

Child Safe Policy – Western Australia

Section	Welfare
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1. Purpose

The Anglican Schools Commission (ASC) is committed to child safety and has developed this policy to assist Principals, teachers and other school staff to deal appropriately with the issue of child protection, and by doing so is supporting a consistent approach by all ASC schools to this important issue.

2. Principles

The Anglican Schools Commission acknowledges the serious consequences of child abuse and neglect, both in the short term and the long term. Within its schools the protection strategies and procedures to be followed are based on the following principles:

- 2.1 **All adults have a responsibility to care for children**, to positively promote their welfare and to protect them from any kind of abuse.
- 2.2 All children have the right to a thorough and systematic education about personal safety, including safety in relationships.
- 2.3 The ASC and its schools are committed to child safety.
- 2.4 The ASC is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- 2.5 The ASC and its schools are committed to fulfilling our legal responsibilities in the area of child abuse.
- 2.6 All ASC schools will ensure there are robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- 2.7 All students should know that they are valued as persons from the time they enter the school community. This pastoral dimension should influence every aspect of the school's life. The value of the family unit is to be respected but this should not be to the detriment of the well-being of a child.
- 2.8 All persons involved in situations where abuse is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- 2.9 The Principal is responsible for all aspects of school management including the management of suspected or disclosed incidents of child abuse, in line with legislation and CPFS and WA Police requirements. With the assistance of the appropriate Pastoral Care Staff (such as the School Chaplain, Pastoral Dean, Psychologist, Nurse or Counsellor), the Principal must ensure that the school's pastoral care structures address the issue of child abuse, and make appropriate provisions for the assistance of affected children, families and staff.
- 2.10 All school staff have a duty of care to students during school hours and at other times when staff/student relationships exist.
- 2.11 All ASC Schools will ensure regular training and educating of staff on child abuse risks.
- 2.12 The ASC and its schools abide by the legal and moral obligations to report all forms of abuse.
- 2.13 School staff who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed child abuse or neglect have a clear obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality in

relation to the entire matter, and an obligation to ensure that this information is secure.

3. Relevant Policies, Procedures and Legislation

3.1 This policy must be read in conjunction with the following ASC policies and procedures:

- Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Policy – Western Australia
- Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect Policy – Western Australia
- Dispute and Complaint Resolution Policy and Guidelines for Implementation
- Allegations of Misconduct against Employees in ASC Schools and Guidelines for Interviewing of Students by Police

3.2 Each ASC school is responsible for developing and reviewing school based policies, procedures and guidelines in line with the ASC Child Safe Policy and those policies listed above. Related school based policies include, but are not limited to:

- Working with Children Check Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Recruitment and Selection of Staff Policy.

3.3 Relevant legislation:

- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008
- Criminal Code Act 1913
- Criminal Code Amendment Section 204B (Cyber Predators) Bill 2005.

Legislation is available to be viewed through the State Law Publishers website www.slp.wa.gov.au

4. Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct

4.1 All ASC Schools are required to have a Code of Conduct that:

- is publically available;
- states as its objective the promotion of child safety in the school environment;
- sets standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children;
- takes into account the interests of school staff (including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular school staff), and the needs of all children; and
- is consistent with the school's child safety strategies, policies and procedures as revised from time to time.

4.2 Schools must also provide guidelines on how to comply with the Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct, including an explanation distinguishing between grooming and sexual abuse, and clearly delineating the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate interaction between students and between students and adults. Information on sexual abuse and grooming is covered in the Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures – Western Australia.

4.3 Schools must have procedures in place for the detection and reporting of Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct breaches, grooming and child abuse.

The Code of Conduct will be used by each school in a variety of ways, including:

- as part of induction training for new leadership members, staff and volunteers;
- as part of refresher training for existing leadership members, staff and volunteers;
- to inform parents/carers and other person associated with the school what behaviour they can expect from the school's leadership, staff and volunteers;
- to support and inform organisational protocols and reporting procedures should breaches of the code be suspected or identified;
- include a reference to the code of conduct in employment advertisements and contracts to ensure compliance.

4.4 The ASC's Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct is provided in Appendix A. This forms the minimum standard for all schools, however, individual schools may wish to add additional elements.

5. Child Empowerment and Participation Education

5.1 All ASC schools must have in place developmentally appropriate protective behaviours curriculum, developed by experts in child abuse protection, and covering what the boundaries are between appropriate and inappropriate interactions and when, how and who to tell when a boundary is crossed.

5.2 Schools should also consider appropriate education to be delivered about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality); and
- resilience.

6. School Staff recruitment practices

6.1 All ASC schools must develop recruitment practices which:

- are robust to help ensure the best applicants are employed with each step of process done consistently and thoroughly;
- engage only those who are suitable to work with students;
- make every attempt to assess commitment to the Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct on the part of the applicants;
- include induction to the school's policies and procedures for the prevention, detection and reporting of suspected and actual grooming, and abuse and mandatory reporting obligations.

6.2 Each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child-related work must have a clear statement that sets out:

- The job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
- The job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.

6.3 All applicants for jobs that involve child-related work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).

6.4 In accordance with any applicable legal requirement (eg. Working with Children Check, Federal Police Clearance) or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-related work:

- Working with Children Check status, or similar check;

- Proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- The person's history of work involving children; and
- References that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

Appendix B provides selection criteria examples that can be used as part of the recruitment process, including advertising, interviews and reference checks.

7. School Staff and Volunteer supervision practices

7.1 All schools will ensure that new employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand the commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (as per the Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the appropriate channels, including CPFS, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

8. School Staff Education and Training

8.1 All ASC schools must have in place training for staff that identifies, assesses and minimises the risks of child abuse, and detects potential signs of child abuse.

9. Procedures: Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 The Anglican Schools Commission

If formal notification is to be made to CPFS, the Principal should inform the CEO of the Anglican Schools Commission as the official representative of the School Authority.

The Anglican Schools Commission Office will:

- Assist Principals in arranging appropriate professional development for designated staff in the principles, policy and procedures in child protection.
- Assist Principals in arranging professional development for designated staff in a protective behaviours curriculum.
- If necessary assist the Principal or her/his delegate when a case of child abuse or neglect is disclosed, or where there is a belief, based on reasonable grounds that abuse or neglect has occurred, to follow the procedures on notification of abuse to CPFS.
- Assist the Principal in ensuring that members of staff and students of the school making the referral are offered appropriate support to adjust to any consequences of the referral.
- Provide any other assistance to the Principal or his/her delegate to ensure other aspects of the ASC Child Safe Policy are met.

9.2 The Principal

- The Principal is responsible for all aspects of school management including the management of suspected or disclosed incidents of child abuse and neglect.
- The Principal must ensure that the school's pastoral care and/or curriculum structures address the issue of child abuse and protective behaviours.
- The Principal must ensure that all staff receive appropriate training in the detection and reporting of child abuse. Further information on the detection and reporting of child abuse is provided in the policies listed in Section 3.
- The Principal must ensure that all employees and volunteers are fit and proper persons to work with children via Working with Children Checks and Federal Police Clearances.

It is advisable that the Principal, in addition to checking the individual's Working with Children Card, access the Working with Children website to ensure the school has the most up to date information on the individual. Further advice on recruitment of staff and volunteers is provided in Appendix C.

- The Principal's role is **not** to investigate any disclosure or strong concern about the well-being of a student, but he/she **must** report the matter to the CPFS, and to the CEO of the ASC.
- Where a mandatory report has not been made, the Principal must report to the CPFS when a case of child abuse or neglect is disclosed, or where there is a belief that abuse has occurred.
- Any staff member who is a mandatory reporter may advise the Principal in regard to any report they make to CPFS. This should be done as soon as is practicable to do so after they have submitted their mandatory report.
- Advice must be sought from the CPFS or the Police prior to informing the parent/guardian of the concerns regarding the child.
- Should any disclosure or strong concern of abuse relate to the behaviour of a staff member, the Principal must report the matter to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) of the Diocese of Perth and to the CEO of the ASC. The identity of the reporter must be protected at all times, in line with the Children and Community Services Act 2004.
- The Principal must retain records of all communication with the CPFS, the Police, the PSU and the CEO of the ASC and the subsequent actions. All records must be stored in a secure place to ensure confidentiality and kept separate from any other file on the student. There should be an indication on the student's general file that other confidential records are being kept separately without revealing the nature of those records.
- The Principal, with the assistance of the appropriate Pastoral Care Staff (such as the School Chaplain, Pastoral Dean, Psychologist, Nurse, or Counsellor), must undertake ongoing support for the teacher, the student and anyone else affected by this process or its outcomes.
- The Principal must inform parents and guardians about the school's Child Safe Policy, the protective behaviours curriculum, the Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct, and when, how and who to tell if they have concerns about grooming or child abuse. This could be done by including the information in the Parent Handbook, thereby ensuring that all new parties are kept informed.

9.3 **Mandatory Reporters**

All obligations for mandatory reporters are covered in the policies listed in Section 3.

9.4 **Non-mandatory reporters**

Everybody had a duty to report concerns that involve the safety of children and young people. All reporting obligations for non-mandatory reporters is covered in the policies listed in Section 3.

9.5 **The Department for Child Protection and Family Support**

- The CPFS is the government department with the statutory authority to investigate concerns relating to child abuse in WA.
- All disclosures or strong concerns of abuse or neglect (except sexual abuse – see the Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Policy – Western Australia) are to be reported by **the Principal** to the Duty Officer at the nearest local district or regional office of the CPFS.

- In the case of child sexual abuse, the teacher must provide a written report to the Mandatory Reporting Service of CPFS (see Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Policy – Western Australia).
- The Mandatory Reporting Service and the Duty Officer at the local CPFS office can be used initially in a consultative role if either the Principal or the teacher is unsure of what action to take.
- The CPFS has the authority to interview the child at school before contact is made with the parent/guardian. The Principal must be notified before the interview and the child may be given the option of having support at the interview from a staff member of their choosing. The decision of having a support person for the child will rest with CPFS or WA Police.
- CPFS officers may remove a child from school if they have the permission of the parent/guardian. They may also apprehend a child without warrant and take them into care if they believe that the child is in need of care and protection.
- For further information: www.dcp.wa.gov.au

9.6 **The Western Australia Police**

- The WA Police may play a role in responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect when informed by the CPFS.
- In the case of sexual abuse, the CPFS will forward all reports to the WA Police Service.
- The WA Police Service Child Abuse Investigation Team will intervene in instances where it is believed that a criminal offence has occurred which may lead to criminal charges being laid.

9.7 **The Professional Standards Unit of the Diocese of Perth**

- The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) investigates reports of sexual misconduct and child abuse made against an employee of the Anglican Church and its incorporated bodies and unincorporated organisations.
- School Principals must refer to the PSU any disclosures or strong concerns relating to the behaviour of staff members. The identity of the reporter must be protected at all times, in line with the Children and Community Services Act 2004.
- The PSU will investigate the matter and make a recommendation to the school.

Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers and council members of [insert name of school] are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of [insert name of school] are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- Adhering to the Anglican Schools Commission Child Safe Policy at all times/upholding its commitment to child safety at all times;
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
- Treating everyone with respect;
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child;
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal, and ensuring any allegation is reported to the WA Police or Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS);
- For mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse, all allegations must be reported to the Mandatory Reporting Service of CPFS, and the Principal may be informed as soon as is practicable;
- Reporting any child safety concerns to the Principal;
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

Staff and Volunteers must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (e.g. the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children);
- Exhibit behaviours with children which cross the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate interactions;
- Put children at risk of abuse (e.g. by locking doors);
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children;
- Express personal views on culture, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
- Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability;
- Have contact with a child or their family outside of the school without the Principal or his/her delegate's knowledge and/or consent (e.g. no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate;
- Have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example, providing families with e-newsletters);
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Principal.

The Anglican Schools Commission wishes to thank the State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services for making this material available to assist in the writing of the Code of Conduct.

School Staff Recruitment Practices Checklist

Selection Criteria

Developing appropriate selection criteria for the position is a valuable step to reducing the risk of appointing someone who poses a child safety risk. It will also ensure that applicants have a specific knowledge and skills required for the position.

Examples of appropriate selection criteria may include:

- Must have experience working with children
- Must be able to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate behaviours when engaging with children

Does your selection criteria clearly state the experience, qualifications, qualities and attributes expected from the successful applicant?	
Does your selection criteria outline the supervision and accountability processes in place which support child safety?	

Advertising

Does your advertisement include a message about your school's commitment to child safety?	
Does your advertisement include reference to the Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy?	
Does your advertisement inform applicants that appropriate rigorous reference and background checking will be undertaken, include a Working with Children Check and federal police check?	

Interviews

The interview process is a very important step in selecting the right people for your school and in identifying any people who may pose a risk to children. Give yourself sufficient time to plan and prepare for the interview process, and form an interview panel with the right mix of experience and skills to carry out the interview, ensuring that all panel members are clear on what the position requires.

An open-ended style of behavioural-based questioning will give you an insight into the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability. Some useful questions may include:

- 'Tell us about why you want to work with children?'
- 'Describe a time when you had to manage a child whose behaviour you found challenging?'
- 'Tell us about a time when you had to comfort a distressed child?'

Have you prepared a list of open-ended questions which will determine how the interviewee will behave in certain situations?	
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Ask for more information if the applicant does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses.

Did you notice any warning signs such as:

Unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history?	
The applicant says they do not value or 'need' supervision	
The applicant is evasive or inconsistent in his or her answers	

Pre-employment screening

Screening applicants (including paid and volunteer positions) is a good tool for helping to prevent people who may abuse children from entering your school.

Police Checks

It is important to be upfront and ask the applicant if they have any criminal convictions, formal disciplinary action taken against them, or any finding of improper or unprofessional conduct. This could involve the applicant signing a declaration as part of an application form.

You could also cover this in a face-to-face interview. This may be challenging for the interview panel, particularly if the person is already known to you, but the applicant's response should demonstrate a sufficient level of professionalism as well as an understanding of your obligations. To help introduce this difficult topic, you could say to the applicant that you have some specific questions about child safety because your organisation takes child safety seriously.

Have you included a question about whether the applicant has any criminal convictions, cautions, other legal or pending cases, including formal disciplinary action, which may affect their suitability to work with children?	
If addressed during a face-to-face interview, did you take notice of how the applicant responds to questions with regard to his or her words and body language?	
Have you undertaken a police record check (which includes identity check)?	

Working with Children Check

Does the applicant hold a valid Working with Children Check, if required? OR If the applicant does not hold a valid Working with Children Check, and it is required, has the applicant provided evidence that they have applied for a Working with Children Check, and does your school have processes in place to follow up pending applications?	
Has the applicant provided you with evidence of their Working with Children Check, or evidence of their application for a Working with Children Check?	

Referee checks

Do the referees provided by the applicant include line managers who can be objective, rather than colleagues or friends?	
Has the applicant provided their most recent line manager as a referee? If not, have they provided you with a satisfactory reason?	
Have you spoken to at least two of the referees by telephone? Did you confirm with them their name and position provided to you by the applicant?	

When speaking to the referees, ask about any concerns they may have about the applicant working with children with questions such as:

'What did the applicant do when [for example, they had to comfort a distressed child]?)'

'Do you have any concerns about the applicant working with children?'

'Would you employ this person again?'

Additional checks

Additional checks will confirm the identity of the applicant and that their responses have been truthful.

Have you checked the identity of the applicant (for example, that their driver's licence/passport has the same name they have provided you)?	
Did you see a certified copy of the applicant's qualifications (if required)?	

The Anglican Schools Commission wishes to thank the State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services for making this material available to assist in the writing of the recruitment practices checklist.