

Welfare Policy

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Version History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	Feb 2016	Draft policy for approval by HACE Board
1.0 (a)	Apr 2019	Amended Clauses – 6.2
1.1	April 2024	Amended Clauses – Vision and Purpose 5, 6.2,6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6

Hastings Association of Christian Education (HACE) Ltd

Vision Statement

To inspire students for a life of transformation and service through excellent, authentic Christ-centred education.

Purpose Statement

Heritage Christian School exists to partner with families, and equip staff to develop highly capable students, of Christian character, ready to serve and enrich the community for the glory of God.

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Important related documents:

Heritage Christian School:	Discipline Policy
Child Protection Policy	Grievance Policy
Employment Policy 1-1 Recruitment	Privacy Policy
External Providers Policy	ICT policies
Peripatetic Tutors Policy (pending)	Excursion Policy (pending)
Teaching and Learning Policy (pending)	Overseas Excursion Policy
Special Education & Extension/Enrichment Policy	Student Leadership Policy (pending)
Staff Appraisal Policy	Community Development Plan
Continued Professional Learning Policy (pending)	Staff Code of Code
Enrolment Policy	Student Code of Conduct
Attendance Policy	School Rules
Communication Policy	Code of Conduct for Parents and Visitors
WHS Policy suite	Staff Handbook
Anti-bullying Policy 1-1 Student	Pathways to and from Care, NSW Govt Health, (20 September 2012)
Anti-bullying Policy 1-2 Workplace	Suicide Postvention Toolkit, Headspace School Support
Anti-Discrimination Policy	

Relevant Legislation

Ombudsman Act 1974 and Ombudsman Amendment (Child Protection and Community Services) Act 1998 NSW
 Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012 NSW
 Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 NSW

1 INTRODUCTION

The welfare of students at Heritage Christian School is a paramount responsibility and privilege of the school as it partners with parents in the education of their children.

Welfare encompasses the whole of a student's well-being and healthy development. It therefore includes nurturing, building and encouraging; protection from harm (HCS Child Protection Policy); and also training, direction and correction. (HCS Discipline Policy)

Student welfare is built in to everything that happens in the school to meet the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, social and learning needs of students. The School partners with parents, and the wider community, in strategies which are preventive and proactive in caring for students; and responsive in identifying welfare needs and determining best actions.

2 CHRISTIAN RATIONALE

The purpose of Heritage Christian School is to honour and glorify God by giving each child a Christ-centered education, as a complete person created by God in His image. Healthy students are happy and resilient; who can form good relationships with peers and others; and who are well-resourced to develop into leaders of godly character, and will blend academic achievement and biblical truth, to influence society for the glory of God.

The school recognises that the responsibility for a child's welfare is given to his or her parents by God; but that this task is shared by the community of faith, and the wider community. Heritage Christian School considers the welfare of the children in its care as a sacred trust from God, through the parents who enrol their children.

In partnership with parents, every person who belongs to the community of Heritage Christian School is encouraged to take responsibility for, and seek the well-being of, others: *'...admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.'* 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

The school's policies and procedures, educational programs and extra-curricular activities are designed to build a healthy personal framework for children, teach them about their responsibilities as citizens of God's kingdom, and allow them opportunities for practical experience in caring for others.

Recognising the vulnerability of children, the school seeks to identify and minimise harm in the school environment; and to respond quickly and appropriately when a student appears to be struggling or in distress. The school dedicates resources and structures to protect, heal and restore students; through a vital partnership with parents, the community and local churches.

Heritage Christian School honours the laws and processes of our state and federal governments for the safety and well-being of our students.

3 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the policy and procedures of the school in pursuit of the welfare of students; and its obligations to government authorities for child protection.

4 WHO MUST COMPLY

Responsibilities	Evidence of Compliance
Principal	
Implement the policy within the school	Executive CPL Program & Calendar
Review the policy in collaboration with school community	Calendar of Policy Review
Report to relevant authorities	Records of investigations; secure confidential files on server
Board	
Review of monthly report of serious welfare concerns	Board reports
Deputy Principal	
Investigate reports and incidents	Records of investigations
Oversee appropriate follow up	SchoolPro; secure files on server
Report serious welfare concerns to the Board	Board reports
Section Coordinators	
CPL weeks: communicate welfare & discipline policies and procedures to teachers in their section	Executive CPL Program & Calendar Section meetings
Ensure anti-bullying curriculum in teaching programs	Staff Professional Growth Appraisal; Program Registration
Assist class teachers in welfare & pastoral care issues	Section meetings; SchoolPro; secure files
Chaplain	
Support of students, parents, staff	SchoolPro; Secure files on server
Referral to other specialist service providers	SchoolPro; Secure files on server
Assist class teachers in welfare & pastoral care issues	Section meetings; SchoolPro; secure files
Teachers	
Monitoring pastoral care/ welfare issues	SchoolPro
Include anti-bullying content in PDHPE program	Teaching Programs; Digital Discipleship program
School staff	
Respect and support students	Staff Code of Conduct
Respond in a timely manner to welfare concerns of bullying	SchoolPro
Support students to develop a caring attitude toward others	Teaching Programs
Students	
Behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity	Student Code of Conduct; Discipline records
Behave as responsible bystanders	Student Code of Conduct;
Parents	
Support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible on-line behaviour	Supporting Your Child at HCS
Support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying	HCS Anti-bullying Policy 1-1 Student (information for parents & students)
Open communication with the school about matters which may affect their child at school	SchoolPro; notes
All Staff	
Can report issues of concern re: child welfare to authorities	Child Protection Policy
Participate in annual CPL in child protection, discipline, welfare	CPL calendar & sign-on sheets

5 POLICY

At Heritage Christian School (HCS), student welfare and academic achievement involves the balance of physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual well-being of the child. Thus student welfare is incorporated into every area of school life.

HCS aims to provide:

- (a) A safe and nurturing environment in which students can learn. (HCS WHS Policy suite)
- (b) Effective teaching and learning experiences which engage students in the activities of the school, including extra-curricular activities. (HCS Teaching & Learning Policy)
- (c) Oversight of day-to-day monitoring of student well-being as determined by observable signs at school.
- (d) A fair and effective discipline system which encourages behaviour consistent with the Student Code of Conduct and seeks to improve the behaviour of students who do not meet those expectations. (HCS Discipline Policy)
- (e) An environment in which students can come to understand how God has given them abilities and gifts and how they can use them.
- (f) An environment that encourages attitudes of self-respect, self-discipline, and respect for others, as people made in God's image; and, an understanding of individual differences. (Staff Code of Conduct; Student Code of Conduct; Code of Conduct for Parents and Visitors)
- (g) An environment in which it is clear that bullying, violence and aggression are unacceptable. (HCS Anti-Bullying Policy 1-1 Student; 1-2 Workplace)
- (h) Monitoring of student attendance at school to ensure safety and well-being of students, and the continuation of a sound educational program. (HCS Attendance Policy)
- (i) Staff who are committed Christians, qualified teachers, have current clearance under WWCC; and who seek to care for and nurture the students in their care. (HCS Employment Policy 1-1 Recruitment; Child Protection Policy)
- (j) Open Classroom policy – classrooms are open to visits from other staff, team teaching arrangements, the assistance of a teacher's aide; and a teacher may invite observation by their Learning Managers / Heads of School, or have a class observation agreed to as part of Staff Appraisal. (HCS Staff Appraisal Policy)
- (k) A clear understanding across the school community of duty of care; the provisions of the Child Protection Act; and commitment to reporting incidents relating to child protection. (HCS Child Protection Policy)

6 PROCEDURES

Heritage Christian School seeks the welfare of all students through nurture, protection, training and building them up in every element of school life; so they may develop personal resilience and a sense of self, through the understanding that they are loved and valued by God.

6.1 Physical Security

Measures to ensure the safety of students include:

- Playground and bus supervision by teachers
- Visitor sign-in and ID passes; Code of Conduct for Parents and Visitors
- Late and early notes for students arriving or departing during class hours
- Administration office overlooks front grounds to be aware of child leaving without authorisation
- Maintenance of buildings, grounds, facilities (HCS WHS Policy suite)

6.2 School Programming

- (a) Timetabled commitment of time for Biblical Studies and Discipleship which complement family and church priorities for development of Christ-like character and attitudes.
- (b) The Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) program addresses issues of physical and emotional health, reinforced by events such as: sports carnivals and teams; Brainstorm Productions.
- (c) The Student Code of Conduct sets out positive expectations for students to confidently know how to behave in the school setting. It is reviewed annually at the start of the year, and regularly in classroom discussions.
- (d) Anti-bullying content is incorporated in classroom management practices and teaching programs. (HCS Anti-Bullying Policy 1-1 Student)
- (e) Discipline procedures provide a clear behaviour modification plan that provides direction and both positive and negative consequences for behaviour choices at school. (HCS Discipline Policy)
- (f) Staff morning devotions and staff meetings will update staff generally on student issues for information and prayer, maintaining confidentiality and privacy according to the sensitivity of the circumstances.
- (g) When part of an appropriate course, work experience and work readiness programs give students practice scenarios and orientation to the workforce.
- (h) Staff training in child protection, discipline and welfare occurs annually at the start of the year (PD Week); and is included throughout the year at staff meetings as incidents arise, or policies and procedures change.

6.3 Development of Student's Gifts and Strengths

- (a) The school offers individualised learning support; and creative extension, to enhance students' learning opportunities.
- (b) Retreats and outdoor education experiences develop closer relationships and offer challenges that build resilience.
- (c) The work, gifts and achievements of students is celebrated; and regularly showcased through assemblies, newsletters, performances and displays.
- (d) A range of extra-curricular activities is offered for students to try new things, mix with students in other year groups, and to learn from invited guests who can build positively into the lives of students.
- (e) Opportunities are provided for student leadership that allows development of skills and positive relationships within different year groups in the school context e.g. Student Representative Council, school captains and prefects
- (f) The school encourages the development of an outward focus and service to others through involvement in charities and local events designed to help others in our local or wider community.
- (g) Understanding of other cultures, and an experience of Christian ministry to others is encouraged through experiences, such as the Spanish Trip.

6.4 Building the School Community

(a) Enrolment

The Enrolment process includes orientation to the school. (HCS Enrolment Policy)

Orientation activities occur: for students entering Kindergarten the following year; for students and families at the start of the year, or when a student commences mid-year.

(b) Communication

Regular information to parents, and other members of the school community, on all aspects of school life and events, through: newsletters, website, annual report, school reports, newspaper coverage of school events, Audiri App, advertising etc.

Information nights for parents at the beginning of the school year include a discussion of welfare pathways for the support of students.

(c) **Community Calendar**

Outlines a calendar of opportunities for effective transition into the school for families and students. Activities include: information nights, School Exhibition Days, Celebration and Thanksgiving services, student performances and displays

(d) **Appointment of Community and Events manager**

The Community and Events manager facilitates communication between parents and the school on matters of community interest.

(e) **Counsellor**

HCS engages on-site Counsellor for student and staff support, who may be called on for advice or direct involvement with the welfare of a student.

The Counsellor speaks at assemblies and contributes to newsletters, on topics such as: wellbeing checklists, bullying, cyberbullying, mental health issues, resilience training for students, and relationships.

6.5 School Welbeing Team (SWT)

- (a) **Pastoral Care teacher:** the first point of contact for students, parents and other staff concerning student welfare.

Parents are encouraged to arrange a meeting during scheduled parent-teacher meeting times; and at any other time through appointment via the Front Office, if they would like to talk to their child's teacher.

- (b) **Subject teachers (secondary school):** the first point of contact for students, parents and other staff concerning student welfare that relates to a specific subject area.

Subject teachers should be contacted during scheduled parent-teacher meetings for regular updates on a child's progress in those subjects; or at any other time by appointment through the Front Office, if there are concerns about that subject.

- (c) **Teachers** will consult with Year Advisors in all significant matters of student welfare; or when requiring further support in dealing with a welfare issue.

- (d) **Counsellor:** available to students, parents and staff.

The school may refer students to the Counsellor; or include the Counsellor in discussion/ mediation/ investigation as required.

The Counsellor may also initiate contact with students, parents or staff, to invite discussion or prayer.

- (e) **Year Advisors:** oversight of the welfare and pastoral care for the students in the years for which they are responsible. They deal with pastoral care issues, arrange pastoral activities and assist with discipline. They are key people in the welfare system and will often liaise with parents, the Counsellor, the Head of Wellbeing and Discipleship and with the Deputy Principal.

Parents and students may raise issues of concern directly with the Year Advisor by making an appointment.

- (f) **Head of Wellbeing and Discipleship (HOWD)/Head of Junior School (HoJS):** responsible for the wellbeing of students. Parents may contact the HOWD/HoJS if they feel the need for further intervention in a matter of their child's welfare.
- The Deputy Principal and HOWD will meet regularly with the Year Advisors, Faculty Heads, and Counsellor to discuss issues involving students and to plan activities.
- The Deputy Principal deals directly with issues such as child protection matters, and provides appropriate information to HoJS/HOWD and Year Advisors.
- In emergency or critical incident situations any School Leadership Team member can be called on for assistance.
- (g) **Principal:** reports all incidents where a student appears to be at risk of significant harm, to the relevant authorities. (Child Protection Policy)
- The Principal will also intervene in any issues of a serious nature where there is difficulty reaching resolution.

6.6 Welbeing Strategies

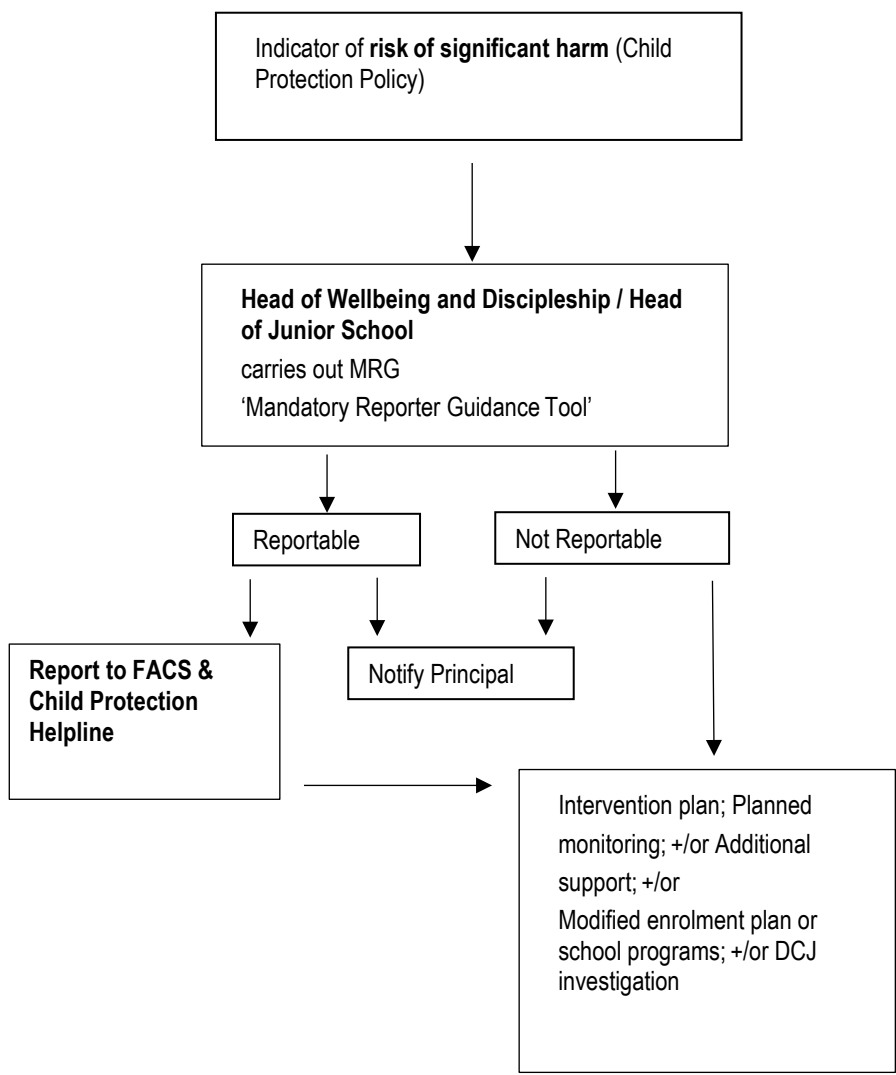
- (a) Early communication to parents of any educational, welfare or behavioural concerns the school holds regarding their child
- (b) Individualised Enrolment Plan – partial enrolment; return to school plan; provisional enrolment; (HCS Enrolment Policy & HCS Attendance Policy)
- (c) Special Ed/ Learning Support – testing;
- Individual Education Plans (IEP's) and Personalised Learning Plans (PLP's) – Managed by Head of Student Support
- (d) Classroom Support – Student Learning Support Officer (SLSO) in class, observing lunch/playground, taking students out of class; parent involvement; Continued Professional Learning (CPL) for teachers
- (e) Parent Connection/ Involvement – such as: information nights; parent-teacher meetings; regular communication to parents if welfare/ discipline issue; parent involvement in classes and on excursions/ camps; displays/ performances of student work; PIP (parents-in-partnership) working bees; social community events
- (f) Feedback on effectiveness of the school in numerous areas - annual community survey; Association meetings and Board Consultation meetings
- (g) Attendance procedures - to ensure regular attendance and follow up of unexplained/ persistent absences or late arrivals (HCS Attendance Policy)
- (h) Discipline procedures – individual plans for focus on improvement to behaviour in 3 goals (HCS Discipline Policy)
- (i) Centralised record keeping on SchoolPro - an accurate profile of student records as updated by staff. Confidential notes are securely maintained on a school server, with access limited to authorised staff only.

6.7 When School Intervention is Required

In case of immediate danger to a student, contact the Police (000), or DCJ Helpline (133 627), directly.

Where there is suspicion that a student is at **risk of significant harm** (Mandatory Reporter Guide, www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au), procedures will be followed as set out in the HCS Child Protection Policy. (Diagram 1, below)

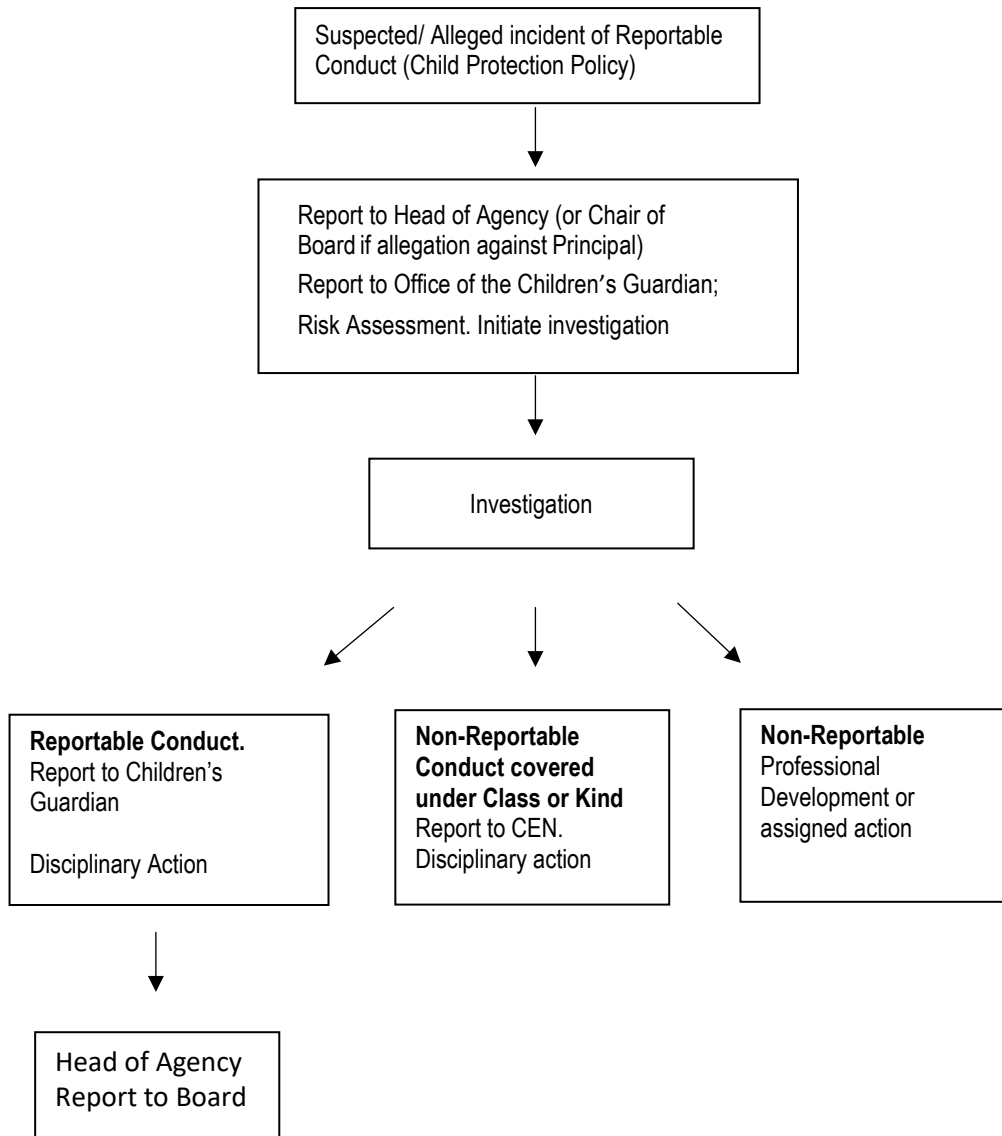
Diagram 1. Risk of Significant Harm Flowchart



Reportable Conduct

If the welfare situation indicates **reportable conduct**, the Principal shall act in accord with the Head of Agency provisions in the Children’s Guardian Act and follow procedures set out in the HCS Child Protection Policy. (Diagram 2, below)

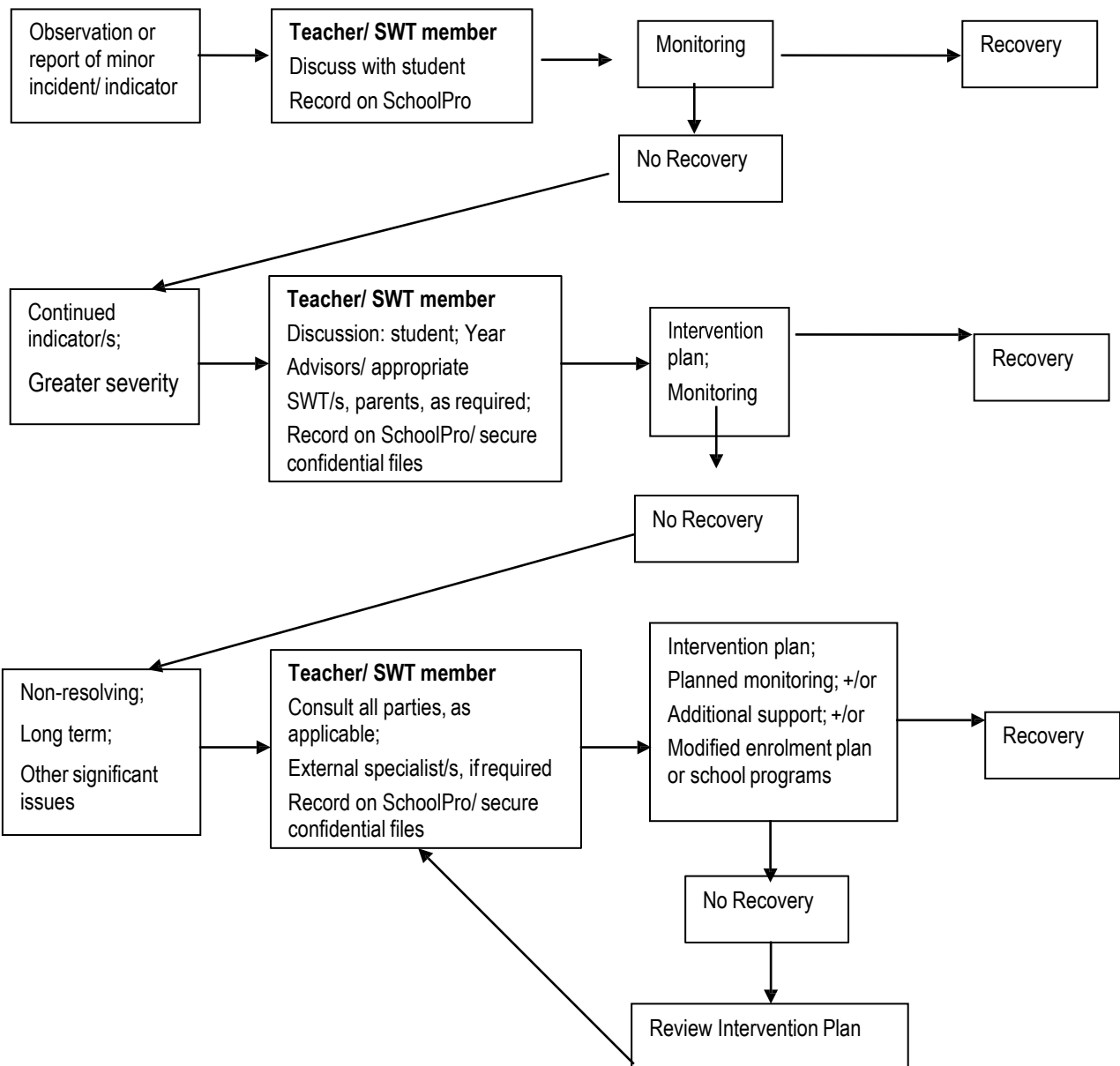
Diagram 2. Reportable Conduct Flowchart



- (a) A concern or issue of student welfare may be raised by any member of the Student Wellbeing Team (SWT), other staff member, parent or family member, or by the student themselves.
- The concern may be an observation, report or allegation of an incident or an indicator of lack of well-being or harm. (See HCS Child Protection appendices)
- (b) The response/s, including most appropriate staff member/s and strategies chosen, will depend on:
- the severity of the circumstances
 - any legal requirements for reporting the incident
 - the indicators of student lack of well-being
 - the observer's relationship with the student
 - determination of underlying causes and effects e.g. a behaviour/ discipline issue or undiagnosed health issues
 - willingness and comfort of the student with the planned intervention;
- following the processes outlined in the Welfare Intervention Flowchart (6.8)
- (c) The full resources of the SWT are available for consultation by the observer; for support of the student, and the assistance of the parents/ family. Where indicated, specialist consultants may be brought into the school, or the student and family referred to specialist services outside the school.
- (d) All student welfare incidents are entered as a 'Behaviour Report on SchoolPro'. More sensitive information is recorded in a secure confidential file with authorised access only.
- (e) Parents/ family will be consulted early in any intervention, unless specifically contra-indicated by circumstances. (HCS Child Protection Policy)

- (f) Teachers, Year Advisors, Head of Wellbeing, Head of Junior School, Counsellor, Deputy Principal and Principal will keep parents notified of escalating circumstances as appropriate. Teachers should check with Head of Wellbeing / Head of Junior School for guidance in this matter.
- (g) All meetings are to be conducted in a manner consistent with HCS Child Protection Policy.

6.8 Welfare Intervention Flowchart



6.9 Working With Other Professionals

The school seeks to partner with local and other agencies to assist in student welfare; and may refer both students and staff to outside services when circumstances indicate additional support or training may be required. These include:

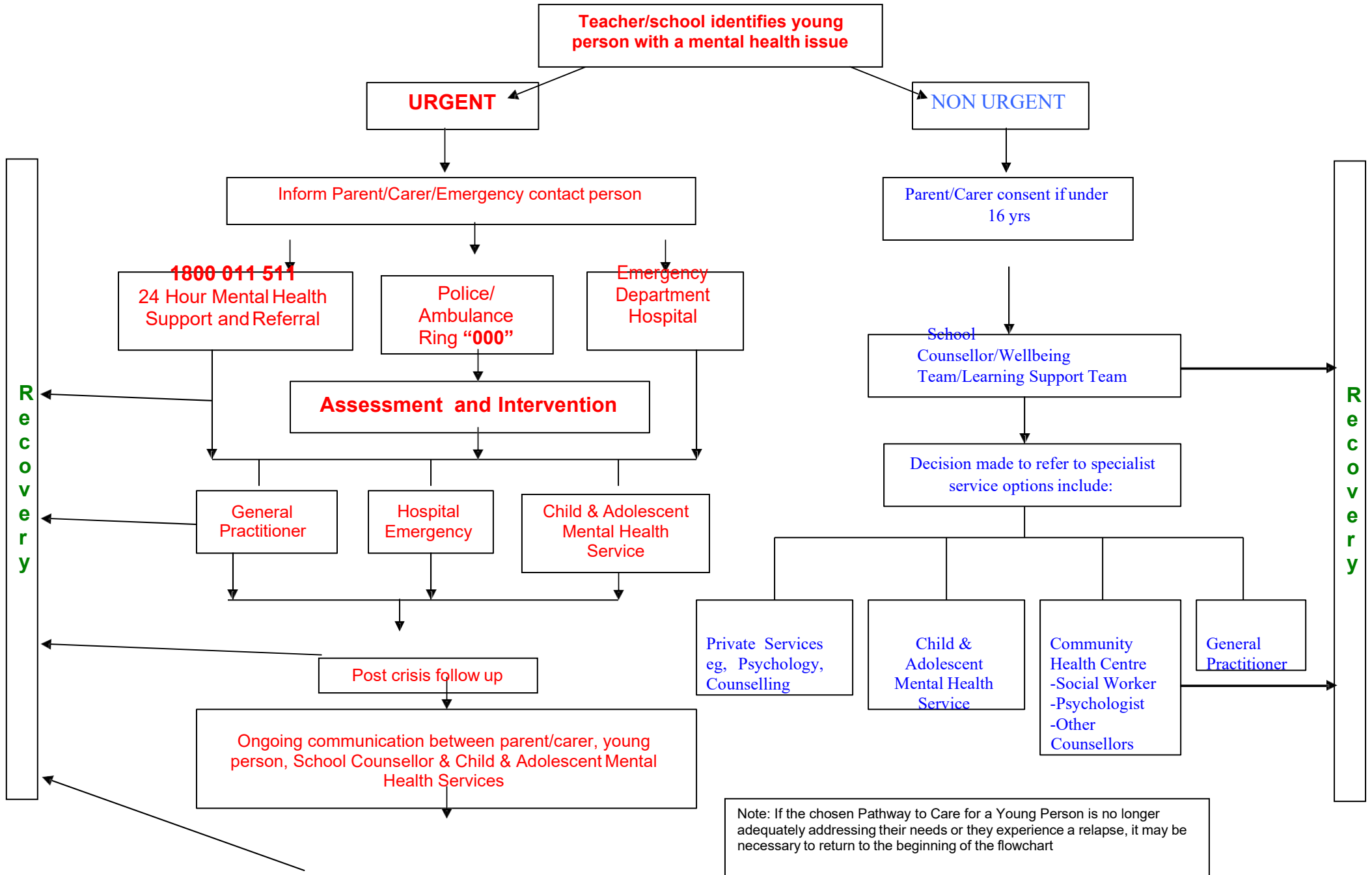
- (a) External providers e.g. medical, educational specialists, who contribute towards planned programs for additional support of students within the school.
- (b) Training partners for staff and school procedures e.g. AIS, CEN
- (c) Local churches for family and spiritual support
- (d) Police Youth Liaison Officer
- (e) Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service
- (f) Department of Communities and Justice

6.10 Resources for Youth Mental Health in Port Macquarie

Mental Health Line	1800 011 511
Alcohol and Drug Information Line	1800 422 599
Headspace Port Macquarie	6588 7300
Community Health	6588 2882

'Pathways to and from Care' School-Link Initiative, Western NSW Local Health District (2012) – See Flowchart following page.

Pathways to Care for a Young Person who has been identified by their school as having a mental health issue.



Note: If the chosen Pathway to Care for a Young Person is no longer adequately addressing their needs or they experience a relapse, it may be necessary to return to the beginning of the flowchart

Planning for return to school
including all key people

