INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

January 2015
As adults we all have a responsibility to care for children and young people and to protect them from all forms of harm, as well as to positively promote their wellbeing.

Brisbane Catholic Education is committed to the safety and well-being of all students and the protection of students from harm and abuse.
As a volunteer you play a significant role in the work of the school, form a valuable part of the school community, and assist in providing the optimal learning environment for students.

This presentation outlines your responsibilities in the vital area of student protection.
RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND HARM

Step 1 - Recognise
Step 2 - React
Step 3 - Report
STEP 1

Recognise
WHAT IS ABUSE?

Child ‘abuse’ is any act, or failure to act, that leads to the ‘harm’ of a child or young person.

It can be better understood by thinking about ‘abuse’ as the action and ‘harm’ as the consequence.
A student may be harmed by:

Sexual abuse
Physical abuse
Emotional abuse
Neglect or
Domestic and family violence
In Queensland ‘harm’ is defined in the *Child Protection Act 1999* as:

1. ‘Harm caused to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child’s physical, psychological or emotional well being’.
2. ‘It is immaterial how the harm is caused.’
3. ‘Harm can be caused by:
   (a) physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or
   (b) sexual abuse or exploitation’.
4. ‘Harm can be caused by –
   (a) a single act, omission or circumstance; or
   (b) a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances’.
Harm may be caused to a student by:
1. a staff member or volunteer;
2. another person such as a parent, carer, other family member or other person in the community or another student (not enrolled at the school);
3. another student enrolled at the school or
4. self-harm.
RECOGNISING HARM

You might recognise harm:

1. if a student reports information of concern about him/herself or about another person’s behaviour;
2. another student reports information of concern about a student or about another person’s behaviour in relation to that student;
3. a parent or another person reports information of concern about a student and/or another person’s behaviour (This information may come from a relative, friend, acquaintance of the student, or sometimes could be anonymous) or
4. through observing a child’s appearance or behaviours.
MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

Maintaining appropriate boundaries with students with whom you work is an important part of your role as a volunteer.

Typically, there are three types of boundaries you need to be mindful of in working with students:

- **Physical boundaries** - refers to: (a) limitations placed on physical contact between staff and students and (b) respect for and response to the physical needs of students.

- **Emotional boundaries** - refers to respecting the emotional needs and well-being of students.

- **Behavioural boundaries** - refers to respecting the rules of the school.
EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS THAT MAY CAUSE CONCERN

Physical boundaries
- making inappropriate physical contact by pushing, pulling or grabbing; or
- refusing to respond to biological necessities.

Emotional boundaries
- making embarrassing or humiliating comments about a student or their family
- using intimidating behaviour or language

Behavioural boundaries
- supplying tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs to a student
STEP 2

React
WHAT IF A STUDENT TELLS YOU SOMETHING?

DO:

• listen attentively, actively and without judgement
• let the child use their own words
• respond calmly to the information the student provides
• Avoid questioning; if clarification is necessary use open-ended statements such as, ‘Tell me more about that.’
• reassure the student that they have done the right thing e.g. ‘I am pleased you have told me these things’
• reassure them they are not to blame for the behaviours of others
• provide pastoral support to the student and be aware of the privacy issues involved
• be honest about your responsibility for taking action
• pass the information onto the Principal or the school’s nominated Student Protection Contact immediately
• make detailed notes
WHAT IF A STUDENT TELLS YOU SOMETHING?

DO NOT:

• react emotionally or accuse
• seek any more information than is absolutely necessary
• ask leading or probing questions or put words in the student’s mouth
• make promises that you cannot keep – particularly about not telling others such as the Principal or another Student Protection Contact about the information
• leave the student alone immediately after a disclosure
• discuss the situation with parents, caregivers or others (other than those designated e.g. Principal, or other Student Protection Contact)
REMEMBER

It is very important to maintain confidentiality for the protection of all involved.
STEP 3

Report
If you need to make a report you should report to either the teacher in whose class you are volunteering, the school Principal or the school’s other Student Protection Contact. The names of your SPCs are found on the student safety posters.
Work through the following scenarios and decide what you may need to do.
You work as a volunteer in the tuckshop. You notice a Year 2 girl has a large bruise around her eye and she tells you that she has been hit by her mother. You know her mother well.

What do you do?
You are a volunteer who assists with helping students to read. Another volunteer is working nearby with a student. You observe that the volunteer appears angry, is raising her voice at the student, and poking the student on the shoulder. You have worked with this volunteer all year and usually have morning tea with her.

What do you do?
You are a volunteer and assist with the school’s Year 8 netball team. You notice that a female student on the team, who is your daughter’s best friend, has cuts on her arms and legs. You discreetly enquire and she tells you that she did it to herself because she was really unhappy.

What do you do?
You are a volunteer parent assisting school staff take the Year 6 class on an excursion. On the bus one of the Year 6 girls tells you that one of the boys has been acting in a sexually inappropriate manner at the back of the bus. The male student is the son of a friend with whom you socialise regularly.

What do you do?
In each of these situations you should report the incident to the class teacher, the Principal or your school’s other Student Protection Contact.

You do not have to be sure that a student has been harmed to report.
Once you have reported the suspected harm of a student, the Principal or the Student Protection Contact will do whatever is necessary to make sure the student is safe.

Brisbane Catholic Education has student protection reporting processes they must follow and all Brisbane Catholic Education staff have received training in student protection.

You can rest assured that your report will be taken seriously, dealt with immediately and reported to the appropriate State authorities where necessary.
If you have been involved in a student protection matter in your role as a school volunteer, be aware of your own reactions and seek support if required.

Your Principal can assist you.
QUESTIONS?
More information on student protection can be found on Brisbane Catholic Education's Public Website under the Students and Parents tab

www.bne.catholic.edu.au
Thank you

Please complete, sign and submit to the Principal the

School Volunteer Register Sheet