



MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Rationale

- At Officer Primary School we believe that all children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As teachers, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to serious incidents involving abuse and neglect of the children with whom we have contact, and to report instances that we believe involve physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

Aims

- To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Implementation

- All members of the Teaching Service (including primary and secondary school teachers, principals and students in training to become teachers) who believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury and/or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection.
- All other school staff who believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection are encouraged to report their concerns to DHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person they are encouraged to report their concerns to DHS Child Protection or Child First.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities regularly.
- All members of the Teaching Service are required to complete the Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module annually.
- All concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of students must be reported immediately to a Principal Class member, or his/her nominee. If the principal or nominee does not wish to make a mandatory report, this does not discharge the teacher's obligation to do so if they have formed a reasonable belief that abuse may have occurred. If the teacher's concerns continue, even after consultation with the principal or nominee, that teacher is still legally obliged to make a mandatory report of their concerns.
- The Principal/nominee will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse or neglect has taken place, and a report is made, a record of the report is recorded in the "Child Protection Register" filed in the confidential file in the Principal's office.
- Where during the course of carrying out their normal duties, a school staff member forms the belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection, the staff member and/or the Principal class officer must make an official notification to DHS Child Protection by telephone as soon as practicable on: 1300 655 795 or after school hours crisis line 131278.
- If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report to DHS Child Protection.

- Members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- Staff must respect confidentiality when dealing with a case of suspected child abuse and neglect, and may discuss case details and the identity of the child and their family only with those involved in managing the situation.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, and neglect; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
- When students disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, the matter must be reported by staff to a Principal Class member, or his/her nominee.

Evaluation

- The Management and Accountability Sub-Committee of School Council will be responsible for co-ordinating and planning the review of the Mandatory Reporting Policy under the auspices of School Council. The review period will be 3 years from the policy being passed by School Council.