Rowville Primary School
Mandatory Reporting Policy

PURPOSE

- To ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect.
- To ensure that school staff understand their mandated obligations in relation to child abuse or neglect.

Rationale

The Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) states that teachers must report to the Department of Human Services when they form ‘a belief on reasonable grounds’ that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Child abuse and neglect may be the result of one abusive or neglectful incident or the cumulative result of many instances or a general pattern of behaviour or circumstances as follows:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to a situation in which a child suffers or is likely to suffer, significant harm from an injury inflicted by the child’s parent/carer. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive interaction with a child. Physical indicators include:

- Bruises or welts in different stages of healing in areas not easily injured by falling
- Burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations, bites or cuts
- Lacerations and abrasions
- Poisoning.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is not always identified through physical indicators. A young person may disclose sexual abuse to a trusted teacher or other staff member or may engage in behaviours that are not developmentally appropriate. Sexual abuse includes those situations where:

- A parent/carer, family member or someone in charge of the care of a child involves the child in sexual activity.
- A parent/carer is unable to protect the child from sexual assault.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or subjected to threats or verbal hostility. The child might be called derogatory names, humiliated, ignored over long periods of time or isolated from social relationships to such an extent that the child’s behaviour is disturbed. Emotional abuse is most prevalent as a consequence of other forms of abuse or neglect. Emotional abuse can cause delay in social, physical or emotional development.

Neglect

Neglect includes the failure to provide an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to such a degree that the child’s health and development are placed at serious risk. A child is neglected if they are left uncared for over long periods of time or abandoned.
IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the induction process, mandatory reporting training will be arranged for all new teaching staff.

1. If, in the course of their duties, a teacher or other staff member forms the opinion that a child has suffered harm as a result of abuse or neglect they will seek advice from the Principal or Assistant Principal to determine if there is sufficient information to ‘form a belief on reasonable grounds’ that a mandatory report is required. Reasonable grounds includes:
   - A child telling the teacher or other staff member they have been abused.
   - Someone else telling the teacher or other staff member that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused.
   - A child telling the teacher or other staff member that they know someone who has been abused (often that may be themselves).
   - The teacher’s or other staff member’s own observation of a particular child’s behaviour, injuries or knowledge of the child leads them to suspect that abuse or neglect is occurring.

2. Teachers will supply the following information and other members of staff will consult with the teacher and Principal, as a basis and background for the mandatory report:
   - Details (name, date of birth, address).
   - Indicators of harm (reasons for forming belief that the injury or harm is the result of abuse).
   - Safety assessment (assessment of the immediate danger of the child).
   - Injury (description of injury or behaviour).
   - Other services (other services/agencies involved with child’s family).
   - Other relevant family information (cultural, language, disability).

3. The Principal or Assistant Principal will make the mandatory report to the Department of Human Services Child Protection on the basis that ‘a belief has been formed on reasonable grounds’. However, if in the staff member’s opinion a justifiable report did not proceed, then the staff member is legally obliged to make the report independently.

4. The Principal or the Assistant Principal will be the point of contact by Child Protection workers when discussing case matters or arranging interviews with students on school property.

5. It is the role of the Department of Human Services Child Protection to determine whether a belief should be investigated for proof.

EVALUATION

1. All staff will be provided with a copy of the Mandatory Reporting Policy.

2. All staff members will be supported in the implementation of the Policy.

3. The Policy will be revised every two years by School Council.

This Policy was ratified by School Council on 30th April 2014 and will be reviewed in April 2016