

MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

BASIC BELIEFS

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have the right to feel safe and to be safe. All professionals working with children and/or their families share the responsibility of protecting children. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

As staff members, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to incidences involving abuse of the children with whom we have contact, and to use our professional judgement of the available information to ensure that reporting is appropriate to the situation (i.e. to report instances that we believe involve physical or sexual abuse)

AIMS

To ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children is maintained by putting the needs of children first and that each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

- All members of the Teaching Service, who believe that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse is mandated by law to report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.
- Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must **also** disclose that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence. In these cases also contact SOCIT Wangaratta: (03) 5723 0848
- Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence. *(The offence applies only to **adults in a position of authority** within an organisation, including Principals, senior school staff, regional directors and other senior managers)*

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A **'reasonable belief'** is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Types of child abuse and indicators of harm

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- human trafficking (including forced marriage)
- sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution).

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A report should be made to DHHS Child Protection in circumstances where, for example:

- the child is engaging in risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring
- there is a risk to an unborn child
- a child or young person is exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours
- there are indications that a child is being groomed
- ***Reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16.***

In the case where a staff member has formed a reasonable belief that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse and has reported this to Child Protection (and Victoria Police where applicable) the allegations **MUST** also be reported to:

- Principal, Campus Leader or Child Safety Officer
- Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266
- Relevant Regional Office
- Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487.
- A record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern will be kept in the locked confidential student files, held by the Child Safety Officer.
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place a "Mandatory Reporting Notification Sheet" (see Appendix) available from the Principal, Campus Leader, Student Engagement & Wellbeing Leader or Unit/Sub-school leader, must be completed. Following discussion and/or notification to DHS, this is to be filed in the confidential student files.
- If the staff member has doubts regarding the making of an official report, they can contact Child Protection on **1300 360 391** and propose a hypothetical. This allows Child Protection to provide advice on appropriate action without disclosing the identity of the child. A record of this discussion must be completed and placed in the confidential student files.
- The staff member to whom the disclosure is made is required to make the report with support from the Principal, Campus Leader, Student Engagement & Wellbeing Leader or Unit / Sub-school leader, by contacting Department of Human Services (Child Protection Unit) on **1300 360 391 or 03 9843 6000 or 131278**
- 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 "Mandatory Reporting Notification Sheets" remain filed in the locked confidential student files that reside with the Child Safety Officer.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents are to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.

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- Full cooperation will be provided to DHS, CPS workers and police which will be facilitated by the College Principal or his/her nominee.
- Staff members and students who are involved in the notification report will be supported by the critical incidents support team through the regional office.
- Where appropriate the College will provide support to families.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, staff are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse and/or neglect.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF

- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually and will complete the online module at www.elearn.com.au/deecd/mandatoryreporting each year. (Username: deecd; Password: employee)

Date Implemented	January 2010 (updated October 2016)
Author	Jo McCarthy / Kelly McKay
Approved By	School Council /Policies sub-committee
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Date Reviewed	October 2016
Responsible for Review	Campus Principal
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References	DEECD Reference Guide – 4.6.6 Child Abuse and Neglect, 4.6.6.3 Child Protection Law Memorandum 6/6/99 – Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse The Children’s and Young Person’s Act 1989, Section 64 Safe from Harm, 2001 DEECD/DHS Protocols, 2001 School Policy and Advisory Guide, 2016 – Child Protection Reporting Obligations