



4.2.4

## St Leonard's Primary School Mandatory Reporting Policy

### **Rationale:**

- 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.

### **Aims:**

- To ensure that each child's right to be safe is maintained and that each child is protected against physical, psychological or sexual abuse, and neglect.

### **Implementation:**

- All members of the Teaching profession are mandated by law to report signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities at the beginning of each school year.
- All teaching staff are obliged to complete an online Mandatory Reporting PD each year before the end of Term 1. Certificates are produced at the end of the online session which are filed in teachers personal file in the principal's office. [www.elearn.com.au/deecd/mandatoryreporting/external](http://www.elearn.com.au/deecd/mandatoryreporting/external). User name is 'deecd' password is 'external'

### **Guideline 1: A Mandate to Report**

- In case of an emergency or if a child is in life-threatening danger, contact triple zero (000) or the local police station.
- When a teacher forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse, he/she must make a report to *Child Protection or Child FIRST* (Department of Human Services Child protection) as soon as practicable.

#### **Department of Human Services Child Protection**

**Intake unit / Eastern 1300 360 391**

**Regional Office / Box Hill (03) 9843 6000**

**After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services: 131 278**

#### **Child FIRST**

**Eastern Metropolitan / Monash 1300 762 125**

- It is mandatory to report concerns relating to physical and sexual abuse or neglect. While not mandatory, making a report to DHHS Child Protection or Child First may also be needed for:
  - emotional abuse
  - neglect
  - medical neglect
  - family violence
  - human trafficking (including forced marriage)
  - sexual exploitation (including pornography and prostitution)
  - risk taking behavior
  - female genital mutilation

- risk to an unborn child
- a child or young person exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours
- School staff has a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care, they should take immediate action. This may include:
  - Reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency
  - Notifying the Principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for their concern.

### **Guideline 2: Documentation**

- If a teacher suspects that a child is in need of protection from physical and/or sexual abuse it is essential that he/she document any concerns and observations – these observation sheets are to be stored in the Principal’s office. Over a period of time it may become apparent to the teacher that there are reasonable grounds on which to form a belief that the child needs protection.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- It is important to be aware that child abuse is rarely identified on the basis of one incident. Child abuse is not usually a single incident, but takes place over time. One incident may be sufficient to form a reasonable belief. Once a teacher is concerned about a child, it is helpful to keep brief, dated notes that show a correct chronology of events.

### **Guideline 3: Structure**

- Establish an Advisory Committee as a support to all involved. The formation of this group will be the responsibility of the Student Wellbeing and Child Safety Team.

### **Guideline 4: Teacher’s Responsibilities**

- Following a discussion with the Child Safety/Wellbeing Team about his/her concerns and observations:
  - (a) The teacher may form the belief that it is necessary to make a report. In this case the teacher must make a report to the DHHS Child Protection as soon as practicable. It is the responsibility of the individual teacher to ensure that this notification has occurred and that all reasonable grounds supporting the belief have been reported.
  - (b) The teacher may continue to suspect that a child is in need of protection. In this case the teacher should continue to record any further observations made.

### **Guideline 5: Communication**

- A teacher may notify the DHHS Child Protection of his/her belief without the prior knowledge of the Principal. It is good practice for the teacher to inform the Principal of his/her action as soon as practicable. It is common for Human Services Officers to use the school as neutral ground for interviews. Therefore, it is important for a teacher to consider communicating promptly with the Principal.

**Ph: 1300 360 391 or after school hours crisis line 131278**

- It is not a teacher's role to investigate or prove child abuse and neglect.

### **Guideline 6: The Role of the Principal**

- A teacher does not need permission from parents or caregivers to notify, nor do they need to inform them that they are notifying. At an appropriate time the standard practice for the DHHS Child Protection personnel is to contact the parents, guardians or caregivers after a notification has been made.
- When Officers of DHHS or the Police seek an interview with a child, the Principal should co-operate with the authorised agency.
- He or she should:
  1. Arrange for the child to choose a supportive adult to be present;
  2. Follow the recommended procedures from the Department of Human Services and the Catholic Education Office;
  3. Ensure that arrangements are in order for any interview which is to take place at the school;
  4. Seek or offer appropriate pastoral support for the reporting staff member;
  5. Observe confidentiality at all times in the management of a mandatory reporting case;
  6. If legal assistance is required, contact the Catholic Education Office in the first instance.

### **Guideline 7: Employee as Alleged Perpetrator**

- If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, principal or any other person employed by the school or while connected to the school environment; contact should be made in the first instance with the Members of the Catholic Education Melbourne Wellbeing and Community Partnerships Unit. This action and all other procedures to be followed are outlined in the document: Misconduct Procedures CEOM 2.20, published in 1999 by the Catholic Education Office Melbourne.

## **SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES**

The concerned teacher:

1. Discusses the matter with the Principal;
2. Meets with the Child Safety/Wellbeing Team if and when appropriate;
3. Forms a belief that a child is in need of protection;
4. Reports the matter to DHHS Child Protection or Child First;
5. Observes strict confidentiality.

Support for the Child or Young Person Connected to the Allegation

The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting students and young people who are involved with DHHS Child Protection may include the following:

- Acting as a support person for the child or young person
- Attending DHHS Child Protection case planning meetings
- Observing and monitoring the child's behavior
- Liaising with professionals

Members of the Catholic Education Melbourne Wellbeing and Community Partnerships Unit are available to support Principals and Teachers in instances of child abuse. (Student Wellbeing Information Line: 03 9267 0228)

**Evaluation:**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

**This policy was reviewed by the Leadership Team in 2016.**

**It will be reviewed again in 2017.**

**This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Education Board in 2012**