



# Holy Eucharist Catholic Primary School St Albans South.



## COUNSELLING POLICY

### APPENDIX

#### **1: Guidelines At Holy Eucharist For Conducting Group Counselling Sessions**

##### **Holy Eucharist Catholic Primary School Commitment Statement to Child Safety**

*A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people at our Catholic school*

'The intention for this statement is to provide a central focus for child safety<sup>1</sup> at our Catholic school, built around a common understanding of the moral imperative and overarching commitments that underpin our drive for improvement and cultural change....

...Holy Eucharist Primary School together with the CECV will stay abreast of current legislation and will meet legislative duties to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Victorian Government 2016), mandatory reporting, grooming, failure to disclose and failure to protect requirements<sup>2</sup>.

**<sup>1</sup>As defined by the Victorian Government Special Gazette No. 2 (2016), 'children and young people' in this document refers to those children and young people enrolled as students in Catholic schools in Victoria.**

**<sup>2</sup>Holy Eucharist Catholic Primary School Commitment Statement to Child Safety**

##### **EVIDENCE OF THIS OCCURRING AT HOLY EUCHARIST**

All children attending either one on one counselling or group counselling will be treated with respect and any concerns relating to child safety will immediately be reported as per the reporting requirements outlined in the HE Child Protection reporting obligations and the HE police and DHHS interview protocols.

##### **Rationale:**

Holy Eucharist as a Catholic Community sees wellbeing as fundamental to successful learning. Children and young people who are happy, confident and able to establish meaningful relationships are better placed to achieve positive learning outcomes. The Catholic school environment must provide a safe and effective environment that contributes to positive learning outcomes and the wellbeing of students, staff and the broader community. Holy Eucharist commits to ensuring that all students' wellbeing is a priority and that any concerns are addressed immediately.

Connectedness with the family, the school, peers and the whole community is highly regarded in the lines of the pastoral work of the school and the provision of a Community hub. Research demonstrates that education and wellbeing of parents significantly contributes to the wellbeing of their children so it is important to have a strong link between these two areas.

##### **Documents and Policies to be familiar with:**

Holy Eucharist Code of Conduct  
Holy Eucharist Commitment statement  
Holy Eucharist Child Protection – Reporting Obligations  
Holy Eucharist – Police and DHHS Interview Protocols  
National School Chaplaincy Programme (NSCP) 2016  
Holy Eucharist Group Counselling Guidelines (attached)  
Holy Eucharist Wellbeing Policy  
Holy Eucharist Discipline Policy  
Holy Eucharist Community Partnerships Policy  
Holy Eucharist Student Services Policy

**Aims:**

- To provide counselling to the children when circumstances other than specific learning problems are hindering their academic progress and emotional stability. This is either one on one or group counseling.
- To promote and develop the child's own awareness of their abilities to develop positive self esteem and identity in a nurturing relationship.
- To provide the appropriate intervention in counselling for the children to achieve independence, social, emotional and spiritual growth.
- To provide Pastoral support to the students and their families where required.
- To provide support to teachers and school staff regarding students with social and emotional needs.
- To provide an integrated and consistent school program that identifies, embeds and rewards expected school-wide positive behaviors, enables student reflection where positive behaviors have not been followed and follow up by the school counsellor in a timely manner to address any behavioral concerns and allows for appropriate analysis of behavioral trends and strategies to be implemented where identified
- To ensure that student behavioral issues are addressed immediately and that behavioral reflection sheets and logs are completed and provided by all staff to the school counsellor in a timely manner so this may occur
- To provide all students the opportunity to develop their personal development by the provision of a whole school SEL program.
- To liaise with school staff formally and informally regarding linking the SEL program based on 'Bounce with the RE curriculum
- To maintain the ethical standards and qualifications required of the Counseling, Psychological and Chaplaincy program.
- To provide awareness, support and consultation on matters of prevention and treatment of mental wellbeing and behavioral problems within the school community.

**Implementation:**

The School Counsellor will be responsible and in charge of the operation of the Chaplaincy Program in the School which includes the submission of reports. This support program is an active and complimentary part of the wider Pastoral Care and Student Well Being Plan and will be carried out within the ethical limits of consent and confidentiality. The privacy of family material will be maintained. Confidentiality would only be broken in case the child or others are in serious danger.

In cases of suspicions of abuse and serious discipline situations the counsellor will act according to the school protocols and/or guidelines for teachers. Please refer to the documents outlined at the beginning of this policy. The counsellor will refer any serious or ongoing counseling needs identified to On Psych services. The option of a team approach between parents, teacher and counsellor should be taken when necessary.

- The Counsellor is a qualified staff member employed full time who is also accredited to work under the National School Chaplaincy Programme (NSCP) 2016 and must provide reports as per the requirements.
- Conducts group counselling and one on one sessions.
- Is closely linked to other internal/external support programs:
  - Special Needs
  - Student Wellbeing program
  - Whole School SEL program
- The school staff will be aware of the Counsellor through participating in debriefing and staff meetings, PSG meetings, visits to the class rooms and individual talks to individual children and/or issues pertaining to the case.
- The parents will be aware of the Program through notices/invitations published in the school newsletter and at the beginning of the year with a letter of introduction and participation at the info meetings for the prep parents.
- Children will be aware of the Counsellor through regular visits to the classrooms and the teachers who will remind them of the special support provided (at the appropriate time).

**Accessing Counselling Support:**

- Referrals can be made by: teachers and parents.
- The parents sign a Counselling Program Participation form that is provided at the commencement of each year (parents not wishing to opt into this program will not sign this form)
- If necessary, contacts to outside agencies will be made if there are others involved in the child's case plan. Interviews with parents will be requested over the school year and their regularity will depend on the nature of the case and circumstances of child and family.
- Internal referrals by school staff can be done and children might need short or long term support. Parents will be advised of these and their consent will be requested.
- Staff will provide Behaviour Reflection Sheets to the counsellor so that relevant and timely discussions can occur during counseling sessions
- Parents will decide when the children leave the Program or if they wish this to continue on an on going basis.
- Regular contact with teachers to update observations of individual children and these discussions to be done within the boundaries of confidentiality.

**Evaluation:**

The following points are suggested for taking a periodical evaluation of the program, its on going need and the appropriateness of it :

- The statistics concerning the number and nature of issues that children present and that are attending the program.
- The statistics concerning the number of behavior reflection sheets logged
- Trends regarding types of issues and demographics to be analysed for pro-active program implementation
- Regular revision of the policy and processes including updating as required, ensuring end to end linkages to other related processes – e.g discipline, wellbeing, student support, EAL etc
- Parents and staff to evaluate periodically the delivery of the program.
- Evaluation to happen according to the changes of the school's needs, trends and budget situations.
- During the regular reporting of the program, issues raised, referrals made and discussion of priority of cases and their progress to the Principal.

**Staff Members involved:**

Student Wellbeing Leader – Robynne Tongue  
Deputy Principal – Michael Bonnici

**Date of Ratification:** 2016

**Reviewed:** 2017.

## **APPENDIX 1: GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING GROUP COUNSELLING SESSIONS**

### **GUIDELINES AT HOLY EUCHARIST FOR CONDUCTING GROUP COUNSELLING SESSIONS**

- Ensure familiarity with Holy Eucharist Code of Conduct
- Ensure familiarity with Holy Eucharist Commitment Statement
- Ensure familiarity with Holy Eucharist Child Protection Policy – Reporting Obligations and Police and DHHS Protocols
- Ensure that you are familiar with the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) 2016
- Ensure that a qualified counsellor is present in all sessions
- Notify the school Wellbeing leader/qualified counsellor immediately of any concerns about the wellbeing of any child
- Ensure all students are supported with respect for their religious beliefs, or lack of religious beliefs at all times
- Contribute to providing a safe and inclusive environment
- Actively discourage any form of harassment or discrimination
- Respect students, families and staff for their beliefs and not seek to impose own beliefs or persuade students towards a particular set of beliefs
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with a student, recognising, however, that there may be some circumstances where physical contact may be appropriate, such as where the student is injured or distraught
- Prior to group sessions, ensure that your goal for the session is clearly established and that it is articulated early in the session, but also ensure that any serious immediate concerns expressed by group members are addressed
- Ensure that any materials required for the session are prepared beforehand
- Decide on a group counselling contract or set of meeting guidelines/agreement with participants in the first session (e.g respect other's views, one person speaks at a time, what is said in the room stays in the room, look at and listen to the speaker etc) and re-visit these at the commencement of each meeting
- Ensure that sessions are not just chalk and talk and that everyone has reasonable opportunities to participate
- Be flexible about moving group session times depending upon unexpected occurrences (e.g DHHS visits, specialist timetables etc)
- Ensure strategies are evidenced-based (e.g use reliable program guides such as Bounce Back etc and other well known counselling resources for schools)
- Use counselling skills in all sessions (e.g reflective listening, confronting or challenging sensitively, active listening, open-ended questions, encouragement, provide appropriate feedback, summarization, empathy)
- Model expected group behaviours
- Attend to what's happening in the group (both verbally & non-verbally) and take appropriate action (e.g move students if seating is causing an issue)
- Don't force participants to disclose if they are uncomfortable
- Check in with each group member during the session
- Give precedence to group helping strategies
- Evaluate progress of sessions – (e.g look at feedback sheets for participants, teachers etc)