

# Child Safety Support Resource 1



## St Mary's School internal school process for mandatory reporting

All procedures in relation to Mandatory Reporting at St Mary's School are outlined in detail within our Mandatory Reporting Policy. The process below is an elaboration of how the Four Critical Actions for Schools (CECV reference document) is followed at St Mary's.

### Reporting

- If the source of suspected abuse comes from within the school (this includes any form of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer), the reporter must:
- Contact Victoria Police (Castlemaine Police Station)
  - ALSO report internally to:
  - School Principal or other designated person e.g. Acting Principal

If the source of suspected abuse comes from within the family or community the reporter must:

- **Report to DHHS Child Protection (1800 675 598) or after school hours crisis line (131278)** if the child is considered to be:
  - In need of protection due to child abuse
  - At risk of being harmed (ore has been harmed) and the harm has, or is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.
  - ALSO report suspected sexual abuse (include grooming) to Victoria Police.
  - ALSO report internally to:
    - School Principal (or acting Principal)
    - The reporter may also make a referral to Child FIRST (if they have other reasonable concerns for the wellbeing of the child e.g. conflict within a family, parenting difficulties, isolation of a family or a lack of apparent support)
- The following information will be required when making a report to DHHS Child Protection:
  - The child's name, date of birth and address
  - The name, age and address of any known siblings
  - Your reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse of neglect
  - Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child
  - Current whereabouts of the child or young person
  - Your description of the injury or behaviour observed
  - Any other information you have about the family

- The reporter's identity as a notifier will remain confidential unless: you choose to inform the child and or family of the notification yourself OR you consent to your identity as the notifier being disclosed.
- The reporter should keep detailed and accurate notes, that include the following:
  - A description of the concerns (e.g. observation, report from a child or another person).
  - Source of these concerns (e.g. observations, report from a child or another person).
  - Actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with Principal, report to DHHS).
- A teacher may make a Mandatory Report independently and without discussing it with anyone, or when a Principal disagrees with the teachers' beliefs.
- The report should be made on the same day as the belief is formed or a disclosure has been made.
- Further reports can be made if the teacher becomes aware of further reasonable ground that continued abuse of neglect has or will occur.
- Where required, teaching staff will be released from their classroom duties to speak with DHHS Child Protection or other authorities about their report.

#### Safety and care of affected child/ren

- School staff should do any or all of the following to support and protect the affected child/ren:
  - Separate the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring all parties are supervised by a school staff member.
  - Arrange urgent medical assistance where necessary.
  - Preserve any items that may amount to evidence of the abuse (e.g. environment, clothing, other physical items, potential witnesses).
  - Monitor the affected child/ren over a pre-determined period and review their circumstances.
  - Refer the child/ren to the school Social Worker for further support and/or counselling.

#### Contacting carers/parents

- In many cases, where it is suspected that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, it is extremely important that the parents/carers are notified as soon as practicable. This enables them to take steps to prevent or limit their child's exposure to further abuse and/or ensure their child receives the support that they require. (Source: Protect-Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)
- A staff member does not require the permission of parents, carers or guardians to make a report to DHHS Child Protection, nor are they required to tell parents, carers or guardians that they have done so.
- The Principal should seek the advice of DHHS Child Protection and/or the Victorian Police to determine if it is appropriate to contact parents/carers.

- Where advised to be appropriate, the Principal should make sensitive and professional contact with parents as soon as possible on the day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion.

#### Providing Ongoing Support

- Support must be provided for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of our duty of care requirements.
- Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals etc.

#### Further Information

- Proof is not required that abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur. A belief is sufficient. It is the role of the Department of Health and Human Services to determine whether that belief should be investigated.
- Members of the Department of Health and Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and child/ren only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
- Fulfilling the roles contained in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and stored in the Principal's office and remain strictly confidential. (Appendix A)
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of grooming, emotional abuse, neglect and family violence.
- Students who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the Principal.
- School staff are encouraged to contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 1300 361 008 to seek assistance / support for any potential stress they may be subjected to during incidents, disclosures and/or reporting of child abuse.