



# THE PENINSULA SCHOOL

## Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy

### Rationale of The Peninsula School Child Protection & Mandatory Reporting Policy

The Peninsula School is committed to providing a safe environment for all students. As a school, we have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in the best interests of our students. The School will provide a positive culture where risk to students is not accepted, and compliance with legal obligations that relate to the management of the risk of child abuse is paramount.

### Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical Violence;
- Sexual Offences;
- Serious Emotional or psychological abuse; and/or
- Serious neglect.

### Aims of the Child Protection & Mandatory Reporting Policy

- To reinforce within the School community what child abuse is, and the fact that it is unacceptable
- To ensure that everyone within the school community is alert to signs and evidence of abuse and neglect and be aware of their reporting responsibilities
- To ensure that action is taken to protect students from risks and immediate action is taken to ensure the safety of students
- To ensure that all mandatory reporters are trained with respect to what must be reported and relevant procedures, with refresher training to be completed annually
- To ensure all reports on reasonable grounds are reported to the Department of Health & Human Services with up-to-date procedures maintained to assist Mandatory Reporters in identifying when to make a report and how
- To ensure that ongoing support and assistance is provided to students who have been abused and their confidentiality respected with case details and the identity of the student only discussed with those managing the situation
- To ensure that staff are provided with clear expectations for appropriate behaviour.

### Structure/Content of the Child Protection & Mandatory Reporting Policy

The School will adopt a three-phase approach:

#### A. Education

- Annual Professional Development for staff relating to identifying child abuse, forming a belief that a child is at risk and reporting obligations and procedures
- Community awareness and input relating to child abuse, its characteristics and the school's programs and response
- Working with Counselling staff to educate students on unacceptable behaviours towards them and disclosing unsafe behaviour to appropriate staff.

#### B. Intervention – Reporting Obligations & Procedures

##### 1. Mandatory Reporting Legislation

- Mandatory reporters are defined as:
  - Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
  - Principals of Government and Non-Government Schools
  - Registered Medical Practitioners
  - Nurses
  - All members of the Police Force
- All mandatory reporters whom, in the course of carrying out their duties, form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical harm or sexual abuse, and that the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child, must report that belief to the Department of Health & Human Services, Child Protection Division as soon as possible after forming the belief
- All mandatory reporters should also alert a member of the School Executive and Head of School Counselling
- In the event that subsequent to an initial report a mandatory reporter becomes aware of further information that is relevant to their belief the child is at risk, they must make an additional report on each and every occasion
- The mandatory reporter must assess whether, if provided with the same information, a reasonable person would form a belief the child is at risk. A 'reasonable belief' is more than mere rumour or speculation but may be less than having proof.



## 2. Criminal Offences – Failure to disclose, failure to protect & grooming offences

- Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child must disclose that information to the Police. Failure to disclose the information to the Police is a Criminal Offence and applies to all adults in Victoria.
- Any staff member who becomes aware that an adult associated with the School poses a risk of sexual abuse to a student must take all reasonable steps to reduce or remove that risk. Failure to take reasonable steps to protect a student from the risk of sexual abuse from an adult associated with the School is a Criminal Offence.
- Any staff member who becomes aware of predatory or “grooming” behaviour must disclose that information to the Police.

## 3. Specific Requirements of The Peninsula School

- In the event there is a life-threatening danger to a student Staff are to contact Triple Zero (000) and call the School’s Emergency Number 666 (9788 7666)
- Staff are to keep records of all concerns regarding Student Wellbeing and to inform the Principal or their delegate when they believe a student is at risk.
- Staff must not make a promise to a student to withhold information from relevant persons, including the Department of Health & Human Services and Police, if a student makes a disclosure to them.
- Staff may seek assistance from Counselling staff in the event they have formed a belief a child is at risk.
- Staff must be aware that their Mandatory Reporting obligation is not discharged by a report to the Principal or their delegate.

## C. Post Incident Review

- School Executive will undertake a review of staff responses to specific incidents to ensure compliance with the policy.
- All staff and students involved will be offered ongoing support.
- School Executive will seek guidance from appropriate authorities as to the School’s response to specific incidents and any recommendations they may have.

## Implementation of Policy

- Parents, teachers, students and the community will be aware of the School’s position on Child Protection & Mandatory Reporting
- All staff will be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to the policy.
- Training will be provided to staff on the commencement of their employment and annually on identifying risks and their responsibilities.
- Publication of Policy via School publications.

## Breach of Policy by Staff

- Any breach of this Policy by staff may be considered misconduct and disciplinary action taken, which may also result in a report to the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

## Review of Policy

- This policy is to be reviewed annually.
- Review is to be undertaken prior to March 2017.

### Contact details

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