

STUDENT PROTECTION INFORMATION

Introduction

For most children, childhood is a positive time in their lives. They grow up in loving families that care for and nurture them and help them develop into healthy young adults. However, for a small proportion of children, this is not their lived experience. These children grow up in families that face one or more significant social, emotional or financial issues that impact negatively on their ability to care for and protect their children.

Because of their regular contact with students and families, staff in schools and other educational facilities play a vital role in:

- identifying and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect and
- helping families to access support services that may build on their strengths and address issues impacting on their parenting.

Statement of Commitment

Anglican schools support the rights of children and young people and are committed to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students. Anglican schools are therefore committed to responding to allegations of student harm resulting from the conduct or actions of any person including that of employees.

This commitment includes the provision of a safe and supportive living and learning environment for all students and requires all employees, volunteers and visitors to model and encourage behaviour that upholds the dignity and protection of students from harm.

Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland has developed policy and procedures to guide staff, volunteers and visitors to an Anglican school in their responsibilities both by virtue of legislation and policy to recognise and report all matters of abuse and harm, likely abuse or suspected harm of any student.

How can schools help to protect children and young people?

Our staff can help to protect children and young people by:

- working to make Anglican schools safe and supportive learning environments for all students;
- taking action to prevent students being harmed at an Anglican school; and
- reporting any suspicion that a student or unborn child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.

Which principles guide our actions and decisions?

Our actions and decisions in relation to student protection will be guided by the following principles:

- All children have a right to be protected from harm.
- Employees will act in the best interests of the student or unborn child.

Student Protection Officers

All Anglican schools have a number of staff identified as Student Protection Officers (SPO's), designated as a contact person to whom students may seek advice from or report concerns for their or another student's safety, or to make a complaint of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse, harm or risk of harm or inappropriate behaviour of a staff member or volunteer towards a student.

What is harm?

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. This could also include harm to an unborn child. Harm can be caused by physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, neglect or sexual abuse or exploitation. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.

Any behaviour that harms a student or places a student or unborn child at significant risk of harm is not acceptable. Anglican schools will not condone behaviours (e.g. a student witnessing domestic or family violence) or cultural customs (e.g. unlawful domestic discipline of children or female genital mutilation) that fall into the definition of harm.

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What is inappropriate behaviour?

Any behaviour of an employee or a volunteer of the school including words, towards a student, regardless of age, which is inconsistent with the relevant professional standards, Code of conduct and policies of the school and is considered to be 'inappropriate behaviour' by the person making the complaint.

Behaviour of a sexual, physical or psychological nature which exploits the special position of trust and authority between an employee or volunteer and a student, regardless of age, is a breach of obligations and of the Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures.

What are our reporting responsibilities?

All employees, volunteers and visitors to an Anglican school have a responsibility to report when they suspect a student, or an unborn child, has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Some employees also have a responsibility under legislative reporting obligations to report student protection concerns.

Mandatory reporting obligations

- **School staff members** must immediately make a written report when they become aware or reasonably suspect the sexual abuse or likely sexual abuse of a student under 18 years of age [*Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*]
- **Teachers or registered nurses** must make a report when they reasonably and honestly suspect a child has suffered, is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse and may not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from harm (*Child Protection Act 1999*)

Reporting requirement: Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedure

All employees, volunteers and visitors to the school **will immediately** report **all** concerns and suspicions of harm or risk of harm of a student to an SPO or the Principal. The SPO or the Principal will determine if the concern is 'reportable', i.e. meets the threshold to report to the police or Child Safety Services, or that a referral to a community based support service would be of benefit to the child and/or family.

When should student protection concerns be discussed with an SPO or the Principal?

All student protection concerns should immediately be discussed with the relevant school supervising staff member, an SPO, or to the Principal irrespective of whether it is suspected the harm or inappropriate behaviour towards a student is caused by:

- someone working at the school;
- a volunteer or visitor to the school;
- another student;
- someone from the student's family, a friend or a stranger; or
- the student self-harming.

What if the concerns relate to the Principal?

If it is suspected that the Principal is responsible for causing harm to a student, report this to the Director of Professional Standards on (07) 3835 2266 or email at: dops@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.

What do staff, volunteers and visitors need to remember in relation to their own behaviour?

- **NEVER** harm a student, either physically, psychologically or emotionally
- **NEVER** make fun of, put down or unlawfully discriminate against a student
- **NEVER** touch a student in a sexual way, or engage in any other inappropriate sexual activity, e.g. sending a suggestive text message, showing a student inappropriate images, engaging in over familiar and unprofessional conduct with a student without sound educational reason.
- **NEVER** do or say anything that would make people think you are doing or intending to do something sexual to a student.

REMEMBER

If you are not sure – IMMEDIATELY REPORT your concern