



montessori school

Child Abduction Policy

1.1 Introduction

Police Definition: *“Child Abduction is the act of carrying off or detaining a child against his or her will by unlawful force.”*

This policy was written in line with the Child Abduction Response Plan of the Western Australian Police and determines the actions that need to be taken in the event of an attempted or successful abduction.

1.2 Process

Child/Parent/Guardian Report

A child or parent makes a report to the teacher or parent/guardian. 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 him or herself to students.

Educator

The educator who receives the report should immediately inform the Principal, passing on all information reported by the student. The information needs to include what actually happened and descriptions of any persons involved. Educators who believe that a matter is sexual in nature, may also need to submit a formal Mandatory. Educators are requested not to speak directly with the media or with any people not directly associated with the issue.

Principal

The Principal, or delegate, should as soon as is practicable, call the police on 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. The Principal must also ask the attending police officers if they believe that the incident should be reported to other schools.

The School will then contact the parents if they have not already been informed. The Chair of the School Council 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 2013.

If a public alert is being distributed, please insert the following line: "This matter has been reported to WA Police. The matter should be regarded as unsubstantiated until further advice from WA Police. Anyone with information regarding this matter is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000."

Schools should advise the WA Police Media Unit of intent to warn parents, including the actual warning that is being distributed to parents, via police.media@police.wa.gov.au.

So that other schools can be informed, schools are requested to send brief details of the incident to Niki Preston, the Personal Assistant to the Executive Director of AISWA. Her email address is npreston@ais.wa.edu.au (cc to cdcruz@ais.wa.edu.au). When advising AISWA, schools should include a description of the person (if available) but not specific details of vehicle registration numbers or what the person may have said to the child.

The School may wish to involve the Non-Government School's Psychology Service to assist the student and families concerned. The Principal may also need to advise the School Community of the incident by letter. A suggested letter is attached in *Appendix E: Sample Wording for Child Abduction Response Plan Letters*.

Police Media have suggested the following areas that require specific attention by the Police, with possible assistance from schools (if requested), in the event of an attempted abduction. The Police will:

1. Verify the attempted abduction through independent corroboration (witnesses, consistent injuries, video surveillance);
2. Organise for the child to attend the Child Assessment and Interview Unit as soon as practicable for the formal interview process;
3. Organise for the child to attend the Forensic Imaging Unit to provide a composite image of the offender;
4. Revisit the child and verify the story through retelling. If discrepancies arise, consider and investigate the possibility of a false report; and
5. Advise Police Media Unit who will liaise with the Police Education Liaison Officer (and Education Department Media) about the incident if it involves a school aged child or travel to and from school.

AISWA

AISWA will contact the Principals of other AISWA schools in the area, the Catholic Education Office and both regional offices of the Department of Education. The Department of Education will advise Police Media. AISWA will assist with any calls to the Association by the media or will, if requested, provide assistance to the School.

A sample email that may be sent to schools by AISWA is noted below:

Subject: Child Protection Incident near <Location>

[A sentence or two with a brief description of the event and/or the person(s) involved. Police Media have requested that the description de-identifies the alleged perpetrator.]

Please consider this information in the context of your school community and whether you determine a communication to your parents is needed. You may wish to consult the WA Police Facebook Page or with your local police to determine the level of threat and if the report is credible before deciding whether to proceed with a communication.

When a communication is sent, then a standard template should be used with a brief description of the alleged incident.

NB Offenders and potential offenders are extremely mobile across the metropolitan area – please continue your professional vigilance in protecting your children at entry and exit times and when they are on excursions in the community at other times.

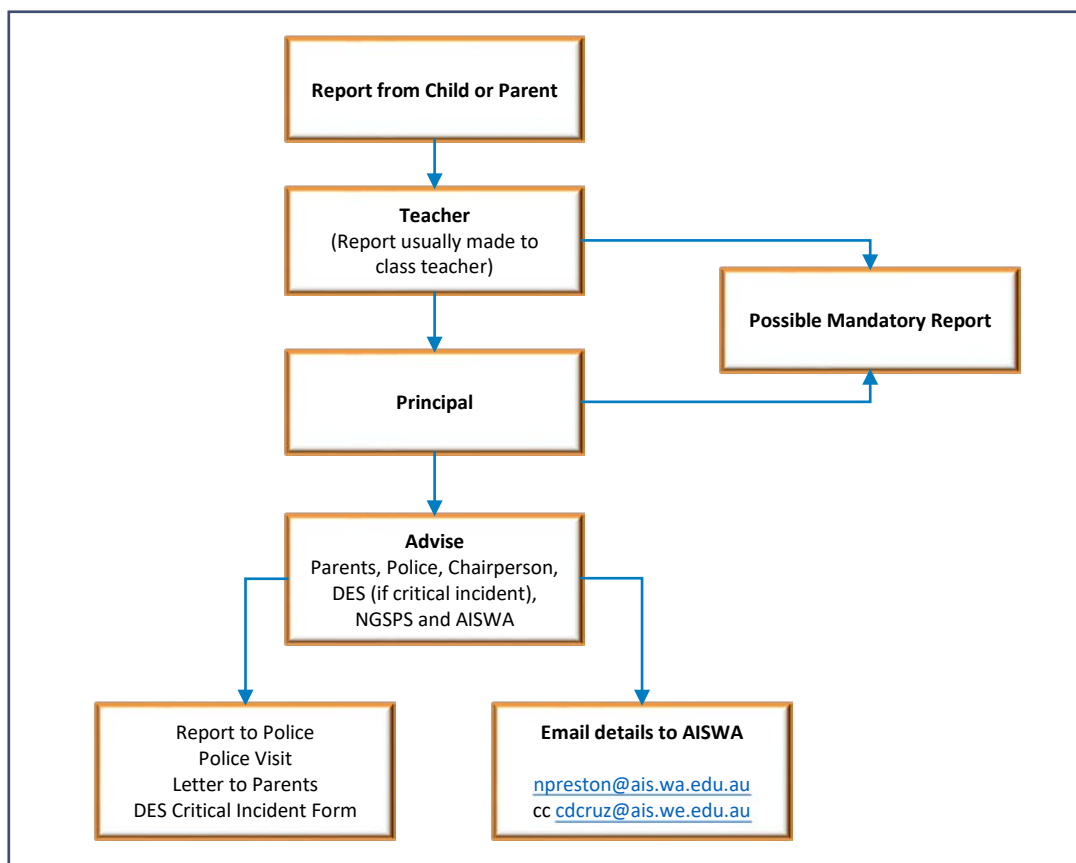


Figure 1: Child abduction response process

1.3 Media

If schools would like assistance with dealing with the media they should contact the Executive Director through her PA, Niki Preston, on 9441 1611 or npreston@ais.wa.edu.au. AISWA recommends that Schools do not make the first contact with the media.

1.4 Contacting Parents/Guardians

In the event of an attempted or successful abduction a letter (see first letter in *Appendix E: Sample Wording for Child Abduction Response Plan Letters*) is to be sent to all families by e-mail or given to the children at the end of the school day. The letter has been designed by the Western Australian Police, in consultation with DoE, CEOWA and AISWA and contains protective behaviour messages. Whilst the police want parents and students to be vigilant, they do not want a letter to cause unnecessary alarm. Therefore, only known facts are to be communicated.

It is the Principal's decision, in liaison with the investigating police as to whether or not the community requires notice of the event. The Principal 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 the second letter sample in *Appendix E: Sample Wording for Child Abduction Response Plan Letters*.

1.5 Record Keeping

Along with all notes taken by the teacher and Principal, 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 also note that, in the event of a successful abduction, unless a child is taken directly from a school, the Police will not advise the school until parents and all other relevant authorities and agencies have been contacted.

1.6 Contacts

Queries regarding these guidelines may be directed to:

Nicola Davidson

AISWA Workplace Relations

Email: ndavidson@ais.wa.edu.au

Tel: 9441 1679

Senior Sergeant Mark Fleskens

State Coordinator Community Engagement Division

Email: mark.fleskens@police.wa.gov.au

Tel: 9222 1063

Sergeant Garry Corker

Police Education Liaison Officer, Community Engagement Division

Email: garry.corker@police.wa.gov.au or Garry.Corker@education.wa.edu.au

Tel: 9264 4531

1.7 Appendix

1. Sample wording for Child Abduction Response Plan Letters

Child Abduction Policy	
Signed by Chairperson:	Council Approval Date: 7 February 2018
	Council Review Date: February 2019

Sample Letter 1

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 [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.

[The Principal 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.

Yours sincerely,
Principal

Sample Letter 2

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,

Principal