

# MANDATORY REPORTING

## POLICY

### Rationale

All children have the right to be safe, healthy and well cared for both at and away from school. School staff members have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of all children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care it is important that they take immediate action.

### Aims

- A clear understanding that all teachers and parents are mandated to report instances of child abuse.
- In the instance where teachers have formed the belief that a child may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, they must:
  - notify the Principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for their concerns, and
  - report their concerns to the DHS Child Protection Unit or DHS Child FIRST.
- All other staff members are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the school leadership and make an appropriate report as required.
- Understand the different forms of child abuse that can take place:
  - Physical abuse
  - Sexual abuse,
  - Emotional abuse
  - Neglect
  - Medical neglect
  - Family violence and **for children who exhibit**
  - Risk-taking behaviour
  - Female genital mutilation
  - Sexually-abusive behaviours **and also to protect**
  - an unborn child
- In cases where the observer has formed a belief on reasonable grounds that a young person is in need of protection and that the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect them, a report must be made.

### Implementation

In reporting suspected incidents of child abuse, staff are required to use the following protocol:

### Description

1. **School staff should keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:**

Description of the concerns (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)

Source of those concerns (e.g. observation, report from child or another person)

Actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHS Child Protection etc).

School staff should discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the Principal or a member of the school leadership team. The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they must or may make a report about the child or young person.

**2. School staff should gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:**

Full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person

Details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns

The individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person

Details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person .

**3. Make a report to the relevant agency**

**4. Immediately make a written record of the report which includes the following information:**

The date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported

The name and position of:

the person who made the report

the person who received the report.

**5. Notify relevant school staff and/or Departmental staff of the report.**

School staff should advise the principal or a member of the leadership team if they have made a report.

In the case of International Students, the principal must notify the International Education Division of the Department on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.

In the case of Koorie students, the principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the Regional Koorie Support Officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.

**Potential Consequences Of Making A Report**

Potential consequence	Description
Confidentiality	<p>The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.</li><li>• the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.</li><li>• a Court or Tribunal decides that it necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.</li><li>• a Court or Tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.</li></ul>

Professional Protection	<p>If a report is made in good faith:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.</li> <li>• the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.</li> </ul>
Interviews	<p>DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without the parent's knowledge or consent.</p> <p>Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.</p> <p>DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the principal or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.</p> <p>When DHS Child Protection practitioners/Victoria Police officers come to the school premises, the principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.</p> <p>When a child or young person is being interviewed by DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.</p>
Support for the child or young person	<p>The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHS Child Protection may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting as a support person for the child or young person.</li> <li>• Attending DHS Child Protection case planning meetings.</li> <li>• Observing and monitoring the child's behaviour.</li> <li>• Liaising with professionals.</li> </ul>
Requests for Information	<p>DHS Child Protection and/or Child FIRST and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, DHS Child Protection can also direct school staff and Department staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHS Child Protection.</p>
Witness Summons	<p>If DHS Child Protection makes a Protection Application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a Witness Summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.</p>

### Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

**September 2018**