



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>

Reportable Conduct Scheme

It is a mandated requirements that any incident that meets the threshold defined by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), will be reported and investigated in line with guidelines of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. In 2017, the Victorian Parliament amended the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 to create the basis for the CCYP and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>

Reporting to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formerly Department of Health and Human Services)

Information on reporting concerns in relation to child safety to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing can be found at this web address - <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- Child Safety is of vital importance. The following areas are required to be reported as soon as practical in line with this policy.
 - sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
 - sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
 - physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child

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- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
 - grooming of a child
 - significant neglect of a child.
- (<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/about-the-reportable-conduct-scheme/#TOC-4>)
- All members of the Shepparton Christian College community, be it teaching staff, other staff, contractors, volunteers or students are required to report suspected abuse in line with the previous point as soon as practical. The following is an outline of appropriate reporting mechanisms.
 - If a staff member has formed a belief that a young person is at risk, they must make a notification to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). 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 DFFH (formerly DHHS) or police.
 - Contact numbers
 - For child protection reports (including mandatory reporting), phone Department of Families, Fairness and Housing as soon as possible on **03 9843 6000 or after school hours crisis line 131278**
 - Shepparton police **03 5820 5777**
 - If it is felt that a child is at immediate risk, this should be reported to Victoria Police immediately
 - When a belief has been formed, the staff member who forms the belief must make detailed notes about the belief and how they came to form the belief as well as any actions taken by the staff member.
 - The school Principal must be notified as soon as practical, and no later than 24 hours after forming a belief. The Principal is responsible for promptly managing and ensuring there is a prompt and appropriate response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the allegations are taken seriously. In the absence of the Principal, the Assistant Principal undertakes this responsibility. If the allegation is against the Principal, the Board Chair and Assistant Principal jointly take on this responsibility.
 - The Principal is responsible for ensuring that a child, connected to an allegation of abuse, is protected and safe whilst the allegation is being resolved. In the absence of the Principal, the Assistant Principal undertakes this responsibility. If the allegation is against the Principal, the Board Chair and Assistant Principal jointly take on this responsibility.
 - Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this 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.
 - Suspect or suspicious behaviours need to be reported to the Principal regardless of if there is a belief that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. Consideration for “grooming” behaviours is important.

- Where a child raises an allegation of inappropriate behaviour towards themselves or towards another child, these allegations are to be taken seriously.
 - If the allegations made include enough detail to form a belief that abuse has, or is likely to occur, reports need to be made to DFFH and/or Victoria police as outlined earlier in this document.
- NOTE: All adults associated with Shepparton Christian College are expected to report suspected physical and/or sexual abuse regardless of their position or status within our community.
- Where an allegation of inappropriate behaviour of a member towards a child is historic in nature, the allegations will be taken seriously, and where appropriate, reported to DFFH, Victoria Police and the Commission for Children and Young People as appropriate for the circumstances.
- If an allegation of abuse or abusive behaviour of an adult towards a young person is made, this will be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People in line with the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Principal is responsible for ensuring this report is made.
- Where an allegation is deemed to have met the requirements of the threshold defined by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), will be investigated as per the recommendations and guidelines of the CCYP. If in doubt, the CCYP will be contacted for advice on what to do.
 - Contact numbers
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 - Shepparton police **03 5820 5777**
 - Commission for Children and Young People - 8601 5281
- New staff will be informed of reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of reporting responsibilities annually.
- Staff members are required 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 Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), 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.

- 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 – SEPTEMBER 2021