

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### **Policy Statement:**

St Andrew's Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care support each child's right to live and learn in a safe and secure environment. The Services share in the community's responsibility to protect children, both by ensuring that each child is free from abuse within its services, and by reporting suspected instances of abuse. Our main focus is the safety and well being of all our children. We are also here to support the family in the rearing of their child, and are open to referrals from agencies and will work with them. Staff, parents and the community have a duty to protect children from abuse in any form. This protection involves educating children, recognising signs of abuse and notifying the appropriate people. We are not obligated by law to disclose any suspected abuse however staff with reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse or believe a child is at risk, have a moral and ethical obligation to report it to the Nominated Supervisor. Under the scope of the Diocese Student Protection Policy, the Services will follow policy to report to the Head of School (Nominated Supervisor of St Andrew's Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care). An online e-form is to be completed on the LMS site for further action. It is the role of the community services officers and police to investigate and collect evidence in these cases. Directors, coordinators and caregivers must not undertake investigations of cases of child abuse, other than to satisfy themselves that they have reasonable grounds to report that the abuse has occurred. If problems occur there are systems and support services available within the community to help. The best interests, well-being and safety of children are at all times the paramount concerns of the Service. This policy provides guidelines and procedures for the protection of children who are enrolled in St Andrew's Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care.

### **Aim:**

St Andrew's Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care aims to promote the safety and well being of all the children within care, which is each child's "Human Right".

### **Rationale:**

Staff in early childhood services are in a unique situation in relation to observing changes in children's behaviour. This policy was developed to provide a framework for the protection of the child and to clarify procedures for staff. It is inevitable that at some stage a child at risk will attend St Andrew's Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care so it is essential that the policy, procedures for notification and protective guidelines for staff be specified.

### **Strategies/Practices/Procedures:**

Created by: Ola Goryl

Created: June 2009

Updated: October 2010, September 2012, October 2014, June 2015

Next Reviewal Date: October 2016

Initially a staff member may have suspicions of a child abuse/neglect case (based on observed changes in the child's behaviour; instability; physical evidence of neglect or abuse; witness of inadequate provision and/or care by parent(s) or guardian; incidents of ridicule; verbal abusive interactions and inconsistent attendance etc.).

- Educators are to record concerns; date, anecdotes and observations (specify interactions objectively).
- The confidentiality of the child and the family concerned must be recognised and abided by, by all staff.
- On collecting facts, speak to the other staff members in the room expressing and sharing concerns and the documented observations. Discuss the urgency of the situation and/or the necessity for further observations.
- The staff members inform the Director and discuss the issue.
- A further observation of the child and monitoring the situation is to be specific and concise and include the following. -Written running records and anecdotal records, signed and dated by the observer; any relevant conversations with the parents/staff/family; name age and address of the child; information about the parents or caregivers.
- The Director will then supervise reporting on the LMS e-form.  
[Mandatory Report of Suspected Actual or Likely Sexual Abuse](#)  
[Report of Harm by Head of School](#)  
[Report of Harm or Suspected Harm](#)
- Centre Director is to keep staff informed of any ongoing investigations into the matter.

Procedures for dealing with complaints regarding the abuse of a child at St Andrew's Little Saints by a staff member:

*If:*

- There is any suspicion of a child being abused by a person working at the Centre, or
- A parent or outside person reports an alleged act of abuse against a child while at the centre, or
- A staff member reports an alleged act of abuse against a child while at the Centre, or
- A child makes a report of an alleged act of abuse by a person working at the Centre

The following must take place:

The person suspecting, witnessing or receiving a verbal report must immediately inform the Director or the person in charge at the time. If it is the Director or the person in charge at the time, that is the subject of the complaint, then the staff member should contact the College Principal.

The Director or person in charge will:

- complete a 'Report of Harm Form' and send it to the Office of Early Childhood Education and Care and contact the Centre's Community Support Officer for advice.
- complete a [Report of Inappropriate Behaviour](#) form on the College LMS.

Practice:

*General Policy:*

This policy is to be explained to all staff at time of recruitment and at least annually.

The safety of children remains at all times an adult responsibility. This responsibility should not be placed on children, implicitly or explicitly. While it can help children to develop useful skills it is neither reasonable nor realistic to expect children to be able to guarantee their own safety.

In all abuse situations the child's best interests must be considered first. Protection from further abuse must be ensured. The child is not to be held in any way responsible or to blame for the abuse.

#### *Staff - Child Interactions:*

- Staff are to be trained to understand that they are likely to find some children more difficult than others, to discuss these situations with other staff and the Director, and to devise strategies to minimise negative interactions with children.
- Individuals or groups of children will never be withdrawn into areas where they cannot be seen by other staff or taken into rooms that can be locked.
- Changing babies' nappies will take place in view of other adults.
- Centre staff, students or volunteers are not to be alone with children or out of sight of other staff, or away from ready access by other staff. On formal and informal outings there are always to be at least two staff members present.

#### *The following behaviour by staff is not permitted:*

- corporal punishment or any type of physical punishment including hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures which produce physical pain;
- abusive, profane or derogatory language including yelling and belittling;
- any form of public or private humiliation including threats of physical punishment;
- any form of emotional abuse including threats of physical punishment;
- withdrawal of food, rest or opportunity to use the toilet.
- Physical restraint of children will not be used except as necessary to ensure a child's safety or that of others, and then only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

#### *Protective behaviours:*

- Centre staff will help children learn about self protection and to ask someone they trust for help if they feel unsafe, by carrying out protective behaviour programmes. These programmes should be carefully considered so that they are age appropriate, take into account the developmental stages of the children and do not shift onus for safety from adult to child.

#### *Centre staff will:*

- help children to identify and discuss their feelings in a variety of situations, to recognise negative feelings such as "butterflies in the tummy", "tight feelings" in the throat, as well as happy, safe feelings;
- encourage children to talk about situations where they feel safe and don't feel safe;
- listen to children so that they know their questions and concerns are being understood;
- encourage questioning and decision making skills;
- respect children's choices and decisions and encourage them to respect other children's choices, especially where touching is concerned;
- when developmentally appropriate, teach children the basic principles of "No, Go and Tell" - to say "no" if they feel uncomfortable, to get out of the situation if possible and to tell someone they trust as soon as possible;
- help at-risk children to identify a network of five people they can trust and turn to when they feel unsafe;
- use correct terminology for all body parts.

#### *Steps for Notification:*

- Discussions with appropriate staff members
- Notification to the Director
- Notification to the College on the LMS

- The College representative will contact the Child Safety office
- Director to de-brief for appropriate staff
- Director to provide the College Counselling service for educators involved (EAP).
- Staff MUST maintain strict confidentiality at all times.
- Centre educators are to contact the College Principal if they feel appropriate action has not been taken by the Director.
- Centre educators are to contact the Child Safety office if they feel appropriate action has not been taken by the College Principal.

#### Contact Numbers: North Coast Regional Intake Service

Child Safety (general public): 1300 703 921  
 Child Safety (Govt & non-Govt partners): 1300 705 201 (Little Saints staff to ring this number)  
 Child Safety Fax: 07 5420 9049  
 Address: 129 Bulcock St, Caloundra QLD 4551  
 Postal: PO Box 1144, Caloundra QLD 4551  
 Email: NCRISintake@communities.qld.edu.au

#### *Core principles of the Child Protection Act 1999 in relation to child protection are:*

- the welfare and best interests of the child are paramount
- the preferred way of ensuring a child's welfare is through support of the child's family
- intervention is not to exceed the level necessary to protect the child
- family participation in planning and decision making for children
- consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies in decision-making regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children and families have a right to information
- services are to be culturally appropriate
- coordination, consultation and collaboration with families, other professionals, agencies and the community
- accountability of the department.

#### *Following are indicators of abuse for staff to observe, if required:*

Indicators should be seen as a guide rather than conclusive proof. It is important to be aware that many of the indicators listed are not only common to different forms of child abuse, but may be caused by factors other than child abuse. There may be instances where the results of problems are associated with family disruptions/tensions, or stem from a child's illness, undiagnosed disability or learning problems. While it is important to avoid jumping to conclusions, it is equally as important to recognise that a child who shows a number of physical signs and/or behavioural symptoms obviously has some kind of problem. Even if the problem is not related to child abuse, the child is still clearly in need of some help. If in doubt, discuss your concerns with the Office of Early Childhood Education and Care or the Department of Child Safety. It is then their responsibility to decide on further action.

#### Physical Abuse: "Any non-accidental injury to a child"

##### *Indicators:*

- Unexplained welts and bruises
- Unexplained burns
- Unexplained fractures
- Unexplained lacerations or abrasions
- Head injuries
- Human bite marks

Created by: Ola Goryl

Created: June 2009

Updated: October 2010, September 2012, October 2014, June 2015

Next Reviewal Date: October 2016

- Premature loss of teeth
- Verbally reports abuse
- Wary of adult contacts
- Consistent anger, aggression, hyperactivity
- Behavioural extremes
- Role reversal
- Developmental lags
- Appears frightened of carer
- Apprehensive when other children cry
- Wears clothes to cover injuries
- Seeks affection from any adult with no discrimination
- Non-expression of his/her needs
- Non-communicative

*Carer Behavioural Indicators:*

- Seems unconcerned about child
- Seems anxious and overwhelmed by their child's needs
- Takes an unusual amount of times to obtain medical care for their child
- Offers an inadequate or inappropriate explanation for their child's injury
- Takes child to a different doctor or hospital for each injury
- Substance abuser
- Disciplines the child too harshly
- Describes child in a consistently negative manner
- Has poor impulse control

Sexual Abuse: "Utilization of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or an older child in a position of power, or permitting another person to do so"

*Child Physical Indicators:*

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas
- Venereal disease (especially in pre-teens)
- Pregnancy
- Foreign matter in bladder, rectum or urethra
- Recurrent urinary tract infections

*Child Behavioural Indicators:*

- Aggressive, overt sexual behaviour
- Drawing pictures of people with genitals
- Cruelty to animals without physiological basis
- Pre-mature knowledge of explicit sexual acts
- Sleep disorders
- Taking frequent baths
- Starting fires
- Poor peer relationships
- Wary of physical contact, especially with an adult

- Onset of bedwetting, nightmares or thumb sucking
- Reports of sexual abuse
- Self-inflicted injuries

*Carer Behavioural Indicators:*

- Very protective or jealous of child
- Extremely protective of family privacy
- Does not allow child to be involved in extra-curricular activities
- Encourages child to engage in prostitution
- Substance abuser
- Is geographically isolated and/or lacking in social and emotional contacts outside the family
- Has low self-esteem

Emotional Abuse: “Chronic failure by the carer to provide support and affection necessary to develop a sound and healthy personality”

*Child Physical Indicators:*

- Speech disorders
- Lags in physical development
- Failure to thrive
- Attempted suicide

*Child Behavioural Indicators:*

- Habit disorder (sucking, biting, rocking, etc)
- Has low self-esteem
- Difficulty forming positive relationships
- Elimination problems
- Neurotic Traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play, etc)
- Behavioural extremes (compliant, passive, shy, aggressive, demanding)
- Overly adaptive behaviour (inappropriately infantile)
- Apathetic
- Withdrawal
- Inability to trust
- Reports emotional maltreatment

*Carer Behavioural Indicators:*

- Treat children in family unequally
- Does not appear to care much about the child’s problems
- Blames or belittles child
- Is cold and rejecting
- Withholds love
- Finds nothing good or attractive in the child
- Demonstrates inconsistent behaviour in the child

Neglect: “Chronic failure to provide for a child’s physical and emotional needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or supervision”

*Child Physical Indicators:*

- Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress, chronically unclean
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities for long periods
- Unattended physical problems or medical/dental needs
- Often tired or listless
- Abandonment
- Underweight
- Dirty
- Developmental lags
- Flat bald spots on infants head
- Begging or stealing food
- Extended stays in school (early arrival or late departure)
- Attendance at school infrequent
- Substance abuser
- States there is no parent or carer

*Carer Behavioural Indicators:*

- Has disorganized, chaotic, upsetting home life
- Is apathetic, feels nothing will change
- Is isolated from friends, relatives, neighbours
- Cannot be found
- Expects too much from child
- Substance abuser
- Exposes child to unsafe living conditions

**Measuring Tools:**

*Staff Training in Child Protection*

St Andrew’s Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care recognises the crucial role that training plays in ensuring that children are protected from all forms of abuse. Training allows staff to identify possible indicators of abuse and ensure that they are familiar with notification procedures. Training provides staff with a basis for developing programmes and procedures, which protect children and support families.

*Prevention of Abuse and Neglect / Process for Supporting families with child protection needs*

St Andrew’s Little Saints and After School & Vacation Care acknowledges the role it plays by protective factors in supporting families and reducing the risk of abuse for children. We aim to support families by providing:

- Information for families which will enhance parenting skills
- Information about resources and supports available in the community, both formal and informal
- Information about specialist agencies which could assist with issues related to their child or their family situation
- A supportive environment in which families are welcome to discuss concerns they may have about their child

- An environment which reflects the cultural diversity of the local community and which responds to linguistic diversity by offering information in community languages
- Opportunities for families to meet and build informal networks.

### **Sources and Further Reading:**

Education and Care Services National Law 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Department of Child Safety

Child Protection Act 1999

[www.childsafety.qld.gov.au](http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au)

Fact Sheet: Child Safety Services. Department of Communities. September 2010

Procedure Manual for the Protection from Harm of Students at St Andrew's Anglican College (The Anglican Church of Australia – Diocese of Brisbane, 2010)

### **Links to Other Policies:**

Delivery and Collection of Children Policy

Child and Youth Risk Management including Excursions Policy