

CHILD PROTECTION AT MUELLER COLLEGE

Mueller College recognises that protecting students from harm and the risk of harm is fundamental to maximizing their personal and academic potential. For this reason, the welfare and best interests of the children within our College will always be a primary consideration.

We expect our students to show respect to our staff and volunteers and to comply with safe practices and we expect all employees to ensure that their behaviour towards and relationships with students reflect proper standards of care for students, and are not unlawful. The College will respond diligently to a report of suspected or actual harm, or risk of harm to a student.

What does the college mean by harm?

Recent Queensland legislation defines harm as “*any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing*”. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
- Sexual abuse or exploitation; or
- Domestic or family violence.

How Does the College Protect Students from Harm?

The College has a comprehensive Child Protection Policy, which covers the actions to be taken if a member of staff or a parent of the College becomes aware or reasonably suspects that harm has been done to a student of the College by a member of staff, people outside the College or by other students.

What should you do if you become aware or reasonably suspect that harm has been caused to a student of the college by a member of staff, someone outside of the college or by other students?

You should report your concerns to the Head of College or Head of Sub-school or to any other College staff member.

What will happen next?

If you report your concerns to a member of staff other than the Head of College, the member of staff will report it to the Head immediately, or if the subject of the complaint is the Head then the member of staff will report to the Chairman of the College Board.

What will the Head of College or the Chairman of the Board do?

If the Head of College or Chairman of the Board receives a report of harm or suspected harm to a student of the College and he/she becomes aware of the harm having been caused or reasonably suspects the harm to have been caused, then it will be reported to police immediately if the harm relates to (or likely to be) sexual abuse; or to the Department of Child Safety if appropriate; or it may be dealt with internally if the matter does not require mandatory reporting to an outside body.

What happens about confidentiality?

Your report will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Head of College and those directly involved. The Chairman of the College Board may also need to be informed. It is the College's policy that confidentiality between the College and parents will be respected as much as possible and any concerns raised by parents will not rebound adversely on their children.

Each person who has access to information regarding suspected or disclosed harm has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality. However, the College is unable to promise absolute confidentiality since the steps of the Policy will require disclosing, internally and externally, certain details involved in responding to the report. State authorities can compel people to give evidence about actions under the Policy and to produce documents. You would be fully informed if information you provided were to be passed on to a third party.

Any action, which needed to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of an allegation not requiring police intervention, would be handled confidentially within the College.

How will the College help my child?

The Head of College will ensure that the following things are done to reduce the chance of harm occurring:

- Ensure that each staff member understands and fulfils their obligations under this Policy and the Policy for reporting abuse.
- Ensure that there is an acceptable reference for each staff member engaged since the commencement of this protocol, from his or her previous employer.
- Ensure that each staff member and volunteer (who is not a parent) who has contact with children has a current positive suitability notice issued by the Public Safety Business Agency.

If the Head of College receives a report of harm to your child, he/she will support the child by:

- responding rapidly and diligently to the report;
- reassuring the student;
- protecting the child's confidentiality as much as possible;
- offering continuous support; and
- providing counselling if requested.

What should I do if I require more information?

The College's complete Child Protection Policy is available at the school administration. Parents and students may have access to this policy at any time. You may also make an appointment to discuss the policy with the Head of College if you wish to clarify any matters.