OUR LADY OF MOUNTCARMEL SCHOOL
CHILD ABUSE POLICY 2-D3 COMMUNITY

RATIONALE
OLMC acknowledges that a goal of the Catholic school is that students should learn about their value as human persons from the time they enter a Catholic school community. This principle influences every level of the school's life so that students learn about their own dignity and value as a human person. The care and attention they receive from all within the school will help them realise these fundamental principles.

Here at OLMC we have a school social worker/school councilor and a school psychologist who contribute in a special way to students’ integrated personal development. While appreciating these specialists and their contribution, every staff member, when accepting a position in a Catholic school, shares responsibility for the pastoral care of students. In addition, by accepting a position in the school they are also accepting the role of teacher/educator or “one who helps to form human persons”. The Principal has the ultimate responsibility for this care here at OLMC.

At OLMC we are entrusted to take on, in partnership with parents who are the primary educators of their children, the total education of the child. Catholic school staff have therefore a duty of care to students during school hours and at other times when a staff/student relationship exists. Duty of care falls under the area of common law that is established by the courts on the basis of precedent. The practice of duty of care requires that a staff person must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which they can reasonably foresee would be likely to result in harm or injury to the student and take steps to remove those dangers.

In promulgating this policy, OLMC acknowledges its responsibilities for the duty of care of all students. This policy addresses the issue of child abuse.

DEFINITION
Child abuse is the long term and/or short term maltreatment of a person under the age of 18 years of age. It is the result of action or inaction which results in harm or injury to a child.

Child abuse may be categorised as follows:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect.
PRINCIPLES

OLMC acknowledges the serious consequences of child abuse, both in the short term and the long term. The protection strategies and procedures to be followed are based on the following principles:

1. The Principal is responsible for the management of suspected or disclosed incidents of child abuse.

2. The Principal is to ensure the school's pastoral care structures address the issue of child abuse, making appropriate provisions for the assistance of children, families and staff.

3. School staff who have access to information regarding suspected or disclosed child abuse have a clear obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality in relation to the matter, and an obligation to ensure this information is kept secure. (Refer to CECWA Policy Statement: The Management of Confidential Information in Schools)

4. All children have the right to a thorough and systematic education in personal safety. This should be done in partnership with their parents/guardians.

5. The value of the family unit is to be respected. However, this should not be to the detriment of the well-being of the child.

6. All adults have a responsibility to care for children, to promote their welfare and to protect them from any kind of abuse.

7. All persons involved in situations where abuse is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

8. OLMC is committed to the importance and implementation of child protection strategies and procedures.

PROCEDURES

1. Procedures in the following documents must be used, according to the person against whom the allegation is directed:

   • Child Abuse, Allegations of Misconduct and Serious Misconduct Against Lay Employees, is to be used when an allegation is directed against school employees. These include teachers, administrative staff, grounds staff or any other school employee

   • Towards Healing, Principles and Procedures in Responding to Complaints of Sexual Abuse Against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia, is to be used when an allegation is directed against any clergy or members of religious institutes

   • Procedures for Identification and Notification of Child Abuse and Neglect, is to be used when an allegation is directed against school community members or
persons who are not employed by the school. These include but are not restricted to, school volunteers, parents, family members and/or relatives.

2. It is the Principal’s responsibility to ensure the correct procedure is used.