

Mandatory Reporting Policy

INTRODUCTION

This policy is intended to assist all staff at Bairnsdale Christian Community School to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to Child protection and mandatory protection. In particular this policy is in place to support the students in our care and the teachers who have a greater duty of care.

This policy is designed to reflect current legislation relating to child protection and mandatory protection. While some of the scope and implementation has changed teachers remain gazetted mandatory reporters.

Associated Principles:

Bairnsdale Christian Community School culture is one which endeavours to show God's love and grace in all circumstances. According to the vision of the school we will foster a nurturing environment where students can learn and develop free of disturbing, bullying or harassing behaviour.

Policy Statement:

As a School BCCS endeavours to assist all staff members to be aware of their professional roles and responsibilities including those relating to Child Protection and Duty of Care

As a School BCCS will endeavour to foster a culture of welfare and well being that covers personal safety and forms of abuse as a preventative strategy.

As a School BCCS will inform the staff, students and parents of its policies relating to child protection and Duty of Care through parent teacher meetings, community discussions and the school newsletter.

As a Teacher According to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – mandatory reporters include nurses and VIT registered teachers and those who have been granted permission to teach. It is important to note that the responsibility as a teacher is not confined to the workplace or those students who are ordinarily under your direct supervision. This policy and associated procedures are designed to support staff and students at Bairnsdale Christian Community School.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A REGISTERED TEACHER IN VICTORIA

Include the following:

- It is your responsibility as a registered teacher in Victoria to share information with 'Child First' or 'Child Protection' that will assist in promoting a vulnerable child's safety and development and offer the child's family assistance and services they may need
- If you believe on reasonable grounds that a child is suffering physical or sexual abuse, it is your professional and legal responsibility to make a mandatory report to child protection (who do have statutory powers)
- If you have significant concern for the wellbeing of a vulnerable child, it is your professional responsibility to make a referral to Child First (who do not have statutory powers). It is encouraged that you first try to seek the child or the parent/s consent to approach family services
- At no time must a child be put at risk of further harm

- If attempting to gain consent could put the child, yourself or someone else at risk of harm, family services should be contacted without gaining consent.

INFORMATION SHARING

A referral to Child FIRST or report to Child Protection will require sharing information to assist family services in making an initial assessment. Information that can be shared includes:

- any known history of the child suffering harm
- any period the child has been cared for by other people
- any significant issues relating to the child's brothers or sisters
- the child's physical health, including any medical treatment needs
- any psychological and emotional difficulties the child may have
- the child's education, including any special educational needs
- any disabilities the child may have, including the care they may need as a result
- any known allergies and dietary requirements of the child
- any significant health problems of the child's parents
- whether a parent has a mental illness, substance abuse problem, disability or a history of family violence
- whether a parent is receiving treatment for any of the above issues and the outcomes of this
- information about a person in the household who may pose a risk to the child

Information shared must show your belief that the child's family life is causing adverse effects on that child's safety and development and not be founded on prejudice, intolerance or bias.

TEACHER PROTECTION RE INFORMATION SHARING

It is a provision that information shared does not breach any privacy legislation such as the Information Privacy Act 2000.

You may be legally called upon to give information on a child who is subject to a Children's Court Protection Order. Otherwise, information sharing is not legal but it is encouraged.

Information shared in good faith cannot be penalised by legal or professional consequences.

You cannot be successfully sued or suffer any official consequences to your professional work for sharing information with family services.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Mandatory Reporting policy for the School will be revisited annually to ensure that all staff are aware of their obligations under the legislation mentioned above and, more importantly so that they are clear on what they need to do to ensure each of the children in the School are cared for and remain in a safe environment. This will take place, ordinarily, during the first meetings for the year before the academic year begins for students. As well when various situations arise during the year the policy will be read, associated references consulted and advice sought to determine the steps to be taken. Non teaching staff are also to be informed of the process they should follow should they have any concerns.
- During the annual briefing staff are to be reminded of what constitutes child abuse and what to look for as indicators of any harm being suffered. (cf Appendix 2 p 35 – 41 - *Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People – DEECD & DHS May 2010*)
- The following steps are to be followed if any Staff have concerns:
 - Record any observations you have made, disclosures received or concerns you have been made aware of.

- Immediately or as soon as is practicable inform the principal for advice and/or to plan appropriate response using: *A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST* found in the manual referred to above or on the website cited above.
- At all times keep a written record of all dealings and discussions with the issue.
- Non teaching/non mandated staff may report their concerns to the principal or to a mandated staff member. They may also report their concerns directly to Child Protection/ Child First using the step-by-step guide.
- The principal will ensure there is a time of debrief once action has been taken and/or the issue concluded.

RELATED LEGISLATION

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

REFERENCES

Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People – DEECD & DHS May 2010

WEBSITES

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>
- <http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/family-services/child-first>

ESSENTIAL CONTACT NUMBERS

- Child First -East Gippsland 51520052
- Child Protection 1800 020202
5177 2500 (Regional Office)
131 278 (After Hours)