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. Maryborough Education Centre, (MEC), has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse.

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

Guidelines:
- All registered members of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (this includes teachers, principals and staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT) are classed as “mandatory reporters.”
- All mandatory reporters must make a report to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:
  - a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and
  - the child’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.
- It is a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances.

Implementation
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- All staff are required to complete the DET online training module provided by the end of Term 1 each year.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities regularly.
- Any teacher who forms a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child has been abused or neglected will discuss such concerns with the Principal (or other designated person if the Principal is unavailable).

Reporting
- If the source of suspected abuse comes from within the school (this includes any form of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer), the reporter must:
  o Contact Victoria Police (via the Maryborough Police Station)
  o ALSO report internally to:
    - School Principal (or other designated person e.g. Acting Principal)
    - Employee Conduct Branch (03 9637 259 ) and
    - DET Security Services Unit (03 9589 6266).
- If the source of suspected abuse comes from within the family or community the reporter must:
  o Report to DHHS Child Protection (1800 675 598) or after school hours crisis line (131278) if the child is considered to be:
    - In need of protection due to child abuse
- At risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child’s safety, stability or development.
  - ALSO report suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.
  - ALSO report internally to:
    - School Principal (or other designated person e.g. Acting Principal)
    - DET Security Services Unit (03 9589 6266)
  - The reporter may also make a referral to Child FIRST (if they have other reasonable concerns for the wellbeing of the child e.g. conflict within a family, parenting difficulties, isolation of a family or a lack of apparent support)
- The following information will be required when making a report to DHHS Child Protection:
  - The child’s name, date of birth and address
  - The name, age and address of any known siblings
  - Your reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect
  - Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child
  - Current whereabouts of the child or young person
  - Your description of the injury or behaviour observed
  - Any other information you have about the family
- The reporter’s identity as a notifier will remain confidential unless: you choose to inform the child and/or family of the notification yourself OR you consent to your identity as the notifier being disclosed.
- The reporter should keep detailed and accurate notes, that include the following:
  - A description of the concerns (eg; physical injuries, student behaviour).
  - Source of these concerns (eg; observation, report from a child or another person).
  - Actions taken as a result of the concerns (eg; consultation with Principal, report to DHS).
- A teacher may make a Mandatory Report independently and without discussing it with anyone, or when a Principal disagrees with the teachers’ beliefs.
- The report should be made on the same day as the belief is formed or a disclosure has been made.
- Further reports can be made if the teacher becomes aware of further reasonable grounds that continued abuse or neglect has or will occur.
  - Where required, teaching staff will be released from their classroom duties to speak with DHHS Child Protection or other authorities about their report.

Safety and care of affected child/ren
- School staff should do any or all of the following to support and protect the affected child/ren:
  - Separate the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring all parties are supervised by a school staff member.
  - Arrange urgent medical assistance where necessary.
  - Preserve any items that may amount to evidence of the abuse (e.g. environment, clothing, other physical items, potential witnesses).
  - Monitor the affected child/ren over a pre-determined period and review their circumstances.
  - Refer the child/ren to the school Social Worker for further support and/or counselling.
  - Refer the child/ren to the DET’s Student Support Services team.
Contacting carers/parents

- In many cases, where it is suspected that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, it is extremely important that the parents/carers are notified as soon as practicable. This enables them to take steps to prevent or limit their child's exposure to further abuse and/or ensure their child receives the support that they require. (Source: Protect-Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)
- A staff member does not require the permission of parents, carers or guardians to make a report to DHHS Child Protection, nor are they required to tell parents, carers or guardians that they have done so.
- The Principal school should seek the advice of DHHS Child Protection and/or the Victorian Police to determine if it is appropriate to contact parents/carers.
- Where advised to be appropriate, the Principal should make sensitive and professional contact with parents as soon as possible on the day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion.

Further information

- Proof is not required that abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur. A belief is sufficient. It is the role of the Department of Health and Human Services to determine whether that belief should be investigated.
- Members of the Department of Health and Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and child/ren only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
- Filling the roles contained in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and stored in the Principal's office and remain strictly confidential.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of grooming, emotional abuse, neglect and family violence.
- Students who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the Principal.
- School staff are encouraged to contact DET Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 1300 361 008 to seek assistance / support for any potential stress they may be subjected to during incidents, disclosures and/or reporting of child abuse.

Evaluation

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

This policy was last ratified by School Council on Wednesday 22nd February 2017

Signed:

Paul Rumpff
School Council President
Resources:
PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All forms of abuse in Victorian Schools

School Policy and Advisory Guidelines: Child Protection Reporting Obligations

Child Safe Standards