

## Section 10.3

# Child Protection Policy

### Rationale

St John Bosco College is committed to ensuring that children are protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. This commitment arises from our Catholic belief in the inalienable dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God. Hence, the College endorses and supports the following statement from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (Principle 2):

*“The child shall enjoy protection and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him or her to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy, normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.”*

### Principles

At St John Bosco College we believe that:

1. protecting children and young people from the risk of harm is demanded by our commitment to the Gospel and the teachings of St John Bosco;
2. all adults have the responsibility to care for and protect children and young people from all types of abuse;
3. in every preventative and/or protective action related to child abuse, the total well-being of the child is the primary concern;
4. the value of the family unit is to be respected but not to the detriment of the well-being of the child;
5. before proceeding to take action under the Act, school personnel must honestly satisfy themselves that they are acting on the belief that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting risk of harm to the child or young person;
6. all persons involved in situations where abuse is disclosed or suspected are to be treated with sensitivity, dignity, respect and compassion;
7. the Principal is to be informed of all serious matters concerning the welfare of students, including suspected or disclosed incidents of child abuse;
8. school personnel who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed child abuse have the obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality in relation to the entire matter;
9. adequate care and support should be provided to children, young people, families and staff directly involved in situations related to child abuse.

### Guidelines

1. The College will ensure that all staff are aware of the Child Protection as an important social and educational issue.
2. The College will ensure that it has practices and procedures in place that comply with the requirements of the relevant legal, educational and ecclesiastical authorities.

3. The College will ensure that all staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of and comply with the College's Child Protection procedures.
4. Teachers are mandated by law to report situations that they believe may result in risk of harm to a child or young person. In their dealings with students teachers should never give an unconditional promise of confidentiality. Students should be aware that there are some things that are so serious that the teacher cannot keep private or secret.
5. A teacher who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child or young person has been abused in any way or may be at risk of harm is to notify the Principal immediately. In the absence of the Principal the Assistant Principal is to be notified.
6. In the interests of the child or young person, a teacher is not permitted to conduct any investigation into suspected abusive situations beyond satisfying themselves that there are reasonable grounds to suspect risk of harm.
7. The Principal will follow the established procedures to notify the Department of Community Services (DoCS), and will keep documentation that the notification has been received.
10. College personnel must avoid any false, exaggerated or unjustified assertions that may infringe the good name of, or honour due to, another person.
11. The Principal is to ensure that the school's pastoral care structures address the problem of child abuse, making appropriate provision for the support of children, families and school personnel directly involved with this issue.
12. The Principal will utilise the College's pastoral care services to provide the necessary personal support for the students whom staff believe are at risk of harm.

## Notes for the Attention of Teachers

### Understanding Child Abuse

Child abuse includes:

- o **Child sexual assault:** the involvement of dependent children or adolescents in sexual activities with an adult or person older or bigger; it does not include consensual peer sexual activity.
- o **Physical abuse:** non-accidental injury to a child by a parent or caregiver; it includes injuries caused by excessive discipline, and the abusive administration of drugs or alcohol.
- o **Emotional abuse:** the harming of a child by excessive or unreasonable parental demands or failure to provide necessary psychological nurturing; it includes continual scapegoating or rejection, severe verbal abuse or threats of abuse.
- o **Neglect:** the failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, medical care and supervision.

### Notification

Notification (based on *reasonable grounds*) is mandatory for any suspected sexual assault of a child, who is a person under sixteen years of age; there are special provisions for students over sixteen. The Principal may use his or her discretion to notify other forms of abuse.

**Members of staff must not undertake any investigation of suspected child sexual**

**assault beyond satisfying themselves that they have *reasonable grounds* to suspect risk of harm.**

**Reasonable grounds for risk of harm** may be found when:

- o a child speaks about being sexually assaulted;
  
- o someone else (perhaps a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child) informs a member of staff;
  
- o a child tells a member of staff that he or she knows someone who has been sexually assaulted (often the child is referring to himself or herself);
  
- o a member of staff observes a particular child's behaviour or his or her knowledge of children generally leads to a suspicion of child sexual assault.

Notification may have to be made against the wishes of the child. If there is concern by the member of staff that his or her suspicions are not sufficient for reasonable grounds, the matter should be discussed with an appropriate counsellor. For any child enrolled at the school, the Principal is required to notify the Department of Community Services when reasonable grounds exist.

For further information, consult the Principal or the Catholic Education Office who will be able to provide advice and/or further documentation.

policies and procedures to ensure that requirements to notify and investigate allegations of reportable conduct in compliance with the *Ombudsman Act 1974* are known and observed

policies and procedures to ensure that the school meets the employment screening and notification requirements of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*

policies and procedures to ensure that all staff, volunteers, outside tutors and external providers are informed of their obligations under the *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998*

policies and procedures to respond to reportable matters in accordance with legislative requirements

policies and procedures to ensure that all staff who are mandatory reporters under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* are informed of their obligations and the process that the school has in place in relation to mandatory reporting