



Student Protection

Handbook for volunteers

**A new volunteer form must be completed
each year.**

Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane

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Child protection is everyone's business

As adults we all have a responsibility to care for children and young people and to protect them from all forms of harm as well as to positively promote their welfare.

Brisbane Catholic Education seeks to continue its adherence to legislative requirements, policy directives and duty of care to students by a commitment to the implementation of student protection strategies and processes.

The volunteer's role in the school

Our aim is to give students the sense of being safe and valued as people so that they are secure and ready to learn at their best. As a volunteer you play a significant role in the work of the school, form part of the school community and assist in providing the optimal learning environment for the students.

This document outlines your responsibilities as a volunteer in the vital area of student protection and it is important that you read this document, in conjunction with the Volunteer Code of Conduct, so you understand your responsibilities in the protection of our students.

What is child abuse?

The term 'abuse' has been replaced in recent state legislation with the term "**harm**". Child '**abuse**' is any act, or failure to act, that leads to the '**harm**' of a child or young person. It can be better understood by thinking that '**abuse**' is the **action** and '**harm**' is the **consequence**.

The legal definition of 'harm'

In Queensland harm is legally defined as:

'Harm caused to the child/student under 18 years is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the student's physical, psychological or emotional well being.

It is immaterial how the harm is caused.'

Harm can be caused by:

- (a) physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or*
- (b) sexual abuse or exploitation'.*

(Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act and Regulations 2001, and the Child Protection Act 1999)

Within a school there are four (4) sources of harm to a student.

They are:

1. Harm to a student by a staff member, other employee or volunteer of the school.
2. Harm to a student by someone outside the school.
3. Harm by other students.
4. Student self-harm

What are reasonable grounds to suspect harm to a student?

Reasonable grounds to suspect that harm to a student may have occurred is when:

- a student speaks about being harmed or being in danger of being harmed
- someone else (perhaps a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the student) informs you that they suspect a student has been harmed
- a student tells you that they know a child who has been harmed (often the student can be referring to him/herself)

- you observe a particular student's behaviour, physical appearance or social relationships that raises concerns of possible harm to the student.

What is a "disclosure" of harm?

Sometimes a student may approach you and tell you about their experience of being harmed. This is described as a "disclosure".

If a student speaks to you about a concern, you need to be prepared so that you can be supportive of the student and clear about your own responsibility at the same time.

If a student tells you about being harmed or being at risk of harm

DO:

- Let them tell their experience first in their own words and at their own time.
- Listen attentively to their story
- React calmly to the information the student provides though it might be upsetting
- Reassure the student that they have done the right thing to tell e.g. "I am pleased you have told me these things"
- Reassure the child that it is not his/her fault that whatever the concern is has occurred
- **At this stage you may ask for clarification ONLY if it is necessary. If you have the essence of the story, you probably have enough information to report your concerns**
- Be thoughtful and careful of the student's feelings at this time. They may be distressed or ashamed, so they will need care and reassurance
- Be aware of privacy issues for the student
- Treat this information confidentially and discuss it only with the right person out of the hearing of other students
- Be honest with the student about your responsibility for taking action.
- Act immediately to report the concerns to the principal or the school student protection contact (SPC) (See below for more about this)

DO NOT:

- Panic
- React emotionally or accuse the alleged perpetrator.
- Ask leading questions e.g. 'Was it your father who did this to you?'
- Make promises that you cannot keep – particularly about not telling others (e.g. relevant adults such as the principal etc) about the information
- Leave the student alone immediately after a disclosure as they will be feeling very vulnerable at this time
- Discuss the situation with parents, caregivers or others (other than those designated e.g. principal, student protection contact (SPC).)

Who are Student Protection Contacts (SPC's)?

Legislation requires all non-State schools in Queensland to nominate at least two staff members to whom students can report concerns.

In Brisbane Catholic Education the principal is one student protection contact and the principal must also nominate at least one other staff member to be the school's other Student Protection Contact (SPC). Students, staff, parents and others can report to the principal and/or SPC if they have concerns for students.

Your reporting responsibilities

In your role as a volunteer at the school if in any instance:

- you become aware, or reasonably suspect harm to a student has occurred, or it is likely of it occurring, you must report this as soon as possible to the principal or the school student protection contact (SPC).
- Please check with your school principal about whom you are to report to if you have concerns about a student.

REMEMBER
It is vital to maintain confidentiality for the
protection of all involved.

What happens next ?

Once you have reported the alleged harm of a student, the principal or the SPC will do whatever is necessary to make sure the student is safe.

Brisbane Catholic Education has student protection reporting processes and all Brisbane Catholic Education staff have received training in student protection.

You can rest assured that your report will be taken seriously, dealt with immediately and reported to the appropriate State authorities where necessary.

Here are some scenarios for your consideration

Scenario 1

You work as a volunteer in the tuckshop. You notice a yr 2 girl has a large bruise around her eye and she tells you that she had been hit by her mother. You know her mother well. What do you do?

Scenario 2

You are a volunteer who assists with helping students to read. Another volunteer is working nearby with a student. You observe that the volunteer appears angry, is raising her voice at the student, poking the student on the shoulder. You have worked with this volunteer all year and usually have morning tea with her. What do you do?

Scenario 3

You are a volunteer and assist with the school year eight netball team. You notice that a female student in the team has cuts on her arms and on her legs. You enquire about the cuts and she tells you she did it to herself because she felt unhappy. You remember someone remarking in the past that this girl was a little '*strange*'. What do you do?

Scenario 4

You are a volunteer parent assisting school staff take the year six class on an excursion. On the bus one of the year six girls tells you that one of the boys has been acting in a sexually inappropriate manner at the back of the bus. The male student is the son of a friend with whom you talk with regularly. What do you do?

Answers to scenarios:

Each of these situations should be reported to the principal or SPC.

Remember you do NOT have to be sure that a student has been harmed to report – you just need to have a concern.

Very Important Note

If you have been involved in a student protection matter in your role as a school volunteer, be aware of your own reactions and seek support if required. Your principal can assist you with this issue.

Finally, please sign the following page where indicated to confirm you understand your student protection responsibilities as a volunteer.

Brisbane Catholic Education thanks you for your support for our schools and our students.

References and Resources

More information on student protection in Brisbane Catholic Education can be found in the following documents which can be accessed on Brisbane Catholic Education's public website

www.bne.catholic.edu.au

- 1. Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council *Student Protection Policy 2011***
- 2. *Student Protection Processes November 2013***
- 3. *Student Protection Brochure for Families 2011***



VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct applies to all persons volunteering within Brisbane Catholic Education.

- All volunteers should participate in a Student Protection Induction. [This is contained in the Student Protection Handbook for Volunteers and/or Training Power Point for Volunteers].
- All non-parent volunteers must undergo employment screening under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* and hold a current Positive Notice Blue Card for volunteers.
- Volunteers have a significant role in the work of the school. Volunteers have an integral part to play in providing a safe and enjoyable environment for young people.
- Volunteers are expected to follow the principles of:
 - Safety
 - Respect
 - Support
 - Ethical Communication
 - Ethical Conduct.
- Volunteers should:
 - Behave honestly and with integrity
 - Act with care and diligence
 - Behave and dress appropriately
- Volunteers should think and act safety:
 - Put safety first in all activities.
 - Follow the safety procedures outlined in the **School's Operational Guidelines**, to the best of your ability, as outlined in the volunteer induction process.
 - If a direct threat is identified, assist in the evacuation of the area and/or situation as quickly as possible.
 - Work only according to your level of competency. Contact and report to School Administration when confronted with a situation which you are unable to contend with or is beyond your role and responsibility.
- Volunteers should treat students and staff with respect:
 - Respect the rights of individuals and maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality.
 - Treat everyone with courtesy, sensitivity, tact, consideration and humility.
 - Assist in the creation of an environment free of fear, harassment, racism and exploitation.

- Respect the cultures, beliefs, opinions and decisions of others although you may not always agree.
- Take instruction from and not obstruct the responsible staff member in any way in regards to the execution of their duties.
- Report any illegal activity to the School's Administration or appropriate staff member.
- Volunteers should use appropriate communication skills when engaging with students:
 - Acknowledge the needs and concerns of the individual.
 - Practice effective listening (For example - ask open questions; be alert to non-verbal communication; stay calm and relaxed).
 - Be aware of the young person's physical space.
 - Be aware of your own body language.
 - Be judicious in making physical contact with young people and at all times seek the young person's permission to do so.
 - Stay calm and relaxed.
 - Be clear and consistent.
 - Use non-discriminatory respectful and non-judgmental language.
 - Seek advice whenever appropriate.
 - As a volunteer, you must follow all instructions from the staff and School Administration. You should not engage directly with media representatives, and should refer all enquiries to School Administration.
- Volunteers must not:
 - Smoke or use tobacco products while volunteering and/or on school property.
 - Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering and/or on school property.
 - Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time while volunteering and/or on school property.
 - Condone the use of or provided any of the above substances to any students, employees or other volunteers
 - Verbally harass or abuse any person or use profanity while volunteering and/or on school property.
 - Utilize your position as a volunteer to take advantage of any young person.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct will be dealt with by the school principal in the first instance and appropriate authorities will be contacted if necessary.

Should you have any questions with regard to any of the above you should contact the school Principal Mrs Janet Smith in the first instance on (07) 3263 6788.

Statement of Principles for Employment In Catholic Schools

Catholic Education

Archdiocese of Brisbane

Rationale

This is a statement concerning the Catholic education employers' expectations about standards as they apply to the professional and witness responsibilities of any staff member.

Catholic education is called to provide a climate where the dignity of the human person is valued and affirmed and where community is developed with a profound relationship between the Gospel and culture.

The principles have been derived from a reflection on the documents of the Church namely:

- 1965 *Declaration on Christian Education*
- 1977 *The Catholic School*
- 1982 *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*
- 1988 *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*
- 1998 *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*

Inspiration and direction for all staff members is derived from the following points taken from an address by John Paul II given to Catholic Educators, September 12, 1984.

The Church looks upon you as co-workers with an important measure of shared responsibility.

To you it is given to create the future and give it direction by offering students a set of values with which to assess their newly discovered knowledge.

The changing times demand that educators be open to new cultural influences and interpret them for your pupils in the light of Christian faith.

You are called to bring professional competence and a high standard of excellence to your work. Your responsibilities make demands on you that go far beyond the need for professional skills and competence.

Through you, as through a clear window on a sunny day, students must come to see and know the richness and the joy of a life lived in accordance with Christ's teaching, in response to His challenging demands.

To teach means not only to impart what we know, but also to reveal whom we are by living what we believe.

We are called to meet the challenge in paragraph 19 of *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* –

We must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that 'it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose'.

Contractual Principles

Each staff member has an indispensable role to play in contributing to Catholic education. It is required of all staff members employed in Catholic education that they :

- recognise and accept that the Catholic school is more than an educative institution as it is a key part of the Church, an integral element of the Church's mission;
- be qualified for the position and meet all registration, accreditation and other requirements of the State and Church;
- be committed to participation in regular on-going professional development;
- accept and support the Catholic educational philosophy, policy and practices of the school;
- develop and maintain an adequate understanding of those aspects of Catholic teaching that touch upon their areas of responsibility;
- strive by their service, performance of duties and personal example to inculcate in students an appreciation and acceptance of Christian teaching and values;
- avoid, whether by word, action or known lifestyle, any influence upon students that is contrary to the teaching and values of the Church community in whose name they act.

**St Dympna's Primary School
491 Robinson Road Aspley Q 4034**

Volunteer Student Protection Information Sign off
Original of completed sign off sheet to be retained by school

Iconfirm that I have been given the volunteer student protection hand book and that I understand my reporting responsibilities as a volunteer.

Volunteer's signature.....Date.....

Principal's signature.....Date.....



School Volunteer Register Form

Surname: _____ First Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Contact Number: _____
Address: _____
City/Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Volunteer Position held: _____

Date Mandatory Student Protection In-servicing received: _____

(Volunteers other than parents of enrolled students)

Positive Notice Blue Card Registration Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

NB: A copy of the current Blue Card or Exemption Card must be attached to this form

Important Information:

I understand that I must follow the schools visitor procedures and sign in and out at the front desk on all occasions.

I have been provided with a copy of:

- Brisbane Catholic Education's *Statement of Principles*
- The *Volunteer Code of Conduct*
- The *Student Protection Handbook for Volunteers*

I, _____, have read, understood and accepted the above.
(Your first name and surname)

Signed: _____ Date: _____