



Student protection policy

Rationale

This policy applies to all employees, visiting service providers and volunteers engaged with Toowoomba Catholic Schools. It upholds the responsibilities set out in relevant legislation, the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Child Safe Standards.

Toowoomba Catholic Schools affirms that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of students are paramount. Every student has the right to learn in an environment free from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. All staff, visiting service providers and volunteers share a collective responsibility to actively promote student safety and respond to concerns in a timely, lawful and compassionate manner.

Legislative references

- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 (Qld)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
- Evidence Act 1977 (Qld)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)
- Child Safe Organisations Act 2024

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy.

- A **child** is a person under 18 years of age.
- **Harm**, to a child, as defined in section 9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999* 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 or
 - sexual abuse or exploitation.Harm can be caused by
 - a single act, omission or
 - circumstance or
 - a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
- A student is any person enrolled as such within Toowoomba Catholic schools. This includes a 'relevant person' for the purposes of mandatory reporting under sections 366 and 366A of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*. A 'relevant person' is
 - a student under 18 years attending the school;
 - a kindergarten age child registered in a kindergarten learning program at the school; or

- a person with a disability who –
 - under section 420(2), is being provided with special education at the school; and
 - is not enrolled in the preparatory year at the school.
- A **staff member** is any person who is employed by Toowoomba Catholic Schools on a casual, fixed term, or continuing basis, pursuant to a contract of employment or appointed to a role at the school pursuant to an agreement with a religious order.
- A **volunteer** is a person who is engaged by the school not for financial reward but who may receive reimbursement for out of pocket expenses.
- A **visiting service provider** is a person who is engaged by the school or TCSO to provide paid services.

Policy statement

Toowoomba Catholic Schools are to

- provide safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments
- prevent harm to students through proactive risk management and safeguarding practices
- ensure appropriate and lawful responses when a staff member, volunteer or visiting service provider reasonably suspects sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse, harm or inappropriate behaviour
- support students who have experienced harm or are at risk, and, where lawful and appropriate, collaborate with statutory and community agencies
- embed the Child Safe Standards, including the principle of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Actions

- The Toowoomba Catholic Schools student protection policy, processes and guidelines will be implemented, reviewed and updated
 - in accordance with legislative requirements and
 - by actively listening to students, taking their perspectives seriously and ensuring their voices inform continuous improvement in child-safe practices.
- The safety and wellbeing of all students will be promoted in different ways throughout the year including the provision of a relevant curriculum program.
- All staff members will complete annual training in the Toowoomba Catholic Schools student protection policy, processes and guidelines in relation to reporting suspicions of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse, harm, or inappropriate behaviour of staff members, volunteers and visiting service providers, towards students.
- All volunteer and visiting service provider induction processes will include information in relation to responding appropriately to student protection concerns.
- Schools will work in partnership with families to ensure consistency of message and expectations.
- Student protection processes will be transparent and accountable and the privacy and confidentiality of information respected.



Most Reverend Ken Howell | Bishop of Toowoomba