



THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN RESPONSE TO ABUSE OF FORMER STUDENTS OR STAFF**

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### **Premise or Rationale**

The Friends' School (the School) is guided by its Purpose and Concerns statement:

*The Friends' School is a co-educational Quaker school based on fundamental values such as the intrinsic worth of each person, the recognition of 'that of God' in everyone, the desirability of simplicity and the need to establish peace and justice. As a learning community, we are concerned for the academic, cultural, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development of each person in our care. We seek to help our students develop as people who will think clearly, act with integrity, make decisions for themselves, be sensitive to the needs of others and the environment, be strong in service and hold a global perspective. We believe that these aims can best be achieved with the active support of all members of our School community.*

The School recognises that it may have failed to protect individuals from harm, pain and loss. The School deeply regrets such failures and the consequent effects. The School is resolved to protect all in our care and to recognise and redress failures from the past.

### **Guiding Principles**

- All complaints alleging abuse against former or current employees or volunteers of the School will be taken seriously.
- The School recognises the individual's experience and acknowledges their distress.
- The School will support individuals to present their complaint/s to the School, the police, child protection agency and /or other competent bodies.
- The School is committed to meet the pastoral needs of complainants and respondents.
- The School will endeavour to ensure no further harm is caused.
- The School will offer to support the individual reporting the abuse.
- The Friends' School will seek to be open, transparent and accountable while respecting the rights of the complainants to privacy.
- We also support the complainants to make their own informed choices about whether to engage with Friends' School processes, or to seek assistance elsewhere.



### **Processes and Procedures for Receiving Information – Responding to Information of Misconduct by Friends’ School Employees or Volunteers**

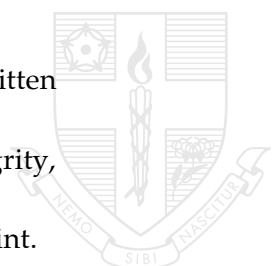
- All complaints /allegations received by the School will be reported to the Board of Governors by the Principal.
- Complaints or allegations of child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexually inappropriate conduct or process failure received in writing will be investigated by the School.
- If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint in writing, the School will offer, and if accepted arrange for counselling for the complainant.
- If the subject of the complaint/allegation is a child and there is a risk of harm to a child, the School will report the information to the Police and any statutory authority as required by law of the State.
- If the complaint/allegation concerns an adult and involves criminal behaviour, the School will report the matter to the Police at the time the allegation is presented.
- If an allegation involving criminal behaviour or a criminal charge has been referred to the Police, the School will assist their investigations and cooperate with civil authorities having responsibility for the welfare of the persons involved. The School will ensure that its activities do not hamper the procedures of the Police or other civil authorities.
- The School will ensure that a confidential record is kept of all information, even if the information is unable to be acted upon.
- The School will ensure that complainants and respondents are provided with materials and resources related to their rights, remedies and procedures.
- The School cannot act upon hearsay or third party allegations.

### **Provision for Assisting or Supporting (where appropriate) All Persons Affected by Alleged Conduct**

- The complainants and respondents of child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexually inappropriate conduct involving Friends’ School staff members will be supported by the offer of counselling and other processes as appropriate.
- There will be a transparent process in place to determine if and to what extent ongoing counselling will be provided.
- The School will remain mindful of secondary victims including families and friends.
- The School may seek occasional reports from counsellors where appropriate.

### **Processes on How the School Will Investigate and Deal with Information**

- The School will appoint an external person or persons to investigate written complaints that include specific allegations.
- The selection of an external investigator will be based on ensuring integrity, skills and appropriateness.
- The investigators will obtain all materials related to the written complaint.



- Investigators are not bound by the rules of evidence. The evidence listed need not be limited to matters raised in the original complaint. Parties may be interviewed more than once.
- The investigators will, wherever possible, interview:
  - the complainant
  - the respondent, seeking a written response to the complaint
  - any witnesses d. any other parties who may be able to provide information relevant to assessing whether there is a case to answer to, and in addition to interviews, relevant documents and records may be searched and considered.
- The investigators will, at the conclusion of their investigation, provide a written report to the Presiding Members Group of the Board of Governors:
  - Outlining the results of the investigation.
  - Collecting and collating of all evidence.
- The Board of Governors on receipt of the investigators report and after all investigations are complete will determine the complaint/allegations.

#### **Provisions for Dealing Fairly with Respondents**

Respondents are entitled to have access to support persons and to know the substance of the complaint, allegation or information against them at the earliest possible stage. They are afforded the opportunity and provided with assistance to put everything before the Principal, the Presiding Members Group of the Board of Governors or other investigators as appointed by the School which they consider to be relevant. They are entitled to be represented and to test the evidence.

#### **Process for Referral to Mediation and Conciliation in Appropriate Circumstances**

The School may, where appropriate, arrange for the conciliation or mediation of any complaint. Mediation and conciliation would only be considered after conferring with the individual and usually after an investigation.

#### **Process for Dealing with Alleged Process Failure**

If the School receives a complaint that there has been a process failure in dealing with previous allegations of child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault or sexually inappropriate conduct involving a member of School staff, the Presiding Members Group of the Board of Governors will promptly cause the following to occur:

- Invite and assist the complainant or individual to provide a written statement of the allegation or complaints.
- Investigate the alleged process failure.
- Provide a written response within 14 days or such other reasonable time as might be allowed.
- Advise all parties what further action is to be taken



### **Provisions for the Maintenance of Records**

- A register of all information received and investigations shall be maintained.
- All records will be kept confidential and secure, unless required to be released by law. Access to the records will be controlled by the Principal.
- In accordance with privacy requirements, respondents will be entitled to see records relating to themselves unless the Presiding Members Group of the Board of Governors determines that to allow them access would put another person at risk of serious harm.
- Information will only be provided to third parties as required by law in the investigation or prosecution of an offence.

*This document was adapted from "Diocese of Tasmania – Protocol for professional standards for the protection of children and adults from sexual misconduct ordinance 2005" for use by The Friends' School.*

