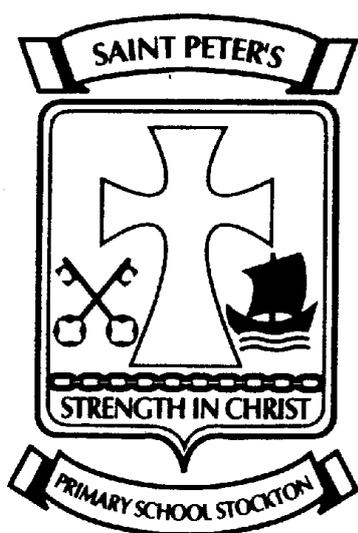


St Peter's Primary School Stockton



Child Protection Policy

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St Peter's Primary School, Stockton

Revised 2013

Rationale

We at St Peter's believe catholic schools have at their centre the total care of the whole student-physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. We seek to provide an environment that is free from violence and exploitation. Children in the community have a right to feel safe at all times and to know that they will be protected by the adults around them. NSW legislation and Catholic Church regulations set out a range of personal, professional and organisational requirements for the promotion of child protection and it is the obligation of all adults in our school community to adhere to these requirements.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- provide staff members with a clear understanding of what constitutes risk of significant harm to children;
- provide staff members with a clear understanding of their obligations under NSW legislation and Catholic Church regulations;
- provide staff members with explicit procedures to follow when risk of significant harm to a child or reportable conduct is suspected.

Implementation

At St. Peter's School, all adults who have contact with children, either as employees or voluntary workers, are required to adhere to legislation and regulations concerning child protection. This involves being aware of what constitutes risk of significant harm and procedures to follow when risk of significant harm is suspected.

At St Peter's, we follow the procedures in relation to Child Abuse as set down in the Diocesan Reporting Child Protection Concerns Policy 2013.

Legislation involved includes:

- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012 and Regulation 2013
- Ombudsman's Act 1974 and Amendments
- The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

We adhere to the NSW Ombudsman's "Guidelines "Child Protection in the Workplace" 2004 for all relevant matters.

We work closely with the Diocesan Child Protection Unit, known as Zimmerman Services, when dealing with any Child Protection matters.

Staff Development:

At the beginning of each school year staff members are reminded of their legal responsibilities in dealing with any child protection matters. They are asked to re-read the "Child Protection Code of Professional Standards for Catholic School Employees" June 2005. Copies are available in the Child Protection folder in the Principal's office.

All staff are kept up to date with changes to legislation via mandatory sessions. Most recent training update: *Child Protection In-Service Training Day 2012*

When employing new staff to the school, we follow the guidelines for screening as outlined in "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Schools". Any applicants interviewed for a position within the school are asked the mandatory Child Protection questions at interview. This information is forwarded to Human Resources at the CSO for checking.

Any volunteers working within the school or at school events are required to complete a Child protection Declaration form. This is forwarded to CSO so that checks can be carried out and an up-to-date Register of Volunteers be maintained.

Recognising Risk of Significant Harm:

In accordance with the *Child Wellbeing and Child Protection Interagency Guidelines*, Risk of Significant Harm is defined as "*sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority, irrespective of the 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 and young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing, or in the case of an unborn child, after the child's birth.*"

Risk of Significant Harm circumstances may include:

- Neglect of Basic Care;
- Neglect of necessary medical treatment;
- School enrolment / attendance issues;

- Physical Abuse;
- Sexual Abuse;
- Psychological Harm;
- Exposure to Domestic Violence;
- Prenatal concerns.

When deciding if you would need to make a mandatory report about one or more of these circumstances, the reporter needs to satisfy three elements.

1. **Concerns must be current** – significant harm arising is recent or likely in the foreseeable future should circumstances continue unchanged.
2. **Reasonable grounds** – there needs to be an objective basis for the concern which may include first hand observations, what the child or another person tells you or what can be reasonably inferred based on professional training and/or experience.
3. **One or more harm circumstances** (see above) is the basis of the concern.

Some general indicators of abuse or neglect include:

- A child tells you of their abuse or neglect;
- Someone else tells you of the abuse or neglect of a child;
- There is a history of previous abuse or neglect to the child or a sibling;
- Unexplained and marked changes in a child's behaviour or mood;
- The parents' or caregivers' misuse of alcohol or drugs is affecting their ability to care for the child;
- Ongoing or sporadic violence between the parents;
- The parents or caregivers are experiencing significant problems in managing their child, which is incongruent with the child's behaviour or special needs;
- A deficiency in functional parenting skills required to provide for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child.

Learning to identify indicators and to use them effectively in recognising child abuse and neglect is a complex matter. For this reason it is important to access the guidance of staff from Zimmerman Services, **4979 1390**(office hours) or **1800 234 050** (after hours), when uncertain and to use the **Mandatory Reporting Guide** to direct your course of action.

Reporting Risk of Significant Harm:

An initial response to concerns about risk of significant harm to a child would be to discuss your concerns with the Principal or Executive Staff member.

You would then be directed to use the **Mandatory Reporting Guide** to confirm or allay your concerns. This guide is a multidisciplinary tool which

- assists mandatory reporters as they gain familiarity with the reporting threshold;
- helps ensure that children and families requiring statutory child protection services are promptly reported and
- provides alternative options for reporters to assist children and families who would be better served outside of the statutory child protection system.

The Mandatory Reporting Guide is accessed at

<http://sdm.community.nsw.gov.au/mrg/app/summary.page>

The guide is largely self-explanatory and takes the mandatory reporter through a series of structured questions which require a Yes / No response.

At the completion of the questions, a "Final Decision" screen will appear. This will advise whether or not to make a report to Community Services. A report can be printed which can be attached to any emails sent to Community Services or Zimmerman Services. A copy should also be kept on file with the Principal at school.

If the outcome of using the Mandatory Reporter Guide is to make a report to Community Services, the supervisor, in this case the Principal or Executive Staff member, must contact Community Services either via the Helpline Ph. **133627** or **132111** or via a Risk Of Significant Harm Report which should be completed and faxed to **9633 7666**.

If the person alleged to be the cause of concern is a member of the diocese, the Principal or Executive Staff member must advise Zimmerman Services, **4979 -1390** (office hours) or **1800 234 050** (after hours) within five working days of the report being made.

If the person alleged to be the cause of concern is a member of the clergy, the Bishop must be advised immediately.

In the event that a child was in immediate danger and 000 had to be called, or it is likely that following a report statutory intervention by the Police or Community Services will occur, the school's Assistant Director must be advised of the report immediately.

Safe Practices For Teachers, Children and Parents:

As adults working with children, it is important for staff members to be aware not to put themselves into situations where their conduct can be questioned. Some simple guidelines are as follows:

When working alone with a child make sure doors are left open and that you are within view of passers by.

If it becomes necessary for a staff member to drive a child home, where possible another staff member should accompany the teacher. Children should always sit in the back seat.

Children must seek teacher permission to leave the playground for any reason. If they ask to retrieve a ball only upper primary children will be allowed and they will go in pairs. They must inform teacher when they return.

Any visitors coming into the school, either as volunteer workers or to provide a service (e.g. tradesmen), must sign in at the school office when they arrive and depart and wear a visitor's tag whilst on the premises.

Parents or family members who bring their child to school late, or pick up their child before the end of the day, must sign the register in the school office.

Budget

School funds will be allocated when necessary to ensure the successful implementation of this policy.

Evaluation

This policy will be evaluated every 3 years or when any changes to relevant legislation occurs. Practices are constantly evaluated via discussion at staff meetings.