



CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS 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 physical or sexual abuse. These people are called mandated reporters and include teachers, principals and school counsellors. If the mandated reporters fail to report they may be fined and/or incarcerated. 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, and the child's parents or guardians have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type.

Failure to Disclose

It is a legal requirement 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). Failure to disclose this information may be a criminal offence which can result in imprisonment.

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

Failure to Protect

If a person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of our organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with our organisation, and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, they must take all reasonable steps to do so. If that person in a position of authority fails to take appropriate action to address the risk, they may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face imprisonment.

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

Grooming

Being aware of the offence of grooming and ensuring measures are in place to reduce risks associated with this including via online means. Our Staff Code of Conduct seeks to ensure that conversations are not engaged in via written or electronic means including phone, email, social media, text message or chat programs outside of a school context. For further information regarding grooming see:

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence>

Reportable Conduct Scheme

Should allegations of child abuse, or other child-related misconduct, be made against any staff, volunteers or contractors, it is a mandated requirement that these incidents be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). These incidents will be investigated in line with the guidelines of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. There are five types of reportable conduct that are required to be reported as soon as practical in line with this policy:

1. sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
2. sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
3. physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
4. any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
5. significant neglect of a child

<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 relating to reporting child safety concerns 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

All members of the Shepparton Christian College community, be it staff, volunteers, contractors, parents or students are required to report suspected abuse 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 notify the appropriate authorities in line with the Four Critical Actions for Schools. 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.
 - Contact numbers
 - For child protection reports (including mandatory reporting), contact Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) as soon as possible on **1300 360 391**, or after school hours crisis line **13 12 78**
 - If a child is at immediate risk of harm, or the belief relates to sexual abuse, contact Shepparton police on **03 5820 5777**
 - Where a child is not subject to abuse but there are other significant concerns relating to a child's wellbeing, contact Orange Door **1800 634 245**
- If it is believed that a child is at immediate risk, this should be reported to Victoria Police immediately
- The Principal must be notified as soon as practical, and no later than 24 hours after forming a belief. The Principal is responsible for 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 the child at risk 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.
- When a person forms a belief, they must make detailed notes about how they came to form the belief as well as any actions they have taken. 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 reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential. All information will form part of the school file but should be labelled confidential.
- All incidents are to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- Staff members are required to keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.

- New staff will be informed of reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
 - Staff will be reminded of reporting responsibilities annually.
- 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.
 - In accordance with the Code of Conduct, 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 another child, these allegations are to be taken seriously.
 - If the allegations result in forming a belief that abuse has, or is likely to occur, reports need to be made to DFFH and/or Victoria police as outlined above.
 - Where an allegation of inappropriate behaviour of a member of staff, volunteer or contractor 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 (CCYP) 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 CCYP, it will be investigated as per the recommendations and guidelines of the CCYP. If in doubt, contact the CCYP for advice on **1300 782 978**.
 - If the alleged abuser is a member of staff, volunteer or contractor, that person will be suspended from their normal duties until such allegations are investigated in full.

6. EVALUATION/REVIEW

- This policy will be reviewed at least once every two years.

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 – JUNE 2022