



## SANDRINGHAM EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL Mandatory Reporting

### **Rationale:**

As a mandated professional, teachers and principals under the Child, Youth and Family Act (2005) are legally compelled to make a report to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse.

### **Aims:**

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:

- 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.

### **Definitons:**

**Reasonable Belief:** 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.

### **Implementation:**

**See Appendix 1: *A step by step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child First***

- All staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures each year.
- If a staff member has a belief on reasonable grounds that a student is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child they should keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information; a description of the concerns (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour), the source of those concerns (e.g. observation, report from child or another person), the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHS Child Protection etc.).
- All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Assistant Principal.
- The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- The teacher and principal will gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information; full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person, the details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns, the individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person, details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person. The "Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet" available from the Principal must be completed and filed in the Principal's office.
- **The teacher and/or principal will make a report to the relevant agency as soon as practicable**
  - To report concerns that are life threatening phone 000 or the local police station. To find the nearest Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team contact your local police station
  - 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)
  - To report concerns to DHS Child Protection, contact the local child protection office.
    - **1300 655 795**
    - **After hours call the crisis line 13 12 78**
- 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.

- 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.
- DHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the principal or a member of the leadership team of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.
- When DHS Child Protection practitioners/Victoria Police officers come to the school premises, the principal or a member of the leadership team should request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.
- 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.
- All “Mandatory Reporting Information Sheets” are to remain filed in the Principal’s office.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- Although teachers are only mandated to report to Child Protection if they have a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, they are strongly encouraged to contact Child First or make a report to Child Protection if they significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child.

**Evaluation:**

- This policy is currently being ratified by the School Council. (June 2015)