

ST PATRICK'S SCHOOL



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

All staff are expected to know and understand their child protection responsibilities.

There are four key areas of responsibility regarding child protection in the school environment. Staff are expected to:

- Understand that they are **mandatory reporters** are required by law to report to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of 'significant harm' from abuse or neglect. Staff must report these concerns directly to the Principal who will make a report to the Helpline on behalf of the staff member.
- **Act professionally and maintain appropriate professional boundaries** when interacting with children.
- Be aware of the **complaint handling processes** that must be followed when managing complaints involving a staff member's alleged inappropriate conduct towards a child. Staff must report any concerns directly to the Principal who will consult with the Education Officer: Wellbeing and Safeguarding or Leader: HR at CEDB to determine how those concerns are to be managed.
- Be aware of the Working With Children Check requirements applicable to staff and volunteers.

In relation to any child protection issues staff must maintain confidentiality at all times by not discussing concerns with any person other than the Principal. All information needs to be documented and files need to be stored securely.

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL STAFF

All staff are expected to promote child safety by having a clear understanding of their child protection responsibilities and act in accordance with those responsibilities.

Our child protection responsibilities derive from three key pieces of legislation:

- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *NSW Ombudsman Act 1974*
- *Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012*

In practical terms we must be aware of the responsibility to:

1. Respond appropriately when we suspect a child is at risk of significant harm from possible abuse or neglect by a parent/carer.
2. Maintain professionalism in our interactions with children at all times by exercising appropriate duty of care and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
3. Be aware of the requirement for the school to address allegations of inappropriate behaviour by staff towards children.
4. Be aware of the Working With Children Check requirements applicable to staff and volunteers.

Responding to Risk or Harm

All school staff are mandatory reporters. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of 'significant harm' from abuse or neglect, then a report must be made to the Family and Community Services Child Protection Helpline (CP Helpline).

The basic expectations of school staff is to inform the Principal when you are concerned that a child may be at risk.

It is the role of the Principal (or delegate) to make a report to the CP Helpline. This is primarily to prevent duplicate reports being made. It is also because as manager of the school, the Principal may be aware of additional information which may inform the report. The Principal must also be aware of all issues of serious concern in the school.

In making a report, the Principal will:

- Consult with you and obtain your information.
- Gather/collate all other available information. This may include requesting information from other schools or external sources under information exchange laws.
- Ensure all information is documented. This may include your record of your initial concerns.
- Consult the online Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) to obtain a final decision about what action to take.
- Print the MRG decision report and keep it with the other documentation. The Principal must maintain a confidential and restricted access file for any risk of significant harm or serious wellbeing concerns, separate to the student's education file.
- If the MRG final decision is that a report is necessary, or professional judgement suggests a report is required, the Principal will make the report by phoning the CP Helpline on ph: 132 111
- Keep you informed about whether or not a report is made to the CP Helpline. If a report is not made and you reasonably believe that a report should be made, you may make an independent report to the CP Helpline.
- Whether or not a report is made, develop a support plan to ensure that the school is providing appropriate support to the child and/or their family.
- In all cases the Education Officer: Wellbeing and Safeguarding must be informed by phone (for urgent matters) and by emailing the documentation to safeguarding@bth.catholic.edu.au

In protecting children in the school from risk of harm it is important that you:

- Remain alert to possible safety, welfare and wellbeing issues through your own observations of a child or from direct or indirect disclosures by a child.
- Become familiar with the possible signs of abuse and neglect outlined in the Child Wellbeing and Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines.
- Take disclosures by a child seriously and respond sensitively.
- Document your concerns, observations or disclosures clearly and thoroughly ensuring that your records:
 - o Use non-judgemental language
 - o Detail the facts only, not your opinion or your subjective feelings
 - o Are legible, signed and dated
 - o Are confidential.
- Discuss your concerns with the Principal as soon as possible.
- Participate as needed in supporting the child.
- Teach students about personal safety skills and respectful relationships through the PDHPE curriculum.

All staff must attend Child Protection Training organised by the CEDB annually. (March 30/3/21)

Date of Implementation	June 2015
Date of last review	March 2021
Date of next review	February 2022