



Child Protection Policy

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Child Protection Policy

1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the approach that Coast Christian School (“Coast”) takes to care for, support and protect children in our care from harm. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is the paramount consideration¹ for all responsibilities under this Policy, and we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and neglect.

We acknowledge that children, like adults, possess human rights and that children have the right to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse². In the context of Coast, children have the right to learn in a safe, caring, accepting and protected environment.

Coast is committed to following all measures legislated to protect children and young people, including the February 2019 [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Additionally, our Biblical Christian worldview compels us to protect and support children - and any other vulnerable person - from harm.

Although the Keep Them Safe initiative³ has ended, Coast continues to adopt the key precepts of the program; ensuring that caring and supporting children is “first and foremost the responsibility of parents, families and communities” and acknowledging our crucial role in keeping the students in our care safe.

Coast aims to create a safe setting where students are supported, respected and empowered to learn in a Christian setting.

Coast acknowledges our duty of care to keep children safe and protection them from ill-treatment (including sexual abuse, abuse by neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse etc), and aims to take a proactive rather than reactive approach to fostering student safety and wellbeing.

2. Policy Approval

This Policy has been set in place and approved by the Board of Directors to ensure Child Protection is a critical part of the functioning of Coast.

¹ Section 7 – Children’s Guardian Act (NSW) 2019

² United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1990

³ NSW Government’s “Keep Them Safe” initiative (2009-2014)

3. Responsibility for Child Protection

The responsibility to keep children safe applies to everyone involved at Coast - known as "School Community Members" - who are as follows:

- Staff including those employed on a permanent, temporary, casual or other basis;
- Board Members (Responsible Persons);
- Parents/Guardians/Relatives of students;
- Volunteers;
- Contractors;
- Consultants;
- Prac Teachers;
- External providers (eg speech therapists, music tuition providers etc) ;
- Visitors including adults involved in Coast Community Church which shares somewhat the site premises with Coast (see also Shared Site Use Policy);
- Children - who will be guided by Coast to protect other children; and
- Any other person who comes into contact with children at Coast.

Coast requires School Community Members to be aware of their obligations under this Policy, and at law, and to actively manage child protection risk to ensure a zero-tolerance approach to harm, abuse or neglect is taken.

4. Guiding Principles

- All School Community Members have a responsibility to protect children from harm.
- Coast acknowledges that parents entrust us with the care of their children.
- Coast works in partnership with families, but will always put the safety and well-being of children first.
- Coast is responsible for providing a safe environment for children in our care.
- Coast is responsible to provide an education which fosters children's health, developmental needs, spirituality, well-being, self-respect and dignity.
- Coast recognises that a proactive approach to preventing child abuse, and early intervention, is vital in ensuring children are protected from harm.
- School Community Members should be equipped to ensure the safety of children, and to prevent anything that puts the safety and wellbeing of students at risk.
- School Community Members should understand their own individual obligations and be equipped to respond to child abuse appropriately.
- School Community Members should understand what constitutes reportable conduct and how to respond and report appropriately.
- Any Coast Staff who are also Mandatory Reporters (see definition below) should be

aware of the additional obligations of the role of Mandatory Reporter.

- Any issue that puts a child at risk should be rectified and reported immediately.
- Reports of a child at risk should be responded to immediately.
- Relevant School Community Members are to hold a clear Working With Children Check ("WWCC").

5. National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The Guiding Principles, as listed in the previous section, are based on Coast's commitment to complying with the 10 Principles set out in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2019) as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which are as follows:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Online environments are accessed only in line with Coast policy to ensure children are aware of potential dangers and remain safe.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

6. Duty of Care Required

Coast has a duty to take reasonable care for the safety and welfare of students in their care. The duty extends to considering known hazards or risk of harm that can be reasonably predicted and taking all reasonable action to protect students. The standard of care that is required takes into consideration various factors such as a student's vulnerability, maturity and ability.

The duty of care includes an obligation not to neglect the welfare of students. Neglect includes either an action or inaction by a person who has care responsibilities towards a student, and includes:

1. Supervisory neglect (failure to adequately supervise a student);
2. Carer neglect (inadequate care of a student);
3. Failure to protect (unreasonable failure to protect or respond to information that may result in harm to a student); and/or
4. Reckless acts or failure to act (including a gross breach of professional standards that may result in harm to a student).

A single or repeated failure to exercise an appropriate duty of care of students may constitute neglect or negligence according to the law if actual harm is caused or even if there is potential to cause harm.

7. Coast's Participation in Redress Scheme

As further evidence of Coast's commitment to protecting children and ensuring any harm is addressed appropriately, Coast has voluntarily opted into the National Redress Scheme in response to the ["Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse"](#).

8. Child Protection Code of Conduct

Coast has developed the Child Protection Code of Conduct to support School Community Members in understanding their obligations to protect Children. It is mandatory for School Community Members to sign an acknowledgment of the Code before employment or engagement with Coast involving contact with children.

9. Other Codes of Conduct

Coast has developed the following general Codes of Conduct which assist various School Community Member groups with awareness of how they should behave at Coast, including their conduct and contact with children:

- Code of Conduct for School Community Members
- Student Code of Conduct (which is drawn in a Child-Friendly manner so as to engage children and maximise their understanding of the behaviour expected of them)

10. Responsibility for Setting and Monitoring this Policy

Coast's Board of Directors has ultimate responsibility for the prevention and identification of child abuse or harm, and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place to detect reportable matters and respond effectively. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that supporting policies and procedures are in place.

The Board leads Child protection "from the top" and ensures a child-safe culture is embedded at Coast to ensure child safety is paramount.

The Board does this by:

- setting a zero-tolerance stance to child abuse;
- setting clear roles for who is responsible for what actions under this policy;
- ensuring systems and processes are in place to ensure all School Community Members are trained of their obligations to keep children safe at Coast;
- ensuring systems and processes are in place to ensure any concern, risk, or reportable conduct is reported and that immediate steps are taken to ensure a risk of harm is remediated;
- making child safety a top priority when making governance decisions for the organisation;
- requiring regular reporting from the Principal of child-safety issues and concerns; and
- ensuring that child safe policies and procedures are reviewed regularly by the Board.

11. Responsibility for Implementing this Policy

The Board delegates oversight for the daily running of the school to the Principal who is referred to as the Head of Relevant Entity, and who is also responsible on a day-to-day basis for Child Protection. If the Principal is absent, then responsibility transfers to his or her delegate.

It is the Principal's responsibility to:

- promote child safety at all times;
- ensure procedures are in place to require all School Community Members to be aware of, and to abide by, this Policy (including awareness of how to prevent, identify, detect and respond to child abuse/harm) and their obligations regarding Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct;
- ensure reports of child abuse/harm (including sexual abuse) are dealt with appropriately;
- conduct regular risk assessments to ensure Coast activities are safe; and

- ensure appropriate reporting of any actual or suspected child abuse issues.

12. Reporting Observations of Child Abuse

There are different schemes of reporting referenced under this Policy, summarised briefly as follows and detailed more comprehensively in separate headings further below:

1. Reporting to the OCG – any allegations of Reportable Conduct committed by “employees” (as defined below and which includes staff, volunteers and contractors);
2. Reporting to the Child Protection Hotline (DCJ) – any Mandatory Reporting issues observed by a Mandatory Reporter (as defined below);
3. Reporting under the Crimes Act (NSW) 1900; and
4. Reporting to the Principal – all of the above and any general child protection issues observed by any School Community Member.

13. Comparison of OCG Reporting and Mandatory Reporting

OCG Reporting focuses on allegations of harm (defined below) against children BUT only when the alleged perpetrators are “employees” (defined below) of Coast. All School Community Members are to report reportable conduct to the Principal who will conduct an investigation and inform the OCG at various steps along the way so that the OCG can ensure the investigation is running appropriately.

The Mandatory Reporting scheme focuses on risk of harm (defined differently below) to children when the alleged perpetrators are from anywhere at all and of any relationship to the child (eg relatives/neighbours; not just Coast employees). Only those in Professional roles with children are Mandatory Reporters (see definition below) and they have a professional obligation to personally report to the DCJ Child Protection Hotline. However, the Principal may have other information that is unknown to the Mandatory Reporter but relevant to another child or another case.

Furthermore, the Principal is able to provide support to staff who may be under duress due to making a report. Therefore, unless a report is being made about the Principal, any Mandatory Reporters at Coast are instructed to inform the Principal prior to submitting their report to the DCJ Child Protection Hotline. The “mandatory” component comes into play when the risk of harm is

Significant, but the option to report less-than-significant risk of harm remains available – this can include where a seemingly minor one-off incident is becoming a pattern which may (or may not) eventuate to be Significant. Although any person is at liberty to report their concerns to the Child Protection Hotline (staff, in consultation with the Principal), Coast recommends that the Principal take the responsibility for reporting any issues concerning children at Coast which do not otherwise fall within the “Significant” risk of harm provisions of the Mandatory Reporting Scheme.

Neither Scheme requires the abuse/neglect to have occurred at School. Both Schemes extend to abuse/neglect which has happened either at School or elsewhere, and whether recently or in the past. Both Schemes require Coast to respond promptly and appropriately to the allegations of abuse/neglect. Aside from any these reporting obligations, all School Community Members must be aware of how to protect children from harm and how to respond if a child is being harmed.

14. NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme - OCG

14.1. About the Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is a NSW Government initiative which has been in operation since 1999. In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Scheme transferred in March 2020 from the responsibility of the NSW Ombudsman to the [Office of the Children’s Guardian](#)⁴.

14.2. What the OCG oversees

The OCG now oversees:

- The NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Working with Children Checks
- The NSW Child Safe Standards - which substantially mirror the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) – see above).

14.3. Intention of Scheme

The Scheme allows the OCG to:

- actively ensure Coast has proper policies and procedures in place to keep children safe, and
- monitor and guide the progress of any investigation of reportable conduct.

14.4. Conduct Covered by the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme

Conduct covered by the Scheme (“[Reportable Conduct](#)”) is:

- a sexual offence;

⁴ Children’s Guardian Act (NSW) 2019

- sexual touching of a child;
- a child grooming offence;
- production, dissemination or possession of child abuse material.
- sexual misconduct;
 - descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions;
 - sexual comments, conversations or communications;
 - comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards the child, or another child.
- ill-treatment of a child;
 - conduct that is unreasonable; and
 - seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel;
 - these can include a range of conduct such as making excessive or degrading demands of a child, a pattern of hostile or degrading behaviours towards a child or using inappropriate forms of behaviour management towards a child.
- neglect of a child;
 - an obviously or very clearly unreasonable or serious act or series of acts that the employee knew or ought to have known was unacceptable, and
 - evidence of psychological harm to the child that is more than transient, including displaying patterns of 'out of character behaviour', regression in behaviour, distress, anxiety, physical symptoms or self-harm, and
 - an alleged casual link between the employee's conduct and the significant emotional or psychological harm to the child, and
 - can include failing to protect a child from abuse and exposing a child to a harmful environment.
- assault against a child;
 - applies physical force against a child without lawful justification or excuse – such as hitting, striking, kicking, punching or dragging a child (**actual physical force**); or
 - threatening to physically harm a child through words and/or gestures and regardless of whether the person actually intends to apply any force; or
 - a physical assault is serious where it results in the child being injured, beyond a type of injury like a minor scratch, bruise or graze; or it had the potential to result in a serious injury; or the injury suffered may be minor but the assault is associated with aggravated circumstances (for example, kicking a child, pulling a child by grabbing the child around the neck); or
- failure to protect OR failure to report offences; and
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Reportable conduct does not extend to the following:

- Conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children, and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards;
- a physical assault that only involves minor force; and did not, and was not ever likely to, result in serious injury. Generally, physical force that does not result in transient injury and

which had no potential to result in serious injury would be considered “trivial or negligible”;
or

- Conduct of a class or kind exempted from being reportable conduct.

14.5. OCG FAQs for Employees

Coast requires all “Employees” (defined below) to read and keep in mind [FAQs for Employees](#). This brochure defines who is an “employee” for the purpose of the OCG Reportable Conduct scheme.

14.6. OCG FAQs for Employers

Coast adopts, and requires all “Employees” (defined below) to read and keep in mind, [FAQs for Employers](#) so they can understand Coast’s overarching obligations.

14.7. Obligations under Scheme

The following obligations apply under the Scheme⁵:

1. School Community Members are to report Reportable Conduct, or allegations of reportable conduct, to the Principal immediately of becoming aware. If the allegation is about the Principal, then the matter should be reported directly to the OCG via reportableconduct@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au OR use [OCG Forms](#) and also to the Board Chair via boardchair@coastcs.nsw.edu.au.
2. The Principal will report to the OCG⁶ ([using OCG Forms](#)) within 7 business days of being made aware of any allegation [*noting there does not need to be any evidence or proof that the conduct occurred*] made against any of the following persons that provide services to children:
 - Staff [*even if the alleged conduct occurred outside of, or before commencement of, their course of employment*]
 - Volunteers [*even if the alleged conduct occurred outside of, or before commencement of, their volunteer work, regardless of whether a WWCC is required – so this category includes Parent Volunteers at Coast*]
 - Contractors/subcontractors - if required to hold a WWCC for the purpose of their engagement with Coast [*even if the alleged conduct occurred outside of, or before commencement of, their engagement with Coast*]

and which may constitute reportable conduct [*whether or not the alleged conduct took place before the above were engaged with Coast, meaning even a historic allegation is reportable*].

⁵ Coast is a Schedule 1 entity which dictates who the relevant “employees” are for the purpose of the Act

⁶ Office of Children’s Guardian – 02 8219 3800 or reportableconduct@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm)

For clarity:

- Allegations of reportable conduct trigger the obligation to report – even if there is evidence or proof that indicates the offence did not occur.
 - As long as the alleged offender is currently employed/engaged by Coast at the time Coast learns of the allegation, it must be reported to the OCG.
 - If Coast learns later of an allegation which took place during the course of employment/engagement, but which Coast did not know about until cessation of the employment/engagement, this need not be reported to the OCG.
 - The above only deals with reports to the OCG. Any concurrent obligations to report to the police OR as a mandatory reporter to DCJ, still apply.
3. The Principal will conduct an investigation, acting on any recommendations/advice or directions of the OCG;
 4. The Principal will submit a final investigation report to the OCG within 30 days (using [OCG Forms](#)).

14.8. Further information about the Scheme

Further information resources from the Office of the Children’s Guardian about the Scheme and Coast’s responsibilities are linked below:

- [Identifying Reportable Allegations](#)
- [Principal’s Responsibilities](#)
- [Risk management following an allegation](#)
- [Planning and conducting an investigation](#)
- [Recognising and managing conflicts of interest](#)
- [Disclosing information to children, parents and carers](#)
- [Making a Finding of reportable conduct](#)

As described in the Training section below, all staff are trained annually on their obligations to prevent, identify, report - and investigate (depending on their role) allegations of Reportable Conduct in compliance with the Children’s Guardian Act 2019.

15. Mandatory Reporting to the DCJ Child Protection Hotline

15.1. About Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory Reporting is a NSW Government scheme which requires a limited number of Professionals to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the Child Protection Hotline operated by the Department of Communities and Justice (“DCJ”) formerly “FACS” and previously “DOCS”). The Scheme is underpinned by the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) (the Care Act) and associated legislative framework.

As outlined in Section 13, unless reporting about the Principal, all reports are to be made in consultation with the Principal.

15.2. Conduct Covered by the Mandatory Reporting Scheme

Conduct covered by the Mandatory Reporting Scheme includes, but is not limited to, concerns that a child or young person is at risk of:

- being neglected
- being physically, sexually or emotionally abused

(See further below about whether the risk of harm needs to be Significant).

15.3. Who is a Mandatory Reporter at Coast?

Based on the provisions of the Care Act, the relevant roles at Coast who are Mandatory Reporters are:

- Principal;
- Proficient Teachers, and any Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers as may be employed from time to time;
- School Counsellors (if any); and
- Allied Health professionals eg Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists etc (insofar as they deliver onsite services to Coast pupils);

NOTE: Provisional/Conditional/PracTeachers should make enquiries with the Principal and/or DCJ if they are unsure whether they are a Mandatory Reporter under the Scheme.

The list of prescribed Mandatory Reporters was expanded in March 2020 (following the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutionalised Abuse) to include:

- People in religious ministry who, at Coast, include:
 - The School Chaplain if also in religious ministry;

- Any Board Member who is also a CCC Pastor insofar as their duties relate to religious activities provided to Coast pupils;
- CCC Children's Ministry Leader insofar as their duties relate to Chapel etc and providing services for Coast pupils.

AND

- Registered Psychologists (if and when such a provider might attend Coast to provide professional services to pupils)

It is part of the professional qualifications of Mandatory Reporters to be familiar with their own obligations, but Coast sets them out in this Policy for the benefit of Mandatory Reporters and others and to act as a "refresher" – in addition to annual training (internal and external) which is also provided by Coast.

If a Mandatory Reporter has concerns about a child they do not have a professional relationship with (eg a 3-year old child of a colleague), they should report to the Child Protection Hotline as an Individual and not as a Mandatory Reporter.

15.4. Who is NOT a Mandatory Reporter at Coast?

- Office staff
- Aides
- Canteen Manager
- Bus Driver
- Maintenance officer
- Cleaner
- And all other roles who do not fit within the definition of Mandatory Reporter provider above

However, just because School Community Member may not be a prescribed Mandatory Reporter, does not mean their responsibility under this Policy is diminished.

There remains an obligation owed by all School Community Members to report any child protection issues they observe to the Principal, as covered in this Policy.

15.5. What is a Mandatory Reporter at Coast required to do?

In this section is a detailed explanation of the process. However, below is a summary of what to do if you suspect a child, or class of children, is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect:

QUICK GUIDE

- Make sure you have documented your concerns in writing
- Speak with the Principal about the issue (unless the Principal is the one suspected of being responsible for causing the harm or neglect, then consult the Board Chairman);
- Provide the Principal with a copy of your documented notes;
- In consultation with the Principal, use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) on the Child Story website to help determine if a report is to be made (<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/childstory/childstory-reporter>);
- If prompted to report, do so by making an e-report through the Child Story Reporter website or by phoning the DCJ Child Protection Helpline on 132 111;
- Ensure you note the report number, keep a copy of the number for yourself and also give a copy of the number to the Principal.

A Mandatory Reporter is mandated under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (“the Care Act”) to:

- report to the [Child Protection Helpline \(DCJ\)](#);
- if they suspect a child, or a class of children, is at risk of Significant harm from abuse or neglect; and
- when their awareness arises because of their professional relationship with a child.

It is a criminal offence for a Mandatory Reporter not to report to DCJ when there is a risk of [Significant](#) harm.

It is a “must” (but not to the extent of a criminal offence for omission) for a Mandatory Reporter to report a risk of harm that is [not Significant](#).

Mandatory Reporters at Coast, may also report concerns held about the safety, welfare, or well-being of a young person (16-17 years of age), but are not required to do so by law.

Unless the concern relates to the Principal, a Mandatory Reporter at Coast is – also – required to report the concern in consultation with the Principal to DCJ. If the concern relates to the Principal, the Mandatory Reporter is to report to DCJ and the Chair of the School Board via boardchair@coastcs.nsw.edu.au. Depending on the circumstances, the Mandatory Reporter must decide whether he or she involves the Board Chairman for support before or after a report about the Principal is made. In such a situation, the Mandatory Reporter may wish also to consider the process available through the Whistleblower Policy.

15.6. How does a Mandatory Reporter ensure their observation is reportable?

Use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) on the Child Story website (<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>). This is commonly known as using “the Decision Tree”.

The DCJ Child Protection Helpline **must** be contacted when:

- There are current concerns about suspected risk of significant harm and/or
- The Mandatory Reporter Guide indicates this should be done.

15.7. How to Make a Mandatory Report

There are two ways Mandatory Reporters can make a Child Protection Report:

1. By making an eReport through the ChildStory Reporter website
OR
2. By calling the DCJ Child Protection Helpline on **132 111**; open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week

15.8. Reports from Non-Mandatory-Reporters

The general public (including School Community Members) who are not Mandatory Reporters are at liberty (but not mandated) to make Reports to the DCJ Child Protection Helpline.

15.9. What might happen as a result of a Mandatory Report

In the event DCJ receives a Risk of Significant Harm report, it may take the following actions, which Coast will fully co-operate with:

STUDENT INTERVIEWS IN CASES REPORTED TO DCJ

In relation to reportable cases of risk of significant harm where DCJ has been notified, officers of Joint Investigation and Response Team (JIRT) may wish to carry out student interviews, sometimes at School.

No student will be interviewed at the School against the wishes of the student and it is the Principal's responsibility to inform the student of this.

At the commencement of the interview, the Principal should ask the investigating officers to explain to the student, in the presence of the Principal, the purpose of the interview and their role. The Principal will inform the student of the right to choose a supportive adult to be present at the interview. JIRT Officers are responsible for communicating with parents about any matters related to an interview. If a person is nominated by the student, the interview must not commence until that person has arrived. What takes place in the interview becomes part of the investigation and must remain confidential.

Except in cases which involve a member of the family, it is expected that a parent of the child concerned will be present at any interview with the child.

REMOVAL OF STUDENTS BY DCJ/JIRT OFFICERS

If the Principal is approached by officers from DCJ or JIRT to remove a student from the School premises, the Principal must:

- Sight the identification of the officers;
- Take a copy of and retain in a secure location the Notice to Remove Student from School;
- Record details of the actions, names of officers and, where possible, new location of student; and
- Gain an assurance from officers that they will immediately inform the parent/carer that the student has been removed from the School.

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Because the protection of children and young people from risk of harm is deemed to be more important in some situations than an individual's right to privacy, there are statutory provisions that override restrictions on disclosure of personal information.

Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* allows government agencies and non-government organisations who are prescribed bodies to exchange information that relates to a child's or young person's safety, welfare or well-being, whether or not the child or young person is known to Community Services, and whether or not the child or young person consents to the information exchange. Chapter 16A also requires prescribed bodies to take reasonable steps to coordinate decision making and the delivery of services regarding children and young people.

Coast is a prescribed body and as such will respond to requests under Section 16A where appropriate. DCJ can also make requests under Section 248 of the Act, and Coast will comply where appropriate and as required.

All Section 16A or Section 248 requests for information should be directed to the Principal who will consult to determine the validity of a request and co-ordinate Coast's response. Similarly, should Coast wish to use the provisions of Section 16A to seek information from another agency, this should be coordinated via the Principal.

Before any phone discussions take place between DCJ officers and the Principal, the Principal will confirm the identity of the caller by phoning the known number of DCJ.

Any staff receiving a call from DCJ or JIRT must refer the matter to the Principal.

Providing information in good faith to authorised external investigators under this scheme - including a response to requests for information - is not regarded by Coast as a breach of professional ethics or standards of professional conduct and does not carry liability against Coast for defamation or grounds for civil action.

As described in the Training section below, relevant staff are trained annually on their Mandatory Reporting obligations.

16. Reporting under the Crimes Act (NSW) 1900

From 31 August 2018, the Crimes Act (NSW) 1900 was amended to include new offences as follows:

- S316A – concealing of a child abuse offence (failure to report); and
- S43B – failing to remove the risk that a worker will commit a child abuse offence (failure to protect).

The above additions were part of the suite of reforms recommended following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

S316A - All adults in NSW are to report information to the Police if they:

- know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child has been abused; or
- know, believe or reasonably ought to know of information that might materially assist in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of the offender.

Abuse in this context includes sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and extreme neglect of a child.

S43B - All adults in NSW working in an organisation that engages workers in child-related work (ie Coast) commit an offence if:

- they know that an adult worker engaged by the organisation poses a serious risk of abusing a child, and
- they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, and
- they negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.

Abuse in this context includes sexual or serious physical abuse.

Coast expects that any offence reported to the police in accordance with the above, will also be reported to the Principal (unless the allegation relates to the Principal in which case the matter should be reported to the Board chair – via boardchair@coastcs.nsw.edu.au).

17. Reporting to the Principal

In addition to reporting as set out above in this policy, all School Community Members are required to report all child protection concerns – whether significant or not - to the Principal, unless one of the following exceptions apply:

- The Principal is the alleged offender (in which case the issue should be reported to the Board Chair via boardchair@coastcs.nsw.edu.au);
- The circumstances are such that a reasonable person would regard it as inappropriate to inform the Principal; or
- Any other reason at law.

18. Child Protection Investigations - Generally

All School Community Members must commit to co-operating fully with any investigation concerning child abuse or neglect.

It is acknowledged that in some circumstances, an investigation may be proceeding simultaneously by external authorities (eg DCJ/Police etc) and the Principal, or delegate. In this case, the Principal or delegate shall consult with the external authorities to ensure the investigation is proceeding appropriately and to adopt any recommendations in relation to the manner in which a simultaneous investigation should be conducted (for example, it may be the case that the Principal is requested to put an investigation on hold whilst the Police make their enquiries etc).

19. Consequences of Breach of Child Protection Policy

The consequences of breaching Coast's Child Protection Policy vary according to the circumstances, but may include:

- a written warning/caution;
- summary dismissal (for serious misconduct);
- report to external authorities, including OCG, DCJ, police etc;

- other actions under the [Staff Discipline Policy](#) as may be relevant (eg the Principal has discretion to stand down a Coast staff member (with pay where appropriate) while an investigation is being conducted).

Coast's conduct of investigations is underpinned by principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

20. Child-Focused Risk Management

Coast uses child-focused risk management practices (see Risk Management Policy) to assess all activities to ensure they do not put children at risk of harm. Risk assessments are to be conducted for Coast activities, before the activity is undertaken, to ensure programs are safe and appropriate for children, and that risks are managed proactively. This includes assessing not only physical risks inherent to the activity itself (eg using sporting equipment) but also any child-protection risks associated with the activity (eg considering whom the students might encounter during their activities and whether such persons are appropriate to have contact with children etc.)

21. How to Identify Abuse or Neglect

Although this [Fact Sheet](#) relates to the OCG Scheme, it is helpful in identifying abuse or neglect more widely.

Although this [Fact Sheet](#) relates to the Mandatory Reporting Scheme, it is helpful for recognising signs of abuse or neglect more widely.

22. How to Respond to Abuse or Neglect

Where there are urgent concerns for a child's safety or wellbeing, the **emergency service 000** should be contacted where required. In this instance, Coast undertakes to cover the expense of the ambulance service, if required, as a gesture of good faith and not as any admission of liability. For all other instances of abuse or neglect, whether suspected or actual, immediate steps are to be taken to protect a child from further harm and the matter reported to the Principal so that an immediate holistic response can be activated.

Although this [Fact Sheet](#) relates to the Mandatory Reporting Scheme, it is helpful for informing School Community Members about how to respond if a child discloses abuse.

Although this [Fact Sheet](#) relates to the Mandatory Reporting Scheme, it is helpful for informing School Community Members about how to respond if a parent discloses abuse.

23. Documenting Observations and Response

Any School Community Member who observes or receives a disclosure of child abuse must document their observations and response (as far as is reasonably practicable in the circumstance, and in a confidential manner), and report the matter and provide a copy of their written observation to the Principal as soon as reasonably practicable – along with discharging any other obligations under this policy.

24. Ongoing Training

All School Community Members must participate in reasonable training opportunities as provided by Coast and as appropriate to the context in which the Community Member participates in Coast activities. This ensures School Community Members maintain a relevant understanding of child protection laws and the School's policies and procedures in relation to the care and safety of students.

Education about Child Protection is an ongoing and regular discussion at Coast for all School Community Members as a vital preventative approach and for facilitating ongoing Child Protection awareness.

The Principal will ensure Policies and Procedures are regularly reviewed and updated – and approved by the Board where appropriate - and communicated to staff and other School Community Members.

All training records are to be retained by Coast for at least 7 years after the date of the last entry.

Specific training is provided as follows:

1. Staff

External training delivered by an approved provider will be provided annually to all staff who

have direct contact with children, and others at the discretion of the Principal.

All staff will be made aware of this Policy and the Child Protection Code of Conduct via annual compulsory Child Protection training delivered internally during the January Staff Development week at a minimum but also regularly during other PD segments throughout the year, and which includes:

- Reminding staff of their legal responsibilities related to child protection;
- Reminding staff of Coast's expectations under this and other policies;
- Ensuring all Staff have the Coast Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct front of mind daily;
- Reminding Staff of methodology for preventing, identifying, detecting and responding to abuse, harm and neglect under this policy;
- Reminding staff about their obligations for Mandatory Reporting a Risk of Significant Harm;
- Reminding Staff of their personal obligations, including appropriate responses to any allegation or complaint of improper conduct by another staff member including reportable conduct;
- Reminding Staff of their reporting obligations and processes;
- Ensuring Staff are cognisant of their own personal responsibility to have an up-to-date clear WWCC, including notifying the School and OCG of any change of personal particulars or contact details; and
- Updating Staff of any changes or updates to Child Protection legislation or methodologies.

Staff are to sign an Attendance Sheet as evidence of having received all training under this policy.

Staff who are absent from training sessions or who are employed during a school year after the Child Protection training has been conducted will be required to read this policy and sign to acknowledge an understanding of their obligations.

Any staff member who has not participated in NSW Child Protection Training within the 12 months period prior to commencing employment with Coast, will be required to participate in a relevant Child Protection Training Program and provide the Principal with evidence of course completion within one month of commencing their employ at Coast Christian School.

A Training Register is maintained by the Officer Manager which includes a list of training attended by whom, when, and including a copy of training signoffs. For teaching staff, it is the teacher's own responsibility to ensure confirmation of relevant training is uploaded to eTams.

Throughout the year relevant updated information about Child Protection will be forwarded to staff electronically to ensure they are up to date.

Staff will be reminded of the Policy and Code of Conduct through review at staff development meetings from time to time.

Training on this and related policies forms part of the staff induction program.

2. Other School Community Members

All persons who have direct contact with children are required to sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct before having contact with children (along with having a clear WWCC).

Information about Child Protection is provided regularly, and especially during Child Protection Week, informing parents/carers of Coast's Child Protection teaching program as well as Coast's Child Protection practices and rationale. Parents and carers are also made aware of their compulsory Reporting obligations via the Newsletter.

All visitors to the School are required to enter via the School Office (using sign-in register), and which displays the Child Protection Policy and a Reminder Notice.

The Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Code of Conduct and Complaints Handling Procedure for allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct is available on the School's website.

3. Students

The Child Protection Policy is integrated in the PDHPE program during Child Protection lessons – in a child-friendly and appropriate manner.

Students are advised by the relevant teaching staff and at an age-appropriate level, about Coast's Child Protection approach and procedures.

25. Pre-Engagement & Ongoing Screening

Coast conducts pre-screening of School Community Members who have direct contact with children, and also other groups (eg the Board - "Responsible Persons") who may - but may not have - contact with children, as a risk-based approach to ensuring all individuals are fit and proper persons to be engaging with children and/or to undertake their roles generally. Coast utilises this risk management strategy to identify those who are unsuitable; and exclude them from having contact with children.

Coast's pre-screening processes include:

For Teaching Staff:

- Working with Children Checks (renewed every 5 years)
- Reference checks (character and professional)
- Copies of Qualifications certified by a Justice of the Peace or Solicitor

For Other Staff including Finance Manager:

- Working with Children Checks (renewed every 5 years)
- Police Checks (where appropriate, eg Principal, Finance Manager to check for fraud offences etc)
- Reference checks (character, and professional if relevant)
- Copies of Qualifications (where appropriate) certified by a Justice of the Peace or Solicitor

For Parent Helpers/Volunteers:

- Working with Children Checks (renewed every 5 years)

For Responsible Persons (Board & Principal):

- Working with Children Checks (renewed every 5 years)
- Fit & Proper Person Declarations
- Confirmation of Active Partnership with Coast Community Church
- Other appropriate pre-engagement governance-related documentation (eg reference checks by Chair as appropriate etc)

25.1. Working with Children Checks

The Working With Children Check (“WWCC”) is an important part of Coast Christian School’s screening processes to prevent people who pose a risk to the safety, welfare and well-being of children from being employed or engaged in child-related work. This policy should be read in conjunction with Coast’s Working With Children Check – Verifying and Maintaining - Procedure.

WHO NEEDS A WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK?

1. All School Community Members who have direct contact with children and those whose roles provide them with access to sensitive information about children (eg Finance Manager etc) are required to have a WWCC. Coast ensures its Responsible Persons (ie board members and Principal) are Fit and Proper persons by requiring a WWCC even though some might not have direct contact with children.

Prior to employment, and on a statutory 5-year cycle the WWCC online application is to be completed by people who are employed or engaged (or who are seeking to be employed

or engaged) in child-related work in any one of the following capacities:

The Coast Registrar (Office Manager) will verify each person's WWCC Number online to ensure it is legitimate and of clear status at www.newcheck.kids.nsw.gov.au

The Coast Registrar will maintain records of each cleared worker's WWCC Number, its expiry date, and the date of the school's verification – and will retain such records for at least 7 years after the date of the person's last interaction with the school.

Persons whose role requires them to work with children may not commence employment until they provide a WWCC clearance.

2. At Coast, the Board has mandated that Parent Helpers, including carers, grandparents and relatives acting as volunteers are required to have a clear WWCC as a risk management strategy.

All WWCC recipients are required to notify Coast and the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) of changes in their personal details within three months of any change.

UNCLEARED CHECKS

If it is ascertained during the above processes that an individual's WWCC is expired, or not clear, the individual cannot be employed or engaged at Coast and the Principal will discuss this situation with them. The Principal is always to be advised if any person's WWCC is not verified as "cleared" and will put in place appropriate risk management strategies to ensure such a person does not have access to children at Coast.

WHAT IF A PERSON BECOMES BARRED?

The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) will notify Coast in writing if a person's WWCC clearance is cancelled or becomes subject to an "interim bar".

In that event, the Principal will remove the person from child-related work immediately. The Principal will contact the OCG to investigate the matter. This investigation may lead to the staff member being:

- suspended pending the outcome of an appeal; or
- summarily dismissed; or
- transferred to a non-child-related role.

NOTE: *Coast is under no obligation to find an alternative position for a barred worker. Damages or compensation are not payable to a worker who has been removed from child-related work because*

they are barred from working with children.

25.2. Police Checks

Coast conducts Police Checks before filling selected roles at Coast, including Principal and Business Manager/Finance Manager. In the event a criminal offence arising which indicates a person may not be suitable to work with children or in their relevant role, the Principal (or the Board Chair via boardchair@coastcs.nsw.edu.au via boardchair@coastcs.nsw.edu.au if the matter relates to the Principal) will seek professional advice about the appropriateness of the person's employment with Coast. In this instance, Coast is mindful of its obligations under anti-discrimination legislation and will be guided by professional advice as to available responses to the information ascertained under the Police Check. In all cases, principles of natural justice and procedural fairness will be afforded and the information ascertained will be kept as highly sensitive information in a secure location and shared with only those who need to be informed in order to deal with the matter appropriately.

25.3. Referee Checks

Coast will conduct Referee checks for every staff member employed, prior to engagement.

A minimum of two favourable references are required. Referees will be asked their opinion of the applicant's character and suitability for working with, or in the presence of, children. A suggested question to be asked is:

"To your knowledge is there any aspect of the applicant's behavior, actions or activities that would make them unsuitable for working with children?"

The answer provided by the referees to the above question is to be noted on the applicant's interview report.

The Referee Checks may be verbal or in writing, but in any case, shall cover off the above question regarding suitability for working with children.

25.4. Copies of Qualifications

The Coast Registrar maintains a Register of all qualifications and experience of all teaching staff (including part-time and casual staff) and any others who work directly with children. A copy of relevant qualifications certified by a Justice of the Peace or Solicitor is to be provided to Coast.

26. Privacy & Confidentiality Obligations

Coast understands the need to protect the privacy of children, the privacy of those who raise concerns, and the privacy of those who are alleged to have contravened this policy. Privacy and confidentiality shall prevail unless a person remains at risk of harm, or as is reasonable in the circumstances or required by law.

School Community Members are regularly reminded of their obligation to keep sensitive matters confidential and to ensure privacy around issues of child protection, and other issues, at Coast. Sensitive, health and personal information is maintained in a secure location.

27. Supporting Complainants

Coast understands that a safe and supportive environment is required in order to maximise the potential for those who speak up about concerns. Coast endeavours to foster discussions around child protection in a transparent and inclusive manner that ensures School Community Members can trust that they will be supported and not vilified for communicating concerns or complaints, and that any concerns raised will be taken seriously.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Complaints Handling Procedure for allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct
- Whistleblower Policy

where appropriate.

28. Child Protection Records

Records of child abuse or allegations of abuse are retained for at least 7 years from the date of the last activity relating to the matter, in a secure location which is password-protected and accessible by the least number of persons as is efficacious at the discretion of the Principal.

29. Shared Site Use Policy

Coast has developed a Shared Site Use Policy which provides further guidance on the use of the site by adults involved at Coast Community Church which also has premises located on site.

30. Legal Context

This Policy is underpinned by relevant legislation and industrial instruments. In the event of any conflict between this Policy and the legislation, the provisions of legislation take precedence.

Coast abides by the following Child Protection legislative requirements:

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- National Child Safe Principles and NSW Child Safe Standards
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

31. Feedback and Evaluation

Coast invites feedback from the School community or general community about our approach to Child Protection as we are committed to continuously improving our policies and procedures to ensure child safety and wellbeing.

Coast reviews its Child Protection policy annually – approved by the Board, and reviews the suitability and effectiveness of child protection practices regularly.

32. Related Policies

Child Protection Code of Conduct

Complaints Handling Procedure for Allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct

Working with Children Check – Verifying and Maintaining – Procedure

Complaints and Grievances Policy

Whistleblower Policy

Shared Site Use Policy

Staff Discipline Policy