

# Mandatory Reporting Policy

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To define the roles and responsibilities of school staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and to enable staff to:

**Purpose:**

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law and in-line with Child Safe Standards in Ministerial Order 870.

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**Scope:** All school staff

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**Implemented by:** School Coordinator

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**Approved by:** KVS Board

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## Reporting child protection concerns

Any KVS Staff Members, who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection.

If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person they must report their concerns to DHS Child Protection or Child FIRST (see accompanying documentation: *Step-by-step Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child FIRST*).

In cases where staff have concerns about a child or young person, they should discuss their concerns with the principal or a member of the school leadership team.

## Reporting criminal child abuse

Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must disclose that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence (see accompanying documentation: *Department of Justice –*

*Failure to Disclose Fact Sheet*), except in limited circumstances such as where the information has already been reported to DHS Child Protection.

## Duty of care

School staff have 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 it is important to take immediate action.

In the case of a child who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child, school staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- reporting their concerns to the DHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency (as identified above)
- notifying the School Coordinator or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

## Forming a 'reasonable belief'

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.

## Types of child abuse and indicators of harm

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. The younger a child the more vulnerable he/she is and the more serious the consequences are likely to be.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- grooming
- human trafficking (including forced marriage).

Other reports to DHS Child Protection may be needed for:

- risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation
- risk to unborn child
- child or young person exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours.

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

## Making a report

This table describes how to make a mandatory report, to report child abuse or child protection concerns.

<u>Step</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>In case of emergency or if a child is in immediate danger contact Triple Zero (000) or the local police station.</b></p> <p>Alternatively, to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hours 7 days, toll free)</p>
2	<p>Complete a Child Safety Incident Report that includes comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the concerns (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)</li> <li>• the source of those concerns (e.g. observation, report from child or another person)</li> <li>• the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with School Coordinator, report to DHS Child Protection etc.).</li> </ul>

3	<p>The School's process is for staff to notify the School Coordinator prior to making a report or discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students, so the School Coordinator can assist the staff member through the reporting process and ensure the child's welfare is maintained throughout the process.</p>
4	<p>Gather the relevant information necessary to make the report by using the Child Safety Incident Report. This includes the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person</li> <li>• the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns</li> <li>• the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person</li> <li>• details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person.</li> </ul>
5	<p>Make a report to the relevant agency.</p> <p>To report concerns that are life threatening phone 000 or the local police station.</p> <p>To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit to DHS Child Protection, call the Child Protection Crisis Line on 13 12 78 (24 hrs 7 days, toll free)</p> <p>To report concerns to DHS Child Protection, contact your local child protection office.</p>
6	<p>Make a written record of the report using the Child Safety Incident Report template which includes the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported</li> <li>• the name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report.</li> </ul>
7	<p>Provide the School Coordinator a copy of the completed Child Safety Incident Report following the reporting to DHS Child Protection or Child FIRST has been made. The Incident Report will be securely stored in the administration area.</p>
8	<p>The School Coordinator will advise the Board that a Child Safety Incident Report has been lodged.</p>

## Potential consequences of making a report

This table describes the potential consequences of making a report.

<u>Potential consequence</u>	<u>Description</u>
Confidentiality	<p>The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.</li> <li>• the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.</li> <li>• a Court or Tribunal decides that it necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.</li> <li>• a Court or Tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.</li> </ul>
Professional Protection	<p>If a report is made in good faith:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.</li> <li>• the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.</li> </ul>
Interviews	<p>DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without the parent's knowledge or consent.</p> <p>Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.</p> <p>DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the School Coordinator or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.</p> <p>When DHS Child Protection practitioners/Victoria Police officers come to the school premises, the School Coordinator or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.</p> <p>When a child or young person is being interviewed by DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.</p>

Support for the child or young person	<p>The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHS Child Protection may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acting as a support person for the child or young person</li> <li>• attending DHS Child Protection case planning meetings</li> <li>• observing and monitoring the child's behaviour</li> <li>• liaising with professionals.</li> </ul>
Support for the staff who make a report	<p>Making a report is likely to be a stressful event for the staff members involved. The school has a duty of care to ensure that all staff members are supported throughout the process. This will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing time for staff members to deal with their own emotional responses</li> <li>• Providing support for staff including debriefing by appropriately qualified counsellors when needed</li> <li>• Ensuring the workplace remains a safe environment.</li> </ul>
Supporting families	<p>Families will have a range of responses to a report and the school, via the School Coordinator, will support families in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect the family's privacy and decision whether to discuss the situation with the school</li> <li>• Provide time and a private space should a family choose to discuss what has happened</li> <li>• Recommend support from appropriately qualified counsellors when needed</li> <li>• Provide feedback about any changes in their child's behaviour while at school.</li> <li>• Implement support strategies requested by the family or appropriately qualified counsellor.</li> </ul>
Requests for Information	<p>DHS Child Protection and/or Child FIRST and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, DHS Child Protection can also direct school staff and Department staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHS Child Protection.</p>
Witness Summons	<p>If DHS Child Protection makes a Protection Application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a Witness Summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.</p>

Staff members will be made aware of their reporting requirements via the Staff Induction Handbook.

The document: *Protecting the Safety of Children and Young People* provides further information about child protection and community based child and family services.

All Key Mentors will complete the on-line Mandatory Reporting Professional Learning Module provided by DEECD. <http://www.elearn.com.au/deecd/mandatoryreporting/external/> Login: deecd Password: external

## Related Documentation

*Step-by-step Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child FIRST*

*Department of Justice – Failure to Disclose Fact Sheet*

*Protecting the Safety of Children and Young People*

*Mandatory Reporting Professional Learning Module*

*Child Safety Incident Report*

*Child Safe Standards Statement*

## Related Policies

- Student Welfare Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Concerns & Complaints Policy