

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE

The board of trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care so they thrive, feel belonging and achieve. We are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority. Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

In line with section 15 of the Children, Young Person and Their Families Act, any person in our school/kura who believes that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually) ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived must follow school procedures and may also report the matter to a social worker or the police.

GUIDELINES

Although ultimate accountability sits with the board, the board delegates responsibility to the principal to ensure that all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, contractors, volunteers and parents. Therefore, the principal must:

1. Ensure the interests and protection of the child are paramount in all circumstances
2. Comply with relevant legislative requirements and responsibilities
3. Make this policy available on the school's internet site or available on request
4. Ensure that every contract, or funding arrangement, that the school enters into requires the adoption of child protection policies where required
5. Develop appropriate procedures to meet child safety requirements as required and appropriate to the school
6. Recognise the rights of family/whanau to participate in the decision-making about their children
7. Ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, deal with disclosures by children and allegations against staff members and are able to take appropriate action in response
8. Support all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are understood and implemented
9. Promote a culture where staff feel confident they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal
10. Consult, discuss and share relevant information, in line with our commitment to confidentiality and information sharing protocols, in a timely way regarding any concerns about an individual child with the board or designated person
11. Seek advice as necessary from NZSTA advisors on employment matters and other relevant agencies where child safety issues arise
12. Make available professional learning, resources and/or advice to ensure all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy
13. Ensure that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member
14. Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 when employing staff



Robyn Garrett - BOT Chairperson



Craig Price - Principal

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CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Overview:

These procedures outline school expectations in implementing our Child Protection Policy 2016.

Definitions:

Child abuse: includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

Indicators of potential abuse may include:

- Physical signs (e.g., unexplained injuries, • burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases).
- Behavioural concerns (e.g., age- inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
- Developmental delays (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- Emotional signs/neglect (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).

Indicators of potential neglect may include:

- Physical signs (e.g., looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight).
- Developmental delays (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- Emotional signs/neglect (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- Behavioural concerns (e.g., disengagement/ neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g., out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to).
- Medical neglect (e.g., persistent skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).

Guidelines:

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents will be reported. If any staff (or persons) feels concern for a child's physical, emotional or psychological safety, this concern must be reported in the **first** instance to the **Principal**, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren) .

All information must remain confidential on a "needs to know" basis.

Under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually, or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Child, Youth and Family or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse:

Listen to the child	Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child's cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.
Reassure the child	Let the child know that they: Are not in trouble. Have done the right thing.
Ask open- ended prompts - e.g., "What happened next?"	Do not interview the child (in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue). Do not make promises that can't be kept, e.g., "I will keep you safe now".
If the child is visibly distressed	Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities.
If the child is not in immediate danger	Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next. Inform the Principal or their delegate as soon as possible.
If the child is in immediate danger	Contact the Principal (or their delegate) immediately. The Principal will make a decision regarding contacting Police
As soon as possible formally record the disclosure	Record: Word for word, what the child said. The date, time and who was present.

Responding to other concerns:

Where a concern about a child doesn't amount to suspicion of abuse or neglect, it could be harmful to the wellbeing of the child and their family/whānau to make a notification to the statutory agencies. Instead, organisations should work to partner with social service providers in their communities to identify and address the needs of the child.

Allegations or concerns about staff:

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with Child, Youth and Family or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.

We commit not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some settlement agreements allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

Confidentiality and information sharing:

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Child, Youth and Family or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Recruitment and employment (safety checking):

Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet; identity verification; references and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.