



Cranbourne East 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 children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.

IMPLEMENTATION

- All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of physical or sexual abuse, and neglect.
- The School will institute processes for informing staff on Mandatory Reporting and the reporting suspected child abuse which are clear and robust; including:
 - Step by step guides for staff outlining when and to whom a report must be made;
 - Requirements for accurate recording of relevant information and actions taken;
 - Clear criteria for assessing how and when to report to the Primary Welfare Officer, Principal, Authorities (the police or DHHS child protection), which comply with all legal requirements;
 - Provision of a dedicated person for staff and children to contact to discuss a suspected abuse or child safety concern;
 - Publicise on our website information about Mandatory Reporting; enabling for families and children avenues for reporting incidents or concerns;
 - Institute a feedback process for staff, volunteers, children and families on organisational policies and procedures for reporting abuse, recognising particular needs of Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually.
- All concerns must be reported immediately to the Primary Welfare Officer, Principal, or in his / her absence, an Assistant Principal.
- The Primary Welfare Officer, Principal, or in his / her absence, an Assistant Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that child abuse has taken place a "Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet" available from the Principal must be completed and filed in the Principal's office.
- The teacher or the Principal class officer will contact the Department of Health & Human Services by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on: South Division: 1300 655 795 or after school hours crisis line 131278
- Members of the Department of Health & 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.
- All completed Mandatory Reporting templates remain securely filed, accessed only by the Primary Welfare Officer and Principal.

- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information will remain strictly confidential.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the Primary Welfare Officer and Principal.
- Utilise inclusive language, photography or artwork in communications about reporting processes.

Samples adapted from DHHS booklet- An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and published by Victorian Govt. 2015

In response to the Betrayal of Trust Report, the Victorian Government has introduced new criminal offences to protect children from sexual abuse. New legislation states that failure to report, or take action in relation to suspected child sexual abuse can now constitute a criminal offence. This includes:

Failure to Disclose

This offence applies to all adults (not just professionals who work with children) who form a reasonable belief that another adult may have committed a sexual offence against a child less than 16 years of age and fail to report this information to Victoria Police.

Failure to Protect

This offence applies to people in positions of authority (Principal Class) who:

- Knows of a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16, under the care, supervision or authority of the organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (eg employee, contractors, volunteer, visitor) and;
- Negligently fails to remove or reduce the risk of harm.

All Cranbourne East Primary School staff must act as soon as they witness an incident that breaches student safety or when they form a reasonable belief that a child has been or is at risk of being abused.

The following information has been taken from DET's **PROTECT** documents- Identifying and Responding to ALL Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools and linked website- www.education.vic.gov.au/protect

Forming a Suspicion

All staff suspicions that a child has been or may be in danger of being abused must be taken seriously. Cranbourne East Primary School staff should liaise with our Primary Welfare Officer and Principal, who will advise on the specific incident.

Receiving a Disclosure (current student or former student)

If a child discloses that they have been, are being, or are in danger of being abused, Cranbourne East Primary School staff must treat the disclosure seriously and take immediate action by following the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

If a former student discloses historical abuse, all staff must act. If the former student is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, staff must follow the *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse*. If the student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, staff must still act by contacting Victoria Police.

All disclosures MUST be documented utilising the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template. Strategies and advice on how to handle a disclosure can be found on the Departments website: www.education.vic.gov.au/protect

Forming a Reasonable Belief

If Cranbourne East Primary School staff witness behaviour, have a suspicion or receive a disclosure of child abuse, that staff member needs to determine whether they have formed a Reasonable Belief that

a child is being abused or is at risk of being abused. A reasonable belief does not require proof (but needs to be more than a rumour).

All staff who believes that a child is being abused by any type of abuse or at risk of being abused must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools. Detailed information on each area (physical behavioural indicators) can be gained from DET's website- www.education.vic.gov.au/protect

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Staff members of Cranbourne East Primary School play a critical role in protecting children in their care; including-

- Staff must act, by following the four critical actions, as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- Staff must act if they form a suspicion or reasonable belief, even if they are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (eg if the victim or another person tells them about the abuse).
- Staff must use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STAFF RELATING TO CHILD SAFETY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION:

South Division: 1300 655 795
After hours, weekends, public holidays: 13 12 78

CHILD FIRST:

www.dhhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE:

000 or contact your local police station

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT:

(03) 9589 6266

STUDENT INCIDENT & RECOVERY UNIT:

(03) 9637 2934

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT & ETHICS BRANCH:

(03) 9637 2595

In the case of international students, the Principal must notify the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.

In the case of Koorie students, the Principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the Regional Koorie Education Support Officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.

Please note: whilst staff members may need to gather information to make a report, it is not the role of Cranbourne East Primary School staff to investigate abuse. This is left to Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection.

It is a requirement under Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools, for schools to keep clear and comprehensive notes on all observations, disclosures and other details that led them to suspect the abuse.

EVALUATION

Ratified by School Council: 19th October 2016

This policy is to be reviewed annually or as policy is amended.