



Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct

Introduction

Complaints regarding allegations of staff misconduct and reportable conduct are managed in a different manner to other complaints received by Marri Mittigar School. Day to day communication, concerns and feedback from our School community are dealt with under the **Communication & Complaint Handling Procedure**.

Complaints *involving risk of harm to a child, concerns regarding the welfare and protection of students and reportable conduct allegations against employees, visitors and contractors to the School* are dealt with under this policy.

This is based on our responsibilities under laws and regulations as a Child Safe Organisation, with the paramount consideration to protect children from harm or injury.

Marri Mittigar School requires all staff to comply with a Code of Conduct and standards of behaviour that are intended to prevent staff misconduct and reportable conduct, and staff are encouraged to report any breaches of the Code or standards.

It is also critical that the broader Marri Mittigar School community reports staff misconduct and reportable conduct (both defined below) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, and that Marri Mittigar School complies with its legislative reporting obligations. Marri Mittigar School has a legal obligation to investigate and report to the Office of the Children's Guardian all allegations of reportable conduct made against staff at Marri Mittigar School as defined by the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW) (the Children's Guardian Act) and risk of harm under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

For the purposes of this policy, "staff" and "staff member" is defined to include teaching and non-teaching staff, the Council of Barker College members, Marri Mittigar School advisory committee, volunteers, contractors and external providers.

Definition of Staff Misconduct

Marri Mittigar School defines "staff misconduct" as conduct by a staff member that:

- breaches Marri Mittigar School's Code of Conduct or other key policies/procedures
- displays purposeful neglect of duties/responsibilities
- involves alcohol and/or other substance abuse
- is physically, verbally or emotionally abusive
- endangers the safety or wellbeing of students or others at Marri Mittigar School.

Definition of Reportable Conduct

The Children's Guardian Act defines reportable conduct as including:



- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including child pornography offences, sexual touching or an offence involving child abuse material) including grooming behaviours
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child (whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child).

Some examples of conduct that would not constitute reportable conduct include touching a child to get their attention, guide them or comfort them, a teacher raising their voice to attract attention or restore order in a classroom, or conduct that is established to be accidental.

Making a formal complaint or allegation of staff misconduct or reportable conduct, can be made by:

1. Staff must report to the Head of School any risk of harm or reportable conduct allegations and use the childsafetyteam@barker email to report their concerns.
2. Sending an email to Head of School, jwest@barker.nsw.edu.au
3. Writing a letter to Marri Mittigar School addressed to the Head of School.
4. Telephoning Marri Mittigar School and asking to speak to the Head of School.
5. Sending a report to the concerns@barker link on our public website, this allows anonymous reports to be made by a member of the school community or the public.

If the Head of School or the Head of Barker College is the subject of your complaint or allegation of misconduct or reportable conduct, please contact Deputy Head People & Culture Alison Binet abinet@barker.nsw.edu.au.

Investigating and Managing Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct

Marri Mittigar School initially investigates all complaints to determine whether the conduct in question amounts to a reportable allegation or staff misconduct that could be reportable conduct, as defined in this policy, or reportable conduct that must be further investigated and reported to the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. All investigations uphold the principles of procedural fairness confidentiality - information is only shared with those who need to know.

Staff Misconduct

When a complaint or allegation does not include conduct that is defined as a reportable conduct allegation following Marri Mittigar School's initial investigation, and it is determined through the School's investigation that staff misconduct has occurred, Marri Mittigar School will notify the complainant of the finding and corrective actions that will be taken. Staff misconduct is managed through our Human Resources policies and procedures relating to internal grievances, discipline and termination.

Reportable Conduct



When a complaint or allegation does include conduct that is defined as reportable conduct following Marri Mittigar School's initial investigation, Marri Mittigar School is required by law to report the allegation to the Office of the Children's 's Guardian as prescribed under the legislation.

We also conduct a risk assessment following any allegation that includes conduct defined as reportable conduct to identify and mitigate any ongoing risks to student safety and wellbeing.

Marri Mittigar School must conduct an internal investigation, led by the Head of School or an accredited investigator.

When conducting an internal investigation, Marri Mittigar School follows the Office of the Children's 's Guardian's [Planning and Conducting an Investigation](#).

A further risk assessment is conducted during the internal investigation and at the end of that investigation.

There are five potential findings that Marri Mittigar School can make following the internal investigation:

- Sustained: finding that the alleged conduct did occur
- Not Sustained – Insufficient Evidence: finding that there is some, but insufficient, evidence available to reasonably establish that the alleged conduct did occur
- Not Sustained – Lack of Evidence of Weight: finding that the evidence available is of such poor probative value, or lacking weight, that on the balance of probabilities the conduct did not occur
- False: finding that the alleged conduct did not occur
- Not Reportable Conduct: finding that the alleged conduct was not reportable – for example, conduct that was reasonable in the circumstances or accidental. This may also include 'misconceived' matters where allegations were made in good faith, however it was based on a misunderstanding of what occurred, and therefore the conduct is not reportable.

Marri Mittigar School is required to notify the Office of the Children's 's Guardian of the findings of the internal investigation as soon as possible once the internal investigation has been finalised.

Making a Finding of Reportable Conduct

If Marri Mittigar School's internal investigation results in a finding of reportable conduct, following Marri Mittigar School's notification to the Office of Children's Guardian, we will conduct a final risk assessment of the conduct, the staff member and the circumstances, and take action to mitigate ongoing risks, including reporting findings of workplace misconduct to the Office of the Children's Guardian who is responsible for administering Working with Children Checks.

Disclosing Information to the Marri Mittigar School Community

A parent or carer has a legitimate interest in being told of the process that is being followed to investigate an allegation that their child was a victim of staff misconduct or reportable conduct.

Information can often be provided to the parent, carer or child without the need to consider legal impediments to disclosure. However, legal impediments – real or feared – may discourage the timely and appropriate release of information, particularly in the case of reportable conduct allegations.



Marri Mittigar School closely follows the Office of the Children's Guardian's guidance on this issue provided in the [Reportable conduct fact sheets](#).

Marri Mittigar School is permitted to disclose information to:

- the child who was allegedly the subject of the reportable conduct that forms the basis of the reportable allegation
- any parent of the child
- if the child is in out-of-home care, any authorised carer of the child.

There are times when it may be appropriate to disclose information about the internal investigation to one of these involved parties but not another, for example, to disclose information to the child's parent, but not the child.

Marri Mittigar School is permitted to disclose the following information to involved parties:

- information about the progress of an investigation
- the findings of the investigation
- any action taken in response to those findings,

however it considers all the circumstances of the complaint/allegation and investigation when determining if information should be disclosed.

Where to Find More Information

The Office of the Children's Guardian has several informative fact sheets on the topic of reportable conduct and Marri Mittigar School's obligations to report. For more information about Marri Mittigar School's policies and procedures relating to staff misconduct, reportable conduct or complaints handling generally, please contact Head of School, Julia West jwest@barker.nsw.edu.au

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