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## SECTION 3 ACTION TO PREVENT HARM TO STUDENTS

### The Establishment and Maintenance of a Safe Environment for Students:

The safety and well-being of children and young people in our schools is the paramount reason we aim to develop student-friendly environments. The Catholic Education Office Diocese of Toowoomba is committed to providing safe environments for all students by developing and implementing policies and procedures, which ensures:

- All Personnel are screened and trained in the requirements and processes of Student Protection and professional behaviour
- Students and parents/caregivers are also provided with information and education in the area of Student Protection
- Student records are maintained in confidential and secure files and the school operates within the requirements of the Privacy Act.

### The Establishment and Maintenance of a Safe Environment for Students:

#### 3.1 Teacher Registration:

All teachers employed in the Diocese of Toowoomba are registered with the Board of Teacher Registration in Queensland. Original certificates of registration and qualifications are cited upon employment and copies are stored in the school and in the teacher's personnel file at the Catholic Education Office. Principals are in-serviced with the process and procedures should there be concerns about staff conduct.

#### 3.2 Non-Teaching Staff and Volunteers:

All non-teaching staff and volunteers have been issued with a *Blue Card* by the *Commission for Children and Young People*, in accordance with the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*. Each school maintains a register of all non-teaching staff and volunteers' Blue Card details, including number and renewal date (Sample in Appendix 1). Details of non-teaching employees' Blue Cards are kept at the CEO on a register and in each relevant individual's personnel file. All Principals understand new non-teaching employees must have *applied* for a Blue Card prior to the commencement of work and may present the receipt received from the Commission as proof of their application. In addition, all volunteers require a Blue Card *prior* to the commencement of work.

#### 3.3 New Employees

*Staff Screening Procedures and Guidelines* (Appendix 2) are employed in the selection and recruitment of all new employees in schools. This ensures that teaching staff have been registered with the Board of Teacher Registration and non-teaching staff have been issued with 'suitability notices' (Blue Card) by the Commission of Children and Young People. Reference checks for all applicants are also to be checked by the chair of the selection panel and written referee statements are required for all new teaching staff.

#### 3.4 Student Information Records

Each school ensures confidential student information is stored in restricted areas. Principals and administration officers are aware that confidential information regarding students should not be released to unauthorised personnel as per the *National Catholic Education Commission and National Council of Independent Schools' Associations*

*Privacy Compliance Manual (November 2001)*. Similarly, access to computer databases containing student information is limited to relevant and authorised personnel only.

All student records are to be maintained for the specified time according to the Catholic Education Office Diocese of Toowoomba *Retention and Disposal Schedule for Records Held in Schools*. No original file is to be forwarded to another school upon a student transfer.

### **3.5 Staff In-service on Student Protection (also see Section 5.1)**

All staff are trained in Student Protection in accordance with requirements stipulated by the *Commission for Children and Young People* and are familiar with the procedures and mandatory responsibilities in reporting suspected or alleged incidents of 'harm'. In addition, this training highlights the requirements for risk management processes within the area of Student Protection. This includes excursions, camps, one on one interactions, sporting activities, classroom activities, visitors to the school, and volunteers.

All staff members are to sign a statement of attendance at training and are required to comply with the Code of Conduct and Student Protection Risk Management Procedures. A register of all staff trained in Student Protection is maintained at each school. (Appendix 3)

Principals and Student Protection Contacts are responsible for ensuring that all staff have received training in Student Protection. Principals are encouraged to work with other schools in their 'cluster' to deliver the in-service.

Formal training will be conducted on a bi-annual basis for all staff. A package including PowerPoint presentations has been provided to schools as a resource for ongoing staff training and revision. (Printed power point available in Appendix 4)

New employees are trained in Student Protection matters as part of their induction program within a reasonable time from the commencement of employment.

### **3.6 Information and Education Programs for students and parents/caregivers**

#### Parents

Information detailing the policy and procedures for student protection and strategies for the prevention of harm to their children will be provided at Parents and Friends meetings and Board meetings. Information will also be made available through a specific brochure (Appendix 5), school newsletters and the school website. Families may be directed to outside agencies for additional resources, including:

- Department of Families (*Things You Need to Know: Child Sexual Abuse*)
- NAPCAN
- Department of Child Safety: *Ten frequently asked questions about child abuse*
- Queensland Police: *Who's Chatting to your kids? A must read for parents with the Internet.*

#### Students

A number of resource materials have been developed for the education of students regarding the prevention of harm, the processes for disclosing harm, and the roles and identities of the School Student Protection Contacts. Information is available to students

through a specific brochure (Appendix 6A), a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 6B) and the student handbook. Posters detailing Student Protection Contacts and other contacts are positioned appropriately around the school.

In addition, resources developed by the Departments of Child Safety, Families and Communities (eg. *Touches and Feelings*) are available to schools, particularly for the education of younger students. Family Planning Queensland and NAPCAN have also provided resources for the education of students.

Principals and School Protection Contacts are responsible for ensuring that formal education sessions are conducted at least annually with students.

New students will be made aware of the processes and requirements through the student brochure and student handbook. In schools with Boarders, relevant students will be made aware of the roles and identities of the Boarding Student Protection Contacts and Officers, and the internal complaint process within the Boarding House via the Boarding House handbook.

### **3.7 Staff and Student Codes of Conduct**

#### **3.7.1 Staff**

All teaching staff are familiar with the relevant role description and code of conduct (College of Teachers Registration Code of Ethics) with consideration to their behaviour with students. A *Statement of Principles Regarding Catholic Education* is issued with the employee's contract. *Disciplinary Procedures for Staff Guidelines* (Appendix 7) have been developed to inform staff of the consequences of non-compliance with the Student Protection Policy.

In addition, guidelines regarding professional behaviour and appropriate and inappropriate touching are included in staff handbooks. Policies regarding harassment and bullying are applicable in all schools. (See example in Appendix 8)

#### **3.7.2 Students**

Students are expected to comply with codes of conduct as per the school's Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures. Principals should ensure the policy is relevant to issues of Student Protection.

For older students, a Student Representative Council may have input into the student code of conduct. All students will be made aware of the Code of Conduct and their rights and responsibilities within the school through in-service at year level meetings, home groups or class. Home group teachers and school leaders will promote confidence in the students for the abovementioned processes.

#### **Rights:**

- Expect to feel safe within the school, and be listened to.
- That appropriate policies, procedures and personnel are in place to ensure their safety and follow Student Protection guidelines.
- To be included in all aspects of School life irrespective of their status, expressed opinions or beliefs of their parents or carers.
- Have their best interests considered.

**Expectations:**

- Children and young people will show respect for other children, young people and adults.
- Keep themselves safe.
- Report inappropriate behaviour, unsafe situations or harm.
- That they will follow the code of conduct

**3.8 MCEETYA National Safe Schools Framework**

Each school holds a copy of the MCEETYA National Safe Schools Framework. Programs that comply with the MCEETYA National Safe Schools Framework are in operation in many schools in the Diocese, such as the "You Can Do It" program. More recently, an Education Officer position of "Faith and Life" has been created to support the development and implementation of such programs. Procedures for the prevention and handling of bullying are available. Programs such as "Bullying, No Way" are employed in schools. Principals are encouraged to refer to the *CCH The Hands On Guide for the School Principal Legal Guide* for specific procedural processes. The provision of School Counsellors in all schools ensures there is access to personnel and programs to implement this framework.

**3.9 Capital Programs and Student Protection**

Capital Grants Program Officers are aware of the student protection issues particularly for one-on-one tuition and consider student safety in the planning of new building and refurbishments. Risk management processes, in conjunction with Occupational Health and Safety audits, are employed in determining potential hazards for student safety in the school environment and effective strategies to eliminate them.

**3.10 Safety in Schools Legislation**

All schools comply with the Safety in Schools legislation and following consultation, provide information to the Head of Division: Staff and School Development (CEO) regarding records of exclusion of persons under the above Act. Annual reports to the Minister on the use of this provision are completed.

**3.11 Mature Age Students Enrolment**

Enrollment of all mature age students in Catholic Schools within the Diocese of Toowoomba will be consistent with Education Queensland requirements, specifically to include the screening and issuing of a Blue Card.

## ROLE SPECIFIC STUDENT PROTECTION DUTIES

**School Student Protection Contacts** are nominated by the School Principal and are endorsed in consultation with the Student Protection Officer. Contacts will:

- Ensure that all persons working in the school as well as parents/caregivers and students are informed of who the Student Protection Contacts and the Student Protection Officer are and provide contact information (eg. Posters, newsletters, brochures etc);
- Assist those working in the school and parents/caregivers and students when concerns or disclosures of student related 'harm' are brought to their notice;
- Assist the Principal (if required) to ensure that all paid staff of the school are advised of and trained in the obligations under s. 146B of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989* and the Diocesan Board Student Protection Policy;
- Ensure that all persons working within the school know how to access the Student Protection Policy and Procedures;

**NOTE:** Student Protection Contacts do not investigate allegations of harm. Investigations of suspected or alleged harm will be conducted by officers of the Department of Child Safety and/or the Police who are authorised to carry out such investigations.

- Assist the Principal in ensuring each person working within the school knows the reporting requirements of the Diocese of Toowoomba Catholic Education Office and are familiar with the Report Forms A and B to be completed when student related " harm" is suspected or disclosed;
- Ensure relevant documentation as required is forwarded to the Student Protection Officer in compliance with the requirements of this Policy, if documentation is provided to them;
- Assist the Principal to ensure support is provided for all implicated when student related 'harm' is alleged or disclosed;
- Assist the Principal and Student Protection Officer to organise staff training in student protection and personal safety. Where appropriate and with the approval of the Student Protection Officer, conduct staff training;
- Attend training provided by the Student Protection Officer and other professional development opportunities in the area of student protection as required;
- Meet with the Student Protection Officer concerning student related 'harm' during the annual school visit or as deemed to be required; and
- Support the principles of privacy and the need for confidentiality.

**Student Protection Officers (Catholic Education Office)** have delegated responsibility to ensure compliance with the Student Protection Policy and procedures and will:

- Maintain regular formal and informal communication with each school to ensure the ongoing integration of the Student Protection Policy in each school.
- Assist with the assessment of situations where there is a child related concern and / or an allegation of *harm* by a person/s working at the school, and advise of appropriate action.

- Advise and train all Principals in their legal obligation under section 146b of the *Education (general Provisions) Act 1989*.
- Ensure that where a child is in need of protection or care that the matter will be immediately referred to the Department of Child Safety or the Juvenile Aid Bureau.
- In conjunction with the Principal, manage the process when concerns or allegations of child related *harm* against a person working at a school, both past and present, are received.
- Advise all who have the responsibility for the care and protection of the children at a School, on Student Protection matters.
- Inform the Director or delegate of the Catholic Education Office Toowoomba when a child related concern or allegation of *harm* against a person working at the school, past and present is reported.
- Support the Principal in the supervision and monitoring of student protection cases, seeking advice when considered appropriate from outside persons who have experience and expertise in student protection.
- Develop systems, practices and procedures for compliance with Church and civil law, and this policy.
- Ensure compliance with policy provisions, training, induction, record keeping.
- Ensure internal audits take place regularly.
- Support the Principals in the implementation, the development of and conduct of staff training to achieve the required training outcomes.
- Ensure training and supervision for the School Protection Contacts occurs.
- Support the principles of privacy and the need for confidentiality.

**The School Principal will:**

- Acquire a full understanding of the policy, legislation and the Church stance relevant to student protection.
- Ensure that his or her own behaviour encourages and supports behaviour in others which is consistent with the intentions of this policy.
- 1) Immediately give a copy of any written report of sexual abuse or any reasonable suspicion of sexual abuse of a student received by him/her by a staff member to a police officer and to the Student Protection Officer pursuant to the legal obligation contained in section 146b of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989*.
- 2) Immediately give a copy of any written report of *harm* or reasonable suspicion of harm to a student of a school received by him/her from a paid staff member or any other person to the Student Protection Officer.
- 3) Make a written report of any oral report of *harm* or reasonable suspicion of *harm* to a student at a school made to him/her by any person.
- 4) Make a written report of any reasonable suspicion received by him/her of *harm* to a student at a school.
- 5) Immediately provide a copy of any written report referred to in the above points to the Student Protection Officer.
- Ensure that *harm* is reported to Department of Child Safety or JAB.
- Ensure that all persons in a school under their supervision are aware of their responsibilities and obligations about student protection which includes record keeping.
- Ensure that all persons working at a school under their supervision receive Student Protection training.

- Ensure that all persons working at the school who are required to possess a current blue card from the Commission for Children and Young People or the College of Teachers possess such.
- Ensure that all persons working at the school under their supervision know that victimisation of children and youth or other persons reporting information under this policy will not be tolerated and where proved to have occurred may expose the staff member to disciplinary action.
- Ensure the provision of student protection information to parents/caregivers of children at a school eg: brochures, information nights, student protection policy requirements.
- Ensure the provision of information and education program to students on matters of student protection.
- Ensure nominated School Student Protection Contacts are appointed in consultation with the Student Protection Officer.
- Make publicly known the reporting procedures of this policy for receipt of complaints/allegations of *harm* involving a child.
- Require that all persons working at the school under their supervision give prior written advice by email, or other means to the Principal as to the circumstances surrounding their provision by that person of respite or emergent care to a child attending the school.
- Advise the Student Protection Officer of the circumstances surrounding the provision by a person working at the school of respite or emergent care to a child there.
- Ensure written confirmation of approval by DOCS where a residential student is a ward of the state and a person working at the school is given permission to provide weekend or other leave arrangements and inform the Student Protection Officer of the circumstances.
- Ensure that all management practices and strategies at the school are consistent with the enhancement of student protection and creating harm free environments.
- Ensure in their own actions and that of all persons working at the school under their supervision, that they comply with the notification procedures in accordance with the requirements of the student protection policy.
- Support the principles of privacy and the need for confidentiality.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of and adhere to the code of conduct.

**Each Person Working within the School will:**

- Comply with the Student Protection Policy.
- Support the principles of privacy and the need for confidentiality
- 1) When he or she becomes aware that a student has been sexually abused by someone else who is an employee of the school of which the student is enrolled, gives a written report about the abuse to the Principal or a Director of the Governing Body immediately. If the Principal is or could be implicated in any way then the written report should be provided to the Director of the Governing Body.
- 2) When he/she becomes aware that a student at the school has been harmed in circumstances associated with the school or when he or she reasonably suspects that the student or child of the school may have been harmed in circumstances associated with the school gives, a written report about the *harm* or suspected *harm* to the Principal or Student Protection Contact. If the Principal or Student Protection Contact is, or could be implicated in any way then the



written report should be provided to the Director of the Catholic Education Office Toowoomba.

- Report to the Student Protection Contact and/or Principal and keep appropriate records if it is reasonable to suspect that the child is being or has been the subject of improper sexual behaviour or physical *harm* from another child that has harmed, or could *harm* him or her
- Report to the Principal or Student Protection Contact and keep appropriate records if it is reasonable to suspect that a student is in need of protection from *harm* or the risk of *harm* arising from a situation outside the control of the school
- Report to the School Protection Contact or the Principal and keep appropriate records if it is reasonable to suspect that a student is in need of protection from *self harm*.
- Apply for and be successful in obtaining a Blue Card or Teacher Registration where they are required to do so by law.
- Immediately disclose to the College of Teachers or the Commission for Children and Young People if there is a change in their criminal history.
- Undertake training in Student Protection and the requirements of the School policy.