Student Protection

Handbook for volunteers

St Joseph’s Kangaroo Point
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 and duty of care to students by a commitment to the implementation of student protection strategies and procedures.

**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 level. 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’**

Harm is defined legally in the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act and Regulations 2001*, and the *Child Protection Act 1999* as:

‘Harm caused to the 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.’

**Within a school there are four circumstances where harm can be caused to a student.**

They are:

1. Harm to a student by a staff member 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?

 Reasons 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 is 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 Administration 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.)
Your reporting responsibilities

In any instance where you either become aware, or reasonably suspect harm to a student has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring, you must report this as soon as possible to Administration or the school student protection contact (SPC).

REMEMBER
Maintaining confidentiality is vital for the protection of all involved.

What happens next?

Once you have reported the alleged harm of a student, Administration 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.

Below 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 and you observe the volunteer angrily hit the student on the arm. 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 seven 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:**
In each of the above situations you should be reporting these incidents to Administration or another delegated person e.g. SPC. You do not have to be sure that a student has been harmed.
**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:

1. Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council *Student Protection Policy – May 2005*

2. *Student Protection – Reporting and Investigative Processes for allegations of Inappropriate Behaviour and Harm to child/student by employees 2004*

3. *Student Protection – Reporting Processes for Allegations of Harm to Child/Student by Someone who is not immediately associated with the school (family member, friend or other), other students and student self-harm 2004*
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.

• All non-parent volunteers must undergo employment screening under the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2005 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 to the best of your ability.
  ➢ 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 persons 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 Administration 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 Micheal O’Sullivan in the first instance on (07) 3391 5397.
Please read both sides of this form before signing

I have read and understood the information on the back of this form in relation to the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and understand my responsibilities and obligations under this Act.

I understand that if I fall within the definition of ‘not suitable’ as defined in the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 I am ineligible to apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment. (See reverse for definition of ‘employment’)

I understand that if I currently fall within the definition of ‘suitable’ and I am later convicted of a “serious offence” as defined in the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and therefore ‘not suitable’ for child-related employment, I must not apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment.

Please tick (X) one box

☐ I am ‘suitable’ as defined by this Act to apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment.

or

☐ I am ‘not suitable’ as defined by this Act to apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment.

_____________________________               _____________________________
Name (Printed)                                                                  Signature

______________________________
Date

NOTE:
Please seek advice from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian if you are unsure of your ‘suitability’ status.
Please return this form to: The Principal
Employee suitability declaration
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 legislates to promote and protect the rights, interests and well being of children in Queensland.

A serious offence is defined in Schedule 4 of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 as:
(a) an offence against a provision mentioned in the schedule to the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992; or
(b) an offence against a provision of the Criminal Code mentioned in schedule 2; or
(c) an offence of counselling or procuring the commission of, or attempting or conspiring to commit, an offence mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b); or
(d) an offence against a law of another jurisdiction that substantially corresponds to an offence mention in paragraphs (a) to (c).

Child-related regulated employment within Brisbane Catholic Education schools refers to:

Schools – employees other than teachers and parents
All paid employees (excluding registered teachers) and volunteers (excluding those under 18 years and parents of a child enrolled at the school) whose usual duties include, or are likely to include:
- providing services at a school that are directed mainly towards children
- or conducting activities at a school that mainly involve children

Counselling and support services
Paid employees and volunteers whose usual duties include, or are likely to include, providing counselling or a similar support service to a child in a situation where:
- the employee is physically present with the child while no other person is present or;
- the employee is not physically present with the child (i.e.: over the internet or telephone).

Private teaching, coaching or tutoring on a commercial basis
Paid employees and volunteers whose usual duties include, or are likely to include, the teaching, coaching or tutoring of a child, individually, on a commercial basis.

Employment
A person is employing another person if there is an agreement with the other person to carry out work, irrespective of the nature of that work. Regardless of the following-
- whether the agreement is written or unwritten; and
- whether the work is carried out voluntarily or for financial reward; and
- what a person’s motivation is for carrying out the work; and
- the time for which the person is engaged to carry out the work; and
- whether the agreement provides for the person to carry out work on 1 occasion or on an ongoing basis, whether regularly or irregularly.

Under this Act:
(i) It is an offence
- for a person convicted of a serious offence, and whom the Commission deems ‘not suitable’ to apply for, or start or continue in, child-related employment
- for a person with a current Suitability Card, who is subsequently convicted of a serious offence, to carry out any work in child-related employment
- to provide false or misleading information or documents for the purpose of the ‘working with children check’.

(ii) Persons employed or engaged in child-related employment must disclose changes in their criminal history to their employers who, in turn, must apply to the Commission for a new ‘working with children check’ for the employee. Failure to do so will result in an offence.
St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School Kangaroo Point

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

I …………………………confirm that I have been given the volunteer student protection handbook and that I understand my reporting responsibilities as a volunteer.

Volunteer’s signature………………………………………….. Date………………

Principal’s signature……………………………………………….. Date………………
St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School Kangaroo Point

SCHOOL VOLUNTEER REGISTER SHEET

Surname:      First Name:

Date of Birth:     Contact Number:

Address:

City/Suburb:            Post Code:

Volunteer Position Held:

Date of completion of Student Protection Learning:

Volunteers other than Parent of Enrolled Students:

Positive Notice Blue Card Registration Number:   Expiry Date:

NB: A COPY OF THE CURRENT POSITIVE NOTICE 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:

☐ the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian’s Information Sheet titled The Blue Card (attached)

☐ Brisbane Catholic Education’s Statement of Principles (attached)

☐ The Volunteer Code of Conduct (attached)

☐ Brisbane Catholic Education’s Volunteer Suitability Declaration (to be signed)

I have read and understand the above.

Signed:             Date: