



Broadmeadows Valley Primary School

Responding to and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Child Safety Standard 5

Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse will be in place at Broadmeadows Valley Primary school.

RATIONALE

Broadmeadows Valley Primary school's policies and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse will enable individuals to take the appropriate course of action to protect the safety of students in accordance with clause 11.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CLAUSE 11

1. Broadmeadows Valley Primary School *will* have a clear procedure or set of procedures for responding to allegations of suspected *child abuse* in accordance with this requirement and other legal obligations.
2. Broadmeadows Valley Primary School will ensure that the procedure is:
 - a. sensitive to the diversity characteristics of the school community;
 - b. made publicly available; and
 - c. accessible to children, *school staff* , and the wider community.
3. The procedure will:
 - a. cover all forms of '*child abuse*' as defined in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*;
 - b. apply to allegations or disclosures of *child abuse* made by or in relation to a child, *school staff* , visitors, or other persons while connected to a *school environment* ;
 - c. The Principal is responsible for:
 - i. promptly managing the Broadmeadows Valley Primary school's response to an allegation or disclosure of *child abuse* , and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously;
 - ii. responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of *child abuse* ;
 - iii. monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure; and
 - iv. managing an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility under clause (3)(c)(i), above cannot perform his or her role;
 - d. Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in these procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse;
 - e. The actions the school will take to respond to an allegation of *child abuse* , are detailed in the Four Critical Actions section and include actions to:

- i. inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);
 - ii. protect any child connected to the alleged *child abuse* until the allegation is resolved; and
 - iii. make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of *child abuse* and the school's response to it.
4. The procedure does not:
 - a. prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of *child abuse* to a person external to the school;
 - b. state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
 - c. require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of *child abuse* ; or
 - d. prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of *child abuse* .

GUIDELINES TO RESPOND TO INCIDENTS, DISCLOSURES AND SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

All school staff members play a critical role in protecting children in their care.

ALL STAFF MUST TAKE ACTION

- Staff **must** act, by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as an incident is witnessed, a disclosure is received or a reasonable belief is formed that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- Staff **must** act if a suspicion/reasonable belief is formed, even if the staff member is unsure and has not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person discloses the abuse).
- Staff **must** use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse pro-forma to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- **calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary the staff member may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed the staff member must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE SCHOOL:

VICTORIA POLICE

The staff member must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.

The staff member **must also** report **internally** to the School Principal and/or leadership team

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

The staff member **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

The staff member **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

The staff member **must also** report **internally** to the School Principal and/or leadership team

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

The Principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Broadmeadows Valley Primary school **will** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This will include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of the duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

All staff **must** follow the Four Critical Actions every time a further instance or risk of abuse becomes apparent or suspected. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

If a staff member believes that a child is not subject to abuse, but still holds **significant concerns** for the wellbeing of the child, the staff member must still act.

This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

AREA

South Division 1300 655 795

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT

(03) 9637 2934

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2595

CHILD FIRST

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or contact your local police station

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT

(03) 9589 6266

Evaluation:

<p>This policy will be reviewed every three years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.</p>
<p>The policy will be next reviewed 2019</p>

This policy was adopted at the School Council meeting held at Broadmeadows Valley Primary School on

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_____, 2016
Ratified on (Date)

School Council President – Raymond Drew