

# Student Protection

Monday, 13 February 2017 10:08 AM



# Student Protection

Handbook for Volunteers

Narbethong Special School

## Child Protection is everyone's business

All Department of Education and Training employees and visitors in a State School have a responsibility to respond when it is suspected that a student has been harmed or is at risk of harm and to comply with mandatory reporting obligations. Employees also have a responsibility to care for children and young people and protect them from all forms of harm as well as to positively promote their welfare.

The Department of Education and Training seeks to continue its adherence to legislative requirements and duty of care to students by a commitment to the implementation of student protection strategies and procedures.

## The volunteer's role in the school

Our aim is to give students the sense of being safe and valued as people so that they are secure and ready to learn at their best level. As a volunteer you play a significant role in the work of the school, form part of the school community and assist in providing the optimal learning environment for students.

This document outlines your responsibilities as a volunteer in the vital area of student protection and it is important that you read this document, in conjunction with the Volunteer Code of Conduct, so you understand your responsibilities in the protection of our students.

## What is child abuse?

The term "abuse" has been replaced in recent state legislation with the term "harm". Child "**abuse**" is an act, or failure to act, that leads to "**harm**" of a child or young person. It can be better understood by thinking that "abuse" is the action and "harm" is the consequence.

## The legal definition of "harm"

Harm is defined legally in the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (QLD)*, and the *Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)* as:

"Harm caused to the student under 18 years is any detrimental effect of a single nature on the student's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused".

Within the school there are four circumstances where harm can be caused to a student.

They are:

1. Harm to a student by a staff member or volunteer of the school.
2. Harm to a student by someone outside the school.
3. Harm by other students.
4. Student self-harm.

## What are reasonable grounds to suspect harm to a student?

Reasonable ground to suspect harm to a student may have occurred when:

- A student speaks about being harmed or being in danger of being harmed.
- Someone else (perhaps a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the student) informs you that they suspect a student has been harmed.
- You observe a particular student's behaviour, physical appearance or social relationships that raises concerns of possible harm to the student.
- Matters that may be considered when forming a reasonable suspicion include: detrimental effects on the students body or psychological or emotional state that are evident or likely to become evident in the future; the nature and severity of the detrimental effects and the likelihood they will continue; and the student's age.

## Your reporting responsibilities

In any instance where you either become aware, or reasonably suspect harm to a student has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring, you must report this as soon as possible to the Principal or the Deputy Principal.

## REMEMBER

**Maintaining confidentiality is vital for the protection of all involved.**

## What happens next?

Once you have reported the alleged harm of a student, the Principal will do whatever is necessary to make sure the student is safe. The Department of Education and Training has student protection reporting processes and all Department of Education and Training 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.

## Scenario 1

**Below are some scenarios for your consideration:**

You are a volunteer in the pool supporting your child's swimming program. You notice another student in the pool has bruises on their legs. What do you do?

## Scenario 2

You are supporting in a classroom and overhear a conversation about the health issues of a student in the class. What should you do?

## Answers:

Do not discuss the situations with staff, parents, caregivers or others (other than those designated e.g. Principal and Deputy Principal) – confidentiality is vital for the protection of all involved. If you have concerns please contact the Principal or Deputy Principal.

## Very Important Note

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 with this issue.

Finally, please sign the following page where indicated to confirm you understand your student protection responsibilities as a volunteer.

The Department of Education and Training thanks you for your support for our school and our students.

## References and Resources

More information on student protection in the Department of Education and Training can be found in the following documents:

1. Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (QLD).
2. Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)
3. Student Protection Guidelines.