

ST. PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL PYRAMID HILL



Mandatory Reporting Policy

Rationale:

All children have a right to feel safe and be safe, and to develop to their potential. Teachers 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, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

Aim:

This policy aims to protect Learners from abuse and neglect by ensuring school staff:

- Understand their mandatory reporting responsibilities and duty of care obligations to protect children and young people from child abuse including physical and sexual abuse
- Know how to make a mandatory report to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection when they have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm
- Are able to identify and be aware of the indicators of abuse

Duty of Care:

Apart from mandatory reporting requirements, a teacher has a concurrent duty of care to protect a Learner from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. The Duty of Care obliges a teacher to act to protect children.

Implementation:

- Any person who is registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act (2006), or any person who has been granted to teach under the Act, including principals, is mandated to make a report to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection. Teachers and principals are mandated by law under section 184 of the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA) to make a report to child protection.
- A report should be made when there are:
 - Concerns that have a serious impact on a child's immediate safety.
 - Concerns that are persistent and entrenched and likely to have a serious impact on the child's development. The being 'harm accumulated through a series of continuing acts, omissions or circumstances'.

- A staff member is required to make a further report if they become aware of further grounds for the belief that a child is at risk, or is suffering abuse.
- The person reporting to DHS will not be revealed unless permission is given by that person.
- The person making the report can contact DHS to find the action that has been taken, within the limits of confidentiality.
- Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are encouraged to speak to their principal as well as being able to make a report to DHS Child Protection.
- School staff who have concerns about a child or young person because they have been made aware of possible harm via their involvement in the community external to their professional role may make a (protective) report to DHS Child Protection.
- 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 relevant resources annually.
- Staff will be made aware of support and resources within the Sandhurst CEO, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and Department of Human Services available to discuss issues of child safety and wellbeing including;
 - School leadership or specialist staff
 - Network support staff (Student Support Services)
 - Regional wellbeing staff
 - DHS Child Protection - (03) 5434 5555 (Bendigo)
- When a report is to be made the teacher must contact the Principal. The teacher is well advised to discuss the report with the Principal prior to making the call to the Department. The purpose of this is to discuss any concerns or observations and to provide support for the teacher. At all stages it is essential that those involved in any process of consultation maintain confidentiality regarding the child, the family, the notifier, and the alleged perpetrator.
- As mandated notifier, a teacher is required to report a belief, based on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person, is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse. Classroom teachers are usually best placed to observe indicators of child abuse. Some indicators may be:
 - A disclosure (verbal, written or pictorial) by the child
 - Physical marks upon the student's body
 - Inappropriate responses of a sexual nature
 - Irregular attendance at school
 - Significant personal change

Procedure:

That the concerned teacher;

Discusses the matter with the Principal

Meets with the Advisory Group if and when appropriate

Forms a belief that the child is in need of protection

Reports the matter to the Department of Human Services

Observes strict confidentiality

Assessment & Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed on a four year cycle, as required or in alignment with a full school review.

Resources:

St. Patrick's Staff Handbook

CECV -

<http://web.cecv.catholic.edu.au/publications/StudentWellbeing/MandatoryReporting.pdf>

DHS -

http://web.cecv.catholic.edu.au/publications/StudentWellbeing/ProtectionProtocol_011009.pdf

Protect: Four critical actions for schools (Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse)

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