

# Mandatory Reporting Policy

## Rationale:

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As staff, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to and report any signs of child abuse. Child abuse is defined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) to include: sexual offences, grooming offences, physical violence, serious emotional and psychological harm and serious neglect.

## Aims:

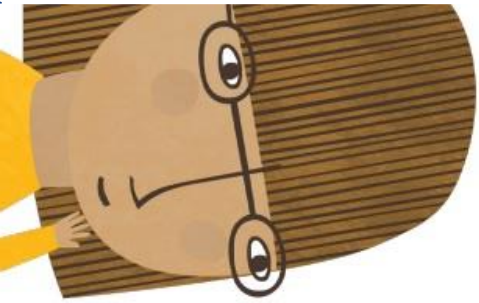
- To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against sexual offences, grooming offences, physical violence, serious emotional and psychological harm and serious neglect.

## Implementation:

- The St. Paul's Primary School Community promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children. Procedures in the St. Paul's Child Safety Policy will be followed in matters involving children.
- All members of the teaching service are mandated by law to report signs of sexual offences, grooming offences, physical violence, serious emotional and psychological harm and serious neglect.
- At St. Paul's all non-teaching staff are also expected to report signs of sexual offences, grooming offences, physical violence, serious emotional and psychological harm and serious neglect.
- All school staff members, must act, and follow the Four Critical Actions as listed in '[Protect - Responding to Incidents Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)' (Appendix 1) documentation, as soon as they become aware of a child protection incident, that is, when a child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities and complete the DET Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module annually. It is an expectation that all staff continually monitor students for any indication of abuse.
- Prior to any report being made to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the reporting staff member is required to inform a member of the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team member must record the report on the school Mandatory Reporting Register and then also report internally to the CEM Student Wellbeing Unit.
- Staff members will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern and file appropriate information in the child's file. Any report made to DHHS will be documented using the PROTECT Template '[Recording your actions: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse](#)' and filed in the child's file.
- All children must be independently supported in any interviews conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection at school by a parent or staff member of their choice. The role of the independent person is to ensure that the child understands what is happening and to provide support. Where possible and appropriate the child's parents/carers should be present for these interviews. However if this is not appropriate, the principal or delegate may act as the independent person.
- All reports, subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential. All associated documentation remains in the child's file.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- Students who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to a member of the school Leadership Team. This needs to be followed up with the student's parents as soon as possible.
- Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this 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.
- Forming a 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof, but is more than 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.

## Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the St. Paul's review cycle.



## FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

# Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

### 1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
  - administering first aid
  - calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
  - identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police
- Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

### 2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

#### WITHIN THE SCHOOL

**VICTORIA POLICE**  
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
- School principal and/or leadership team
- School chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on 1300 782 978.

All allegations of reportable conduct **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
- Employee Conduct Branch
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
- Diocesan education office
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
- Commission for Children and Young People on 1300 782 978.

#### WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

**DHHS CHILD PROTECTION**

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- In need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

**VICTORIA POLICE**  
You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- **GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Security Services Unit
- **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.
- **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
- School principal and/or chairperson.

### YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

- You **must** act. By following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief\* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
  - You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (eg. If the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- \* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

### 3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carer (eg. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor) and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

### 4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support 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 your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

### CONTACT

#### DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

- **AREA**
- North Division **1300 664 9777**
- South Division **1300 655 795**
- East Division **1300 360 391**
- West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
- West Division (Metro) **1300 664 9777**

#### AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**

#### CHILD FIRST

<https://services.dhs.vic.gov.au/letter-and-support/teams>

#### ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-change-door.html>

#### VICTORIA POLICE

**000** or your local police station  
**DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT**  
**(03) 9589 6286**

#### STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT

**(03) 9651 3622**

#### EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

**(03) 9637 2585**

#### DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**  
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7735**  
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**  
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

#### INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA

**(03) 9625 7200**

#### THE LOOKOUT

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence <http://www.lookout.org.au>  
Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**

August 2018 Edition

**PROTECT**

THE EDUCATION VICTORIA STATE

VICTORIA Education and Training

cecv

CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION RESEARCH

