1. PURPOSE

1.1 As a mandated professional, teachers are mandated to report to the Department of Human Services when, in the course of practicing their profession or carrying out the duties of their office, you form the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because:

- The student has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the student’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from harm of that type.
- The student has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the student’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the student from harm of that type.

1.2 The report must be made without delay.

1.3 A report must be made on each occasion on which you become aware of any further grounds for that belief.

1.4 Penalty applying to this sub-section is $1000.

1.5 Non-teaching staff at St Joseph’s College have a duty of care to report and should do so via a member of the Leadership team.

2. REASONABLE GROUNDS

2.1 You have reasonable grounds to report child abuse or neglect when:

- A student tells you they have been abused.
- Someone else, such as a sibling, relative, friend or acquaintance tells you that the student has been abused.
- A student tells you they know someone who has been abused (the student could possibly be referring to themselves).
- Your own observations of the student’s physical condition and/or behavior has lead you to suspect that the student has suffered abuse.
- Other circumstances lead you to suspect that a student has been abused.

2.2 You do not have to prove that the abuse actually occurred to make a report – the law does not require proof. The law requires that you report suspected abuse.
3. **HOW TO MAKE A REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES)**

3.1 **MAKING OBSERVATIONS**

3.1.1 Individual staff members should make observations and keep notes of concerns that have led them to believe a report may be necessary. These concerns should be discussed with the relevant House Leader and a member from Wellbeing. The relevant House Leader will then inform the Principal and Deputy Principal - Community when a report is being made. The staff member who made these observations is strongly encouraged to make the report if required.

3.2 **CLARIFY WHETHER A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IS REQUIRED**

3.2.1 A report to Department of Human Services / Child Protection is required when:

- A teacher believes, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect; and
- The child’s parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from such harm.

3.2.2 It is permissible for a teacher to ask a child sufficient questions to establish a reasonable belief, but care should be taken not to ask leading questions. If there is uncertainty about the need for a mandatory report to Child Protection, the House Leader, the School Counsellor or the notifier should ring the Department of Human Services for advice/secondary consultation: Department of Human Services (DHS) 1800 675 598 or alternatively contact Child FIRST for advice.

3.3 **CONTACT WITH CHILD FIRST**

3.3.1 A registered school teacher or Principal in Victoria can seek advice from or make a referral to Child FIRST if they have a significant concern for the wellbeing of a student, and where the immediate safety of the child is not compromised. The teacher or Principal should share relevant information with Child FIRST to help them complete their assessment of the referral. Contact should be made with the nearest Child FIRST office. For further information and advice telephone 1800 625 533.

3.3.2 A mandated reporter may wish to keep their identity confidential when they make a referral to Child FIRST or a report to Child Protection, or when they share information with these agencies. A Child FIRST or Child Protection worker cannot disclose the identity of the person making a referral or report without their consent. The publications listed in Appendix 1 provide advice on why it may be appropriate for a person making a referral or report to disclose their identity.

3.4 **MAKING A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES**

3.4.1 If a staff member believes a report to Child Protection Services is required, the Head of School or School Counsellor will be notified and they will immediately consult the Principal. The notifying staff member, House Leader or School Counsellor will proceed with a report to Child Protection Services – 1800 675 598 (business hours) or 13 12 78 (after hours).

3.4.2 The following information will be required when making a report:

- The child’s name, age and address;
- The name, age and address of any known siblings;
- Your reason for believing that the injury or behavior is the result of abuse or neglect;
- Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child;
- Current whereabouts of the child or young person;
- Your description of the injury or behaviour observed; and
- Any other information you have about the family.

3.4.3 Your identity as a notifier will remain confidential unless:
• You choose to inform the child and/or family of the notification yourself; or
• You consent to your identity as the notifier being disclosed.

3.5 COMMUNICATION

3.5.1 A decision regarding who else (if anyone), should be informed, needs to be made. Parents, guardians or care givers of the alleged victim are to be contacted unless circumstances indicate this should not occur. Staff members are encouraged to discuss this with the Duty Worker when they make the notification.

3.5.2 The need for confidentiality should be remembered at all times in the interest of the child and family. Only where the welfare of the child will be affected should the matter be discussed with anyone else.

3.5.3 If following a report, a family approaches the College, they should be politely directed to speak with the Deputy Principal of Community. Individual teachers should not engage in discussion with parents or others without the presence (or the express authorisation) of the Deputy Principal of Community.

3.5.4 If a member of staff meets with parents or others in regard to a report, it is recommended that an interview be conducted with a minimum of two designated school staff members present. The focus of such a meeting should be on the welfare of the child, not on justifying the actions or perceptions of the staff involved.

3.6 SUPPORT

3.6.1 It is essential that reports are managed in a caring, supportive and confidential manner. Support for the responding staff member and the student who is the cause for concern as well as anyone else affected should be arranged.

3.7 MONITORING

3.7.1 After notification to Child Protection Services is made, a senior protective worker will decide whether or not further investigation is required. The notifying staff member will be advised of this decision. If the notifying staff member is not advised, the Principal may contact Child Protection Services and request information about what action is proposed. Any information provided at any stage of the process shall also be shared with the Principal in a timely manner.

3.8 DOCUMENT CONTROL, PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALS AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

3.8.1 Other than ensuring the safety of all involved, there should be no detailed communication with alleged perpetrators or any other students involved until after approval from Victoria Police. Victoria Police and Child Protection Services are to be the investigating body at all times.

3.8.2 The Principal or his delegate is the only authorised representative of the College able to make media comment.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1 Further information concerning any aspect of Mandatory Reporting obligations may be directed to the School Counsellors or Deputy Principal of Community.

4.2 Current legislation can be referred to as follows:
5. **TRAINING**

5.1 All staff are required to undertake training in Mandatory Reporting on an annual basis.

6. **MANDATORY REPORTING AT ST JOSEPH’S COLLEGE**

6.1 The following procedures have been initiated to improve the safety of students at St Joseph’s College:

- Staff are encouraged to conduct individual teaching sessions or interviews with students in spaces that have public access and/or viewing (e.g. rooms and offices with windows).
- Student access to teaching areas is limited at non-teaching times to limit isolated contact between staff and students.
- Security cameras are being installed in areas that may be places where students are deemed to be at risk.
- Staff and students are encouraged to report concerns regarding student or staff safety that may relate to Mandatory Reporting Procedures.
- Staff are continually, and specifically twice a year, reminded of the VIT Standards in relation to appropriate staff-student relationships and interactions.
- Staff are made aware of the link between inappropriate staff-student interaction and the Social Media Policy of the College.
- The Child Protection / Mandatory Reporting Policy is distributed to all staff via email, included in the Staff Planner (from 2016) and available on the intranet (Knowledge Banks/Policies) and on the St Joseph’s College website.
- The College Staff Planner (from 2016) will also include a section for staff to sign to signify that that they have read and that they accept the requirements of the following:
  - Child Protection - Mandatory Reporting Policy
  - Bullying and Harassment Policy
  - Social Media Policy
  - Professional Standards - AITSL
A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST

**Protective concerns**
You are concerned about a child because you have:
- received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect
- observed indicators of abuse or neglect
- been made aware of possible harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.

**At all times remember to:**
- record your observations
- follow appropriate protocols
- consult notes and records
- consult with appropriate colleagues if necessary
- consult with other support agencies if necessary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1: RESPONDING TO CONCERNS</th>
<th>STEP 2: FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS</th>
<th>STEP 3: MAKING A REFERRAL TO Child FIRST</th>
<th>STEP 4: MAKE A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. If your concerns relate to a child in need of immediate protection; or you have formed a belief that a child is at significant risk of harm*, Go to Step 4. | 1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child. Ask yourself:
   a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm?
   YES / NO
   and
   b) Am I in doubt about the child’s safety and the parent’s ability to protect the child?
   YES / NO
   2. If you answered yes to a) or b), Go to Step 4. | **Child Wellbeing Referral**
   1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.
   • See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers.
   2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details. |
   3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services, Go to Step 3. | **Mandatory/Protective Report**
   1. Contact your local Child Protection intake provider immediately.
   • See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers.
   • For After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services, call 131 278. |
   2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details. |

* Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Province – Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

For further information refer to Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people – A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children’s Services and Victorian Schools.