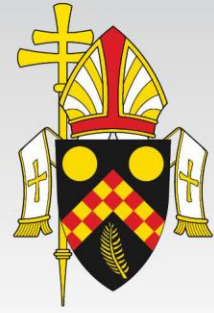


Policy Statement



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
Catholic Education Council

STUDENT PROTECTION

PURPOSE

Schools administered by Brisbane Catholic Education share the vision and hold a common purpose, committed to being safe and nurturing communities of care where the rights and dignity of all children and young people are upheld and protected.

This policy complements and enhances the statutory child protection obligations of Queensland Catholic schools. The objectives of the policy will be achieved through implementing child safe practices and processes, building the capacity of all staff, volunteers and other personnel who provide services to students to act protectively, and holding to account those staff charged with responsibility to protect children. All engagement with students is underpinned by the principle of acting with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.

RATIONALE

Jesus insisted on the primacy of love: love of God and love of each other. No one was excluded from his love and by word and deed, he showed a special preference for people who were poor, powerless and vulnerable. He especially loved children *for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs* (Mt 19:14). All people, like Jesus himself, are called to care for children, protecting them from anyone who would abuse them or cause them harm.

Pope Francis, through his homily delivered to survivors of clerical abuse in July 2014, asked for [our] help to develop better policies and procedures in the universal Church for the protection of minors and for the training of church personnel in implementing those policies and procedures. He further requested that we do everything in our power to ensure that these sins have no place in the Church.

It is recognised that harm or the risk of harm may come from different sources, including self-harm. Appropriate and responsive interventions by schools can provide hope to, and foster resilience in students who may be at risk by protecting them from further harm and supporting their healing.

Student protection is integral to learning and teaching. A safe, supportive, inclusive and positive environment underpins a student's capacity for learning and maximises potential for personal and social development, ultimately enhancing wellbeing and life opportunities.

CONSEQUENCES

The objective of this policy is to support students in Brisbane Catholic Education schools to both feel and be safe through providing the care and protection necessary for their wellbeing. To facilitate this Brisbane Catholic Education schools will:

- grow a culture of transparency and accountability which facilitates a well-founded feeling of safety amongst students
- embed student safety in policy, procedures and practices, including systems to effectively identify and respond to student protection concerns and demonstrate accountability

- keep families and students informed and involved in creating and maintaining safe and supportive learning communities for students and facilitating child-friendly ways for students to communicate and raise their concerns
- engage people who are suitable to work with children and provide training and support to enhance their capacity to identify issues of concern and act to protect students
- respond quickly and appropriately to disclosures of abuse and harm, actual or suspected.

Compliance

Measures to ensure compliance with State and Commonwealth legislative requirements and Church expectations will include ongoing development, monitoring and review of:

- formal student protection reporting and governance processes, embedded in the organisation, which ensure compliance with legislation, including the reporting of harm and abuse of students
- implementation of risk assessment and mitigation processes when student harm has occurred, or appears imminent
- codes of conduct which clearly outline expected professional boundaries when working with students
- clear avenues to support the pastoral care and well-being of students, and others affected by harm to a student.

Building capacity

Catholic schools must comply with their statutory obligations, as well as having the knowledge and capabilities required to identify risks of harm and respond appropriately. The capacity of Catholic schools to manage student protection in a proactive and compliant manner is developed by:

- building a culture to ensure that student protection is the responsibility of every person and is an integral aspect of student wellbeing
- requiring participation of all employees in annual, mandatory professional training in student protection
- providing additional, professional learning for Principals, other relevant specialist staff such as Guidance Counsellors and those who are designated as school student protection contacts
- training volunteers and other personnel who work in schools providing services to students
- providing learning programs for students to develop awareness and skills that lead to their empowerment and an ability to identify risk, act protectively and seek assistance.

Specialist support/resources

Specialist personnel and resources will be available, through Brisbane Catholic Education, to assist Principals and schools with student protection and professional standards issues.

Liaison/partnerships

Liaising with external agencies and partnering within the Catholic education community will occur as part of strengthening whole community student protection strategies:

- partnering with parents/carers is recognised as an essential element of student protection within school communities including respecting the diverse circumstances of students and responding effectively to those with vulnerabilities
- professional relationships with relevant government and non-government agencies to enhance the protection and support of students will be maintained and developed.

Accountability

Accountability is achieved within Catholic schools and to relevant external bodies through:

- demonstrated compliance by schools and specified Catholic school employees, in accordance with their legislated student protection obligations, including reporting to relevant State authorities
- appropriate governance, effective and accurate record keeping and respect for privacy and confidentiality
- rigorous review processes, including school improvement processes and system-level evaluation and case review as applicable.

GLOSSARY

Abuse - students can experience abuse in several ways including sexual abuse, physical abuse and emotional or psychological abuse.

Harm - the detrimental effect or impact of abuse/neglect on a child. Harm may be caused by sexual, physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect.

REFERENCES

Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2017, *Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy*, Brisbane.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2016, *Creating Child Safe Institutions*, Sydney.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Geneva.

LEGISLATION

Child Protection Act 1999

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017

Education (General Provisions) Act 2006

Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000

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BCE Contact Officer	Executive Director, Brisbane Catholic Education



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