

The Catholic Church in Adelaide has appointed an executive officer to establish an inaugural Child Protection Council to review all child protection systems and processes in the archdiocese.

The Council will ensure that all children in the care of the church are safe and that all involved in contact, supervision, care, education and guidance of children are aware of indicators and behaviors that may put children at risk or indicate they may be at risk.

It will also ensure that:

- All involved with children receive training relevant to their responsibility.
- A code of practice is developed for personnel in the church, in particular training in mandatory notification.
- Coordination and policy development is consistent across all agencies of the church.
- Initiatives and directions are monitored for effectiveness through reporting and accountability mechanisms and
- Effective screening processes are in place to ensure that those who work with children in the church are fit and proper people to carry this responsibility.

What processes are now in place to prevent abuse happening again?

Senior personnel in the church including principals are trained to take immediate action on reports of abuse.

Any allegation of child sexual abuse reported to a principal is immediately sent to the Director of Catholic Education SA and the Archbishop is informed. Allegations of criminal behaviour are immediately referred to police. The Archbishop will establish where appropriate, an investigation or a task force.

New teachers and staff at Catholic schools undergo police checks. At present the Teachers' Registration Board requires police checks for teachers who apply for registration. In addition, when teachers renew their registration every three years, they must sign a declaration indicating whether they have any criminal convictions or if they been dismissed from a teaching position or deregistered.

Volunteers who work on an individual basis with children must undergo a police check and a police check is compulsory for anyone working in special schools. The Parents and Friends Federation is currently conducting child protection awareness seminars for volunteers in Catholic schools.

All principals, deputy principals, teachers, temporary relief teachers and education support officers must complete a FAYS-approved mandatory reporting certificate and they must update their training and development on mandatory reporting every three years.

A Memorandum of Understanding on police checks exists between Catholic Education SA and SAPOL. Catholic Education works very closely with FAYS for the protection of children in Catholic schools.

Comprehensive guidelines enable principals to screen potential employees and have been issued to all catholic schools in SA by Catholic Education SA. All potential employees must be asked if they have had a criminal conviction

Before being appointed to a position in a Catholic school, a person must be referenced through their current or immediate past employer.

Teachers renewing their registration are required by Catholic Education SA to sign a declaration regarding any criminal convictions and if they have been dismissed.

All steps possible are taken to ensure staff are aware of their obligations and have continuing knowledge of the range of circumstances in which a child can be at risk and what action should be taken in such circumstances. In addition, principals receive specialised training from FAYS and SAPOL which gives them a contemporary understanding of paedophile behavior.

In SA's two Catholic special schools, including St Ann's, a working party is looking to strengthen child protection for intellectually and physically disabled children.