

## MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

### Context

Christian Brothers' College St Kilda (CBC St Kilda) is a Catholic school for girls and boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established in 1878. CBC St Kilda is committed to providing a caring, supportive and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known. As a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition, our Christian values are those expressed in the Touchstones of our governing body, Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA): Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, Justice and Solidarity. The charism of Blessed Edmund Rice expressed through these touchstones, underpins our continued commitment to a safe and inclusive environment for all, providing a preferential option to those at the margins, to grow in empathy and to respond in faith and action.

### Rationale

This Policy provides the framework for:

- ensuring that mandatory reports are made in a timely and efficient manner;
- the creation of a positive and robust child safety culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College; and
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety and protection in Victoria, most especially Ministerial Order 870.

### Principles

The Children, Youth and Families Act (Vic) 2005 (CYFA) requires that mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection when they believe that a child (aged under 17) is in need of protection from significant harm from physical injury or sexual abuse.

If a report is made by mandatory reporters in accordance with CYFA mandatory reporting obligations, an additional report to the Police under section 327 of the Crimes Act (Vic)1958 may not be required unless you have further information.

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the Child Abuse Key Risk Indicators and The Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence documents. This Policy is designed to be published within the College intranet and portal platform, referenced in other mediums, as appropriate, and used in the induction of new staff, volunteers and third party and educational service providers.

### Scope

This Policy applies to all College employees, board members, students, parents and guardians, third party service providers, volunteers and contractors involved in the College environment.

## **Policy Statement**

### Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

CBC St Kilda is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At CBC St Kilda we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. The College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe. Further, students at the College, through our actions, processes and support, are empowered to have voice and to take action for their own care.

### What Gives Rise to a Mandatory Report

A mandatory report must be made when you form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection where the child 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 harm of that type.

### What is Reasonable Grounds

The concept of 'reasonable grounds' requires you to consider whether another person, when faced with similar information, would also draw the same conclusion. It does not mean reporters are required to be certain, but rather reporters should ensure their concerns are well founded and based on information from a reliable source. There may be reasonable grounds for forming such a belief if:

- A child states they have been physically or sexually abused
- A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused
- Someone who knows the child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- A child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused
- The staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on a child's safety, stability or development
- The staff member observes signs of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision; or

- A child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

Grounds for belief include matters of which a person has become aware and any opinions based on those matters.

### What is Significant

'Significant' means that which is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of a family's consent. What is 'significant' is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child's safety, welfare or wellbeing.

Significant harm can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these. To assist in identifying physical injury or sexual abuse, refer to the College's information relating to Child Abuse – Definitions and Key Risk Indicators.

### Parents Have Not Protected, or Are Unlikely to Protect, the Child from Harm of That Type

A parent who 'has not protected, or is unlikely to protect that child from harm of that type' includes a parent who wants to protect his or her child from harm, but lacks the means to. It also includes a parent who has the means to protect his or her child from harm, but does not want to.

A parent may be rendered 'unlikely to protect' that child for many reasons. For example:

- That parent does not, or refuses to recognise that harm is occurring; or
- That parent or child may be subject to domestic violence; or
- That parent's partner may be abusive or harmful to the child.

'Parent' includes:

- The child's father
- The child's mother
- The spouse of the mother or father of the child
- The domestic partner of the father or mother of the child
- A person who has custody of the child
- A person who is named as the father on the child's birth certificate
- A person who acknowledges that he is the father of the child by an instrument under the Status of Children Act (Vic)1974; and
- A person in respect of whom a court has made a declaration or a finding or order that the person is the father of the child.

### Who Must Make a Mandatory Report

Mandatory reporters are defined by the CYFA and include:

- Teachers
- The Principal

- Medical practitioners; and
- Nurses.

It is the responsibility of other staff, Volunteers or members of the College community to check whether they are Mandatory Reporters under child protection legislation.

If you are not a Mandatory Reporter, you still have the option of making a report to DHHS under the CYFA if you believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. The CYFA states that any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of harm should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection. All College staff who have concerns that a student may be in need of protection or may have been the victim of a sexual offence, should notify a College Child Safety Officer as soon as possible to discuss their concerns.

A Mandatory Reporter must make a report even if the Child Safety Officer does not share their belief that a report must be made.

## **Procedures**

### What to Report and By When

- A report becomes mandatory as soon as is practicable after forming the belief.
- A report must include details of the belief, and the reasonable grounds of that belief.
- Additional reports must be made on each occasion where you become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

Please refer to the Victorian Department of Education's Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child FIRST (Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Team) for guidance on making a decision on whether to report.

### How to Make a Report

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

A report to DHHS Child Protection should be considered if the staff member forms the view the child needs protection because:

- The harm or risk of harm has a serious impact on the child's immediate safety, stability or development; or
- The harm or risk of harm is persistent and entrenched and is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, stability and development; or
- The child's parents cannot or will not protect the child from harm.

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the 24-hour Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78.

Concerns that require immediate attention should be made to the local or regional Human Services Child Protection office, or the After-Hours Child Protection Emergency Services on 13 12 78.

### What if you Believe there is no Reasonable Belief

If you don't have a reasonable belief about a child, but still have concerns, you can refer the matter to a College Child Safety Officer.

There is also the option to refer the matter to Child FIRST.

A referral to Child FIRST should be considered if a staff member forms the view that the concerns have a low-to-moderate impact on the child and the immediate safety of the child is not compromised.

A referral can be made when the following factors may affect a child:

- Significant parenting problems
- Family conflict
- A family member's physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- Isolated or unsupported families; or
- Significant social or economic disadvantage.

### What Happens After a Report is Made

After receiving a report, DHHS Child Protection may seek further information, usually from professionals who may also be involved with the child or family, to determine whether further action is required. In most cases, DHHS Child Protection will inform the reporter of the outcome of the report.

After receiving a referral, Child FIRST may consult an experienced community-based Child Protection practitioner in their assessment. The assessment may lead to the involvement of a local family services organisation.

In most cases, Child FIRST will inform the referrer of the outcome of the referral.

Child FIRST must report the matter to DHHS Child Protection if they form the view the child is in need of protection.

Reports made to the Police will be dealt with in accordance with Police practice.

### International Students

The College must notify the VRQA if the alleged abuse relates to an international student and the College has issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter in relation to that student thereby assuming responsibility for approving the student's accommodation, support and general welfare.

### **Record Keeping Obligations**

For the College's record keeping obligations relating to child protection incidents, please refer to Child Protection Record Keeping.

### **CBC St Kilda Child Safety Team**

All DHHS Child Protection and Child FIRST reports must be communicated to all members of the College Child Safety Team prior to, or at the time a report is made. CBC St Kilda's Child Safety Team is comprised of the following College Child Safety Officers:

- Terry Blizzard, Principal
- Shaun Lancashire, Deputy Principal (Senior Child Safety Officer)
- Catherine McMahon, Student Counsellor
- Chris Pye, Director of Students

**Please be aware that consulting/communicating with a Child Safety Officer does not change any obligation you have under legislation to report to an external authority.**

The Principal or Deputy Principal reports all child safety incidents to the College's governing body, Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA), Director of Safeguarding and Southern Regional Director.

### **Breaches of this policy**

If you believe that the College has breached its obligations, please contact the Principal or the College governing body, EREA in writing or by telephone. EREA and/or the College will investigate your notification and will inform you of the outcome as soon as is practicable after a decision has been made.

A breach of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action including possible termination of employment or appointment and/or referral to the appropriate authorities.

### **References**

- Child Protection and Safety Policy
- Child Protection Program
- DHHS Mandatory reporting to Child Protection Fact Sheet

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed December 2021.