



Westside Christian College Student Protection Policy Information and Guidelines for Staff

Westside Christian College is committed to the complete protection of all its students from harm. This is our primary consideration. Students who are safe have the best possible chance to learn, to grow and to develop into the sound, functioning adults realising their potential our Heavenly Father created them to be.

Westside Christian College expects all people connected with the College, as staff, contractors or volunteers to uphold the values of the College and to adhere to the Code of Conduct in relation to their relationships and interactions with students and ensure these relationships and interactions are edifying and lawful.

All staff, contractors and volunteers associated with the College are required to undergo Student Protection Training and to be in possession of a current Blue Card or in the case of teachers, to be a current and registered teacher registered with the Queensland College of Teachers.

Westside Christian College will respond swiftly and lawfully to any disclosure of harm or to any reportable suspicion of harm in order to protect our students. The College will not put the safety of its students at risk for any reason – religion, culture, personal association or friendship. The College takes its responsibility towards students and their protection seriously.

Harm can be categorised in three broad areas – sexual harm, physical harm and other forms of harm. Harm, under the Child Protection Policy (1999) is defined as:

‘...any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child’s physical, psychological or emotional well-being, immaterial of how it is caused (physical, psychological, emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse or exploitation). Harm can be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.’

The College responds to disclosures of harm or reportable suspicions of harm in the following ways:

1. Sexual Harm

A student discloses they are the victim of sexual harm to a staff member or a staff member has a reportable suspicion the student is the victim of sexual harm.



The staff member completes the form *Reporting Sexual Harm* and submits it to the Principal.



The Principal takes the report and refers it to the Queensland Police Department. If the perpetrator of harm is a teacher, the Principal will also inform the Queensland College of Teachers. The Principal will also report the matter to the Chairman of the College Board. All matters are treated under the strictest of confidence.

If the report of harm involves the Principal of the College, the report is to be made to the Director of Learning, who will, along with the Chairman of the Board, refer the matter to the Queensland Police Department

2. Physical Harm

A student discloses they are the victim of physical harm to a staff member or a staff member has a reportable suspicion the student is the victim of physical harm.



The staff member completes the form *Reporting Physical Harm* and submits it to the Principal.



The Principal takes the report and refers it to the Department of Child Safety. If the perpetrator of harm is a teacher, the Principal will also inform the Queensland College of Teachers. The Principal will also report the matter to the Chairman of the College Board. All matters are treated under the strictest of confidence.

If the report of harm involves the Principal of the College, the report is to be made to the Director of Learning, who will, along with the Chairman of the Board, refer the matter to the Queensland Police Department

3. Other forms of Harm

A student discloses they are the victim of other forms of harm (including emotional, psychological, self-harm, bullying) to a staff member or a staff member has a reportable suspicion the student is the victim of other forms of harm.



The staff member completes the form *Reporting Other Forms of Harm* and submits it to the relevant Head of School responsible for the student.



The relevant Head of School discusses the matter with the Principal and creates a plan of action to assist and support the student. This may involve enlisting the assistance of Year Level and Team Co-ordinators, Chaplains, staff trusted by the student, parents and various outside professional agencies. Each case is based on merit on the needs of the student and the level of severity and type of harm. Depending on the individual case, the Principal may also report the matter to the Chairman of the College Board. All matters are treated under the strictest of confidence

All staff are required to attend formal Student Protection Training (1 hour duration) in the year of implementation (2017) or their year of employment/contracture and complete refresher training (on-line) every other year. This training is a mandatory requirement of employment.

Guidelines for staff

All staff who work, are contracted to or volunteer at Westside Christian College find themselves in a unique responsibility of trust, authority, influence and care, working with children and young people. As such, all staff are to take their responsibilities seriously and maintain professional relationships with those in their care.

The College also recognises the unique position whereby staff and students may attend the same Church organisations or due to the number of staff children who attend the College, staff may find themselves in a situation where students are socialising with staff children. In all cases, it is vital that all staff maintain professionalism in all their dealings and develop strategies where work and personal life does not encroach on each other.

When dealing with disclosures of harm:

- Staff should listen only to the disclosure, allowing the student to speak openly
- Staff should not ask probing questions or coerce the student to disclose or expand on anything stated
- Staff should reassure the student that the College will support them in being safe and this will include reporting the disclosure of harm. Staff should not promise to keep secrets or confidences.
- Staff should remember the College acts in the best interest of the child at all times.

When working with students, staff should:

- Ensure their actions and words are public.
- When working alone in a room, ensure the door is open and that there is a clear exit to the door. If the door is closed, ensure you and the student sit near windows and can be seen and that there is a clear exit to the door.
- Not favour one student over another.
- Not disclose or discuss experiences of a personal nature.
- Ensure any physical contact is appropriate and is able to be explained if either party is questioned.
- Be proactive, open and honest with their relevant Heads of School in relation to any situation where a student or teacher may have misconstrued a comment or situation.
- Ask 'What does this look like/sound like to someone who does not know me or the student?'

All staff, particularly teaching staff, should take note of the following advice from the Queensland College of Teachers publication *Professional Boundaries: A Guideline for Queensland Teachers May 2016*. The table below illustrates behaviours that may be classed as crossing boundaries and may result in disciplinary action

Type of professional boundaries breach	Example
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Showing preferential treatment to students without legitimate reason• Using subtle forms of control to allow a student to develop an emotional dependency on the teacher in order to later foster an inappropriate/sexual relationship with the student• Failure to recognise the role of a teacher is not to be a 'friend', 'personal counsellor' or 'parent' of the student
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intimate relationships with students: engaging in a romantic and/or sexual relationship with a student (current or former*)• Flirtatious behaviour/intimate gestures directed towards a student• Expressing romantic feelings towards a student in written or other form• Planned meetings with the student alone outside of school without a valid context• Taking the student alone for an unauthorised outing, e.g. coffee, the movies or other social events

Type of professional boundaries breach	Example
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Privately giving a student money, credit for a mobile phone or a gift Exploiting position for financial gain Implying that a student's grades will be affected if the student does not comply with the teacher's request Withholding information about academic performance to manipulate 'alonetime' or opportunities with a student
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking with a student about highly personal and/or sexually inappropriate matters that do not benefit the student Using social media to interact with a student about personal/sexual matters without a valid context Offering advice on personal matters to a student Asking a student questions about personal/sexual matters Refusing to stop discussions of a personal/sexual nature when asked by the student

There will be instances where some of the above behaviours or actions may be undertaken by teachers quite legitimately and for laudable reasons. For example, a teacher may provide breakfast for a student from a highly disadvantaged background or may assist a student who seeks their advice on a personal matter because the student has no other trusted adult to turn to. However, any such activity by the teacher should be undertaken as transparently as possible and with the knowledge and consent of the teacher's principal or supervisor.

The following suggestions may assist teachers to maintain professional boundaries with students when providing one-to-one learning assistance/feedback, assessment or pastoral care.

Make it purposeful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether it is essential to meet with the student one-to-one
Make it public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The more visible, public and busy the location, the better Use the school's authorised IT systems. Do not use personal email or websites to communicate with students.
Make it authorised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/carers should be informed and give consent for such individual assistance Have the activity authorised by the school principal or a supervising colleague
Make it timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As far as possible, provide support during normal work hours and do not conduct excessively long sessions

Staff who are unsure of their actions should consult with their relevant Head of School or the College principal for advice and guidance.

At all times staff should act in the best interest of the child.