



Child Protection Policy

Related Policies

Code of Conduct Policy
Pastoral Care Policy
Complaints Policy
Student Welfare and Management Policy
Exclusion Policy
Excursion Policy
Dispensing Medication Policy
Pastoral Care Policy
Privacy policy
Sexual Harassment Policy

This Policy is based on the CEO Policy: Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting ACT

Purpose

The mission of Catholic schools including St Thomas the Apostle unequivocally commits each school community to foster the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of every person. The provision of a safe and supportive environment is an essential element to ensure that each student entrusted to the care of our school is to be affirmed in his or her dignity and worth as a person. Within our community students develop skills in building positive relationships; skills that are modelled by staff. The staff of St Thomas the Apostle endorse the principles of child protection as a fundamental responsibility and maintain positive and professional relationships with students based on our school agreed code of conduct, (see Code of Conduct Policy)

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to the Principal, Teachers and other Mandated Reporters working at St Thomas' school about making a report to Care and Protection Services when they have formed a reasonable suspicion that a Child or Young Person has suffered or is suffering Sexual Abuse or Non accidental Physical Injury or is In Need of Care and Protection.

If a staff member believes a child protection issue exists and it is not reported, they are mandated to report themselves.

Definitions

A Child is a person under 12 years of age.

Child Abuse and Neglect may fall into the following categories:

Non accidental physical injury (physical abuse) – includes injuries caused by excessive discipline, beating or shaking, bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation, female genital mutilation, poisoning, attempted suffocation or strangulation or physical mutilation.

Sexual abuse – is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person. Usually this occurs when an adult or someone who is bigger or older involves the child or young person in a sexual activity by using his or her power over the child or young person or by taking advantage of their trust.

Emotional abuse – refers to chronic or repeated behaviours directed at a child or young person, which are seriously detrimental to or impair the child or young person's psychological, social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development or behaviour. This includes significant harm to the child or young person's well-being or development because of his or her continual exposure to domestic violence.

Neglect – is the continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and psychological, intellectual or physical development such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision.

In Need of Care and Protection is defined fully in s 156 of the *Children and Young People Act 1999 (ACT)*. A child or young person is In Need of Care and Protection if he or she has been, is being or is likely to be, abused or neglected and no-one with parental responsibility for the child or young person is willing and able to protect him or her from suffering the abuse or neglect.

Mandated Reporter is defined in s 159 *Children and Young People Act 1999 (ACT)*. For the purposes of this policy and compliance with ACT law a mandated reporter includes teachers and school counsellors.

Reasonable Suspicion. A Mandated Reporter has a reasonable suspicion to report to Care and Protection Services when;

- A child or young person discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse
- Someone else advises you that a child or young person has been sexually abused or non-accidentally injured, or
- Your own observations of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviours lead you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

The Mandated Reporter is not required to prove that abuse has occurred.

Policy

1. Staff members discuss any child protection concerns with the Principal. If necessary, the Principal contacts Care and Protection Services on 1300556 728.

2. All relevant information that is available about the child or young person's situation and family structure including his or her full name, age, parents' names, names of known siblings and contact details is made available.

3. When making a report, the following information is required:

- the nature of the abuse or neglect;
- when the abuse or neglect is said to have occurred;
- details about how and when you became aware of the information;
- names of others who may have witnessed the abuse/neglect;
- details of any disclosure made to you or others;
- description of any injuries seen;
- description of the behaviour of the child/ren or young person(s);
- attitude of the carers of the child or young person to the injury / incident;
- known supports to the child, young person and family.

4. If the report concerns the conduct or negligence of an employee of the Catholic Education Office, the Director of Catholic Education must be informed as soon as possible of the circumstances leading to the report being made. (See Complaints Policy)

5. After any report is made the Director of Education must be informed of the report using the *Form for Notification of A Mandatory Report to Care and Protection Services*. The child or young person's identification details need not be recorded on the form.

6. When a Care and Protection Services Officer or a Police Officer attends school to interview a student in relation to a child protection matter the Principal must:

- sight the identification details of the officer;
- arrange for the interview to take place discreetly and to ensure that the student's privacy is respected;
- ensure that the officer is aware of the cultural background of the student and any other relevant information about the intellectual / developmental level of the student and any difficulties he or she may have with communication;
- ensure that the officer has been given the opportunity to explain his or her role to the student in the presence of the Principal or the Principal's delegate;
- ensure that the student has agreed to be involved in the interview;
- ensure that a supportive adult, acceptable to the student, is present for the interview (unless the student does not wish a support person to be present);
- explain the role of the support person to the student and assure the student that the support person will be available after the interview for ongoing support;
- provide post-interview support/follow up for the student as required;
- check that officers have undertaken to advise the student's parents that an interview has taken place

7. When a Care and Protection Services Officer or Police Officer attends school to remove a student from school the Principal must:

- sight the identification details of the officer;
- check with the officer's supervisor that authorisation has been granted to remove the student;
- check that the officer has or will inform the parent / guardian that the action has taken place;
- inform the Director of Education that the student has been removed;
- make a written record of the actions taken.

8. When Care and Protection Services or Police request to interview a staff member(s) the Principal should not reveal the name of relevant staff members without their consent. Staff members may decline to be interviewed.

9. The Director of Catholic Education must approve any request by Care and Protection Services to access school records.

References

CEO Policy: Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting ACT

Children and Young Act 1999

(ACT) http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/caypa1999242/

Reporting Child Abuse: Keeping Children and Young People

Safe <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs/publications/keeping%20childweb.pdf>

Forms

Nil

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