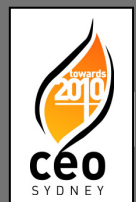


2010

Child Protection Information for Parents

Enrolment Package

Catholic Education Office, Sydney



Child Protection Information for Parents

Catholic Schools and Child Protection

There are a number of steps our schools undertake to protect children which are both preventative and responsive. This includes complying with NSW laws about child protection by screening people who work with children, risk assessments and reporting abuse or neglect to relevant authorities.

Preventative Responsibilities

Our Catholic Schools comply with NSW laws on employment screening which is administered under the responsibility of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. This means that any person who is to be paid by the school in “child related employment” must undertake a pre-employment screening process.

NSW law also require schools to request any volunteer who is engaging in an activity with children in school, during which the volunteer may be unsupervised at any time, to first sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration. This means parents or family members will be asked to sign such a Declaration if they wish to be involved as a volunteer with the children in our schools. A prohibited person cannot volunteer or work in our schools.

Schools have a duty of care to ensure that children in the supervision of the school are safe. Therefore, if a Principal has a concern that a person may pose a risk to a child they have discretion to request that person to disengage from the school activity and leave the school premises until further assessment can be undertaken. Similarly, if a Principal assesses that an activity poses a risk to a child they have a duty to stop that activity until further assessment can be undertaken to reduce the concerns.

A Principal may request information from certain authorities if that information is required to ensure the safety and well-being of a child in its care.

Child Protection Information for Parents

Responsive Responsibilities – a schools response to concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child/young person in general

The abuse of a child is an offence under the NSW law. Community Services is the government authority responsible for responding to reports that a child (under the age of 16 years), or a young person (aged 16 or 17 years), is at “risk of significant harm”.

Staff in our schools are mandatory reporters. This means they are lawfully required to report to Community Services if they have “reasonable grounds” to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect and those grounds are identified in the course of, or from the person’s work. Whilst not mandated under NSW law to report a young person, (age 16 or 17 years), our staff will make such a report, given their duty of care to children in our schools, if their professional judgment believes a statutory intervention is required for the young person’s safety and well-being. Principals, teachers, counsellors, school consultants, as well as many external professionals working with children in our schools, are all mandatory reporters. It is an offence for these people not to comply with their legal duties under the Act.

If the following conditions are present to a “significant” extent our staff will report it to Community Services:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect of – supervision, physical shelter/environment, food , medical care, mental health care, education
- Sexual abuse
- Problematic sexual behaviour
- Psychological harm
- Relinquishing Care
- Carer concerns – parent/carer substance abuse; parent /carer mental health; parent/carer domestic violence

Child Protection Information for Parents

Children's Safety at School

- Any concern about a child's safety whilst at school should be reported immediately to the Principal.
- The Principal will determine if the matter requires a mandatory report to Community Services or NSW Police.
- The Principal will work with the parents/carer and child to address any safety issues.
- If a concern regarding safety relates to a Principal a report should be made immediately to the Catholic Education Regional Office.
- If a complaint about a child's safety relates to actions of any other staff member the Principal will work with the Catholic Education Office to investigate the complaint and ensure the child is safe. In some instances the investigation may be monitored by the NSW Ombudsman Office for reports of "reportable conduct" under Part 3A of the Ombudsman Act NSW.

The Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney is supporting Principals in taking a number of key steps to ensure child protection in Catholic schools.

These include:

- Ensuring that all teachers are aware of their legal and pastoral care responsibilities to students.
- Completing the 'Working with Children Check' at the point of employment to ensure that those employed are fit and proper persons to occupy positions in Catholic schools.
- Inservicing school staff on Child Protection matters and procedures.
- Inservicing teachers in the effective implementation of child protection education to help students understand personal safety.
- Having in place a clearly documented process for responding to complaints of improper conduct by employees, which is fair to all parties.
- Publishing clear policy guidelines for responding to child protection issues.

Child Protection Information for Parents

What can parents do if they have concerns about student safety at school?

Parents should raise any such concerns with the Principal in the first instance.

Parents have a right to report a concern to the police or Community Services at any time if they believe it is necessary

Other Helpful Contacts relevant to the information in this pamphlet

[Commission for Children and Young People](http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au)- Website:
www.kids.nsw.gov.au

[Community Services](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au) - Website: www.community.nsw.gov.au

[NSW Ombudsman](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)- Website: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

[NSW Police](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au)- Website: www.police.nsw.gov.au

For further information on the CEO's Child Protection Policy and Personal Safety Education, please contact your school's Principal, the Regional Office, or the Child Protection Officer at the CEO, Leichhardt.

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