

## Child Protection Policy Statement

Holy Saviour School complies with all requirements of the *NSW Child Protection Legislative Reform Package 1998*. This includes:

- Requirements to collect declarations from all paid employees and volunteer helpers who undertake tasks on behalf of the school that may involve unsupervised contact with students. If you wish to volunteer for such tasks at this school you will be required to sign such a declaration.
  - Undertaking the *Working with Children Check* (employment screening) for paid employees of the school.
  - Making notifications of 'risk of harm' or abuse to students to the Department of Community Services as per mandatory reporting laws.
  - Managing allegations of child abuse against employees of the school according to the requirements of the NSW Ombudsman and the Commission for Children and Young People.
  - Ensuring that all paid employees or volunteers are appropriately informed of their obligations under the legislation.
- This school also applies curriculum and pastoral practice to ensure the safety and well being of students attending the school.

## VOLUNTEERS

- Child Protection legislation **requires** that all those who undertake volunteer tasks on behalf of the school, where those tasks may involve unsupervised contact with students, must sign a *Prohibited Employment Declaration*.
- This means that the volunteer must not be a prohibited person (i.e. have been convicted of a serious sex crime) and must sign the declaration accordingly.
- This school will require you to sign the declaration if you are intending to volunteer to undertake tasks on behalf of the school where unsupervised contact with students is possible.

# FACT SHEET

## Child protection and the law

The abuse of a child is an offence under the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This Act further extends the responsibilities of those working with children to report to the Department of Community Services (DoCS) what is now defined as suspected 'risk of harm' in relation to the safety and well-being of children and young people (under the age of 18).

## What forms of suspected 'risk of harm' must be reported to DoCS?

There are four categories of abuse that form the grounds for suspected 'risk of harm':

- *Sexual abuse* is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child. It refers to the involvement of children in sexual acts including assault.
- *Physical abuse* is non-accidental injury to a child. It includes injuries which are caused by excessive discipline, hostile acts, pushing, shoving, severe beatings or shakings. Actual physical harm does not have to occur for an assault to have occurred.
- *Emotional abuse* comprises a range of behaviours which harm a child. These include making continual, excessive and unreasonable demands, excessive criticism, and severe and constant verbal abuse and rejection. This kind of abuse is evidenced by psychological harm such as vomiting, bedwetting, anxiety and extreme attention seeking.
- *Neglect* occurs where a child is harmed by failure to provide basic physical and emotional necessities such as shelter, food, clothing, emotional security, medical care and adequate supervision.

## Did you know that certain professional people must, by law, report suspected 'risk of harm' to children?

Principals, teachers, and school counsellors must report to DoCS when they have reason to suspect risk of harm to children or young people in their workplace. It is an offence for these people not to comply with their legal duties under the Act. Other professionals working in Government departments such as police, doctors, nurses and social workers – must comply with Government policy and report to the DoCS all cases of suspected risk of harm to children.

## What is meant by having 'reasonable grounds' to suspect?

Because notification is a serious action, the law states that the person reporting the matter must have reasonable grounds for making the report. A suspicion in this context means that the reporter has reasonable cause to believe or suspect that 'risk of harm' has or is likely to occur. It is not necessary for the person making the report to provide proof that the abuse actually happened. However, there must be some factual basis for the suspicion.

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

Parents should raise any such concerns with the Principal.