



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

DATE: 4 DECEMBER 2007

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## INTRODUCTION

St Paul's College recognizes that its duty of care and responsibility for the welfare and well-being of its students is paramount and will always be a primary consideration.

St. Paul's expects its employees to ensure that their behaviour towards and relationships with students reflects proper professional standards of care for students. The College also expects students to show respect to College staff and volunteers and to comply with safe practices.

St Paul's College is committed to the SACCS Child Protection Policy and to the procedures, practices and programs outlined in the Policy.

This Policy will be made available to all members of the College community via the school website, noticeboards, Newsletter and Youth Room. A copy of the Policy will always be available from the College Reception.

This Policy will be directed to the attention of all staff through the staff handbook, and in particular, on the first staff Professional Development Day of each year and to all new staff (and volunteers) at the time of appointment.

Both teaching and non-teaching staff will be provided with appropriate training on child protection issues on an annual basis.

References:                    SACCS Child Protection Policy 2000  
                                      SACCS Dealing with Child Abuse Procedures 2002  
                                      SACCS Duty of Care Policy 2004  
                                      SACCS Pastoral Care Policy for Catholic School Communities 2006  
                                      Towards Healing

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY 2000**  
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me”.

Mark 9:37

*In all  
actions concerning children,  
whether undertaken by  
Public or Private  
Welfare Institutions,  
Courts of Law,  
Administrative Authorities  
or Legislative Bodies,  
the best interest  
of the child  
shall be a primary consideration*

The Convention on the Rights of the Child  
Article 3 (1)  
Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Catholic schools educate young people in all dimensions of life by developing the whole person (South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools Vision Statement)*

- 1.1 The Child Protection Policy is framed within the VISION STATEMENT for South Australian Catholic Schools. The Catholic School is a community which
  - witnesses to Gospel values
  - respects individual dignity.
  - values cooperation
  - challenges its members to be critical and
  - reflective in their search for truth.
- 1.2 The policy is based on the Gospel values of freedom and justice for all people and an underlying belief in their dignity and uniqueness.
- 1.3 Safety, a basic human right, is a pre-requisite for the Catholic school to be able to carry out its mission to educate.
- 1.4 Children are the least powerful people in society. They are vulnerable to exploitation and victimization by those who are more powerful. Safety and protection from all forms of abuse are fundamental rights of all children.
- 1.5 The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) acknowledges the complex societal factors which contribute to child abuse and requires that all its schools be places where children can be safe and feel safe. The requirement is met by providing a Child Protection Policy which directs schools to develop and implement relevant practices, procedures and programs for all students.
- 1.6 Catholic Schools operate in a wider community context where legal requirements exist and where they have an obligation to
  - protect children
  - provide a secure, safe environment where children can be safe and feel safe
  - intervene on behalf of children
  - actively work towards empowering children
  - ensure the principles of care, protection and safety are implemented.

## 2. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

*The safety and well being of the child must be the paramount consideration in every situation.*

- 2.1 The dignity of the human person is fundamental to Catholic teaching.
- 2.2 Children have the right to be safe and feel safe.
- 2.3 Children's development is dependent on the quality of care provided by the significant adults in their lives.

- 2.4 The family is recognized as being the unit primarily responsible for the care and protection of the child.
- 2.5 Where families are not providing the care consistent with their obligations or where a child's welfare is at risk, or suspected to be at risk, intervention on behalf of the child is obligatory.
- 2.6 Schools must be places where children feel safe.
- 2.7 The prevention and treatment of child abuse requires a multi-disciplinary response which is sensitive to cultural diversity and special needs.
- 2.8 Cultural or other reasons, notwithstanding, school personnel must intervene on behalf of children.
- 2.9 Cooperation with Government Departments and human service organizations in the community is essential in child protection.
- 2.10 People who are involved in situations where abuse occurs, or is suspected, are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

### **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 3.1 The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools recognizes the significant role of schools in the prevention of child abuse and takes responsibility for requiring its schools to implement child protection practices.
- 3.2 The Commission is to ensure resource allocation for child protection education and programs.
- 3.3 The Commission requires that all Catholic schools be places where children are safe and feel safe.
- 3.4 The Commission has responsibility to ensure that schools meet these requirements through the provision of child protection policy, practices,
- 3.5 School staffs are to be educated in the area of child protection and mandatory notification.
- 3.6 People in schools are legally mandated and therefore are obliged to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- 3.7 Schools are to provide protection and abuse prevention curriculum for students.

## 4. A GUIDE TO RESPONSIBILITIES

*The responsibility of all people involved in Catholic education is to ensure that there is a total community approach towards the protection of children from abuse*

### **4.1 Responsibilities of the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools**

- 4.1.1 To develop, monitor and review the policy in accordance with legal requirements and the Church's teachings.
- 4.1.2 To ensure that resources are available to facilitate ongoing training and support for mandated notifiers.
- 4.1.3 To provide representation on the appropriate child protection committees.

### **4.2 Responsibilities of the Catholic Education Office**

- 4.2.1 To allocate training resources for personnel to assist in the delivery of professional development programs for mandated notifiers.
- 4.2.2 To provide advice and support for school personnel dealing with issues of child abuse.
- 4.2.3 To encourage school personnel to review on a regular basis their legal obligations under the act.
- 4.2.4 To ensure that an inter-agency approach to the management of child protection is fostered and supported.
- 4.2.5 To provide current information on child protection issues.

### **4.3 Responsibilities of school leaders**

- 4.3.1 To provide a safe school environment which ensures that children are protected.
- 4.3.2 To ensure school personnel understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures when notifying suspicion of child abuse and neglect.
- 4.3.3 To support school personnel directly involved with the handling of disclosure and notification.
- 4.3.4 To ensure that policies and organizational procedures provide children with a safe school environment. This will be done in consultation with schools boards and the parent community.
- 4.3.5 To promote models of behaviour between school personnel and children based on mutual respect and consideration.

- 4.3.6 To ensure that student management practice respects the dignity of children.
- 4.3.7 To provide training and development for school personnel in child protection and abuse prevention curriculum.
- 4.3.8 To initiate and support the implementation of child protection and abuse prevention curriculum at the classroom level to ensure that all children have access to these programs throughout their school years.
- 4.3.9 To monitor and evaluate child protection and abuse prevention curriculum.
- 4.3.10 To provide families with information about and opportunities to participate in the protection and abuse prevention curriculum.
- 4.3.11 To ensure appropriate confidentiality of information concerning children in cases of suspected abuse or neglect.

#### **4.4 Responsibilities of school personnel**

- 4.4.1 To treat children with dignity and respect, to act with propriety, provide a duty of care and protect children in their care.
- 4.4.2 To notify the Central Intake Team if, in the course of their work, they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected.
- 4.4.3 To provide a physically and psychologically safe environment for children.
- 4.4.4 To participate in training and development opportunities which provide knowledge and skills in mandatory notification.
- 4.4.5 To teach children skills and understanding which will empower them to achieve and maintain personal safety.
- 4.4.6 To assist children to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognize the rights of all people to be safe and free from both harassment and abuse.

## 5. GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

*The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools Child Protection Policy guides schools in the further development of policy and procedures at school level.*

Specifically

- 5.1 Develop education and care practices which:
  - ensure a safe environment for children in Catholic schools
  - support children to gain confidence in their identity and develop their capabilities and strengths
  - respect the diverse and special needs of children
  - are sensitive and responsive to changes in behaviour which may be indicative of abuse.
  
- 5.2 Provide training and development opportunities for education and care workers which:
  - ensure they understand their obligations and responsibilities as mandated notifiers and develop appropriate procedures at their work site
  - provide the skills, knowledge and understanding of personal safety programs for children and enable them to continually build on this
  - assist them in their role as advocates, particularly on behalf of very young children.
  
- 5.3 Develop partnerships between the schools, parents and the community which:
  - promote safe environments for children wherever they are
  - are based on effective communication
  - promote community understanding of personal safety programs
  - acknowledge and provide for diversity eg. cultural, special needs.
  
- 5.4 Develop mandatory reporting systems which are clear and understood by all school personnel so that they:
  - are provided with clear written information relevant to their employment
  - establish support mechanisms at each site
  - are able to participate in training and development.
  
- 5.5 Provide child protection programs which support children to:
  - develop knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve and maintain personal safety.
  - participate in a range of developmentally appropriate experiences, which are responsive to their individual needs and interests
  - gain appropriate support and advocacy from adults
  - develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognize the rights of all people to be safe and free from both harassment and abuse.
  
- 5.6 Review policy practices and procedures so that:
  - mandated reporting training records are kept and regularly updated
  - access to child protection curriculum training is provided
  - support mechanisms for school personnel notifying are regularly communicated
  - school personnel are informed of any changes to legislation, policy and procedures.

SACCS also recognizes that whilst schools have developed practices and procedures which enable legal requirements in relation to child protection to be met, there is an ongoing responsibility for supporting schools in the implementation of policy education concerning child abuse, and its prevention, and review of policy, practices and procedures.

Subsequent to the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, appropriate support will be offered to schools as required to enable schools to develop, implement and review policy, practices and procedures. The Human Resource Services Team of the Catholic Education Office supports schools in the implementation of this policy.

A review of the Child Protection Policy should be undertaken every five years according to SACCS guidelines for policy review.

## **6. GLOSSARY**

### **Catholic school**

All school related activities, including retreats, excursions, sporting activities, etc.

### **Child abuse**

Any maltreatment that damages the child's physical, mental, emotional or psychological health or that places the child's physical, mental, emotional or psychological development in jeopardy.

*(interagency Guidelines 1997, Page 3)*

### **Children**

Persons under 18 years old. Students older than 18 who are enrolled in Catholic schools are not covered by the legal mandate, however the duty of care provision under which teachers operate would require that these students be afforded the same protection as children under 18 years of age.

### **Confidentiality**

Refers to the restriction of discussion of a child's circumstances to those agencies and school personnel directly involved with helping the child.

### **Cultural diversity**

Refers to the complex concept of culture and its many different manifestations within Australian society.

### **Empower children**

Teach and discuss the concept of rights, particularly in relation to personal safety, and teach problem solving skills.

### **Family**

Refers to units consisting of parents or care-givers and children. Parents may be biological, adoptive or foster; and the units may consist of blended and extended families, single parent families, families with children in respite, or foster care, or relatives with the care of children. Children are defined as those who are under the age of 18 years.

### **Gospel values**

The teachings and ministry of Jesus as enunciated and described in the Gospel story.

**Legally mandated**

Persons obliged by law to notify the Family and Youth Services (FAYS) Central Intake Team of suspicions of child abuse.  
(Section 11(1) and (2) Children's Protection Act 1993)

**Protect children**

Refers to providing an environment where children are safe and feel safe.

**Protection and abuse prevention curriculum**

All arrangements made by the school within its formal curriculum to teach students to accept their right and responsibility to protect themselves and others.

**Reasonable grounds**

Includes:

- when a child says he or she has been abused
- another person says a child has been abused
- the observations of a child's behaviour or injuries lead school personnel to suspect that abuse is occurring.

**Multi-disciplinary**

Government and non-government agencies involved in welfare, education, health and legal aspects of child abuse and protection.

**Safe environment**

A place where the adults take reasonable measures to ensure that:

- children are protected from harm
- where children know that adults will act on their behalf.

**School personnel**

Persons working in a Catholic school in paid or voluntary capacities (eg teachers, school assistants, ground staff, canteen workers, LAP volunteers etc.).

**7. FURTHER READING AND GUIDELINES**

*Child Protection Agency Guidelines 1997 2nd edn, S A Government*

*Integrity in Ministry* 1999, Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference & the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes

*Towards Healing* Dec 1996, Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference & the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes