



Warracknabeal Secondary College

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. Parents, students and school staff should be confident that if an allegation of child abuse or student sexual assault is reported, it will be dealt with immediately and in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Aims:

- To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.
- To ensure that appropriate mandatory reporting requirements are being met.
- To ensure that all staff are aware of their legal and moral responsibilities when responding to serious incidents or disclosures involving child abuse.

Implementation:

- All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect to the Department of Human Services (DHS) – Child Protection Unit.
- In the course of teachers undertaking their professional duties, mandated staff members are required to report their belief, when the belief is formed on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of sexual or physical abuse.
- The legislation does not make it mandatory for teachers to notify emotional abuse or neglect. However these types of abuse are likely to come to the attention of teachers and notification should be made to DHS, if a teacher believes that a child is being emotionally abused or neglected.
- It is not the teacher's responsibility to determine whether child abuse or neglect exists. This is the responsibility of DHS as the agency authorised to investigate.
- All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Assistant Principal.
- The teacher and/or the Principal class officer 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
- The identity of the teacher making the notification under the Child and Young Persons Act is kept confidential unless that person gives written permission for his or her identity to be divulged. A teacher may **choose** to tell the family involved that they have passed on their concerns to a DHS worker.
- Members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the principal.

Protocol for making a report

1. In the first instance, school staff should consult with and seek advice from the school principal, a member of the school leadership team or the school chaplain.
2. The principal or member of the school leadership team may also consult with the following:
 - DEECD Support Units
 - Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit (SOCA)
 - Department of Human Services, Child Protection
3. A teacher is not obliged to reveal the name of the student in discussion with the Principal or member of the school leadership team.
4. It is important that the teacher making the notification is aware of the procedures which can follow as a consequence of making a report.
5. The report should be made by phone to DHS at the earliest opportunity, once a belief has been established on reasonable grounds as outlined below.
6. Teachers should keep written notes detailing any evidence they have relied on in making a report.

DEECD Guidelines and Support Material

- Under Victorian child welfare law, a child is any person under seventeen years of age.
- Child maltreatment can be broken into four groups
 1. Physical abuse – refers to a situation in which a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child’s parent/guardian or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally, or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of the child.
 2. Sexual abuse – Refers to situations where a parent/guardian, family member or caregiver involves the child in sexual activity and the parent/guardian or caregivers are not able to protect the child from that abuse. In such situations, a child is unable to give informed consent because of their stage of development.
 3. Neglect – includes failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to such an extent that the child’s health and development are impaired or placed at serious risk. A child is neglected if they are left uncared for over long periods of time or abandoned.
 4. Emotional abuse – occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or subjected to threats, hostility or persistent coldness. The child might be called derogatory names, humiliated, ignored over long periods of time, or isolated from social relationships with peers to such an extent that the child’s behaviour is disturbed or the child’s emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.

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

Ratified by School Council

Date:

28/7/14

Signed:

Principal:

T Fowler

School Council President:

R Hallam