

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR STUDENT PROTECTION

Creating safe and friendly environments for children and young people is an important focus of Catholic Education schools' overall risk management plan. We currently have a number of processes in place to try to reduce their exposure to risk. We aim to minimize risks we are aware of and establish procedures to reduce other risks which may arise, particularly in the areas of staff recruitment and selection, variations to school routines through excursions, activities and special events, in promotions and advertising each school and in the use of technology.

B: 1. Recruitment and selection

Guidelines for the screening of staff in their recruitment and selection are available in Part A, section 3.1 – 3.3 and Appendix 2. All non-teaching staff and volunteers are required to have to Blue Cards with a register maintained as per Appendix 1.

B: 2 Activities

2.1 Planning for Activities and Special Events:

Activity Preparation:

Each staff member involved in the planning and delivery of the activity must be aware of the Diocesan and School student protection policies and plans the activity in a way which supports children and young people.

An integral part of the planning for an activity is assessing the actual and potential risks to everyone involved. A risk assessment is an effective way to do this and should be conducted in the planning phase of all activities.

The following factors should be considered in the planning of the activities while conducting the risk assessment:

- The number of people taking part
- Their age and gender mix
- The age range of the participants
- The type of activity
- The environment where the activity will take place (on-line, by telephone, face-to-face)
- The particular needs of individual participants, and
- The policies and procedures of the Diocese and school

In addition, there are a number of basic principles that should be taken into account when planning activities, including:

- Maximizing opportunities for students to enjoy themselves and have fun

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- Ensuring the activities support the interests and wellbeing of students
- Being aware that students should not be left unattended
- Ensuring staff know where students are at all times, and what they are doing
- Providing constant adult supervision over any activity using potentially dangerous equipment
- Ensuring students are supervised by appropriate numbers of adults depending on numbers and age of children and type of activity and,
- Ensuring no dangerous behaviour by students is allowed.

See Risk Assessment Template for Activities/Special Events: Section B. Appendix 1.

Identifying the Risks:

During the risk assessment phase, it is essential to identify risks to students in the following key risk areas:

- Environmental
- Human
- Equipment

In each instance, it is important to consider what can happen and how it could happen, in order for risks to be managed or eliminated.

Environmental:

Location: It is important to consider whether the place in which you provide an activity is *location friendly* to students. If you own or lease the area, you may have direct control over the location and facility. In other instances, you may only use the location or facility from time to time. In this case, there may be a greater risk, as you will have less control over the area.

Some things to consider when thinking about the location of an activity could include:

- Inspecting the location to ensure it is safe; or that things haven't changed since you were last there
- Ensuring the location is appropriate for the activity
- Ensuring the availability of first aid equipment and consumable items relating to the activity
- Checking whether there is adequate shade and water available if the activity is to be outdoors
- Ensuring there is adequate lighting and
- Check whether there are any potential risk created by other people and activities close to where you will be operating.

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Surrounding Environment: It may be necessary when examining the surrounding environment to make adjustments or allowances if there are factors which impact or have the potential to impact on the interests and wellbeing of the students in your care.

Some things to consider about the surrounding environment include:

- Whether there are designated areas for spectators so students do not confuse spectators with your organisation
- The location's proximity to roads, dangerous obstacles, or waterways
- Whether toilets, drinking fountains, or taps are a substantial distance away from the activity requiring a spread of supervision
- Whether there is a lack of shade or shelter and
- If there are any places where children or young people could hide, or in which other people could be concealed.

Human:

Supervision: is a critical element in providing any service, particularly for students. Supervision will usually be provided by employees or volunteers. Some aspects to consider include:

- Ensuring supervisors are appropriately qualified, well trained and current competencies
- Ensuring there are enough people to supervise the number of students involved in the activity
- Making supervisors aware of their rights and responsibilities as well as the rights and responsibilities of all others involved in the activity, and
- Ensuring supervisors adhere to the policies and code of conduct of the Diocese of Toowoomba

Who is responsible for what?

It can be easy to overlook the need to clearly identify who is responsible for providing such an activity. This could include responsibilities such as:

- Who will check the site before it is used?
- Who will bring the equipment and check to see if it works beforehand?
- Who will do any setting up that needs to be done?
- Who will be responsible for delivering the actual activity?
- Who will stay behind until everyone has left?

It is important for all involved to be aware of their roles and responsibilities when delivering an activity. Two ways of ensuring this is to have:

- Clear job descriptions, duty statements or role descriptions which outline a person's role in a particular activity, and

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- An induction for staff before the first activity which outlines what is expected of each person.

It is also important to ensure that any non-teaching personnel, including volunteers, that are attending the activity with students, possess a current Blue Card as part of the Working with Children Check.

Equipment:

Although some activities for students don't require equipment, many do. If equipment is required for the activities, consider whether:

- The equipment is appropriate for the activity, the age range and capabilities of the student's participating
- There is enough equipment of the number involved in the activity. If not, have a system in place to ensure that everyone gets a chance to use the equipment safely and in the way it was intended to be used, and
- The equipment is in good working order and safe for students to use.

Evaluate the Risk:

In consideration of these areas, conduct a **risk analysis** using section 3 of the Risk Assessment Planning sheet, by consulting with others and using your own experiences. Consider what activities are low risk, and which may pose a high risk.

Treat the Risk:

Decide how you are going to deal with, or treat the risks you have identified and analysed by:

- Identifying all possible options to treat the risks
- Selecting the most feasible and cost-effective options
- Developing strategies to treat the risks, and
- Implementing strategies – decide:
 - Who will implement them
 - What strategies should be implemented
 - When will they be implemented, and
 - How they will be implemented

2.2 Providing the activities:

When providing activities for students, the potential risks need to be considered. These could be relatively minor, such as someone not enjoying the activity, or they could be more serious, for example, an accident in which someone is injured.

There are certain things we can do to help minimise the risk and maximize the benefits for students.

Activity Induction

Before the activity goes ahead, it is a good idea to provide an induction about what will happen, regardless of whether it is a 'one off' activity or an activity conducted over a period of time. Provide this information to parents, carers and the students taking part in the activity.

The induction process should:

- Clearly identify what should happen and what is expected of the activity
- Highlight anything that may be of concern to parents, carers or students
- Answer any questions that people may have
- Let people know what will happen if anything goes wrong,
- Let people know who they can talk to if they have any issues or concerns

From the perspective of parents, carers, and students, the induction should:

- Provide an opportunity to ask questions and clarify issues
- Help them understand what is expected of them
- Make them aware of what will happen if an issue arises, and
- Let them know who to contact if they have any concerns in the future.

2.3 Monitoring the activities

It is important to take an active interest in what actually occurs at each activity. The activity coordinator should determine how well staff and volunteers are performing their duties and whether they are acting in an ethical and appropriate way.

Strategies to consider include:

- Supervising staff
- Conducting random audits of activities
- Doing performance appraisal for employees and volunteers
- Conducting surveys to find out how the participants felt about activities
- Rotating staff to supervise different activities and
- Monitoring the development of students as a result of the activities and addressing any deficiencies.

Continually review and update your strategy:

Your risk management strategy should be reviewed following every significant change, event or issue that occurs in your organization.

Document any changes you make and the reasons they have been made.

Continually review and update your risk management strategies to show employees, volunteers and key stakeholders that you take your responsibility to minimize risk seriously, and you committed to maintaining a friendly environment for children and young people.

B: 3 Special Events

There may be occasions when students attend an event held by another organization or individual. In these situations, there may be a certain loss of control over the event or activity. As such, it is worth ensuring that attendance at such an event will not compromise your commitment to providing a safe environment for students.

Questions to ask in the decision-making process include:

- Do we have enough information about the event to decide whether it will contribute positively to the well-being and development of the students?
- Has enough information been provided to parents or carers so they can make an informed decision about whether they want their children to attend?
- Will attending such an event create risks for the students of your school?
- If the event could pose risk, have you evaluated them and developed procedures to minimise those risks?
- Do you know if the event organizers are committed to an environment that is safe and friendly for students?
- Have they developed policies and procedures supporting such an environment?

Special events allow schools to provide additional opportunities to students. It is important to ensure that the experience is positive and fits with your school's student friendly approach to providing activities.

B: 4 Promotions and Advertising

When promoting the special features or events of your school, ensure your key messages highlight your commitment to providing friendly environments for students.

Promotional activities or advertising can offer opportunities for your schools, such as:

- Fundraising

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- Promoting an upcoming event eg. Fete
- Enrolment marketing
- Highlighting achievements

To promote the activities, you may choose to provide a photograph for use in newspapers, flyers, posters or on a website. Be aware of the issues surrounding the use of images of students. You are legally obliged to ensure the identities of anyone under 18 remain confidential in certain situation eg. Where a child may be a victim of a criminal offence or if a child is in care. Always seek legal advice if unsure about releasing information. Steps include:

- Ensure permission is granted from the parent or carer of the student to use the image.
- Ask the student how they feel about the use of the image, ask their permission and allow them some input into how it will be used.
- Provide enough information about how the image will be used so the parent, carer or student can give informed consent.
- Ensure digital and electronic images are formatted so they cannot be altered if downloaded.
- Consider how others will interpret the image.
- Ensure the image is used for its original purpose, and seek permission if the image is to be used in the future in any other way.
- Consider who will see the promotional or advertising material containing the image.

Following these steps will assist in the decision-making process of whether it is appropriate for photographs of students to be used in various contexts and will be in the best interest of the student.

B: 5 Computers, emails, Internet and mobile phone use.

Schools within the Diocese of Toowoomba provide students and teacher with computer facilities for educational use. The resources provided may include computers, printers, CD Rom access and Internet access.

All schools should have developed and implemented an Acceptable Use Policy to govern the use of the Internet connection by staff and students. Student use should be governed by a written agreement. Parents will be made aware of the Internet links and policies governing its use. Parents should also be included in the signing of the agreement allowing the child/children to have access to the Internet. School Policy on the Internet use should contain restrictions on accessing inappropriate material while providing students with instruction for student while using the Internet.

When using the Internet for class activities, teachers will select material that is appropriate in the light of the age of the students and what is relevant to the

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subject/lesson objectives. Teachers should preview the materials and sites they require or recommend students access to determine the appropriateness of materials contained one or accessed through the site. Teachers will also assist their students to develop the skills necessary to use the information critically.

Filtering Software designed to block access to certain sites that are not acceptable is applied in each school setting.

Example: Acceptable Use Policy: The following uses of the Internet connection are considered unacceptable:

- **Personal safety (students only):** Users will not post personal contact information about themselves or other people.
- **Illegal Activities:** Users shall not use this Internet connection to perform any act that may be construed as illegal or unethical including the use of the connection for unauthorized access to other computers.
- **Inappropriate Language:** Restrictions against inappropriate language apply to public messages, email and material posted on Web pages. Users will not use obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude inflammatory threatening or disrespectful language.
- **Respect for Privacy:** users will not repost a message that was sent to them privately without the permission of the person who sent them the message. Users will not post private information about another person.
- **Inappropriate Access to material:** users will not use the Internet link to access material that is; profane, or obscene, that advocates illegal acts or advocates violence or discrimination towards other people. If a user inadvertently accesses such information, they should immediately and quietly disclose the inadvertent access to their teacher or supervisor.

Mobile Phones: each school has developed a policy regarding the possession and appropriate use of mobile phones for students and staff during school hours.

Acknowledgement: Commission for Children and Young people and Child Guardian. *Safe Environments for Young People: Children Protection – managing the risks.*

B: 7 STUDENT PROTECTION COMPLIANCE

A Quarterly non-identifying statistical report will be collated by the Student Protection Officers and will be submitted to the Director, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Toowoomba.

An internal audit schedule must be completed annually for each school (Student Protection Compliance checklist).

Every variation made in implementing the Policy must be recorded on the Record of Variation Form, and these records need to be made available for the internal and external audit.

An external audit is carried out at least every 3 years or as required.

REVIEW

These procedures will be reviewed at least every three years.

POLICY BREACH

Any deliberate breach of the Policy may lead to disciplinary action as defined by the Disciplinary Procedures for Staff Guidelines.

Part B: Appendix 1

STUDENT PROTECTION RISK MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE

1. Description of Activity/Event/Context:

Date: _____

Student/Client:	
Setting:	
Activity:	
Supervision:	

2. Identify the Risks: what can happen? How can it happen?

Environmental	Human	Equipment

3. Analyse the risks: For risks identified, assess the level of risk based on the likelihood they will occur and consequences for children, young people and your school.

Activity	Description of Risk (source of risk, likely effect of the problem)	Existing Control	Likelihood of risk occurring (Almost certain, likely, possible, unlikely, rare)	Consequences (Catastrophic, major, moderate, minor, insignificant)	Level of Risk Extreme, high, moderate, low

Calculating the level of risk:

1. Evaluate the **likelihood** of a risk occurring, according to the ratings in the left hand column.
2. Evaluate the **consequences** if the incident occurred, according to the ratings in the top row.
3. Calculate the **level of risk** by finding the intersection between the likelihood and the consequences.

Consequences

<i>Likelihood</i>	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
<i>Almost certain</i>	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
<i>Likely</i>	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
<i>Possible</i>	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
<i>Unlikely</i>	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
<i>Rare</i>	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High

4. **Evaluate the risks:** prioritise risks to minimise impact, to focus efforts in treating identified risks and to guide action planning and allocation of resources.

5. Treating the Risk:

Consider the option for reducing the likelihood and/or consequences of each risk, eg. Stop the activity, eliminate the risk, minimise harm or transfer liability. Choose the best option, plan action, communicate and review.

Risk	Options to treat the risk <i>Consider the most feasible and cost-effective options</i>	Strategy chosen: Include who, when and how they will be implemented

Signature: _____

Date: _____

6. Review of event/activity:

Discuss any changes made to the above risk management plan and the reasons they have been made. Consider any recommendations to the policy for risk management.

Signature: _____

Date: _____