

## **SCHOOL POLICY 10: CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND DISCLOSURES**

### **Rationale**

Child abuse is the harming [whether physically, emotionally, sexually ], ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person. This Child Protection Policy provides mechanisms for dealing with cases of suspected abuse, should they arise in our school.

### **Purposes**

1. Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children, including prevention of child abuse or maltreatment, is a paramount goal.
2. This policy and the accompanying procedure provide a broad framework and expectations to protect children, including (but not limited to) staff behaviours in response to actual or suspected child abuse and neglect. It applies to all staff, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children that staff may encounter.

### **Guidelines**

1. Our appointment policy and procedure reflect a commitment to child protection by including comprehensive screening procedures as required by the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 [Children, Young Persons, and Their Families \(Oranga Tamariki\) Legislation Act 2017](#).
2. Visitors will sign in at the office and wear a visitors label - including volunteers, contractors, outside educators and agency representatives.
3. To avoid situations where staff may be alone with children, all staff should identify possible situations where this might be the case. Wherever possible an open door policy and/or visible lines of sight for all spaces should be used (excludes toilets). Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times.
4. Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless in an emergency or where circumstances require it. Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from the school grounds, or from the programme we provide, without parental consent.
5. As part of their induction, new staff are made aware of the policy on child protection. All staff are required to undertake child abuse and neglect intervention training. The training might include but not be limited to: attending workshops, carry out professional reading, attending advanced training for the Principal and/ or Deputy Principal.
6. In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies – i.e., Child, Youth and Family and the Police – where they can make professional diagnosis / decision, this policy will also help our staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.
7. We recognise that there may be genuine occasions when connecting families with social and support agencies is the most appropriate intervention. (e.g. families experiencing hardship or dealing with trauma)
8. We commit to explore opportunities to work with other providers, including from other sectors, to develop a network of child protection practice in our wider community.
9. **Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect will be guided by the following principles:**
  - Every situation is different. It's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. E.g., behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

- All children are assessed and managed within a culturally safe environment. This may involve the family, whanau, extended community, or if appropriate hapu and iwi, participating in the making of decisions affecting that child.
- We understand that we shouldn't act alone. When we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to the Deputy Principal or Principal.
- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall well being and the risk of harm to the child.
- It is normal 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.

**10. We recognise the signs of potential abuse:**

- 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 abuse/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)

**11. We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:**

- Physical signs (e.g., looking unkept 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).
- 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 nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).
- 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).

**12. When a child makes a disclosure**

- a) Action *must* be taken immediately if a child expresses a concern. The starting point is the child *must* be believed.
- b) The child *must* be reassured if they are distressed.
- c) Everything the child says will be documented, by the contacted teacher, *but no interview with the child* , including the use of leading questions, must take place.
- d) A teacher must inform the Principal if observations or information indicate any possible abuse.
- e) The case *must* be discussed by members of the School Senior Management Team on the day of concern, so that further and appropriate action can be taken.
- f) The Principal will ensure the appropriate referral has been made or action taken. All such proceedings will be documented.

**13. Referrals made to the Police and/or New Zealand Children's and Young Person's Service will be guided by the following:**

**i. Contact the Police immediately if a child is in immediate danger and/or the child has committed a crime.** The primary response must be to ensure the safety of the child. A record of the Police Reference number will be recorded

Phone: 07 858 6200 Hamilton Central Police

**ii. Contact Oranga Tamariki (Child, Youth and Family) National Contact Centre asking for a Duty Social Worker with the purpose of discussing appropriate steps.** A record of the contacted person's name will be entered on file and any reference number attached to the call.

Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459)

Email: [cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz](mailto:cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz)

**The call will be prompted where:**

- a) A child has disclosed abuse or neglect (see points 10. and 11. above)
- b) Abuse or neglect of a child has been disclosed by the person responsible

- c) A staff member has observed abuse or neglect, or suspects abuse or neglect on the basis of their own observations
- d) A third party has told a staff member of known child abuse or neglect, or of their suspicions of possible child abuse or neglect

**iii. Contact local family/whānau social service providers (such as Whānau Ora or Strengthening Families) where the concern is more of a general, wellbeing related concern and not specifically about abuse or neglect.**

No further action will be taken until the New Zealand Oranga Tamariki (Children’s and Young Person’s) Service have re-contacted the school; if this has not occurred within three days, the School will initiate another contact phone call to the NZ Children’s and Young Person’s Service. This includes any specific contact with the family of the child being referred.

We will act on the recommendations of statutory agencies, including Oranga Tamariki (CYFs) and the Police. We will only inform families/whānau about suspected or actual abuse after we have discussed this with these agencies.

14. Staff involved in cases of suspected child abuse will receive appropriate support as and when required. This could include counselling.

15. Confidentiality and information sharing- Staff should be aware that:

- Under Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, previously sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 *(Note: The Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Bill was passed into law on 13 July 2017. The Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 has been renamed the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, with an accompanying title of the Children's and Young People's Well-being 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 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.

- 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 can 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.
- 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). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Child, Youth and Family under sections 15 and 16 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.




**PRINCIPAL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BOARD CHAIR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATED:** 25/10/2018

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