



CHILD PROTECTION OBLICATIONS POLICY (including Mandatory Reporting)

1. INTRODUCTION

Shepparton Christian College is committed to child safety. All children at Shepparton Christian College should be safe, happy and empowered in regards to their own safety. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. Shepparton Christian College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

2. 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. As a school community, all adults have the responsibility to report suspected instances of child abuse.

3. AIMS

To ensure that a child's right to be safe is maintained and that each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.

4. BACKGROUND

All adults have a responsibility to protect children from abuse. Some people have legislated responsibilities.

Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting describes the legal obligation of certain professionals and community members to report incidences of child sexual abuse. These people are called mandated reporters. If the mandated reporters fail to report they may be fined and/or incarcerated. Section 182 (1) of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended in 2011) lists teachers and principals as mandatory reporters. This section states that mandatory reporters are obliged to notify protective services if they form a belief, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, or if the child's parents or guardians have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type.

Failure to Disclose

The offence for failure to disclose child sexual abuse came into force on 27 October 2014. This offence has been introduced as part of the Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014. This legislation requires that any adult (aged 18 and over) who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (aged under 16) disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse).

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

Failure to Protect

The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- All adults at Shepparton Christian College, be it teaching staff, other staff, contractors or volunteers are required to report suspected physical or sexual abuse.
 - Mandatory reporters must make a report as soon as practicable if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person 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.
 - All adults associated with Shepparton Christian College are expected to report suspected physical and/or sexual abuse regardless of mandatory reporting status, in line with "failure to protect" and "failure to report legislation".
- New staff will be informed of reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of reporting responsibilities annually.
- If a staff member has formed a belief that a young person is at risk, they must make a notification. Where practical, staff should discuss their concerns with the Principal (or in his/her absence, the Assistant Principal) of the College prior to making the report. Regardless of this discussion, if the person has a reasonable belief that a young person is at risk, they must make a report to DHS or police.

- Contact numbers
 - For child protection reports (including mandatory reporting), phone Department of Human Services as soon as possible on **03 9843 6000** or **after school hours crisis line 131278**
 - Shepparton police **03 5820 5777**
- The staff member is advised to keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- If a report (mandatory or otherwise) has been made, a detailed account of the reasons for the report must be submitted to the Principal.
- All information will form part of the school file but should be labelled confidential.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- 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 the Principal or his/her nominee.
- All incidents are to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, and neglect; teachers and other staff are encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
- If the alleged abuser is a member of staff or a volunteer, that staff member or volunteer will be suspended from their normal duties until such allegations are investigated in full.

6. EVALUATION/REVIEW

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

In developing the above policy the College Council has aligned these procedures to the Vision and Mission Statements where Biblical philosophies have been the underlying theme.

This policy was adopted at College Board Meeting ___July 2016___