

St Elizabeth's is a Child Safe environment where all are engaged in keeping children safe.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that St. Elizabeth's children are kept safe from all types of harm. This has a strong link with our school vision which encourages us to stand up for the Gospel values of freedom, love, justice, integrity and forgiveness.

This policy provides staff with a consistent set of procedures to follow when making a notification of suspected abuse. The intent of this policy is to clarify the action/s to be taken in relation to maintaining the highest duty of care to our children.

Definitions

Definition of Child Abuse

The Department of Human Services publication Reporting Child Abuse (June 1999) defines child abuse as an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's (hereinafter called "child's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can occur as a result of a single incident, but often takes place over time.

In Victoria, a child or young person is someone under 17 years of age.

The definition of child abuse includes:

Physical injury which results from abuse or neglect. This refers to a situation in which a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment, or physically aggressive treatment of a child.

Sexual abuse, which occurs when an adult or someone stronger and/or older than the child uses power or authority over the child in order to influence the child in sexual activity, and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved.

Emotional abuse, which occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, being put down, continual coldness from the parent or caregiver to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth and development.

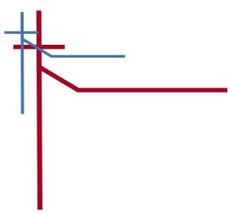
Neglect, which is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.

Implementation

Making a Report

Step 1

Individual teachers should make observations and keep note of the concerns that exist that have led them to form the belief that a report is necessary.



A report is **required** when

- A teacher believes, based on reasonable grounds, that a child under the age of 17 years has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse AND
- The child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from such harm.
- This belief and the reasonable grounds for forming it should be reported to Child Protection Services as soon as practicable after forming the belief.
- AND after each occasion on which they become aware of any further grounds for the belief.
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It is permissible for a teacher to ask a child sufficient questions to establish a reasonable belief, but care should be taken not to ask leading questions. It is advised that teachers enlist the support of the Principal, Deputy Principal or member of the leadership team, in any such questioning.

Step 2

If possible these concerns should be discussed, with the Principal, Deputy Principal or a member of the Leadership team. It is essential that reports are managed in a caring, supporting and confidential manner and that the reporting teacher be supported.

Written records should be kept.

The incident shall not be disclosed to any other person. The identity or information with potential to indicate the identity of, the notifying individual must remain confidential.

This information will be kept in a confidential Incident Register.

Step 3

If there is uncertainty about the need for a mandatory report to Child Protection Services, the teacher or his/her delegate should ring the following for advice:

Protective Services Regional Offices: Department of Human Services (DHS) Box Hill

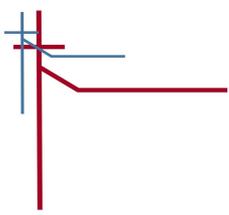
Phone: 9843-6000

Child Protection Crisis Line 131 278 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Step 4

After these internal discussions, the teacher or principal should ring a report through to Child Protection Services. The following information will be required:

- The child's name, age and address
- Your reason for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse.
- Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child. (Information will be sought about the whereabouts of the alleged abuser)
- Your description of the injury or behaviour observed. The current whereabouts of the child.
- Any other information you have about the family.



Step 5

It should then be decided who else, if anyone, should be informed. The need for confidentiality should be remembered at all times in the interest of the child and family. Only where the welfare of the child or the notifier will be affected should the matter be discussed with anyone else.

If, following a report, a family approaches the school; it is recommended that any interview or discussion be conducted with a minimum of 2 school staff members present. The focus of such a meeting should be on the welfare of the child, not on justifying the actions of the teacher/s involved. This meeting must be documented.

Step 6

Support for the reporting teacher/s and the student who is the cause for concern and anyone else affected should be arranged. Support should continue to be provided if necessary, as the role of the teacher with the student and Child Protection Services may be ongoing.