



St Pius X High School

# Child Protection Policy

Updated February 2021

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle are committed to providing safe environments for students. Whilst we have a legal obligation to protect children, this commitment is central to our Catholic beliefs.

At St Pius X High School, Adamstown, we believe that all children have a right to a safe environment which is free from any form of abuse or harm.

At St Pius X High School, Adamstown, relationships between adults and children are governed by trust and Gospel values.

Schools in NSW are required to meet the statutory obligations of legislation relating to child protection. Schools in this diocese are required to uphold the policies and guidelines set out by the Catholic Schools Office.

This legislation includes:

- The Ombudsman Act, 1974 and The Ombudsman Amendment (Child Protection and Community Services) Act, 1998
- The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1998
- The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act, 2012
- The Crimes Act 1900

Catholic Schools Office documents include:

- Reporting Concerns for Children Policy Version 3.2
- Code of Conduct (approved 2017, amended May 2018)

## **Reporting Risk of Significant Harm**

### **Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act**

This legislation establishes a shared responsibility for the protection of children. Teachers have a legal responsibility to report a child or young person who is believed to be at risk of significant harm.

**This means that staff at St Pius X High School, Adamstown, are required by law to make a report to the Department of Communities & Justice when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm.**

This includes harm due to neglect, physical, sexual and psychological abuse, exposure to domestic/family violence and homelessness.

## Working in Child-Related Employment

The legislation that applies specifically to people who work in child-related employment, including volunteers and self-employed people, includes:

- The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- NSW Ombudsman Act 1974

### The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act

This legislation requires that all employers confirm that all employees, both paid and unpaid, obtain a clearance to work with children. This clearance is to ensure only people with valid clearances work with children.

On 15 June 2013, The Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 made under The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 came into force. The **Regulation** applies to any person working in child-related employment including both paid and volunteer work.

- A person starting a new paid job in child-related work at St Pius must apply for a **Working with Children Check (WWCC)** before they start work. Catholic Schools Office employment procedures will ensure that this occurs.
- All current employees of the school must have a current **WWCC**.
- A self-employed person intending to work at St Pius in child-related work must have a current **WWCC** and submit their WWCC number to the Principal, along with their full name and date of birth to enable their WWCC to be verified by The Office of Safeguarding (formerly called Zimmerman Services). This ruling for self-employed people would apply for example to external Music Tutors who are not employed by the school but who use the school facilities to earn money by tutoring students.
- All volunteers commencing work at St Pius, or a volunteer continuing work at St Pius, will usually need to apply for a WWCC before they can commence their voluntary work for the year. Please refer to the notes below under the "Requirements for Volunteers" heading. Note that for volunteers there is no cost for the WWCC.

Information relating to the **Working with Children Check** can be found at the following address:

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check>

## **Requirements for Volunteers**

Potential volunteers must follow the application procedures outlined in the document: **Child Protection Procedures for Staff at St Pius X HS** to become a volunteer at the school. This document is available on the [School Policies](#) page of the school website. These procedures can also be accessed on the [Child Protection](#) page of the school website.

From 2017 most volunteers have been required to obtain a **Working with Children Check (WWCC)** before commencing volunteer work at the school and all volunteers must be registered with the Diocese as a volunteer in the **Child Protection Declarations & WWCCs Register of Active Volunteers**.

## **Reporting Allegations of Reportable Conduct**

### **NSW Ombudsman Act 1974**

This Act guides the Catholic Schools Office and school's response when an allegation of reportable conduct has been made against an employee. It applies to paid and unpaid employees (volunteers) in schools.

The Act requires the school to notify allegations that constitute sexual offences, misconduct, assault, ill-treatment, neglect and behaviour that causes psychological harm to children to the Ombudsman. This is done by the school reporting the allegation to the Prevention and Response Team of The Office of Safeguarding.

Once the allegation is received by the Prevention and Response Team of The Office of Safeguarding, the Team reports it to the Ombudsman's Office, and then investigates the allegation. The investigation gathers facts relevant to the allegation and arrives at a finding at its conclusion. The process of investigation provides the employee with an opportunity to respond to the allegation and have the response heard. All evidence is considered before a decision is made in regard to the finding.

Further information about this process is available from the Prevention and Response Team of The Office of Safeguarding – phone: 49 791 390.

### **Child Protection Procedures**

These are set out in a separate document called **Child Protection Procedures for Staff at St Pius X HS**. This document provides the specific procedures to be followed by staff in implementing the child protection policy at the school. It is available on the [School Policies](#) page of the school website.

### **Other Sources of Information**

Other sources that provide relevant child protection information include:

- [Child Protection](#) page of our school website under the Student Support tab.
- [Information for Volunteers](#) page of CSO Website.
- Pre-Reading for Child Protection Training – provided to all staff who attended the training on April 24 2017 – copy available in Principal's Office
- **Introduction to Child Protection for Diocesan Personnel (2010)** – Zimmerman House Publication – available in Principal's Office.

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed and updated at least every five years unless an earlier review becomes necessary because of changes in legislation or CSO/Diocesan requirements.