



ST. MARY'S SCHOOL, ALTONA

MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Rationale:

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.) to protect children from harm relating to physical injury and sexual abuse. The principal, teachers, medical practitioners and nurses at a school are mandatory reporters under this Act.

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. 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.

St. Mary's School maintains a 'culture of child safety' by actively implementing strategies in accordance with its moral & legal obligations and Victorian Government Ministerial Order 870.

Aims:

To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse and neglect.

Implementation:

- If, in the course of carrying out their duties, a mandatory reporter forms a **reasonable belief** that a child is in need of protection from physical harm or sexual abuse, and that the **child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child**, they must report that belief to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police.
- Mandatory reporters must complete the information prescribed in the [*Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools*](#), as soon as possible after forming the belief.
- A subsequent report must be made on each occasion on which the mandatory reporter becomes aware of further reasonable grounds for the belief and even if the reporter knows that another report has been made concerning the same child and suspected abuse.
- School staff should refer to the "Four Critical Actions" document if they form a suspicion or reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred, or that a child is at risk of suffering abuse.
- All concerns must be reported to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Deputy Principal.
- The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- The staff member or the Principal will contact the Department of Human Services by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on:
(03) 9479 6222 or after school hours crisis line 131278
- **Child FIRST (Family Information Referral and Support Team) is a family-focussed and community-based intake and referral service. Child FIRST may be the best way of connecting vulnerable children, young people and their families to services they need to protect and promote their healthy development.**
- If members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services visit the school following a notification, they will interview staff and children only in the presence of the Principal or his/her nominee.
- All *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse* templates will be filed in the Principal's office.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse and neglect; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the Principal.

- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory reporting responsibilities annually.
- Supporting policies / documents
 - St. Mary's Child Safety Policy
 - St. Mary's Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
 - Appendix 1: [Protect: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
 - Appendix 2: [Four Critical Actions](#)
 - Appendix 3: [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools](#)

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years to take account of any changed legislation, expectations or practices.

This procedure was last ratified by St. Mary's staff in **May 2019**.