



SACRED HEART PRIMARY SCHOOL, Tatura
Child Protection:
Working With Children Checks Policy
July 2018

At Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School we believe:

In building relationships based upon mutual respect, trust and care in an environment of justice, equality, compassion and hope where child safety is of paramount importance at all times.

Commitment to Child Safety

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe all of the time. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. At Sacred Heart we strive to maintain a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. We are committed to continually reviewing our Child Safe policies and practices to ensure that every effort is made for ongoing improvement of our Child Safe environment.

We at Sacred Heart recognise that some groups of children are particularly vulnerable and we are committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal/linguistically diverse children and also promoting the safety of children with a disability.

1.0 PREAMBLE

The dignity of the human person, who is created in the image and likeness of God, is the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching. This Catholic anthropology leads us to afford all people, but especially children, young people and the most vulnerable, the highest respect. Within this context, effective Catholic schools provide a safe, supportive and secure environment that promotes respect and care and values diversity. The mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of children and young people are essential preconditions for successful learning. These qualities cannot be developed for individuals in isolation from the health and wellbeing of the school community as a whole.

Sacred Heart School, Tatura is committed to the creation of a safe, just and respectful environment that supports wellness for all members of the school community. In this, there is a moral obligation and shared responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

Sacred Heart School, Tatura believes that, while protecting children and young people against sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility, schools have particular moral and legal responsibilities to ensure children and young people are safe in their care and to actively and intentionally work to eliminate all forms of abusive behaviours towards children. There are also particular moral and legal obligations for those in authority to prevent, reduce and minimise child abuse and exploitation in all forms.

2.0 PURPOSE

This policy applies to whole school community in supporting safe environments for all children and young people.

It concerns the responsibilities of schools in complying with the provisions of the Victorian *Working with Children Act 2005*, which was enacted to assist in protecting children from sexual or physical harm by ensuring that people who work with, or care for, them are subject to a screening process. [*Working With Children Act 2005*, s.1(1)]

A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required of most people involved in twenty occupational fields of child-related work as paid workers or volunteers - where that work is not directly supervised by someone with an appropriate check:

- Current members of the Victorian Institute of Teaching are exempt from requiring a WWCC as they already undergo a similar regular check
- Clergy and those performing duties of a religious vocation are specifically identified as requiring checks. A school will need to see the WWCC for these people as well, including the Parish Priest
- Sporting clubs also fall within these twenty occupational fields. Schools should consider how they will ensure associated sporting clubs manage their responsibilities
- A check is required of people working in schools, including employees, volunteers and self-employed persons, as well as officers of a body corporate, members of committees of management, and persons involved in practical training, e.g. student teachers. While staff are responsible for obtaining their own check, each School must ensure valid checks are held by all those requiring one.

This also means that each school must ensure all teaching staff maintain their registrations with the *Victorian Institute of Teaching* and makes it even more critical that the school maintains ongoing records of this.

Volunteers who work with children will also require a WWCC, unless they are exempt.

NOTE: A Working with Children Check is a minimum requirement of a school's Duty of Care – it provides evidence that a person has not been found guilty of sexual abuse. It does not endorse any person as being suitable to work with children. Systematic and rigorous screening processes also need to be undertaken in every school to reduce as much as possible the risk of harm to any student.

3.0 KEY PRINCIPLES

- A safe environment is required to protect children and young people from harm and to prevent staff from abusing their position of authority and trust.
- The child and young person's ongoing safety and wellbeing must be the primary focus of all decision making.
- School leaders and staff must be fully self-aware of, and comply with, their professional obligations and responsibilities.
- The commitment to protecting children is embedded in the organisation's culture and responsibility for taking action is understood and accepted at all levels of the organisation.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of the Working with Children Act 2005:

- **Children** are those under the age of 18 years
- **Child related work** is work involved in one of the occupational fields listed in the Act, and that “usually involves direct contact with a child and that contact is not directly supervised by another person.”
Note: “Work is not child-related work by reason only of occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.”
- **Direct contact** is any contact between a person and a child that involves:
 - physical contact, or
 - face to face oral communication
- **Direct supervision** is supervision of a person’s contact with children rather than of their work in general. Supervising another person’s contact with children must be personal and immediate but can include a brief absence such as taking a telephone call in another room.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

This policy applies to the whole school community in supporting safe environments for all children and young people.

- The Governing Authority has administrative responsibility for WWCC.
- As of 1 January 2008, all workers or volunteers engaged in ‘child related work’ must undergo Working with Children checks prior to commencing work. Copies of checks must be provided to the school before the commencement of work. Reminders of requirements will be put on the newsletter at the beginning of each year.
- An up-to-date WWCC & VIT Register for teachers, other staff, contractors, and volunteers is kept with all other Registers & Policies in the Principal’s Office and is maintained by Principal. Those who are exempt from a WWCC are included in this Register with appropriate notation
- Records of WWCC will also be collated on the attached spreadsheet and recorded in SAS 2000. This will include expiry dates and will be checked annually, at the start of the year by the Administrative Officer. Forms will be made available from the school and maintained by the Administrative Officer
- Selection and appointment processes for staff and volunteers require submission of evidence and active assurance of VIT registration or WWCC prior to engagement
- All persons involved in school activities will be made aware of and adhere to the information in this policy and Camp/Excursion Helper Policy
- Any negative responses to the WWCC application will be forwarded to the Principal and Canonical Administrator.
- Staff wishing to seek approval for a volunteer or other visitor will forward the request to the Administrative Officer.
- You are considered to be performing ‘child related work’ if you work or volunteer at a school or school related activities, you volunteer or do this work on a regular basis, and you have direct contact with children under 18yrs of age which may be unsupervised. In this instance, the term ‘regular basis’ refers to more than three time a year.

- The VIT and Department of Justice websites are checked each year to ensure all registrations and WWCCs continue to be current. For VIT registrations, this is undertaken at the commencement of the school year and in early October each year (when registrations are renewed). Therefore, teaching staff members are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, and undergo ongoing monitoring that satisfies Working with Children check requirements. They do not require a Working with Children Check.
- Parents who volunteer in relation to an activity that is fully supervised at all times by a teacher or other person with a WWCC are exempt (i.e. reading in class).
- **All** volunteers attending School Camps and/or Excursions will have current WWCC. This will be checked and confirmed by the staff member responsible for organizing the event.
- Teachers are fully responsible for the supervision of volunteers and visitors. It is also their responsibility to be aware of all changes to this policy on an annual basis. Changes will be communicated to staff at the Staff Information Session on Day 1 each year.
- all relevant non-teaching staff, contractors and volunteers will provide a copy of the current WWCC, or a recent application receipt, prior to them commencing work (a receipt is a valid alternative to a WWCC for only 60 days).
- Where there is doubt if a WWCC is required, staff at Sacred Heart School, Tatura will remain cautious and require that a WWCC application be made prior to work commencing.
- **All staff, including new staff** are made aware each year of, understand and implement the school's procedures in regard to volunteers and other persons, including the need for prior approval of such work by the designated member of the school's leadership team
- Teachers will be informed by the Administrative Officer if a person is eligible to be on the premises unsupervised (i.e. has a current WWCC or an exemption).
- Sacred Heart School does not pay for Working with Children checks. These are free for volunteers.
- All people required to have Working with Children checks are issued a WWC Check Card. A copy of the card must be forwarded to the School Office and kept on file. A record of volunteers with up to date WWC Checks will be maintained.
- Each person with a WWCC will be required to renew the check prior to expiry.
- When attending school camps, excursions, sleep-overs, teaching of swimming lessons, transport of students without staff members present, extra-curricular activities such as school sporting teams etc. and all in school based activities all volunteers must have a Working with Children Check.
- It is strongly recommended that members of School Boards hold a WWCC or provide evidence of being registered with the VIT or being a serving police officer. These are significant positions within schools that should be regarded as role models and they may have contact with students at school functions or activities.

6.0 RELATED DOCUMENTATION

This policy should be read in conjunction with the other SSEB Policies and CEO resources concerned with Child Safety and Pastoral Wellbeing:

- *Charter of Sandhurst School Improvement*
- Catholic Education Sandhurst *Information for Schools – Child Safe Organisations*
- Catholic Education Sandhurst: *Guidelines to Schools for Compliance with the Working With Children Act 2005*
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Child Protection and Safety Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Child Protection – Failure to Protect
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Child Protection – Failure to Disclose Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Child Protection – Grooming Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura After School Care Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Behaviour Management Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Community Grievance Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Complaints Handling Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Camps Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura, Excursions Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura, Camp/Excursion Helper Selection Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Learning & Teaching Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Pastoral Wellbeing Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Positive Behaviour Intervention & Support Policy
- Sacred Heart School, Tatura Yard Duty Policy

7.0 REFERENCES

- Working With Children Act (Vic) 2005
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/wwca2005232/
- Catholic Education Sandhurst Information for Schools – Child Safe Organisations

8.0 REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed at least every six months.

The Sacred Heart School Board has contributed to and approved the policy and practise and has continuing oversight of planning and reviewing.

This document was initially ratified on: March 2016

This document was presented to the Sacred Heart School Board on August 15th, 2018

Next Review to be completed by: February 2019