



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Outcome statement

Students at this school thrive, belong and achieve to the best of their ability. The school is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children.

Scoping

In line with section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, 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 notify the Principal or a Deputy Principal who will communicate with Wai Ora and may also report the matter to a social worker or the local Police.

Delegations

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.

Expectations and limitations

All staff members (including contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and protocols and abide by them. Advice will be sought through Wai Ora and appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

The Principal must ensure that the school:

1. Develops appropriate procedures to meet child safety requirements as required and appropriate to the school.
2. Complies with relevant legislative requirements and responsibilities.
3. Makes this policy available on the School's internet site or available on request.
4. Ensures that every contract or funding arrangement that the School enters into requires the adoption of child protection policies where required.
5. Ensures the interests and protection of the students are paramount in all circumstances.
6. Recognises the rights of family/whanau to participate in the decision-making about their children.
7. Ensures that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, deal with disclosures by students and allegations against staff members are referred to the Principal or a Deputy Principal who involve Wai Ora and will take appropriate action in response.
8. Supports all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection procedures are understood and implemented.

9. Promotes a culture where staff feel confident, they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
10. Consults, discusses and shares relevant information, in line with our commitment to confidentiality and information sharing protocols, in a timely way regarding any concerns about an individual student.
11. Seeks advice as necessary from NZSTA advisors on employment matters and other relevant agencies where child safety issues arise.
12. Makes available professional development, resources and/or advice to ensure all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy.
13. Ensures that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member.

Definitions

- **Child protection** - activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or are at risk of abuse or neglect
- **Disclosure** - information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect
- **Oranga Tamariki** - the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need
- **New Zealand Police** - the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Oranga Tamariki in child protection work and investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred
- **Physical abuse** - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but is not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.
- **Sexual abuse** - any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:
 - **Contact abuse** - touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution
 - **Non-contact abuse** - exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments
- **Emotional abuse** - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:
 - Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse
 - Exposure to family/whānau or intimate partner violence
- **Neglect** – neglect is the most common form of abuse and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:
 - Physical – not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, food and clothing
 - Emotional – not providing comfort, attention and love
 - Neglectful supervision – leaving children without someone safe looking after them
 - Medical neglect – not taking care of health needs
 - Educational neglect – allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs.

Training

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff will be made aware of the policy on child protection. This policy will be referred to in the Staff handbook, and available on the school website.

Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations regarding child abuse
- Consulting with appropriate staff when concerned about a student
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk
- Dealing with students/parents/family/whānau

Identifying Abuse and Neglect

Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect is guided by the following principles:

- We understand that every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the student and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, or worry about the health of a loved one.
- We understand when we are concerned a student is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect, we should talk to the Principal or Deputy Principal. It is important not to act alone.
- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the student. It is not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or neglect.
- It is normal for us to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that we should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.
- Exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of child abuse. There is a high rate of co-occurrence between IPV and the physical abuse of children.

We recognise the signs of potential abuse:

- **Physical signs** – e.g.: unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases
- **Developmental delays** – e.g.: small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills
- **Emotional abuse/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.: age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression
- The student talking about things that indicate abuse – making an allegation or disclosure

We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:

- **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 abuse/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.: roaming unsupervised late at night, left alone, no safe home to return to
- **Medical neglect** – e.g.: untreated medical issue

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

When collecting personal information about individuals, it is important to be aware of the requirements of the privacy principles – i.e.: the need to collect the information directly from the individual concerned and when doing so to be transparent about: the purposes for collecting the information and how it will be used; who will see the information; where it is held; what is compulsory/voluntary information/ and that people have a right to request access to and correction of their information.

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, 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 Oranga Tamariki or the Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Staff may, however, disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11).

Child Safe practice guidelines:

All staff should examine situations where they may be alone with young people, and where-ever possible an open-door policy for all spaces should be used.

Guidelines for staff who encounter student allegations of abuse

Listen and be reassuring

- Listen
- Give them time to talk
- Accept what they have to say
- Respond confidently, keeping voice low and gentle. Show calm and kindness.
- DO NOT interview the student about what they have said.
- DO NOT say “why didn’t you tell me sooner”
- DO NOT fill in the silences
- Let them know it’s not their fault
- Let them know it’s not okay for things like this to happen to kids
- Tell them you will get help

Keep a written record

- Write down what the student tells you, using the same words they used and how you responded.

Don’t promise confidentiality

- The best response might be “thank you for telling me about that, now I need to talk to someone so we can make sure you’re safe”.

Get help

- Report disclosure to Principal, Deputy Principal or Guidance counsellor
 - An agreed course of action will be undertaken.
- Call Ed Assist (0508 332 774) for advice.
- Where you suspect there is serious harm, or risk of serious harm, to a student call Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459
- If you believe a student to be in immediate danger call the Police on 111

Related documentation and information

- Use of physical restraint procedure
- Policy No. 3.2 - Privacy & Protected Disclosure Policy
- Further information including frequently asked questions (FAQ's) are available on the NZSTA website www.nzsta.org.nz
- Ministry of Education website www.education.govt.nz
- [Children's Act 2014](#)
- Further information and sample child protection templates are available in the Children's Action Plan

Legislative Compliance

<http://www.education.govt.nz/>

[Vulnerable Children Act 2014](#)

[Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children](#) – further information and sample child protection templates

Reviewed : September 2023

Next review: September 2026
