

THE SCHOOL

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

RATIONALE

The Anglican Schools Commission has developed a policy statement and operational guidelines to assist Principals, teachers and other school staff to deal appropriately with the issue of child maltreatment. THE SCHOOL acknowledges the need to protect young people and has adapted this policy to reflect this responsibility. The policy makes it clear that in acting to protect students' best interests, staff must follow closely the steps set out in the guidelines and knows when to alert the Headmaster and other appropriately skilled professionals to possible cases of maltreatment.

PROCEDURES

To assist the Headmaster and staff, the Anglican Schools Commission has adopted with appropriate amendments, a booklet entitled "Procedures for Identification and Notification of Child Abuse and Neglect" which was initially prepared by the Education Department of Western Australia for government schools and adapted for use in Catholic Schools. The amendments maintain the integrity of the original document while ensuring its applicability to the Commission's schools.

1. The Commission has adopted the procedures in this document as appropriate for its schools and by so doing is supporting a consistent approach by all schools to the issue of child abuse or neglect.
2. School personnel seeking consultative advice, with the approval of the Headmaster, may contact:
The Education Consultant and Chaplain of the Commission
Senior Social Worker – Anglicare
Duty staff person - Department for Family and Children's Services
Non-government Schools Psychology Service
3. If formal notification is to be made to the Department for Family and Children's Services (DFCS), the Headmaster must inform the Director of the Anglican Schools Commission as the chief executive officer of the school authority.

The Anglican Schools Commission Office will:

1. Assist the Headmaster in arranging appropriate professional development for designated staff in the principles, policy and procedures in child protection.
2. If necessary assist the Headmaster or his delegate when a case of child abuse is disclosed, or where there is belief, on reasonable grounds that abuse has occurred, to follow the procedures on notification of abuse to the appropriate child protection authority or service.
3. Assist the Headmaster in ensuring that staff of the school making the referral, is offered appropriate support to adjust to any consequences of the referral

CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

* PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is an action or inaction by an older person, parent or care-giver that causes physical harm to a child eg. bruises, cuts, bums or fractures.

* SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is when a child under the age of 18 years is tricked, coerced, trapped, forced into, bribed or otherwise involved in a sexual act by an older person. Sexual abuse covers a wide range of sexual behaviour including observation or involvement with inappropriate touching or fondling of the child's body, making the child touch the adult's genitalia, sexual penetration and showing or making pornographic videos to, with or of the child.

* EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse occurs when a constant attitude or behaviour by an older person towards a child harms them emotionally, and may delay or impair their physical and intellectual development. Emotional abuse can include rejection or refusal to accept the child, terrorising, bullying, isolation and continued belittling of the child.

* NEGLECT

Neglect exists when a parent or care giver consistently fails to provide a child with an acceptable minimum standard of care. This includes the basic necessities of life, shelter, healthy food, suitable clothing, medical care, emotional security and appropriate supervision.

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR THE HEADMASTER

Where there is a disclosure of child abuse or strong concerns about the well-being of a child, the teacher or staff members involved must report the matter to the Headmaster.

On receipt of this report the Headmaster must:

- * report the matter to the Department for Family and Children's Services.
- * inform the Director of the Anglican Schools Commission.

The Department for Family and Children's Services will involve other agencies such as the Child Abuse Unit of the Police Department and the Child Sexual Assault Unit at Princess Margaret Hospital where necessary. Where it is believed that the child is in immediate danger of harm, the Police Department will be actively involved to ensure the overall safety of the child.

It is the responsibility of the Department for Family and Children's Services to:

- * react promptly to the school's report;
- * determine if, in fact, abuse has occurred or that neglect is evident;
- * initiate, if necessary, immediate remedial action, including involvement with other agencies; and
- * give feedback as appropriate to the Principal.

DFCS has the authority under the Child Welfare Act to interview a child at school prior to contacting the parent/care giver. If an interview with a child by DFCS personnel is to take place on school premises without the parents' knowledge, the child should be given the option of having support from a staff member with whom they feel comfortable.

It is the responsibility of school personnel to protect the children in their care by reporting their suspicions of child abuse and neglect to the Department for Family and Children's Services through their Headmaster