



## Iramoo Primary School No. 5152

# MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

### Rationale

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. All staff 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 a 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 Department of Health and Human Services (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 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 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 each year and provide evidence of completed module.
- 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 staff 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 belief 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.
  - A Professional observes a concerning change in the child's behaviour.
  - A professional forms 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