

Rowville Primary School Mandatory Reporting Policy



PURPOSE

- To ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect.
- To ensure that school staff understand their mandated obligations in relation to child abuse or neglect.

Rationale

The Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) states that teachers must report to the Department of Human Services when they form 'a belief on reasonable grounds' that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Child abuse and neglect may be the result of one abusive or neglectful incident or the cumulative result of many instances or a general pattern of behaviour or circumstances.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to a situation in which a child suffers or is likely to suffer, significant harm from an injury inflicted by the child's parent/carer. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive interaction with a child. Physical indicators include:

- Bruises or welts in different stages of healing in areas not easily injured by falling
- Burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Lacerations and abrasions
- Poisoning

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is not always identified through physical indicators. A young person may disclose sexual abuse to a trusted teacher or may engage in behaviours that are not developmentally appropriate. Sexual abuse includes those situations where:

- A Parent/carer, family member or someone in charge of the care of a child involves the child in sexual activity.
- A parent/carer is unable to protect the child from sexual assault.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or subjected to threats, or verbal hostility. The child might be called derogatory names, humiliated, ignored over long periods of time or isolated from social relationships to such an extent that the child's behaviour is disturbed. Emotional abuse is most prevalent as a consequence of other forms of abuse or neglect. Emotional abuse can cause delay in social, physical or emotional development.

Neglect

Neglect includes the failure to provide an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to such a degree that the child's health and development are placed at serious risk. A child is neglected if they are left uncared for over long periods of time or abandoned.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. As part of their initial induction to the school, staff will be informed of child protection reporting requirements by this policy (and the Child Protection Reporting Policy, Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct) and Department of Education and Training policy which will be provided with supporting documentation in their staff manual.

2. If any person in the course of their duties, forms the opinion that a child has suffered harm as a result of abuse or neglect they may consult with the Principal or Assistant Principal to determine if there is sufficient information to 'form a belief on reasonable grounds' that a mandatory report is required. Reasonable grounds includes:
 - A child telling a staff member they have been abused
 - Someone else telling the teacher that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused
 - A child telling the teacher that they know someone who has been abused (often that may be themselves)
 - The teachers own observation of a particular child's behaviour, injuries or knowledge of the child leads them to suspect that abuse or neglect is occurring.
3. All mandatory reporters will supply the following information when making a mandatory report:
 - Details (name, date of birth, address)
 - Indicators of harm (reasons for forming belief that the injury or harm is the result of abuse)
 - Safety Assessment (assessment of the immediate danger of the child)
 - Injury (description of injury of behaviour)
 - Other Services (other services/agencies involved with Child's family)
 - Other Relevant Family Information (cultural, language, disability)
4. Staff members **do not require** the permission of parents, carers or guardians to make a report to Child Protection, nor are they required to tell parents, carers or guardians that they have done so.
5. Members of the school community who 'form a belief on reasonable grounds' that a mandatory report is required, may report their concerns to Child Protection or Victoria Police.
6. The Principal or the Assistant Principal will be the point of contact by Child Protection workers when discussing case matters or arranging interviews with students on school property.
7. It is the role of the Department of Human Services Child Protection to determine whether a belief should be investigated for proof.

EVALUATION

1. All staff members will be provided with a copy of the Mandatory Reporting Policy
2. Staff members will be supported in the implementation of the Policy.
3. The Policy will be reviewed every two years.