



THE LAKES SOUTH MORANG P-9 SCHOOL MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Rationale:

- The Children, Youth and families Act 2005 (VIC) outlines the legal responsibilities of Principals and registered teachers in relation to the mandatory reporting for child abuse. For the purposes of this policy, a child is any person 17 years of age or under. As part of the Child Safety expectations, The Lakes South Morang P – 9 School is committed to supporting the wellbeing of its students and protecting them from child abuse. The Lakes South Morang P-9 School has a zero tolerance of child abuse in any forms. Principals and registered teachers are legally required to notify protective services if they form a belief, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer harm as a result of physical injury, neglect or sexual abuse, or if the child's parents or guardians have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type.

Aims:

- The Lakes assists its teaching staff in meeting its obligations under the mandatory reporting of child abuse legislation. It is therefore imperative that reports to Child Protection are co-ordinated in a central manner within the school to ensure that:
 - The legal responsibilities of both the teacher and the Principal are carried out and documented.
 - All appropriate personnel are informed.
 - Suspended cases are reported in an appropriate way and teachers receive ongoing feedback, advice and support.
 - While non-teaching staff members are not mandated legally, they should follow the processes set out in this policy, specifically those related to forming a belief.

Implementation:

- At The Lakes South Morang P -9 School:
 - All staff are reminded through staff briefings, through the student wellbeing handbook and via the school handbook, of their mandatory reporting responsibilities.
 - New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction.
 - The Lakes Mandatory Reporting Policy is available to all staff via the staff server.
 - Staff to successfully complete annual DET mandatory reporting training online.
- The following procedures are undertaken in relation to mandatory reporting;

1. Forming a Belief

When a registered teacher forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical injury, neglect or sexual abuse, he/she must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable, in accordance with the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)*

A reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection is likely to be formed in circumstances where:

- A child discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.
- A relative, friend or acquaintance states that a child has been neglected, sexually abused or non- accidentally injured or,

- Professional observations of the child's physical condition or behaviours lead to a reasonable suspicion that the child has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury, neglect or sexual abuse.
- If a teacher suspects that a child is in need of protection it is essential that he/she document all concerns and observations in a confidential file. This process of documentation may occur over a period of time.
- The concerns and observations regarding the suspected physical injury, neglect or sexual abuse of a child must be discussed with the Assistant Principal or Principal.
- Information about child abuse must remain confidential and the teacher must not discuss this information with anyone other than the relevant Student Welfare Coordinator, Assistant Principal and/or Principal.
- Teachers must make every effort to contact the relevant Student Welfare Coordinator, Assistant Principal or Principal on the day that a reasonable belief is formed to avoid delay in contacting Child Protection and Child FIRST.
- The teacher must document the report which will be filed in the securely locked Student Welfare Office.

2. Reporting to Relevant Agencies

The two relevant agencies are **Child Protection** and **Child FIRST**.

- If the teacher believes that the child is in need of protection, then he/she must make a report. The Principal or relevant Assistant Principal and/or the teacher will notify **Child Protection**.
- Principals and/or teachers can share information and make a referral to Child FIRST when they have a significant concern for a child's wellbeing, but do not believe that the child needs protection.
- The Principal and/or teacher does not have to be able to prove that the child has been abused before notifying protective services.
- An attempt is to be made to file a report on the same day as the belief is formed.
- If the Principal or Assistant Principal does not share the belief that a child is in need of protection and does not notify Child Protection, the teacher must still report the child abuse. It is school policy that the teacher must inform the Principal that he/she has made a report.
- Members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will advise staff and children as to their roles and responsibilities during the interview process, this may include the presence of the Principal and/or the Assistant Principal and the Student Welfare Coordinator being present during the interview process.
- A mandated notifier is both legally and professionally protected, which means that he/she cannot be successfully sued or subjected to any legal liability, nor can he/she be disciplined for unprofessional conduct. The mandatory reporter's identity is usually protected under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)*. Exceptions include when the choice is made to inform the child or the child's parents/guardians or when the court decides that evidence is required to be given.
- **Child FIRST** and **Child Protection** can consult all Victorian Principals and teachers when they are deciding how best to respond to a referral or a report they receive. Any information provided should relate directly to the teachers concerns and should not be based on second hand information.
- The Student Wellbeing and Engagement Executive will be responsible for implementing an Action Plan that incorporates a range of support mechanisms that cater for the affected student's wellbeing at The Lakes.

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy has endorsed been by School Council 20/06/2017

The Lakes South Morang P-9 School Child Safety Statement:

To thrive, children need a safe and supportive environment at school, at home and in the broader community; no exceptions. At The Lakes South Morang P-9 School, we believe meeting the physical and emotional needs of our students is paramount in laying the foundations for a fulfilling future. We pledge to provide an environment that has zero tolerance to child abuse and will strive to work in partnership with our parents and community members to keep our students safe every day, in every way.