



St Joseph's Primary School

Culcairn

LEARNING THROUGH AND IN JESUS CHRIST

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE:

All children and young persons have the right to feel and be safe. Teachers and staff, with reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student has, or will be, exposed to injury through maltreatment, have a moral and legal responsibility to report the situation to an officer of the appropriate authority.

The mission of St Joseph's is to foster the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of every person. The provision of a safe and supportive environment is an essential element to ensure that each student entrusted to the care of our school is to be affirmed in his or her dignity and worth as a person.

In performing their duties, it is expected that all staff will support the core values of St Joseph's. Staff undertake their responsibilities within the framework of the law and lawful instructions from their employer, the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. Employees must comply with legislative and industrial requirements, with the code, and any policies and procedures that are implemented by our school.

Employees (and school authorities) owe a duty of care to students. This duty of care is to take reasonable steps to protect students from a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury. This duty applies equally to school based activities and out of school activities involving the school.

The collaborative approach of **Keeping Them Safe** is underpinned by eight principles:

- Child Protection is the collective responsibility of whole-of-government and the community
- Primary responsibility for rearing and supporting children should rest with families and communities, with government providing support where needed, either directly or through the funded non-government sector
- The child protection system should be child focused, with the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person being of paramount concern, while recognising that supporting parents is usually in the best interests of the child or young person
- Positive outcomes for children and families are achieved through the development of a relationship with the family that recognises their strengths and their needs
- Child safety, attachment, wellbeing and permanency should guide child protection practice
- Support services should be available to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young persons are safe and connected to family, community and culture
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should participate in decision making concerning the care and protection of their children and young people with as much self-determination as possible, and steps should be taken to empower local communities to that end
- Assessments and interventions should be evidence-based, monitored, and evaluated

This Child Protection Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies (found on the [Safeguarding Children](#) site) including:

- Child Protection: Safeguarding Children and Young People – [Standards for a Child Safe Organisation](#)
- Child Protection: Safeguarding Children and Young People - [Policy](#)
- Child Protection: Safeguarding Children and Young People – [Prevention Procedures](#)
- Child Protection: Safeguarding Children and Young People – [Responding Procedures](#)
- Child Protection: Safeguarding Children and Young People – [Record Keeping](#)
- [Guidelines for Professional Conduct in the Protection of Children and Young People](#)

IN-SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION

The supervisory role of staff is aimed at enhancing a student's educational opportunities, building self-esteem, and ensuring students are safe and supported. Whilst in a supervisory role, staff have an obligation to fulfil duty of care requirements.

Employees should be alert to bullying or any other form of harassment or discriminatory behaviour, act on and report incidents in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

Ill or injured students should be attended to by the supervising employee. Should additional assistance be required employees should contact another staff member, the Principal or member of the Executive team. Attention to the personal care needs of a student should be done in accordance with St Joseph's policy and procedure and individual management plan.

RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM

A child or young person is at risk of significant harm if the circumstances that are causing concern for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person are present to a significant extent.

What is meant by 'significant' in the phrase 'to a significant extent' is that which is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of a family's consent.

What is significant is not minor or trivial, and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing.

Significance can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these. (NSW Department of Community Services, August 2009)

Anyone who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused, should report it to the Principal who in turn will report it to Community Services. Reasonable grounds are the standard that reporters must use in deciding whether or not to report to Community Services.

Significant harm exists where there are:

- Current concerns
- Reasonable grounds
- One or more harm circumstances

MANDATORY REPORTER GUIDE

A [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) has been developed to help both mandatory and non-mandatory reporters decide whether a concern meets the statutory threshold for reporting risk of significant harm. Mandatory reporters are encouraged to use the Mandatory Reporter Guide, to guide their decision making, such as whether or not to report to the Child Protection Helpline.

DEFINITIONS

Physical Abuse is where a child or young person has a suspicious current injury, suspected to be caused by the parent / carer and where it has not occurred accidentally or the child or young person is being treated in a way that may have or is likely to cause injury.

Neglect – lack of supervision is where a child or young person is alone and based on their age / development / circumstances, this is unsafe.

Neglect – lack of physical shelter / environment is where a child or young person or family has no safe place to stay or there is imminent danger of serious harm in the current residence dependent on their age / development / disability and where the parent / carer is not ensuring the child's safety.
(NB reporting the homelessness of young people aged 16 – 17 years, is not mandatory and can only be done with the consent of the young person)

Neglect – food – medical professionals is where a child or young person has a condition caused or exacerbated by inadequate or poor diet or where the child is aged under 5 and is failing to keep pace with expected growth and there is no known organic cause.

Neglect – food – non-medical professionals is where a child or young person is

- Reporting persistent hunger
- Reporting persistent withholding of food as punishment
- Thin, frail, lethargic
- Frequently begging / stealing / hoarding food
- Mentioning going without eating
- Frequently arriving at school without having had breakfast or lunch
- Having difficulty concentrating and poor nutrition is suspected

Neglect – medical care – medical professionals is where:

- A child or young person requires medical care for an acute condition for which parents/carers are not providing the recommended medical treatment.
- There is no chronic condition which is not being treated or a treatment plan is not being followed and this is likely to result in significant harm.

Neglect – medical care – non-medical professionals is where

- A child or young person has a physical health condition that appears to need immediate care which is not being provided.
- Parent / carer is refusing or unable to seek recommended medical care.
- There is a medical condition that requires an ongoing treatment plan that is not being followed.

Neglect – mental health care is where

- A child or young person is suicidal, has committed or is threatening serious violence or is causing significant self-harm.
- Parent / carer is refusing to provide or access mental health care that the child or young person requires.

Neglect – education – not enrolled is where a child or young person is of compulsory age and is not enrolled.

Neglect – education – habitually absent is where a child or young person is of compulsory age and is enrolled and is habitually absent.

Sexual abuse – child is where a child or young person has made a clear, unambiguous statement of sexual assault or is

- Pregnant
- Diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease
- Displaying trauma to genital area
- Or where a teacher is aware by other means that a child has been sexually abused.

It will also be a cause for reporting if

- There is a concern a child will have significant contact with an alleged or known sex offender or
- The child or young person is exposed to sexually explicit materials or acts including pornography and communication of sexual matters and the child expresses fear, discomfort or shows symptoms of significant harm.

Sexual abuse – young person is where a young person has made a clear, unambiguous statement of sexual abuse, or a teacher becomes aware by other means the young person has been sexually abused.

It may also be a cause for reporting if

- The young person is engaged in prostitution or pornography and
- The young person appears subject to coercion or intimidation.

Child or young person Problematic Sexual Behaviour is where a child or young person is engaged or may be engaged in sexually abusive behaviour, indicated by

- A victim who is substantially younger, smaller, weaker, less mature or cognitively / physically less capable
- Pressure, coercion, aggression, bribery, secrecy or other grooming behaviours have been used.

It may also be a cause for reporting

- When the victim is a relative of the initiating child or young person
- When the victim lives in the same household or
- Where the action was significantly outside normal sexual behaviour.

It may also be a cause for reporting where the child or young person has continuing or imminent contact with the victim.

Psychological harm is where a child or young person is exposed to:

- Chronic or severe domestic violence
- Severe parental / carer mental health or substance abuse concerns
- Parental / carer behaviours that are persistent, repetitive and have a negative impact on a child or young person's development, social needs, self-worth or self-esteem

- Parental / carer criminal and/or corrupting behaviour
- Parental / carer behaviours that deliberately expose a child or young person to traumatic events

Relinquishing care is where the parent / carer is no longer willing to provide shelter / food / supervision for the child or young person or child or young person has been in voluntary care for longer than the legislation allows.

It is also cause for reporting if there are no alternative care arrangements in place for the next 72 hours.

Parent / carer substance abuse is where the substance abuse impacts on the parents' / carers' ability to meet the child or young person's needs, causes significant harm and /or where the child or young person's behaviour indicates the impact of substance abuse.

Parent / carer mental health is where the mental health concern impacts on the parent / carer's ability to meet the child or young person's needs, causes significant harm and / or where the child or young person's behaviour indicates the impact of the parent / carer's mental health concern.

Parent / carer domestic violence is where there has been an incident of domestic violence, there is a child or young person in the home and where one or more of the following occurred, whether the child or young person was present or not:

- Use of weapon
- Strangulation / suffocation attempt
- Serious injury to adult
- Physical injury to child or young person
- Serious threat to harm child or young person, another adult or self
- A significant increase in the pattern of violence.

Unborn child is where there is a history of abuse or neglect or siblings of the unborn child, siblings have been removed, or died in circumstances that have been reviewed by the Ombudsman.

It may also be where a staff member is aware of circumstances that suggest either parent / carer will be unable to care for baby upon birth due to:

- Suicidal tendencies
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Domestic violence
- Cognitive disability
- Medical condition
- Homelessness
- Inadequate preparations for birth

Other reasons to notify Child Protection Helpline

The child Protection Helpline should be notified if a child or young person is under the parental responsibility of the Minister, there is no concern that reaches the threshold of risk of significant harm but the child or young person is

- Pregnant
- Run away
- Missing
- Homeless (in the case of homelessness review the Neglect: Physical Shelter/Environment tree first)