as soon as possible** in order to give the CAS time to interview the child, if necessary. If the CAS requests it, the Principal shall detain and supervise the child at school for purposes of an interview.
2. Before making a report to CAS, it is necessary to prepare the information about the student and the details about the reason for the referral. The CAS will require this information. (See "**WHEN CALLING CAS Form**" p. 15)
3. Complete the **Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form** p.9 and **Documentation Record Form** p.13.
4. **Related Issues**
 - a. Since the safety and protection of the child is the utmost concern, be sure to inform the CAS worker about any of the child's family circumstances (including siblings) which may help in the investigation.
 - b. It will also be helpful for the school to have answers to the following:
 - i. The name and contact information of the CAS workers spoken to.
 - ii. How and when the parents will be notified.
 - iii. If the child will be interviewed.
 - iv. If the interview will be at the school or at home.
 - v. If the child may go home if the interview has not yet taken place?
 - vi. What information should be shared with the child and parents if the interview has not taken place.
 - c. The Children's Aid Society in our area is the Durham Children's Aid Society.
5. **Make a Record of the Report of Suspected Child Abuse.** All observations and any actions that have been taken are to be factually documented and stored by the school and/or staff member in a confidential location. The teacher and the Principal shall review the outcome of the reporting to the CAS and fill in the form **Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form** (p. 9) immediately. The Principal shall be available for support to the staff member and to assist in any decision making that may have to occur. If the CAS worker indicates that there are not reasonable grounds or the suspicions and/or disclosure to warrant an investigation, complete the form and indicate the worker's response on the form. The person making the report should make detailed notes of the disclosure/suspicion and the report to CAS.

Supporting the Child

1. **Confidentiality.** Any suspicion of a child in need of protection must be kept confidential by restricting the number of people who are made aware, and by all parties maintaining strict silence. Respect the child by not identifying them to other staff or students.
2. Depending upon the child's age, the reporting staff member may let the student know of the requirement to report.

3. **Provide Access to the Child by the CAS worker.** The place of interview should be discussed with the Children's Aid Society intake worker at the time of the reporting. CAS or the police may interview the child, and possibly other children in the family, at school. The Principal shall permit a CAS worker to have access to the child at school, and to the child's siblings, if requested. The Principal shall ensure that the proper identification has been produced by the child protection worker or police officer prior to an interview.
4. If the interview is to take place at the school, a trusted person should be appointed by the staff member or Principal to stay with the student until an intake worker from CAS arrives and is ready to begin the interview.
5. **Presence of School Staff at Interview.** Although the CAS intake worker will usually ask to interview the child alone, they may determine who else should be present for the interview of the child. If the child requests a support person, they should be an adult that the child has chosen.

Notification of Parents

Do Not Contact the Parent. It is the responsibility of the CAS to notify the parents when child abuse is suspected. The person reporting shall not notify the parents nor obtain their consent. The decision as to when and how to report to the parents will be coordinated with the school by the CAS worker. The reporting person should ask the CAS worker when the parents will be notified so that the school may be prepared for the response and provide appropriate support.

Removal of Child from School

CAS has the legislated right to remove a child from the school with or without a warrant.⁵ When this is the case, the Principal or Principal designate shall ensure that there is a written statement from the worker that they "believe the child is in need of protection and is removing the child to a place of safety" (See **Removal of Child from School Premises by CAS Form** p. 15)

The CAS worker or police officer will then take full responsibility for the student.

Protocol When Complaints Involve an External Caregiver

When the suspected offender is an external caregiver, the staff member's responsibilities are to:

1. Inform the Principal or designate of suspicions or disclosure to determine reasonable grounds.
2. Make the report to CAS and/or police. Be prepared to provide the appropriate information to the intake worker (See **"WHEN CALLING CAS Form"** p. 15).
3. Complete the **Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form** (p. 9) and **Documentation Record Form** p. 13.
4. Support the child through the investigation.
5. Maintain confidentiality.

NOTE: Parents/guardians should not be notified. The decision as to when and how to report to the parents will be coordinated with the school by the CAS worker.

Protocol When Complaints Involve a Member of Staff

When the suspected offender is another staff member, the staff member's responsibilities are to:

1. Inform the Principal or designate of suspicions or disclosure to determine reasonable grounds.
2. Make the report to CAS and/or police. Be prepared to provide the appropriate information to the intake worker (See **"WHEN CALLING CAS Form"** p. 15).

⁵ [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, s. 81 \(7\)](#)

3. Complete the **Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form** (p. 9) and **Documentation Record Form** p. 13.
4. Support the child through the investigation.
5. Maintain confidentiality. The implicated staff member **MUST NOT** be contacted regarding the allegations or disclosure unless instructed by CAS. After receiving instructions, contact should only be made by the Principal or designate.

NOTE: Parents/guardians should not be notified. The decision as to when and how to report to the parents will be coordinated with the school by the CAS worker.

Additional Steps for the Principal

1. Subject to authorization by CAS, the Principal/Designate shall notify the suspected offender of the accusation, the action taken, and advise them to contact their professional association and/or to seek personal legal counsel.
2. The Principal, in collaboration with CAS, decide what actions to take in regard to the alleged abuser. (For example, remove staff member from interaction with student, which may include suspension with/without pay).
3. The Principal shall cooperate but remain uninvolved in any investigation.
4. Aside from informing the Board Chair, in confidence, of the allegations and keeping them informed of the situation, the Principal shall also contact the school's legal counsel and insurance provider. The Principal may also wish to contact Edvance.
5. The Principal should consult with the CAS regarding any communications with the school community. This will include decisions on who should be informed (other staff members, parents, and/or students), what information is disclosed, and when and how the information is shared.
6. Under the *Student Protection Act*, where the accused is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and/or the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators, and there has been a **charge or conviction** of abuse or that, in the employer's opinion, indicates that a child may be at risk of harm or injury, the matter shall be reported to the appropriate college **in writing** as soon as possible.

Protocol When Complaints Involve a Volunteer

When the suspected offender is a school volunteer, the staff member's responsibilities are to:

1. Inform the Principal/Designate of suspicions or disclosure to determine reasonable grounds.
2. Make the report to CAS and/or police. Be prepared to provide the appropriate information to the intake worker. (See "**WHEN CALLING CAS Form**" p. 15) **Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form** (p. 9) and **Documentation Record Form** p. 13.
3. Support the child through the investigation.
4. Maintain confidentiality. The implicated volunteer **MUST NOT** be contacted regarding the allegations or disclosure unless instructed by CAS. After receiving instructions, contact should only be made by the Principal/Designate.

NOTE: Parents/guardians should not be notified. The decision as to when and how to report to the parents will be coordinated with the school by the CAS worker.

Additional Steps for the Principal

1. Subject to authorization by CAS, the Principal or designate shall notify the suspected offender of the accusation, the action taken and advise him/her to seek personal legal counsel.

2. The Principal will act in collaboration with CAS on what actions to take in regard to the alleged abuser. (For example, remove volunteer from position in school).
3. Aside from informing the Board Chair, in confidence, of the allegations and keeping him/her informed of the situation, the Principal shall also contact the school's legal counsel and insurance provider. The Principal may also wish to contact Edvance.
4. The Principal should consult with the CAS regarding any communications with the school community. This will include decisions on who should be informed (other staff members, parents, and/or students), what information is disclosed, and when and how the information is shared.

Protocol When Complaints Involve the Principal

When the suspected offender is the Principal, the staff member's responsibilities are to:

1. Inform the Board Chair/Designate of suspicions or disclosure and that a report is being made to CAS.
2. Make the report to CAS and/or police. Be prepared to provide the appropriate information to the intake worker. (See "**WHEN CALLING CAS Form**" p. 15)
3. Complete the **Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form** (p. 9) and **Documentation Record Form** p. 13.
4. Support the child through the investigation.
5. Maintain confidentiality. **Under no circumstances shall the implicated Principal be contacted** regarding the allegations or disclosure until specific instructions are received from CAS. After receiving instructions, contact should only be made by the Board Chair/Designate.

NOTE: Parents/guardians should not be notified. The decision as to when and how to report to the parents will be coordinated with the school by the CAS worker.

Additional Steps for the Board Chair

1. Subject to authorization by CAS, the Board Chair/Designate shall notify the Principal of the accusation, the action taken and advise them to contact their professional association and to seek personal legal counsel.
2. The Board Chair/Designate will act in collaboration with CAS on what actions to take in regard to the alleged abuser. (For example, remove Principal from interaction with student, which may include suspension with/without pay).
3. The Board Chair/Designate informs the executive committee as well as contacting the school's legal counsel and insurance provider. The Board Chair may also wish to contact Edvance.
4. The Board Chair/Designate should consult with the CAS regarding any communications with the school community. This will include decisions on who should be informed (other staff members, parents, and/or students), what information is disclosed, and when and how the information is shared.
5. If the Principal has been suspended without pay, the board will need to appoint an interim Principal to run the school. This person should be kept abreast of the situation.
6. Under the **Student Protection Act**, where the accused is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and/or the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators, and there has been a **charge or conviction** of abuse or that, in the employer's opinion, indicates that a child may be at risk of harm or injury, the matter shall be reported to the appropriate college **in writing** as soon as possible.

Protocols for Student to Student Abuse

When a complaint is received about child to child abuse allegations:

1. The caregiver/staff member receiving the complaint should consult with the Principal or designate.
2. If reasonable grounds are established, the person who received the complaint shall notify the CAS.
3. If further advice is required before officially filing with CAS, an informal call shall be made to the intake worker at the local CAS without using the name of the child.
4. If a complaint is filed, then communication will be dictated by the CAS case worker.
5. If reasonable grounds are not established, the school's discipline protocols will determine next steps.

Additional comments about Student to Student Abuse:

1. Due to the extremely sensitive nature of these allegations, all parties must respect confidentiality. Regardless of the actions of other parties, it is imperative that school staff maintain confidentiality at all times.
2. Record keeping must be thorough and complete. Complete the *Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form* and *Documentation Record Form*.
3. The Principal should seek outside advice, including Edvance, the school's legal counsel, and the insurance provider.
4. The following link to the Public Health Agency of Canada addresses sibling sexual abuse and may provide some helpful insights for the caregiver:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sfv-avf/sources/nfnts/nfnts-visac-sibabus/index-eng.php#lfo>

Status of the Investigation

The Principal may ask the designated authorities to inform the school of the outcome of the investigation once the interviews have been completed. It is at the discretion of the CAS as to how much information they choose to provide.

Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form

To be used when suspected child abuse cases are reported to a Children's Aid Society

CHILD'S NAME

D.O.B.

AGE:

GENDER: ☐ M ☐ F

ADDRESS

PHONE:

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME(S)

CHILD KNOWN TO RESIDE WITH

OTHER CHILDREN IN RESIDENCE

WORK PHONE

CELL PHONE

SCHOOL

1. TYPE OF SUSPECT ABUSE ☐ Physical ☐ Sexual ☐ Emotional ☐ Neglect

OBSERVATIONS LEADING TO SUSPICION OF ABUSE (time and dates if communicated - attach if necessary):

NAME OF ALLEGED ABUSER: (IF KNOWN) _____

2. PERSON REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE

NAME:

POSITION:

DATE:

TIME:

3. REPORT TO PRINCIPAL/DESIGNATE

NAME:

POSITION:

DATE:

TIME:

OTHER STAFF CONSULTED (DIRECT OR SUPPORT)

Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form continued

4. REPORT TO CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

NAME OF AGENCY REPORTED TO: ☐ CAS ☐ CCAS ☐ OTHER

DATE:

TIME:

CASE WORKER RECEIVING CALL:

PHONE:

PERSON REPORTING:

POSITION:

CAS RESPONSE (including information that can be shared and with whom, responsibility of parental contact, timing and location of investigation.)

NEXT STEPS:

5. SIGNATURES

PERSON SUSPECTING ABUSE:

DATE:

PERSON REPORTING ABUSE:

DATE:

PRINCIPAL:

DATE:

NOTES:

**One copy for CAS intake worker.
One copy for the school to be stored in a secure confidential file.
NOT TO BE INCLUDED WITH OSR.**

Discretionary Follow-Up Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form

To be used when suspected child abuse cases are reported to a Children's Aid Society as a follow-up.

CHILD'S NAME:

D.O.B.

AGE:

GENDER: ☐ M ☐ F

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

SCHOOL:

DATE OF INITIAL REPORT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE:

OUTCOME OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY INVESTIGATION

☐ ABUSE CONFIRMED ☐ ABUSE NOT CONFIRMED

☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)

COMMENTS:

CURRENT STATUS AND CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT

SIGNATURE:

PRINCIPAL:

DATE:

**If this form is used, it should be attached to the initial report.
NOT TO BE INCLUDED WITH OSR.**

Documentation Record Form (Sample)

The purpose of the notes is to assist in providing information to CAS and if necessary, to assist in recalling information when testifying in court at a later date.

1. The staff member's documentation record should:
 - a. be brief and to the point and written immediately after an observation is made (do not rely on memory);
 - b. include dates and times;
 - c. be a record of factual observations without judgments;
 - d. include relevant quotes from the child;
 - e. be chronological;
 - f. include name of the CAS worker and/or police officer who was spoken to and any advice given;
 - g. be signed.
2. Any alterations made to the original notes must be dated, with initials, signed and kept with the original notes.

Notes must be kept in a safe and secure confidential location and not in the child's OSR file.

Documentation Record Form

NAME: _____

POSITION: _____

RECORD PERTAINING TO:

CHILD'S NAME: _____

D.O.B. _____ AGE: _____

DATE	TIME	OBSERVATION	QUESTIONS ASKED OF STUDENT

CAS/POLICE CONTACT: _____ DATE: _____

ADVICE GIVEN:

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

PICKERING CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Removal of Child from School Premises by CAS

Form to be signed when a child is taken into care with or without a warrant.

NAME OF SCHOOL:

ADDRESS:

STUDENT'S NAME:

D.O.B.

DATE OF REMOVAL:

1. I, _____ am a person authorized under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*.
2. I have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the child above noted is apparently in need of protection within the meaning of the *Act*.
3. I advise you that I have removed or do hereby remove such a child from your care and premises.
4. I acknowledge that _____, the Principal or School Designate has this ____ day of ___, 20__ delivered to me the custody of the child named herein.

Name of Authorized Person (Printed)

Signature line of Authorized Person

I, _____ (Principal or School Designate) hereby attest that I have verified the credentials of the person named above and he/she, in my presence, has reviewed and signed this form and has carried out the actions therein.

Name of Principal/Designate (Printed)

Signature of Principal/Designate

CC: Children's Aid Society, School, Police

**This form is to be attached to the initial report.
Include a copy of the warrant if applicable
NOT TO BE INCLUDED WITH OSR.**

WHEN CALLING CAS Form

The Children's Aid Societies in our area are:

- Children's Aid Society of Durham
- Catholic Children's Aid Society of Durham

When making a report to CAS, the following information should be provided to the intake worker at CAS. Completing the *Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form* will provide most of this information.

This information must be kept in a secure confidential file, separate from the student's OSR.

1. General details

- ✓ Name and position of person reporting
- ✓ Date and time of the report

2. Information about the student

- ✓ Name
- ✓ Date of Birth
- ✓ Parent/Guardian Name(s)
- ✓ Contact information of Parent/Guardian including address and phone number
- ✓ Names of other known residents in home, especially siblings

3. Information regarding the suspicions or disclosure

- ✓ What did the student say?
- ✓ To whom was it said?
- ✓ If known, where and when did the incident(s) take place?
- ✓ Who is the alleged offender?
- ✓ Describe any physical marks or injuries
- ✓ Describe the student's demeanor

It will also be helpful for the school to have answers to the following:

1. Information about the CAS intake worker

- ✓ Name and position of intake worker
- ✓ Contact information

2. Information about the investigation

- ✓ Will the matter be investigated? If yes:
 - ✓ Will the child be interviewed?
 - ✓ When will the interview take place?
 - ✓ Where will the interview take place?
 - ✓ How and when will the parent(s)/guardian(s) be notified?
 - ✓ When will that contact be made?
 - ✓ What should be done with the child?
- ✓ What if the interview is delayed?
 - ✓ May the child go home?
 - ✓ What information should be shared with the student?
 - ✓ What information can/should be shared with the parent(s)/guardian(s)?

If the CAS intake worker determines that the matter will not be investigated,

- ✓ Record name and contact information of intake worker on the *Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form*
- ✓ Indicate the worker's response on the form.
- ✓ Keep detailed notes of the disclosure/suspicion and the report to CAS
- ✓ This information must be kept in a secure confidential file, separate from the student's OSR.

This form is to be completed by every staff, contract and volunteer member who interacts with students after training has been completed. A copy of the form should be kept indefinitely in the personnel file.

PICKERING CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Acknowledgement of the Child Welfare Policy and Procedures

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Pickering Christian School's *Child Welfare Policy and Procedures Manual* and also received training. I understand my duties regarding the protection of students and will abide by the policy and procedures of Pickering Christian School.

EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER NAME (PLEASE PRINT):

EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

WITNESS NAME (PLEASE PRINT) _____

WITNESS SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Acknowledgement of Annual Training

I have received the annual training regarding Pickering Christian School's Child Welfare Policy and Procedures.

Date	Name Printed	Signature