



John Paul College

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SAFEGUARDING OUR STUDENTS

Student Protection at John Paul College



A Guide for Parents and Students

Through a series of questions and answers, this Guide provides information on key definitions and concepts, child protection reporting processes and options for referring families to local support services.

As you read the guide, it's important to be aware of your reactions to the content. Information about abuse and neglect can be very confronting. If, at any time, the information in the guide causes you distress, it's important to discuss this with a support person or member of staff, such as one of our College Counsellors or Student Protection Officers (SPO's).



INTRODUCTION

For most children, childhood is a positive time in their lives. They grow up in loving families that care for and nurture them and help them develop into healthy young adults. However, for a small proportion of children, this is not their experience.

Because of their regular contact with children and families, schools play an important role in helping families access support services and identifying and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect.

Parents also play an important role in helping children feel safe and supported. For some children, the first person they will trust enough to talk to about abuse or neglect may be a friend or the parent of a friend. When this happens, it can be very stressful, and you will need to know what to do and who you can turn to for help.

This guide tells you about the policies, procedures and practices that our College has in place to protect students (under 18 years) from abuse and neglect, and inappropriate behaviour towards a student by a JPC employee, volunteer or visitor, including Contractor and what you can do if you have concerns for a student.

John Paul College is a Christian, ecumenical, co-educational College. Our values are based on a Christian ethos and particularly emphasise the principles of Mutual Respect, Integrity, Compliance and Excellence. As a College, we retain a 'duty of care' for our students, and as such take steps to look after the wellbeing of students.

OUR STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

John Paul College supports the rights of children and is committed to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students. John Paul College is therefore committed to responding to allegations of student harm resulting from the conduct or actions of any person including that of employees.

This commitment includes the provision of a safe and supportive living and learning environment for all students and requires all employees, volunteers and visitors to model and encourage behaviour that upholds the dignity and protection of students from harm.

In support of this commitment, John Paul College is dedicated to our Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy which includes having relevant policies, procedures and training in place to effectively address the safety and wellbeing of students in our care.



HOW DOES JPC PROTECT STUDENTS?

Our College recognises that child protection is everyone's business and we encourage all members of our community, including staff, students, parents, volunteers and visitors, to understand child protection and play their part, if and when they need to.

JPC will provide information about student protection, including policies, procedures, resources and training, to help guide staff, students, parents, volunteers and visitors to our College. We will develop and review an annual Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy.

If you would like to read our policies, our Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy, or other relevant documents, you can find these on our website.

By providing this information, our staff, students, parents, volunteers and visitors will be able to recognise suspected harm to a student as a result of abuse, identify inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, volunteer or visitor towards a student, respond to the ongoing support needs of students and families, and report concerns for a student, when required.

LAWS IN RELATION TO CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Because the safety and wellbeing of children is so important, there are several pieces of state legislation, including the:

- Child Protection Act 1999 Education (General Provisions) Act 2006;
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017; and the
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000.

This legislation contains provisions to help us protect students from abuse, or inappropriate behaviour, and support students and families when they need assistance.

These laws stipulate when and how suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to the Police and/or to the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs; how professionals can better support families, and other actions our College must take to protect students, including screening employees and volunteers and having a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy.

If you would like more information about the legislation that helps us all protect students from harm, please speak to a Student Protection Officer or review our policies on our web page.



WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED FOR A CHILD?

You might suspect a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm when:

- the child tells you about something that happened to them, or should have happened and didn't, which led to the child being harmed;
- someone else, such as the child's friend or another parent, tells you about an incident when the child was harmed or about a situation that is likely to happen in the future which will place the child at risk of harm;
- the child tells you about a friend or someone else they know who has been harmed - sometimes the child may actually be talking about themselves, but they may not feel comfortable telling you yet; or
- you are worried about changes you've noticed in the child's behaviour or unexplained and suspicious injuries.

These are just a few of the possible indicators of harm but every child will be affected differently. Some children show no observable signs of abuse, while others show multiple indicators.

If you're uncertain about what you've seen or heard it's best to talk about your concerns with one of our counsellors or a Student Protection Officer.

WHO ARE OUR STUDENT PROTECTION OFFICERS?

Student Protection Officers are designated senior college staff who receive specialist training annually, so they are best placed to respond to queries from students, parents, staff or volunteers about concerns for a student's safety or wellbeing. You can find information about John Paul College's Student Protection Officers, including who they are and how you can contact them, on our website [Student Protection Officers](#) or by contacting the College's main reception.

WHAT SHOULD A STUDENT DO IF CONCERNED FOR A STUDENT?

If at any time you have concerns for your own safety and wellbeing, or that of another student, you can discuss your concerns with one of the Student Protection Officers.

You can also talk to another staff member of your choosing, such as a Counsellor, teacher or Chaplain, if you are comfortable approaching them with your concerns. At JPC, there are also processes to report concerns in confidence (e.g. STYMIE).

WHAT SHOULD A PARENT DO IF CONCERNED FOR A JPC STUDENT OR FAMILY?

If you ever have any concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a student or are concerned that your family or another family may need some support, you can discuss your concerns with one of the College's Counsellors, a Student Protection Officer, relevant Deputy Principal or with the Principal.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

The Student Protection Officer will listen to your concerns, ask questions to help them understand the situation and who is involved, and will make notes about what you've said.

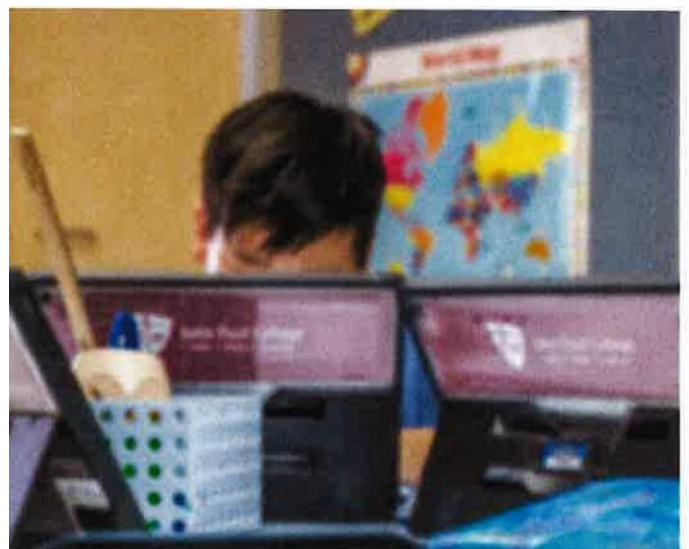
A staff member will listen to your concerns and assist you in accessing a Student Protection Officer.

When it's required by law or College policy, the Student Protection Officer or staff member will discuss your concerns with the Principal, and report to the police and/or Child Safety.

When Child Safety or the police receive a report about suspected child abuse or neglect, they'll review all the information and make a decision about whether further action is required, including gathering more information or starting an investigation.

No matter what action is taken by Child Safety or the police, our College will continue to support students and help to ensure their ongoing safety and wellbeing.

The College may speak with the student and their family and offer them support, including a referral to local counselling, health or support services.





WHO WILL KNOW I TALKED TO STAFF ABOUT MY CONCERNS?

If you decide to talk with a staff member about concerns for a student, under Queensland law, this information must be kept confidential and only certain professionals can be given the information.

For example, you talk to a Student Protection Officer about suspected sexual abuse, the Student Protection Officer may be legally obligated to report to the police and possibly also to Child Safety. The report will have your name, contact details and the information about the suspected abuse. This is a legal requirement.

For the police and/or Child Safety to investigate and do everything they can to protect the student, they need to gather as much information as possible about concerns. This might include speaking directly with any person who has seen or heard things about the student or the suspected abuse.

Under Queensland law, the identity of any person who notifies Child Safety or the police of suspected child abuse or neglect will be protected. In addition, any person who gives information to Child Safety or the police about suspected child abuse or neglect will not be liable civilly, criminally or under any administrative process.

DO STAFF HAVE TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE?

Our Student Protection Policy and Procedures state that all staff, volunteers and visitors must immediately discuss with a Student Protection Officer or the Principal when they suspect harm or risk of harm to a student.

After discussing with the Student Protection Officer or the Principal. There may be a legal obligation to report the concerns to Child Safety and/or the police.



WHEN ARE CONCERNS NOT REPORTED TO THE POLICE OR CHILD SAFETY?

At times, children may suffer harm but a report will not be required to be sent to Police or Child Safety.

Generally, this could include bullying by another student, student self-harm or harm to a student over the age of 18 years of age

When incidents like this occur, our staff will immediately respond to ensure that all students are safe, follow our policy and procedures and speak with the students involved and their parents.

Our staff may also offer families additional support, such as information about local counselling, health or support services, and may inform students and/or parents of their right to make a complaint about an incident to the police.

CAN CHILD SAFETY OR THE POLICE TALK TO STUDENTS WITHOUT PARENTAL PERMISSION?

The *Child Protection Act 1999* does, in certain circumstances, give Child Safety and police the authority to interview a JPC student at our College without a parent's permission.

The investigating officers have authority to take this action when they are investigating suspected abuse or neglect, if they believe it is in the student's best interests to interview them before the parent is informed, and they believe that informing the parents beforehand could adversely affect their investigation.

After the interview, the police or Child Safety must tell the parent about the contact with their child.

WHAT WILL THE SCHOOL DO IF YOU REPORT SUSPECTED INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR?

Our policy and procedures also state that, when staff become aware of alleged inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, volunteer or visitor towards a student, they must discuss this with a Student Protection Officer or with the Principal.

If the concerns relate to the Principal, the concerns must be reported to the Chair, Board of Directors.

Once aware of the alleged inappropriate behaviour, the Principal or Chair must follow John Paul College Policy and Procedures including informing the parents of the concerns and commencing an investigation if warranted.



WHAT ELSE WILL OUR SCHOOL DO TO HELP STUDENTS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN HARMED?

To help students affected by abuse or inappropriate behaviour, our staff will also:

- provide security through regular routines;
- provide opportunities for the student to talk with someone, if they want to;
- keep an eye on how the student is coping, interactions and general behaviour;
- provide extra support if needed;
- give the student opportunities to feel good about themselves and their achievements; and
- work with their family to ensure their ongoing safety and wellbeing.

HOW CAN STUDENTS AND FAMILIES GET SUPPORT WHEN THEY NEED IT?

At times, families face challenging situations that may stretch their resources and require more than their usual coping strategies. At these times, families may need some extra support from services within the local community to help them work through the issues and develop new strategies and capabilities they can use again in the future.

If our College is concerned that a family is having difficulties, we will, wherever possible, try to help families by linking them with support services within the local community.

If, at any time, you feel your family needs some extra support or information, please speak with any of our College Counsellors.

At John Paul College, we will always be sensitive to your privacy and will, keep your personal information confidential (unless required by law) and will try to help you source the support or information you require.



IF I ASK FOR HELP, WILL THE INFORMATION ABOUT MY FAMILY REMAIN PRIVATE?

If you decide to speak to any of our staff about getting support, under Queensland law, this information must be kept confidential and only those services or professionals who assist your family will be given information.

WHAT IF I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE?

If you believe our College hasn't complied with child protection legislation or our student protection policy you can, in the first instance, speak with a Student Protection Officer or the Principal, or you can make a complaint following the relevant Grievances Policy.

Acknowledgement: John Paul College acknowledges the Anglican Schools Commission Queensland for the concept of this guide.