INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Child Protection at St Hilda’s School

St Hilda’s School recognises that protecting students from harm and the risk of harm is fundamental to maximising their personal and academic potential. For this reason the welfare and best interests of the children within our School will always be a primary consideration.

We expect our students to show respect to our staff and volunteers and to comply with safe practices and we expect all employees to ensure that their behaviour towards and relationships with students reflect proper standards of care for students, and are not unlawful. The School will respond diligently to a report of suspected or actual harm, or risk of harm to a student.

What does the School mean by harm?

Recent Queensland legislation defines as follows:

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
- Sexual abuse or exploitation; or
- Domestic or family violence.

How does the School protect students from harm?

The School has a comprehensive Child Protection Policy and Manual, which covers the actions to be taken if a member of staff or a parent of the school becomes aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been done to a student of the school or any other person.

What should you do if you become aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused to a student of the school by a member of staff, someone outside of the school or by other students?

You should report your concerns to the Principal or Deputy Principal or to any other member of school staff.

What will happen next?

If you report your concerns to a member of staff other than the Principal, the member of staff will report it to the Principal or Deputy Principal immediately, or if the subject of the complaint is the Principal or Deputy Principal then the member of staff will report to the Chair of the School Council.
What will the Principal or the Chair of School Council do?

If the Principal, Deputy Principal or Chair of School Council receives a report of harm or suspected harm to a student of the school; and he/she becomes aware of the harm having been caused or reasonably suspects the harm to have been caused then it will be reported to police immediately if the harm relates to sexual abuse; or to the Department of Child Safety Services if appropriate; or it may be dealt with internally if the matter does not require mandatory reporting to an outside body.

What happens about confidentiality?

Your report will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. The Chair of the School Council may also need to be informed. It is the school’s policy that confidentiality between the school and parents will be respected as much as possible and any concerns raised by parents will not rebound adversely on their children.

Each person who has access to information regarding suspected or disclosed harm has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality. However, the school is unable to promise absolute confidentiality since the steps of the Policy will require disclosing, internally and externally, certain details involved in responding to the report. State authorities can compel people to give evidence about actions under the Policy and to produce documents. You would be fully informed if information you provided were to be passed on to a third party.

Any action, which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of an allegation not requiring police intervention, would be handled confidentially within the school.

How will the School help my child?

The Principal or Deputy Principal will ensure that the following things are done to reduce the chance of harm occurring:

- Ensure that each staff member understands and fulfils their obligations under this Policy and the Policy for reporting abuse.
- Ensure that there is an acceptable reference for each staff member engaged since the commencement of this protocol, from his or her previous employer.
- Require all members of academic staff to be registered or provisionally registered with the College of Teachers (formally Board of Teacher Registration), or to have received special dispensation from the College.
- St Hilda’s School is required to provide the Director of Professional Standards with the names of all potential employees including teachers so that the Director can obtain any record which may be on the Anglican Church’s National Professional Standards Register. The Director will inform the School of the outcome of the National Register check.
- Require all non-teaching members of staff and all volunteers and contractors (including School Council members), to hold a current Blue Card.
- In some cases, deemed appropriate by the School, paid or unpaid employees who work with children but are not required to hold a blue card (e.g. a parent volunteer) may be asked to consent to a criminal history check through the Queensland Police Service.
- Ensure that where volunteer parents are working with children, it will always be in the presence of academic or non-teaching staff who are cleared to work with children.

If the Principal or Deputy Principal receives a report of harm to your child, he/she will support the child by:

- Responding rapidly and diligently to the report.
- Reassuring the student.
- Protecting the child’s confidentiality as much as possible.
• Offering continuous support, and providing counselling if requested.

**What should I do if I require more information?**

The School’s complete Child Protection Policy from the School’s website and at the School administration. Parents and students may have access to this policy at any time. You may also make an appointment to discuss the policy with the Principal or Deputy Principal if you wish to clarify any matters.

Every student has the right to feel safe and free from harm while at school. We expect you to respect your teachers and other students and we expect that you will receive the same respect in return. You should **never** allow yourself to feel unsafe without reporting it to someone you trust.

**Who should I tell if I am not feeling safe at school or at home?**

Any staff member. If you do not feel like talking to a member of staff you may like to write him or her letter.

**What will happen if I report what is happening to a member a staff?**

If the concern is worrying you but not causing you immediate harm, then the member of staff will discuss with you ways to solve your problem. If the concern is serious and the member of staff believes that you are being harmed or in danger of being harmed, he or she will report it to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

**What if I don’t want the member of staff to tell the Principal?**

The member of staff will try to keep your concerns confidential as much as possible. However, if the member of staff is aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of the School then the law says that the matter must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal and it may have to be reported to the Police. If the staff member has no choice about reporting what you have told them to some-one else he or she will explain to you exactly what will happen next.

**Remember the most important thing is that you feel safe and free from harm. You must tell someone if you are being harmed or are afraid that you will be harmed.**
CHILD PROTECTION
PROCEDURES FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR/HARM/SEXUAL ABUSE

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING HARM

Scope: Applies to:
• harm of any student of this school who was under 18 years at the time the harm was caused; and
• behaviour of any person that a student considers is inappropriate.

Definition: “harm”
• Means any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the student’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by: physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation.

Actions Required:

Reporting Harm

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| A  | You are a student and you are aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of the School who was under 18 years at the time of the harm | • Report it to the Deputy Principal or
• Any other staff member. |
| B  | You are a staff member of the School Safety Officer and you are aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused by anyone to a student of the School who was under 18 years at the time of the harm, or you receive a report under A above. | • Report it to the Principal or the Deputy Principal
• Keep a written record of your actions
• Complete Form 2 and hand it to the Deputy Principal or Principal. |
| C  | You are the Principal/Deputy Principal and you receive a report under A or B above and you are aware or reasonably suspect the harm to have been caused by anyone to a student of the School who was under 18 years at the time of the harm. | • Report the matter to the relevant State Authority.
• Keep a written report of actions. |

Reporting Inappropriate Behaviour

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| A  | You are a student and you wish to report behavior by a staff member which you consider inappropriate. | • Report the behavior to the Deputy Principal.
• Any other staff member. |
| B  | You are the Deputy Principal or staff member and receive a report under A above | • Complete form 1 and hand it to the
• Deputy Principal or Principal.
• Keep a written record of your actions. |
| C  | You are the Principal and you receive a report under A or B above. | • Consult as appropriate to decide on investigation process.
• Make initial enquiries of student to establish that matter is “inappropriate behavior” commence investigation by interviewing student, staff member named, and other person/s.
• Take appropriate action based on findings. |
| C  | You are the Principal/Deputy Principal and you receive a report under A or B above and you are aware or reasonably suspect the harm to have been caused by anyone to a student of the School who was under 18 years at the time of the harm. | • Report the matter to the relevant State Authority.
• Keep a written report of actions. |

Reporting Sexual Abuse

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| A  | You are a staff member and become aware or reasonably suspect that any person has sexually abused a student of the School who is, or was at the time of the abuse, aged under 18 years. | • Provide a written report on Form 3 about the abuse to the Deputy Principal/Principal or School Council immediately.
• The report must contain all required information. |
| B  | You are a staff member and reasonably suspect that a student is likely to be sexually abused by any person. | • Provide a copy of the report to a police officer immediately.
• Advise the Chair of Council and Director of Professional Standards. |
| C  | You are the Deputy Principal/Principal/School Council member and you receive a report under (A) or (B) above. | • Provide a written report on Form 3 about the abuse to the Deputy Principal/Principal or School Council immediately.
• The report must contain all required information. |

Controlled Document: Forms part of the following Guidelines: