



MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Latest DET Update: 12/01/2016
Reviewed/Updated: September 2016

Rationale:

- All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. School staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and emotional wellbeing of children in their care. As teachers, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to serious incidences 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 to DHHS.
- Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with the school poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the school must take all reasonable steps to reduce or remove the risk. If a staff member in authority such as Principal or senior school staff fails to do this this may amount to a criminal offence.

Purpose

- To ensure Altona Green Primary School complies with the Mandatory Reporting requirements of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, the *Crimes Act 1958* and other legislation.
- To ensure the school complies with DET policy and guidelines.
- To ensure the safety of children through the creation and maintenance of a child safe environment.
- To ensure the school complies with Child Safe Standard 5.
- To develop a child safe school that fosters and develops a culture in which everyone – staff, volunteers, parents/carers and children – feel confident, enabled and supported to safely disclose child safety concerns.
- To define the roles and responsibilities of school staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children.
- To enable staff to identify the indicators of a child who may be in need of protection.
- To empower staff to make a report of a child who may in need of protection.

Definition:

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

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.

Implementation:

- Altona Green primary school has a zero tolerance of child abuse
- The safety of every child at our school is our highest priority
- All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect. Proof is not required that abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur – ‘reasonable belief’ is sufficient.
- If a staff member has concerns about safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they must take immediate action.
- Types of abuse include physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, medical neglect, family violence, sexual exploitation
- The presence of a single indicator or even several indicators does not prove that abuse or neglect has taken place, however the repeated occurrence of an indicator or several indicators together should alert staff to the possibility of abuse and neglect. These concerns must be discussed with the Principal or a member of the leadership team
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse or neglect has taken place a ‘Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet’ available from the Principal must be completed and filed in the Principal’s office. The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern
- In the case of Koori students the Principal will notify regional office and in the case of an international student will contact the Education Division 03 9637 2990 for suitable support
- A staff member does not need the permission of parents, carers or guardians to make a report to DHHS or tell the parents they have done so
- All ‘Mandatory Reporting Information Sheets’ remain filed in the Principal’s office. Concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in her absence, the Assistant Principal.
- It is a DET requirement for all staff to complete the Mandatory reporting eLearning module annually. It is highly recommended that ES staff also complete the module. An annual professional learning session will be held on this policy.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- The teacher and/or the Principal class officer will contact the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on
Child Protection Crisis line crisis line 131 278
Child Protection Footscray (local contact) – 1300 664 977
Child First Brimbank – 1300 138 180
Child First Wyndham – 1300 775 160
- In case of emergency or if a child is in immediate danger the school will contact Triple Zero (000) or the local police station
- Any staff member who forms reasonable belief a sexual offence has been committed must disclose that information to police – failure to do so is a criminal offence
- Members of the DHHS , 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 her nominee. Parent permission or knowledge is not required. Interviewing children at school occurs only if in the best interest of the child.
- DHHS and Victoria Police are required to provide identification to interview a child. If information or documents are requested by these parties, this request must be in writing and made by authorised persons
- 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. School strategies are to be put in place to support all students who may have been involved or impacted on by the incident.

- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the principal.
- 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 is exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours
 - there are indications that a child is being groomed. For information see:
[Department of Justice and Regulation – Grooming offence.](#)
- When making a report school staff should include the following information:
 - Full name, date of birth and address of the child
 - Details of concerns and reasons of concerns
 - The individual staff member's involvement with the child
 - Details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest update mid-January 2016).

This update was ratified by School Council on the 26th September 2016

Reference: www.education.vic.gov.au/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx