

## Stella Maris internal school process for mandatory reporting

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) schools should develop internal procedures consistent with [PROTECT](#) and the [Four Critical Actions](#) referenced in the Policy. Schools may document these internal procedures below in a variety of ways, including a flow chart. The internal procedures must be readily available to all members of the school community, including on the public website.

## Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) (Act) to protect children from harm relating to physical injury and sexual abuse. A child, student or young person for the purpose of the relevant parts of the Act, is any person 17 years of age or younger.

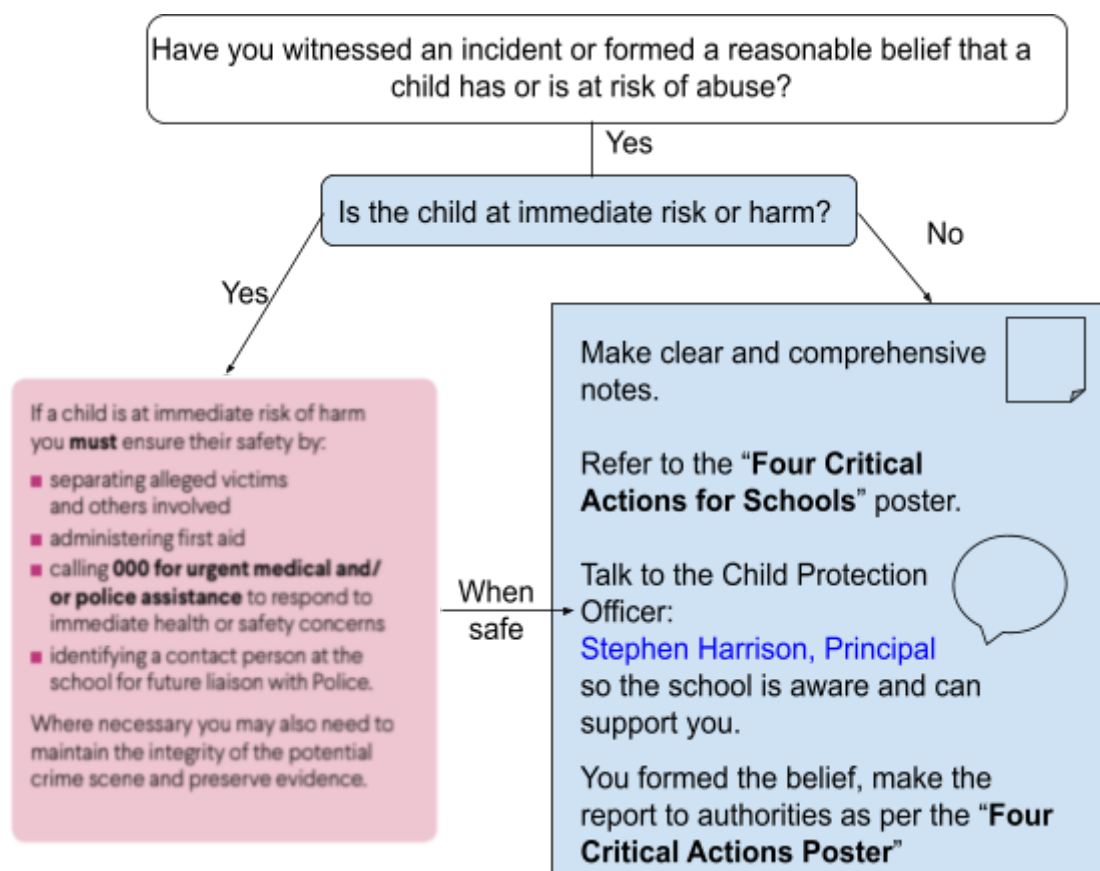
Staff Members mandated under this Act (teaching staff & principals) who form a 'reasonable belief' that a child, student or young person is in need of protection from physical, emotional, psychological, developmental harm or sexual abuse, and that the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child, must report that belief to DHHS Child Protection and the 'grounds' for it, as soon as possible after forming the belief. A subsequent report must be made on each occasion in which the Mandatory Reporter becomes aware of further reasonable grounds for the belief.

## Forming a Reasonable Belief

When a Staff Member is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. 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 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- A student or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- A student or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- Someone who knows a child states that the student or young person has been physically or sexually abused
- A student or young person exhibits sexually-abusive or age-inappropriate behaviours
- Professional observations of the student or young person's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the student has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the student or young person has been physically or sexually abused.



Note - Should the offense be of a student sexually offending another student, refer to the [Four Critical Actions Poster - Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#).

## Resources

[Four Critical Actions Poster - Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)

[Four Critical Actions Poster - Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)