



Mandatory Reporting Policy 2018

Rationale:

As members of a community, Mentone Girls' Secondary College staff all have a moral obligation to protect any child under our care and supervision from foreseeable harm. As a school staff members you play a critical role in protecting children and must meet a range of legal obligations to identify, respond and report child abuse.

This includes support for all impacted students, including situations involving student sexual offending. You must provide support for both the alleged victim and the student who has allegedly engaged in the offending. The easiest way to comply with your legal and moral obligations is to remember that you must report any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.

This includes abuse that has, or is suspected to have, taken place within or outside of school grounds and hours. If in doubt, report your concerns IMMEDIATELY to a Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Sub-school leader, Student Manager, Assistant Principal or Principal.

For the purposes of this policy child abuse includes – (a) any act committed against a child involving – (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and (b) the infliction, on a child, of – (i) physical violence; or (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and (c) serious neglect of a child.

Aims:

To ensure all Mentone Girls' Secondary College staff are aware of their mandatory requirement to report that a child or young person is in need from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse. Once a year the Department will require all staff members to complete the online training modules related to Mandatory reporting.

Implementation:

Duty of care

All school staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable injury to children and young people under the care. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect their safety, health and wellbeing. Your Duty of Care also extends to students who are:

Aged 17 years and over

In circumstances where you suspect that a student over the age of 17 is subject to abuse you should still follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools. Although DHHS Child Protection work with children under 17 they can still be contacted with concerns relating to students 17 and over for referral and advice.

Involved in student sexual offending

You have a duty of care towards all students involved in student sexual offending, including the alleged victim, assailant and any other students in the school who may have witnessed and/or been affected by the abusive behaviour.

A victim of grooming

What is grooming? The offence of grooming concerns:

- predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of
- Facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
- Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the
- Purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

When must I act?

You must act as soon as you witness and incident of form a reasonable belief that a child has been or is at risk of being abused. This section steps you through when and how to respond if you:

Witness an incident

Form a suspicion

Receive a disclosure from a current student

Receive a disclosure from a former student

Form a reasonable belief

Document your actions

As a school staff member, you must keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse. It is strongly recommended that you use the responding to child abuse template (link and sample at end of this policy)

Strategies for managing a disclosure

When managing a disclosure of abuse or student sexual offending, it is important that you respond in an appropriate and supportive manner.

All disclosures of abuse must be taken seriously and addressed immediately by following the four critical actions above.

Confidentiality

When a disclosure of abuse is made and/or you are concerned that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused, you must inform the student that their confidentiality cannot be maintained.

This should be done in language appropriate to the student's age and stage of development.

For example:

To a younger student:

'I am not going to be able to keep your story a secret. I really have to tell someone who is going to be able to help you.'

To an older student:

'The information you have given me has made me very concerned for your welfare and I need to tell you that it is my responsibility to report this information to help you get some assistance.'

When managing a disclosure you should:

- listen to the child and allow them to speak
- stay calm and not display expressions of panic or shock
- use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary
- be patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the child that they are doing the right thing in telling you about what has happened and that it is not their fault
- do not ask leading questions, but instead, gently ask, 'What happened next?' rather than 'Why?'
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was the right thing to do use verbal facilitators such as, 'Okay, I see', restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way
- tell the child you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate.

When managing a disclosure you should not:

- ask questions that are investigative and potentially invasive. This may make the child feel uncomfortable and cause the child to withdraw
- go over the information time and time again (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority).

Privacy and information sharing

As a school staff member you are permitted to share certain information about a child who has been impacted by abuse. For guidance on the specific information sharing requirements, see: [Privacy and information sharing](#)

Resources

Contacts

DHHS Child Protection – 24 hour services 131 278

Victoria Police – 000

Department of Education and Training Security Services Unit – 9603 7999

Relevant authorities

DHHS Child Protection

Victoria Police - Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT)

Child FIRST

Reporting child abuse OR sexual abuse –links

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/report.aspx>
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence>

Other Relevant Policies and documents

2018 MGSC Child Safety Policy

2018 MGSC Child Safety Code of Conduct

[VRQA Child Safe Standards](#)

Evaluation:

4 | This policy was last reviewed by School Council in: December of 2018.