

St. Francis of Assisi Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Bishop of Sandhurst and is owned, operated and governed by Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Ltd).

1. Purpose

Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, and they are safe and feel safe (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety, 2022).

This policy sets out the obligations and procedures for St. Francis of Assisi Primary School staff in relation to mandatory reporting.

2. Mandatory reporters

2.1 Mandatory reporting is the legal requirement for certain professional groups to report a reasonable belief of child physical to sexual abuse to child protection authorities.

Mandatory Reporters as defined by *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.) include:

- VIT registered teachers, including principals
- school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT
- registered doctors, nurses and all members of the police force
- registered psychologists
- people in religious ministry
- staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare officers, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and student support services staff.

2.2 All other St. Francis of Assisi Primary School staff should make a voluntary report if they discover information that a child is at risk of reportable harm in the course of their work.

2.3 Following the St. Francis of Assisi Primary School **PROTECT responding and reporting obligations policy and procedure** when responding to incidents, disclosures and

suspicions of child abuse will support staff to meet legislative obligations to protect children and young people in their care.

3. What must be reported?

3.1 All mandatory reporters must make a report to Victoria Police and/or Department of Fairness, Families and Housing (DFFH Child Protection) as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a reasonable belief on reasonable grounds:

3.1.1 a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse, and

3.1.2 the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

3.2 It is a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances

3.3 Mandatory reporters must follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as described in the St. Francis of Assisi Primary School PROTECT Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and St. Francis of Assisi Primary School PROTECT Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedure to ensure they fulfil all their legal obligations.

4. What is a reasonable belief?

4.1 A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold:

- so that people are encouraged to report suspected abuse to the relevant authorities and agencies, enabling authorities to investigate the allegations and take further action to prevent or stop any further abuse
- which does not require proof, but does requires something more than a mere rumour or speculation
- and is met if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

4.2 Forming a belief on reasonable ground may include:

- a child stating that they have been abused
- any person telling you they believe someone has been abused
- physical indicators of abuse such as non-accidental or unexplained injuries; persistent neglect, or inadequate care and supervision lead you to believe that the child has been abused
- behavioural indicators of abuse lead you to believe that the child has been abused

- other signs such as family violence, parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child’s safety, stability or development.

5. Information requests

Where appropriate, consideration should also be given to whether a request for information should be made or whether any information should be voluntarily provided to another prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), where this may improve child safety or wellbeing, or help to assess or manage the risk of family violence. These schemes complement existing mandatory reporting obligations.

6. Relevant Legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information sharing) Regulations 2018*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*
- *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic.)*
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic.)*
- *Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018*
- *Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework*
- *Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance*
- *The Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)*

7. Related documents

School Policies

- Child Safety and Wellbeing [\[Hyperlink to your school’s Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy\]](#)
- Child Safety Code of Conduct [\[Hyperlink to your school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct\]](#)
- PROTECT Responding and Reporting Obligations [\[Hyperlink to your school’s PROTECT Responding and Reporting Obligations\]](#)
- PROTECT Responding and Reporting Obligations [\[Hyperlink to your school’s PROTECT Responding and Reporting Obligations\]](#)
- Child Safety Reportable Conduct Scheme [\[Hyperlink to your school’s Child Safety Reportable Conduct Scheme\]](#)

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- [Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: responding to suspected child abuse](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Responding to Student Sexual Offending: Principal Checklist](#)

Date of Next Review	
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