



Iramoo Primary School No. 5152

MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Rationale

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As teachers, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to a *'reasonable belief' of an incident involving abuse and neglect of the child/ children with whom we have contact and to report instances that we believe involve physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or other abuses as outlined in this policy.

Aims

- To demonstrate Iramoo Primary Schools' commitment to child safety.
- To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and that children are protected against physical and sexual abuse and neglect.

Implementation

All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs of abuse or disclosures of abuse made by children.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence
- human trafficking (including forced marriages)
- sexual exploitation (including inappropriate electronic images of children).

Responding to a disclosure or a reasonable belief:

- All allegations, disclosures or concerns will be taken seriously.
- If a child makes a disclosure of abuse to a teacher, the teacher needs to listen to the child in a private manner, make notes of what has been said and report the disclosure immediately or in a timely manner to the Principal or Principal Class.
- Teachers need to ensure that children are treated with dignity, respect and confidentiality.
- If a teacher has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a child is being/has been abused they must discuss their concerns with the Principal or Principal Class immediately or in a timely manner; e.g. before the end of the school day.
- Allegations or disclosures from people of culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, or vulnerable children, may experience additional barriers, when reporting or disclosing allegations of abuse. Sensitivity and additional supports may be required, e.g. an interpreter, Koori Engagement Support Officer.
- School staff should only enquire sufficiently to inform belief that a child may be in need of protection, it is not the responsibility of the school staff to determine or investigate whether child abuse, neglect or a criminal offense has actually occurred (it is the responsibility of the police or/and DHHS).
- Where possible or appropriate, the Principal or Principal Class will speak with the child in a confidential manner to obtain further information about the disclosure and ensure that the child is protected from any immediate threat.

- The Principal or Assistant Principal will keep a record of all discussions about the child/children with whom there is a concern.
- If a 'reasonable belief' has been formed by a staff member or Principal Class member that abuse has taken place, a 'mandatory reporting information sheet' available from the Principal Class must be completed and filed with the Assistant Principal.
- The Principal/Principal Class will contact the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification. A record of the phone conversation with DHHS will be kept.
- If appropriate, teachers will be informed of the outcome of the notification.
- Members of the Department of Health or Human Services (DHHS), or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the office area and in the presence of a Principal Class member if requested by the student or DHHS.
- All notifications to DHHS are confidential and only when requested by the police, DHHS- Child Protection will the Principal Class contact the parents to discuss the notification.
- In some cases the school may be required to discuss the notification/disclosure with the
 - Victorian Police Sexual Offensives and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT)
 - Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit (SCIAU)
- In an emergency situation that requires immediate attention/intervention the school will call 000.
- All disclosure, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents are to be monitored and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are to be immediately reported to the Principal Class.

PD and Further Information

- All staff will complete the online PD Mandatory Reporting eLearning module as required by the Department of Education and Training.
- Further information regarding mandatory reporting can be found on Victorian State Government Department of Education and Training website Advisory Guide 'Child Protection-Reporting Obligation', the Iramoo Primary School commitment to Child Safety Policy and/or the Iramoo Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- All teachers have the right to make a notification to the Department of Health and Human Services-Child Protection.

Definitions

- A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.
- A 'reasonable belief' or a believe on 'reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation.
- A belief is considered to be more than a suspicion. It results in a person being more inclined to accept rather than neglect, the particular idea they are contemplating. It is important to understand that proof is not required to support your idea.
- A 'reasonable belief' 'might be formed when:
 - A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused (disclosure).
 - A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused.
 - Someone who knows a child state that the child has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
 - Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused.
 - Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated.
 - Professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.
 - Signs of physical or sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been abused.

Evaluation:

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

**Ratified by Iramoo Primary School Council: November, 2016
Review Date: November, 2019**