SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING

RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT AND ALLEGATIONS OF STUDENT SEXUAL ASSAULT

GENERAL STATEMENT
All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe. All professionals working with children and/or their families share the responsibility of protecting children. Child abuse includes all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of the children and the neglect, maltreatment or exploitation of children.

RATIONALE
Concord School is obliged to ensure that the safety and well being of our students is maintained, by putting the needs and rights of the child first, to ensure that each child is protected against significant harm from abuse. As staff members we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to incidences involving abuse of the children with whom we have contact.

GUIDELINES
- All members of the teaching service are mandated by law to report signs or suspicions of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional), neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including allegations of student sexual assault.
- Allegations of sexual assault must be managed by the Principal in partnership with the DEECD's Emergency and Security Management Unit and the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit and the Regional Office.
- Staff members are obliged to use professional judgement of available information to ensure that reporting is appropriate to the situation.
- This policy is written in accordance with the Child Protection Reporting Policy and Education and Training Reform Act, Child Safe Standards, Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, Ministerial Order No. 870. As emphasised in the schools’ Child Safety Policy, “Concord School is committed to child safety and has a zero tolerance of child abuse”.

IMPLEMENTATION
A report to Child Protection should be made in the following circumstances:
- serious physical abuse of, or non-accidental or unexplained injury to a child
- a disclosure of sexual abuse by a child or witness, or a combination of factors that suggest the likelihood of sexual assault or abuse
- serious emotional abuse or ill-treatment of a child impacting on the child's development
- persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision, where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child or the child’s development
- serious or persistent family violence or parental substance abuse, mental illness or intellectual disability where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child or the child’s development
- where a child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child
- where a child appears to have been abandoned, or where the child’s parents are dead or incapacitated, and no other person is caring properly for their child.
- Staff members are mandated to report any disclosures or concerns about a child’s safety to the Principal, Assistant Principal/s, or their Team Leader
- A member of the Leadership Team will make a report will by ringing the Department of Human Service's (DHS) Notification Line on 131 278.
- No staff member, including members of the Leadership Team should conduct investigations.
- If a belief is formed by a staff member that child abuse has taken place, all reports, discussions and information are to be recorded, and remain strictly confidential according to Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000 and Health Records Act 2001. All incidents are to be monitored and any subsequent signs and/or indications of abuse are to be also reported.
- Members of the DHS, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of the Principal and/or their nominee. Notification of parents/carers is subject to advice from DHS.
- Full cooperation, facilitated by the Principal, will be given to DHS, Child Protective Services and police.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction.
- Professional development in the protocols, legal requirements and processes relating to mandatory reporting will be conducted bi-annually for all staff.

Ratified by School Council: 20 August 2012
Review Date: 20 August 2015
EVALUATION
This policy will be reviewed as part of the three year policy review cycle and/or in line with DEECD or DHS directives.

REFERENCES
- Department of Human Services, Child Protection, Children Youth and Families Act (2005)
- DEECD Allegations of Student Sexual Assault
- Responding to Allegations of Sexual Assault Procedures
- DEECD Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit, telephone: 9637 2934 or 9637 2487
- DEECD Emergency and Security Management Unit, telephone: 9589 6266
- DHS Child Protection, telephone: 131 278
- Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault procedures
  Appendix 6: Flowchart – Compulsory Actions for Principals