

Murrayville Community College Mandatory Reporting Policy

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.
- All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, and neglect.
- Mandatory reporting may relate to sexual harassment which is unlawful behaviour under the Commonwealth Sex discrimination Act (1984) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995).
- Quite apart from mandatory reporting requirements, a teacher has a concurrent duty of care to protect a student from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. A breach of this duty of care may lead to legal action.
- The major emphasis is on prevention, with the goal of providing population based strategies as well targeted programs to provide young people with the skills and strategies to enhance their resilience.

Aims:

- To ensure Murrayville Community College complies with the Mandatory Reporting requirements of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and other legislation including:
 - being aware of their legal responsibilities and DEECD's policy and procedures
 - ensuring staff are trained in recognising potential child abuse or neglect and responding appropriately
 - ensuring critical incidents are immediately reported to the Emergency and Security Management Unit.

Implementation:

- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- An annual professional learning session is held on protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people (mandatory reporting protocol).
- All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his / her absence, a Leading Teacher. Proof is not required.
- Reasonable grounds for reporting child abuse are when
 - A child informs a teacher that he / she has been abused
 - Someone else informs a teacher that a child has been abused
 - A child informs a teacher that he /she knows someone who has been abused
 - A teacher's own observations lead to suspicions that a child has suffered abuse.
- The teacher and / or the Principal / Leading Teacher will contact the Department of Human Services and the Emergency and Security Management Unit on (03) 9589 6266 (24 hours) as soon as possible to make an official notification. (The Emergency and Security Management Unit will notify the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit of any incidents of a sexual nature as soon as it is reported by the school. The Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit is available 24-hours a day, and immediately liaises with the School, and where required, the regional office, the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (SOCA) Unit or the Department of Human Services, Child Protection or the Conduct and Ethics Branch.)
- The school will not interview the child; the role is only to gather sufficient facts to make the report.

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- 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.
- It is important that, after a critical incident occurs or is disclosed, the school develops strategies to support all students who may have been involved in or impacted on by the incident. Management Support Plans and Supportive Behaviour Management Plans are the most effective strategy to ensure appropriate support occurs. This plan should be developed in consultation with relevant school staff and parents/carers. It is also important to involve in the planning process any external organisations that are providing support to students.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents will 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 or Student Welfare Coordinator.
- In some cases, students will disclose abuse or neglect including allegations of sexual assault that may have occurred sometime in the past. In some cases, the incident disclosed may have occurred a number of years ago and may have occurred off-site or within a family or community context. These disclosures should still be responded to immediately. The time elapsed between the incident occurring and its disclosure is not relevant. Appropriate actions and support processes must still be undertaken.
- All allegations that a teacher or school employee has committed a sexual assault must be reported directly to the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (SOCA) Unit and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Conduct and Ethics Branch, which provides advice about misconduct issues on (03) 9637 2594 or 9637 2595.
The Emergency and Security Management Unit should also be notified.
- The Principal will maintain ongoing contact with the Regional Office. The Principal may be in contact with the Regional Director or Assistant Regional Director, Regional Network Leaders, regional student wellbeing staff or Regional Emergency Management Coordinator.

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed annually.

When First Approved: 19th May 2014

When Reviewed / Modified: 19th June 2017

References:

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/referenceguide/enviro/4_6.htm
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/default.htm>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/sciau.htm>
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/referenceguide/management/6_15.htm