

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN CHILDREN

NOTE: These guidelines must be interpreted in the context of each situation. For advice contact Student Support Services (Child Protection) T: 9402 6124

	Very concerning behaviours	0 to 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 13 years	14 to 17 years
Very concerning behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent, secretive, coercive or exploitative Significant age, development and/or power difference May cause physical pain to self/others <p>Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires immediate action – advise principal. Follow recording and reporting processes (refer to Child Protection policy). If a belief is formed that a child is or has been the subject of sexual abuse, submit a report to the Mandatory Reporting Service. <p>DEFINITION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE <i>Sexual abuse</i>, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence; or the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour (<i>Children and Community Services Act 2004</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts out explicit sexual behaviour, through play, language and interaction with others Persistently strokes their own genitals to the exclusion of normal childhood activities and may cause injury to own genitals Persistently attempts to touch the genitals of others Sexual behaviour involving penetration of anus or vagina with fingers or objects Forces or offers to perform sexual acts on other children Drawings/artwork which depict sexual acts Disclosure of sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obsessive stroking or exposure of own genitals in public Sexually explicit drawings/artwork Acts out explicit sexual behaviour, e.g. oral sex, intercourse Uses force, threats, aggression, violence or secrecy to coerce others into sexual activity, including bullying with sexual aggression (e.g. lifting/removing other children’s clothing, sexually threatening notes, drawings or text messages). Sexual behaviour with significantly younger child or of lower cognitive ability. Entering a sleeping child’s room to touch or engage in sexual activity. Persistent sexual activity with animals Knowingly accessing or distributing child exploitation images of self or others Disclosure of sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obsessive masturbation (may injure genitals) Bribery, coercion, threats or force of others into sexual activities (grooming) Oral sex and/or penetration with a person of different age, developmental ability and/or peer grouping Chronic pornographic interest Possession or deliberately accessing or distributing child exploitation images of self or others Sexual contact with animals Sexual activity in exchange for reward, e.g. money, alcohol, cigarettes Persistent fear of (or presence of) STI/pregnancy Arranging a meeting with an online acquaintance Disclosure of sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obsessive masturbation (may injure genitals) Persistent exposure in public Bribery, coercion, threats or force of others into sexual activities (grooming) Preoccupation with sexually violent pornography or child pornography Sex under influence of drugs/alcohol Sexual activity in exchange for money, goods, accommodation, drugs or alcohol Sexual contact with others of significant age and/or developmental difference Arranging to meet an online acquaintance without the knowledge of a known peer/adult Sex with an online or unknown acquaintance Possesses, accesses or distributes child exploitation images of self or others Sexual contact with animals Persistent fear of (or presence of) STI/pregnancy Disclosure of sexual abuse
Concerning behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints from other students Inequality in age/developmental stage Concerning frequency and duration of behaviours Does not respond to teacher correction Frequency, intensity or intrusiveness increases Behaviour too advanced for age Discovery or correction of behaviour results in fear, panic, shame or guilt <p>Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record, monitor, assess and advise principal. Develop a behaviour plan. Consult with the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) and/or WA Police Force. If concerned, submit a report. If a belief is formed that a child is or has been the subject of sexual abuse, submit a report to the Mandatory Reporting Service (refer to Child Protection policy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts out explicit sexual behaviour through play, language, interaction with others Knowledge and discussion of sexual behaviour too advanced for age Preoccupied with adult sexual behaviour Touching or attempting to touch unfamiliar adult’s breasts, bottom, genitals Preoccupied with touching other’s genitals Uses explicit adult sexual language Persistent stroking of own genitals and doesn’t respond to redirection or instruction to stop Follows others into toilets to watch toileting or touch genitals Touching genitals of animals and does not respond to redirection or instruction to stop Lifting/removing other children’s clothing against their will. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stroking own genitals in public Re-enactment of adult sexual behaviour Knowledge and discussion of sexual behaviour too advanced for age Frequent questions about sexual activity Persistent nudity and/or exposure of genitals in public places Persistently following other children to look at them undress or touch their genitals Lifting/removing other children’s clothing against their will. Photographing other children in their underwear Flirtatious sexual behaviour (too advanced for age) with other children or adults Touching genitals of animals and does not respond to direction to stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masturbation or exposure in public Obsessive masturbation, which may include genital injury Knowledge and discussion of sexual behaviour too advanced for age Persistent, explicit communication, art or play which is sexual or sexually intimidating Makes sexually explicit threats but not enacted Incident of voyeurism, exposure or accessing sexual images that ceases when corrected Sexual behaviour with younger/older children or adults Engaging in sexual activities with unknown peer, e.g. deep kissing, mutual masturbation Persistent fear of (or presence of) STI/pregnancy Oral sex and/or intercourse with a known partner of similar age and developmental ability Persistent public communication about body or sexual development Accessing age restricted materials e.g. movies, games internet with sexually explicit content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual preoccupation which interferes with routine functioning Behaviour involves sexually aggressive themes/obscenities Sexual behaviour including unprotected sex and frequent changes of sexual partner Consensual sexual activity in school Voyeuristic behaviours Sexually explicit themes in written work or art work, which are obscene or sexually intimidating Oral/penetrative sex with a known partner with a significant age/developmental difference Persistent fear of (or presence of) STI/pregnancy Preoccupation with pornography Arranging to meet with an online acquaintance accompanied by a known peer/adult Using mobile phone/internet to send or receive sexual images of another person with consent
Expected behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spontaneous, curious, mutual and responds well to teacher correction Play/activities among equals in terms of age, size and developmental stage No coercion, force, exploitation The child is not left feeling angry, ashamed, scared or anxious when corrected <p>Response (if behaviour is inappropriate for setting):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop the behaviour – e.g. tell child to stop, remove child’s hand, separate the children. Define the behaviour – e.g. “You are poking Billy’s private parts and that’s not ok.” Redirect the behaviour – e.g. “Go wash your hands and help me get the blocks out.” Document the behaviour. <p>(ref Patricia Ryan, Ph.D., Eastern Michigan University)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comfortable being nude Unselfconsciously strokes their genitals Touching and holding own genitals, especially when upset or anxious Curious about body parts and functions Touching or attempting to touch familiar children’s genitals during bath or toilet times or during play, e.g. show me yours and I’ll show you mine, doctors and nurses, mums and dads Touching or attempting to touch breasts, bottom, genitals of familiar adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing sense of privacy Stroking own genitals in private Touching and holding own genitals, especially when upset or anxious Curious about sexuality, body changes during puberty, gender differences, reproduction and intimate relationships Curiosity about other children’s genitals involving looking, comparing and/or touching familiar children Lifting skirts or pulling pants down in context of play Telling ‘dirty jokes’ Experimenting with sexual language and taboo words e.g. names for private parts/ swear words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing need for privacy Masturbation in private Increased curiosity and discussion about adult sexuality, e.g. reproduction, puberty, gender differences. Boys comparing penis with friends Uses sexually explicit language Seeks information about sex and sexual images on internet Interest in or participates in boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, including consensual hugging, kissing and hand-holding with known peers Exhibitionism, e.g. flashing/mooning among same age peers within the context of play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for privacy Masturbation in private Sexually explicit mutual conversations with peers Use of sexual humour and obscenities Interest/participation in relationship with someone of same or other sex Sexual activity with a partner of similar age/developmental stage (ability to consent must be considered) Accesses erotic materials for arousal (e.g. music, videos, magazine, movies) use of mobile phones and internet in relationships with peers

Sources: <http://www.true.org.au/Resources/shop#!?Traffic-Lights-brochure/p/57318729> <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/79/fact-sheets> <https://www.childsafety.org.au/infosheets.html>

Age appropriate sexual play and behaviour in children, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory Government Community Care, 5-11: Child Protection, the essential guide for teachers and other professionals, Prof Freda Briggs, 2012