

ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Current January, 2008

INTRODUCTION

It is a requirement of the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2001* that schools must have written processes about the appropriate conduct of its staff and students, that accord with legislation applying about the care or protection of children.

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Important Notes

- This Policy is current at January, 2008.
- This Policy has been prepared with assistance from AISQ's legal advisors..

ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY: To provide written processes about the appropriate conduct of St Michael's College staff and students that accord with legislation applying in Queensland about the care and protection of children.

Scope

Applies to all staff and students at St Michael's College and covers information about the reporting of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect; and inappropriate behaviour, harassment, and self harm.

Responsibility

School Board

Point of Contact

Principal

DEFINITIONS AND LEGISLATION

A *child* is a person under 18 years of age.

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
- Sexual abuse or exploitation.

A *student* is any person regardless of age who is enrolled at the school

Relevant Legislation

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (Qld)

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Regulation 2001 (Qld)

Education (General Provisions Act) 2006 (Qld)

Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006 (Qld)

Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act, 2005 (Qld)

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 (Qld)

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2001(Qld)

Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 (Cth)

Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 (Qld)

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

PART A – PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

PRINCIPLES:

St Michael's College will uphold the following principles under this Policy:

- Protecting students from harm and the risk of harm is fundamental to maximising their personal and academic potential.
- St Michael's College recognises that people who are subjected to abuse are harmed by it.
- At St Michael's College, the welfare and best interests of the child will always be a primary consideration.
- St Michael's College expects our students to show respect to our staff and volunteers and to comply with safe practices.
- All employees must ensure that their behaviour towards and relationships with students reflect proper standards of care for students, and are not unlawful.
- Sexual acts by an adult employee or volunteer with a student who is a child will always be sexual abuse.
- St Michael's College will respond diligently to a report of suspected or actual harm, or risk of harm to a student.
- Reprisals against students or others making a complaint will not be tolerated.
- Student management practices will be administered with respect and in a manner which maintains the student's dignity.
- St Michael's College will act fairly and reasonably towards an employee or volunteer who is the subject of allegations of improper conduct.
- St Michael's College will support an employee or volunteer who is the subject of a proven false allegation of causing harm to a student.
- Anybody within St Michael's College who becomes aware or reasonably suspects that a student is being harmed must report it to the School in accordance with the School's Procedures for Reporting Harm.
- St Michael's College will take disciplinary action against employees who harm others, and appropriate action against volunteers who harm others.
- St Michael's College will not permit people to work in a position if the School believes on the basis of all information available that, if the allegations against them were wholly or partly true, there would be an unacceptable risk that others might be harmed.
- St Michael's College will cooperate with state authorities in resolving allegations of harm.

GUIDELINES

In complying with these principles, St Michael's College will be guided by the following.

Natural Justice

The principles of natural justice will apply to decisions to be made under this Policy. The two fundamental principles of natural justice are:

- That those making a decision are not biased.
- That nobody should be condemned unless they are given prior notice of the allegations against them and they have a fair opportunity to be heard.

Process

It is important to make the lodging of a complaint easy.

Confidentiality

Each person who has access to information regarding suspected or disclosed harm has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality. St Michael's College is unable to promise absolute confidentiality since its policies will require disclosing, internally and externally, certain details involved in responding to any complaint. State authorities can compel people to give evidence about actions under the Policy and to produce documents.

Criminal Law

Where there are allegations of criminal misconduct, the allegations should be referred to the police. The Principal must refer all allegations of pedophilia to the police, including those from the past, except where the alleged perpetrator is deceased.

Defamation

A person providing information about harm in good faith to a person who needs to know that information is generally excused from liability for defamation.

Promptness

All steps under the Policy should be carried out promptly. The School will keep the victim and the alleged perpetrator informed of progress.

Protection

The Principal will ensure that the following are undertaken in order to reduce the chance of abuse occurring:-

- Ensure that each staff member understands and fulfils their obligations under this Policy.
- Ensure that there is an acceptable reference for each staff member engaged since the commencement of this protocol, from their previous employer.
- Ensure that each non-teaching staff member and volunteer who has contact with children has a current positive suitability notice issued by the Commissioner for Children and Young People¹.

¹ Note: The Commission for children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (Qld) currently exempts volunteers who are parents of children at the school from the requirement to have prescribed notices. It is therefore a decision for the school as to whether all volunteer parents should have police checks.

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- Ensure that each teaching staff member is a Registered Teacher.

Support

The School will provide support for the victim through professional counselling if it is requested, even if any allegation is not yet proved or disproved. The School will support the respondent to a complaint with professional counselling if it is requested until the matter has been resolved.

Interviews

There will be two representatives of the School present at interviews, where practical. In cases of allegations of serious harm it is best not to interview a student who is a child unless a properly qualified person conducts the interview.

Teachers

If a respondent to an allegation is a registered teacher, the School will give notification to the Board of Teacher Registration, if required to do so under the *Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act, 2005, (QLD)*.

Public Relations

The Principal will ensure that the School is able to react quickly to allegations of harm so that accurate and relevant information is available for staff members, students and their families and for the media.

Police Action

It will usually be necessary to wait until the police have decided whether to charge the respondent before taking any internal disciplinary proceedings. If the police do charge the respondent, it will be necessary to wait until the charges have been dealt with in the courts before commencing internal enquiries or disciplinary proceedings. This does not preclude the Principal from seeking advice from police regarding the duty of care to existing students which may involve the standing down of a staff member during an investigation. The police are not required to inform the School about their investigation. Some of their material may be acquired under a Freedom of Information request when their work on the case is finished.

Insurer

The School will keep its insurer informed about developments.

Publication

The Principal will ensure that this policy is published:-

- to staff members generally, at least once each year
- to each new staff member, on induction
- by reference to it in the school newsletter, at least twice each year
- by display on at least one noticeboard in the school, always

The Principal will ensure that a copy of the policy is always available from the school's administration

Review

The School will ensure that this Policy is reviewed at least once every two years.

PART B - DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF HARM

Suspicion of harm

You have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect harm if:

- A child or young person tells you they have been harmed
- Someone else, for example another child, a parent, or staff member, tells you that harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- A child or young person tells you they know of someone who has been harmed (it is possible they may be referring to themselves)
- You are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child or young person, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries, or
- You see the harm happening.

Disclosures of harm may sound like:

- "I think I saw ..."
- "Somebody told me that ..."
- "Just think you should know ..."
- "I'm not sure what I want you to do, but ..."

Any disclosure of harm is important and must be acted upon, regardless of whether:

- The harm to a child or young person has been caused by a person from within or outside your organisation, or
- The child or young person disclosing the harm to you is from within or outside your organisation.

It is crucial to have procedures in place so any disclosure from an adult, child or young person is dealt with efficiently and effectively.

What to do when a disclosure is made

- Don't panic
- Find a private place to talk
- Listen
- Believe the person, and
- Don't ask leading questions.

It is not your role to investigate allegations of harm. Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter to the Queensland Police Service or the Department of Child Safety. The safety of the child or young person is paramount. Unnecessary questions or interviews could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any subsequent investigation authorities undertake.

In the first instance, reports of suspected child abuse should be made to the Department of Child Safety. Your local child safety service centre (CSSC) has professionally-trained child protection staff who are skilled in dealing with suspected child abuse reports. Locate and contact your local child safety service centre online at www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/contacts/cssc/index.html or freecall **1800 811 810**. The after hours service centre can be contacted on freecall **1800 177 135** or (07) 3235 9999. The service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Queensland Police Service has a number of dedicated units across Queensland to investigate matters relating to children and young people. If you wish to discuss or report an incident involving a child or young person, contact your local Child Protection and Investigation Unit (formerly Juvenile Aid Bureau) through the Police District Communication Centre nearest you (details can be obtained online at www.police.qld.gov.au/Forms/contact.asp#districtComms). In an emergency, call **000**.

An organisation should not:

- Conduct its own investigation to substantiate claims
- Hold its own internal hearing, or
- Attempt to mediate a settlement of the matter instead of notifying relevant authorities.

Investigations conducted by your organisation could lead to:

- The destruction of evidence by an accused person
- Intimidation of the person disclosing the information, or
- Intimidation of the child or young person being harmed (if the disclosure was made by somebody else).

Remember, when you make a report to the Department of Child Safety or the Queensland Police Service, your details are kept confidential and your identity is strictly protected. For more information, read more about what happens when a report is made online at www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/child-protection/report-process.html.

The following actions should be taken in any cases relating to harm or suspected harm against a child:

1. Record details of the allegations. Be careful not to taint the evidence of the student or the respondent.
2. Decide whether the allegation should be reported to authorities: see *Procedures for Reporting Harm*. If so, report it.
3. Provide details of the allegations to the respondent.
4. If there is unacceptable risk, stand down the respondent. In extreme cases, dismiss them summarily.
5. Offer counselling to the student and the respondent.
6. Inform the student's parents unless circumstances suggest that it would be wrong to do so.

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7. Inform the School's governing body.
 8. Inform the School's insurers.
 9. Investigate the allegations. Note: if the allegations have been reported to police, do not begin the investigations until the prosecution is complete and the police inform you they have decided not to charge the respondent.
 10. Attend to public relations.
 11. Take disciplinary action against the respondent if the circumstances require it.
 12. Keep the student and the respondent informed as the matter proceeds.

PART C - PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING HARM

Staff members at St Michael's College are expected to reflect the highest standards of care in their behaviour towards and relationships with students.

Employees of St Michael's College must not under any circumstances engage in physical or emotional abuse or engage in sexual contact of any nature with a student of the school. It is irrelevant whether the conduct is consensual or non-consensual, or condoned by parents or caregivers. The age of the student is also irrelevant.

Failure to behave in an appropriate manner may result in criminal proceedings and/or disciplinary action, including dismissal.

The following Table outlines the procedures for reporting harm which will apply in St Michael's College

Where a reference is made to **PROVIDING A WRITTEN REPORT** in the below procedures, the following matters are to be included in the written report:

1. name of the person giving the report (the 'first person');
2. the student's name and sex;
3. details of the basis for the first person becoming aware, or reasonably suspecting, that the student has been sexually abused by an employee of the school.;
4. details of the abuse or suspected sexual abuse;
5. any of the following information of which the first person is aware:
 - the student's age;
 - the identity of the employee who has abused, or is suspected to have abused the student;
 - the identity of anyone else who may have information about the abuse or suspected abuse.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING HARM	
SCOPE:	applies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• harm of any student of this school who was under 18 years at the time the harm was caused; and• behaviour of a staff member that a student considers is inappropriate.
DEFINITION:	"harm":- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a student's physical psychological or emotional well being, however caused• can be caused by<ul style="list-style-type: none">- physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or- sexual abuse or exploitation.

ACTIONS REQUIRED:

Subject	If	Then
Reporting Harm (Accreditation Regulation s.10)	You as a student are aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of the school who was under 18 at the time	report it to any staff member – either your class teacher, Mrs Loi, Mrs Hubble or any other person on staff you feel comfortable speaking to.
	You are a staff member and you are aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of the school who was under 18 at the time	report it to the principal or to the deputy principal keep a written record of your actions
	You are:- the principal or the deputy principal and you receive a report of harm or suspected harm to a student of the school; and you are aware of the harm having been caused or you reasonably suspect the harm to have been caused	report it to the police or the Department of Child Safety keep a written record of your actions
Reporting Inappropriate Behaviour (Accreditation Regulation s.10)	you are a student and you wish to report behaviour by a staff member that you consider inappropriate you or the Principal receive the report under the preceding step	report the behaviour to The Principal interview the student interview the staff member named in the report interview any other person who may be able to provide useful information report your findings to the principal, if you are the Dean of Students, with your recommendation for action to be taken as Principal take action on the basis of the report
Reporting Sexual Abuse Education (General Provisions) Act s.146B)	you are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a staff member; and • aware or you reasonably suspect that an employee of the school has sexually abused a student of the school who was under 18 at the time 	give a written report about the abuse to the Principal or a member of the board of directors immediately contents of the written report are prescribed by regulation made under the Education (General Provisions) Act
	You, the Principal, receive a report under the preceding step	give a copy of the report to a police officer immediately

PART D – PREVENTING BULLYING

The school has a responsibility to ensure that the rights of its students are safeguarded. These include the right to a learning environment free from discrimination and harassment.

All schools must take reasonable steps to ensure that students learn in a safe, supportive and caring environment without fear of being bullied, discriminated against or harassed.

By definition bullying is repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person or group by a more powerful person or group of persons. It may be manifested in many ways e.g. harassment (verbal, sexual or psychological), victimisation, alienation, coercion, intimidation, exclusion, ostracism, discrimination.

In any form bullying is not acceptable behaviour and results in hurt, fear, loss of self-esteem and decreased social effectiveness for the victim. Within the context of the (name of school) bullying is entirely contrary to the ideals of the school. In accordance with the school's Mission statement therefore this policy seeks to:

- develop in students respect and concern for others, of all races and creeds;
- develop in students an understanding that they must take responsibility for their own behaviour;
- develop in students critical and effective thinking and problem solving skills;
- develop in students life skills related to healthy life styles; and
- develop an environment that nurtures and promotes student self-esteem and self confidence.

Implementation

The following steps are a guide to dealing with reports of bullying.

1. If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident should be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached, to ensure the student's safety. It is **never** acceptable to turn a blind eye to bullying.
2. A clear account of the incident should be recorded and given to the Principal or delegate.
3. The Principal or delegate will then work through the school's anti-bullying policy (see The Personal Power Program below).

Students

Students who have been bullied will be supported by:

- offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a member of staff of their choice;
- reassuring the student;
- offering continuous support; and
- providing encouragement to form and maintain friendships with non-bullying students.

Students who have bullied will be helped by:

- discussing what happened;
- discovering why the student became involved;
- establishing the wrong doing and the need to change; and
- enlisting the support of parents/caregivers to help change the behaviour and attitude of the student, where appropriate.

Within the curriculum the school will raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in assemblies and subject areas, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour.

PART E – PREVENTING HARM TO STUDENTS FROM PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL

Over 85% of children are harmed by someone they know and trust – a parent, sibling, other relative, family friend or care provider. Employees should be aware of the physical, emotional and behavioural indicators of risk of student harm, and actual harm. These indicators are more significant if they are severe and/or consistent over time.

Indicators of harm

Physical abuse and excessive punishment

- student presents with bruises, burns or fractures at a frequency which is inconsistent with normal activity;
- students offer explanations for an injury which appear inconsistent with that injury;
- student or another person advise that he/she has been subjected to or threatened with physical harm;
- reluctance/refusal to participate in swimming or other activities where getting changed or wearing more revealing clothes may show signs of harm;
- excessive absenteeism.

Emotional abuse and/or deprivation

- poor peer relationships/withdrawn;
- inclined to seek adult company and/or students who are older or younger;
- avoiding going home on a regular basis;
- learning difficulties, including poor concentration;
- attention seeking behaviour such as stealing, lying, running away, disrupting classes repeatedly.

Physical neglect and/or inadequate supervision or care

- students appear underweight for age and body type;
- inadequate clothing;
- asking other students for food or money or not bringing food to school;
- excessive absences from school and/or high frequency of illness/infection;
- student often arrives at school early and/or leaves late.

Sexual abuse

- bruises, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, arms, lower abdomen or thighs;
- bruises, scratches or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury;
- difficulty walking or sitting;
- persistent headaches or recurrent abdominal pain;
- unexplained pain in genital area;
- torn, stained or bloodied underwear;
- itching, soreness, discharge or unexplained bleeding;
- painful and recurrent urination;
- recurrent urinary tract infections;
- signs of sexually transmitted diseases;
- pregnancy in adolescents where the identity of the father is vague or secret.

Where an employee has concerns or is unsure whether or not observations should be cause for concern, it is mandatory that they report their concerns to the Principal.

The Principal will contact the Department of Families to discuss, in the first instance, the fact there is a concern and to seek advice as to the appropriateness of formally reporting the matter.

If it is deemed, after this discussion, that further investigation is warranted, then the Principal, on behalf of the employee who made the original observation, will report the matter to the Queensland Police Service. Reporting to the police is mandatory where harm caused to a child indicates a criminal offence may have taken place, such as a sexual assault. At this time the employee concerned must be available to give a first hand account of the situation.

It should be noted that the role of the employee is not an investigative one. Staff must not undertake investigations beyond satisfying themselves that they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a student has been, or is at risk of harm. Neither the employee nor the Principal is obliged to obtain proof, establish the cause of harm or assess its severity.

Once a report has been made, the employee is not required to take further action, beyond the requirement to exercise a duty of care.

Evidence

The investigation of these matters is a complex and sensitive process. In the course of an investigation, officers from the child protection agencies may request permission to interview the student concerned. In most cases, in order to ensure the interests of the child are protected, the student may be interviewed before the matter is discussed with the parent/caregiver.

The responsibility for informing parents/caregivers of notifications and any interviews rests with the investigating child protection agency officers, not with the Principal. For this reason, any person making an inquiry or complaint concerning an investigation or an interview must be promptly referred to the Principal who will refer the enquirer to the appropriate department, with the explanation that it is the responsibility of that department to answer such inquiries or complaints.

Confidentiality

The identity of the person reporting the matter must not be revealed to any person or officer of any department without that person's consent.

Child protection agencies operate under strict laws of confidentiality. This means they do not divulge the identity of the person reporting the matter except to others requiring the information to perform duties under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, neither do they divulge information about their investigations to the person reporting the matter.

Section 22 of the Child Protection Act 1999 provides for the protection from civil liability for persons who, acting honestly, notify or give information about suspected harm to a child. It also states that merely because the person gives the notification, the person cannot be held to have breached any code of professional etiquette or ethics, or departed from accepted standards of professional conduct. Furthermore, Section 146B (5) of the *Education and Other Legislation (Student Protection) Act 2003* provides similar protection with respect to reports of sexual abuse.

Support for the Student

The school has a responsibility to offer a long-term, supportive environment for all students. The following are suggested as ways to support a student who may be in need of protection:

- Treat the student with respect and dignity.
- Be sensitive to the student's needs, feelings and concerns.
- Monitor the situation.
- Maintain confidentiality as far as is practicable.
- Immediately notify the Principal if, after the initial report, any further incidents of harm are suspected.

PART F – PREVENTING STUDENT SELF HARM

During their schooling, some students may be at risk of harming themselves. This harm may occur with or without suicidal intent; or may be symptomatic of, or associated with, a known medical condition or intellectual disability.

Self-harm with suicidal intent

Youth suicide rates in Australia are among the highest in the industrialised world. Common risk factors include:

- previous attempts at suicide (most powerful risk predictor);
- depression;
- drugs and alcohol abuse;
- conduct disorder;
- disruptive and unsupportive family background;
- relationship conflicts;
- poor coping skills;
- psychiatric illnesses;
- ready availability of lethal means to commit suicide;
- copycat behaviour after an incident of self-harm by another person.

Other risk factors include:

- recent bereavement;
- chronic physical illness;
- anniversary phenomenon (of past losses or major life events);
- early loss experiences;
- school failure;
- perfectionism and overachievement as a result of students having high expectations of themselves.

Threats of self-harm by a student should be taken seriously and reported to the Principal immediately. It is much safer to be cautious and act on the concern, than to do nothing.

An employee who becomes aware of, or suspects, a student is experiencing significant psychological distress, should report the information to the Principal.

In the case of an acutely distressed student, the immediate safety of the child is paramount. An employee should ensure the immediate safety of the student, arrange for an adult to be with the student at all times and then report concerns to the Principal. Employees should note, that while it is important to support a student, they should be careful not to substitute support for professional help.

Following a report, the Principal will meet with the distressed student, **on the day of the report**, to conduct an initial assessment and determine an appropriate course of action. In cases of serious concern, the Principal will notify the student's parents and make arrangements for access to professional assistance.

Self-harm without suicidal intent

Not all cases of self-harm relate to suicidal intent. Students may engage in a variety of high risk behaviours, such as alcohol/substance abuse; drug-taking; unsafe promiscuity; cutting/burning oneself.

All school employees are expected to act to prevent all high risk behaviours occurring within the school, and support any other interventions undertaken to reduce the risk of such behaviours occurring outside the school.

Employees who are aware that a student is engaging in, or is at risk of engaging in, high risk activities should report their concerns to the Principal.

Following a report, the Principal will determine what course of action should occur. Possible actions include:

- contacting parents
- arranging professional assistance
- consulting with the local office of the Department of Families
- contacting the police, where appropriate.

Self-harm as a symptom of a medical condition or intellectual disability

Where it is known that a student has a propensity to engage in self harm that is symptomatic or associated with a known medical condition or intellectual disability, the school Principal, in cooperation with other qualified school staff and external treating professionals (where applicable) will devise an individual program of management to prevent or reduce the likelihood of the student engaging in self-harm at school.

The program will complement any other management procedures adopted outside the school setting to address the self harm behaviour.

The program of management will be monitored on an on-going basis and modified as appropriate to maximise socially adaptive behaviour.

Child Protection at St Michael's College

St Michaels' College recognises that protecting students from harm and the risk of harm is fundamental to maximising their personal and academic potential. For this reason the welfare and best interests of the children within our School will always be a primary consideration.

We expect our students to show respect to our staff and volunteers and to comply with safe practices and we expect all employees to ensure that their behaviour towards and relationships with students reflect proper standards of care for students, and are not unlawful. The School will respond diligently to a report of suspected or actual harm, or risk of harm to a student.

What does the School mean by harm?

Recent Queensland legislation defines harm as:

- any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:
- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
- Sexual abuse or exploitation; or
- Domestic or family violence.

How does the School protect students from harm?

The College has a comprehensive Child Protection Policy, which covers the actions to be taken if a member of staff or a parent of the school becomes aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been done to a student of the school by other staff, people outside the school or by other students.

What should you do if you become aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused to a student of the school by a member of staff, someone outside of the school or by other students?

You should report your concerns to the Principal or Deputy Principal or to any other member of school staff.

What will happen next?

If you report your concerns to a member of staff other than the Principal, the member of staff will report it to the Principal immediately, or if the subject of the complaint is the Principal then the member of staff will report to the Chairman of the School Board.

What will the Principal or the Chairman of the Board do?

If the Principal or Chairman of the Board receives a report of harm or suspected harm to a student of the school; and he/she becomes aware of the harm having been caused or reasonably suspects the harm to have been caused then it will be reported to police immediately if the harm relates to sexual abuse; or to the Department of Child Safety if appropriate; or it may be dealt with internally if the matter does not require mandatory reporting to an outside body.

What happens about confidentiality?

Your report will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. The Chairman of the School Board may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that confidentiality between the school and parents will be respected as much as possible and any concerns raised by parents will not rebound adversely on their children.

Each person who has access to information regarding suspected or disclosed harm has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality. However, the school is unable to promise absolute confidentiality since the steps of the Policy will require disclosing, internally and externally, certain details involved in responding to the report. State authorities can compel people to give evidence about actions under the Policy and to produce documents. You would be fully informed if information you provided were to be passed on to a third party.

Any action, which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of an allegation not requiring police intervention, would be handled confidentially within the school.

How will the School help my child?

The Principal will ensure that the following things are done to reduce the chance of harm occurring:

- Ensure that each staff member understands and fulfils their obligations under this Policy and the Policy for reporting abuse.
- Ensure that there is an acceptable reference for each staff member engaged since the commencement of this protocol, from his or her previous employer.
- Require all members of academic staff to be registered or provisionally registered with the College of Teachers (formally Board of Teacher Registration), or to have received special dispensation from the College;
- Require all non-teaching members of staff and all volunteers and contractors (including Board members), to hold a current Blue Card;

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- In some cases, deemed appropriate by the School, paid or unpaid employees who work with children but are not required to hold a blue card (e.g. a parent volunteer) may be asked to consent to a criminal history check through the Queensland Police Service;
 - Ensure that where volunteer parents are working with children, it will always be in the presence of academic or non-teaching staff who are cleared to work with children.

If the Principal receives a report of harm to your child, he/she will support the child by:

- responding rapidly and diligently to the report;
- reassuring the student;
- protecting the child's confidentiality as much as possible;
- offering continuous support, and providing counselling if requested.

What should I do if I require more information?

The School's complete Child Protection Policy is available at the school administration. Parents and students may have access to this policy at any time. You may also make an appointment to discuss the policy with the Principal if you wish to clarify any matters.

Information Leaflet for Students

Every student has the right to feel safe and free from harm while at school/college. We expect you to respect your teachers and other students and we expect that you will receive the same respect in return. You should **never** allow yourself to feel unsafe without reporting it to someone you trust.

Who should I tell if I am not feeling safe at school or at home?

Any staff member. If you do not feel like talking to a member of staff you may like to write him or her letter.

What will happen if I report what is happening to a member a staff?

If the concern is worrying you but not causing you immediate harm, then the member of staff will discuss with you ways to solve your problem. If the concern is serious and the member of staff believes that you are being harmed or in danger of being harmed, he or she will report it to the Principal.

What if I don't want the member of staff to tell the Principal?

The member of staff will try to keep your concerns confidential as much as possible. However, if the member of staff is aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of the school then the law says

that the matter must be reported to the Principal and it may have to be reported to the Police. If the staff member has no choice about reporting what you have told them to some-one else he or she will explain to you exactly what will happen next.

Remember the most important thing is that you feel safe and free from harm. You must tell someone if you are being harmed or are afraid that you will be harmed.

Date of Policy

January 2008

Approved by

Board

Review Date

Biennially

Related Policies and Documents

Child Protection Compliance Policy

Anti-bullying policy

Sexual Harassment policy