
Westgarth Primary School is a community of students, staff, friends and family working together to create a diverse, engaging and respectful learning environment.

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 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 indicators that a child or young person may be in need of protection.
- make a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law and fulfil their duty of care.

Actions

- All members of the Teaching Service who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse are mandated by law to report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.
- All other school staff members who form reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse should report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, or is displaying sexual abusive behaviours and is in need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.
- A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation.
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.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures.

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- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities and will be provided with the required Mandatory Reporting training.
- 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.
- If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child they should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Child First.
- The teacher and/or the Principal class officer will contact the Department of Human Services by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on:
North division Intake - 1300 664 977 or after school hours crisis line 131278
- Members of the Victoria Police, Department of Health and 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.
- Comprehensive notes that are dated remain filed in the Principal's office and must include:
 - information that has led to concerns about the child's safety (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)
 - the source of this information (e.g. observation of behaviour, report from child or another person)
 - the actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHHS Child Protection etc.).
 - 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, if known.
 - the date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported
 - the name and position of the person who made the report and the person who received the report.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- Notify relevant school staff and/or Department staff of a report to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST. For Victorian government schools, the allegations must be reported to the:
 - principal or member of the school leadership team
 - Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589 6266
 - relevant Regional Office
 - Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit on (03) 9637 2934 or (03) 9637 2487.
 - 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.

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- In the case of Koorie students, the principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the regional Koorie support officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.
- All incidents 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 are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the principal.
- Counselling will be offered to any staff member involved in the Mandatory Reporting process through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 1300 361 008

Evaluation

The student wellbeing coordinator and Principal will monitor any situations of reporting and will ensure support services are in place to assist the child and staff. This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four year review cycle.

*For further reference refer to DET for detailed instructions of the processes to follow:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx#ink84>*

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