

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## Rationale

The Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care. We are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to protect all children. All staff members (including contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and protocols and abide by them.

## Purposes

1. To provide teachers with guidelines so that they can identify signs of abuse or neglect.
2. To provide procedures for dealing with cases of abuse or neglect.
3. To provide a supportive, safe environment which encourages children to discuss their concerns and we recognise the importance of involving whānau in decision making about their children.

## Guidelines

1. This policy is in line with section 15 of the [Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act](#); it's underpinned by the [Child's Action Plan](#) and with the guidelines set out by the [Ministry of Education](#).
2. All cases of suspected child abuse must be responded to in a manner which best ensures children's immediate and future safety. The safety of the child is paramount.
3. The school will seek advice to ascertain the most appropriate agency to deal with the case under investigation.
4. Keeping Ourselves Safe and Kia Kaha units will be taught as part of the P.E./Health curriculum to increase children's assertive skills in recognising and coping with potentially threatening situations, and to help raise teachers' consciousness of the issues. Professional development will be provided to staff to implement these programmes and the child protection policy requirements.
5. Parents will be informed except where a student's welfare is likely to be threatened. When an agency is involved the responsibility for informing parents will be theirs as they have the skills to handle the situation in the most appropriate way to support the child.
6. Senior Management (i.e. DP, Principal, Senior Teachers) will be the resource people in this area. Teachers who have concerns may discuss them with any one of these resource people. No outside agency will be involved without the prior knowledge of the Principal.

## Background

It is essential that teaching staff are aware of the indicators of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse in young children. Although many of these indicators are not exclusively indicative of abuse, notes are recorded over time they often add up to a picture that creates concern. It is important that any teacher building up such a picture of receiving indirect or direct evidence of suspected and/or alleged abuse

does not keep that information to themselves and reports their suspicions to a member of the Senior Management team.

**N.B.: Refer to:**

- Appendix A for suspected Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect)
- Appendix B for Disclosure of Alleged Abuse
- Appendix C for Complaint against staff involving alleged abuse (physical, emotional or sexual)
- Appendix D for Behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse checklist.

**APPENDIX A**

**Procedures for Suspected Abuse.**

1. **Report.** Teacher to report initial suspicions to a member of the Senior Management team.
2. **Observe.** Teacher to keep a record of the child's specific behaviour and physical indicators in the SMS. Records will include dates and times of observations, and if appropriate a body diagram indicating position of bruising or injury and a description of the colour of bruising (to be completed by principal).
3. **Consult.** Observations will be monitored by the Senior Management team. Where concerns have accumulated over a period of time Senior Management will decide whether further action should be taken. This may include consulting an appropriate professional and/or the child's parent or guardian.
4. **Information Feedback.** It is important that the staff involved with the child are kept up to date with whatever development occurs so that they can best support the child and his/her family. It is important that this information is not shared with anyone who does not need to know. Privacy is imperative.

**APPENDIX B**

**Procedures for Disclosure of Abuse**

1. **Listen** to the child in as private and comfortable a place as possible.
2. **Believe** the child, thank them and provide appropriate assurance if they are distressed  
**DO NOT INTERVIEW THE CHILD**
3. **Record** discussion as near to the child's language as possible as soon as possible. Sign, date and hand to principal
4. **Tell** the child that for abuse to stop other adults need to be involved. Provide a support person for the child.
5. **Inform** Senior Management of disclosure immediately
6. **Support** the staff member involved with disclosure. (Senior Management)

**Follow Up:**

**Note:**

In case of serious abuse, reporting to the Oranga Tamariki or the police is mandatory.

- If it appears to be unsafe for the child to return home, the Principal should consult with at least one other member of the Senior Management before contacting Oranga Tamariki or the police. Whenever possible this should be done well before school finishes for the day
- The outside agency will make the necessary arrangements for any further investigation
- The school will provide a support person (not necessarily the classroom teacher) for the child during the interview, especially if it is their first meeting with the child
- Senior Management will seek feedback on the report and find out how best to support the child at school

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Complaint Against Staff Involving Alleged Abuse**

The following procedures will be carried out and will be in line with those set out in the relevant Employment Contracts.

1. The principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees but will not divulge names
2. Both will then inform the staff member of the allegation. The person will be advised to seek legal and/or union representation
3. The school will inform the employee's union (if the employee is a member)

Once an investigation has begun, the complaint will be addressed in accordance with the employee's Employment Contract. At this stage the rest of the staff will be informed as fully as possible in accordance with the Privacy Act. (Counsellors can be made available to any staff)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Behavioural Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse.**

1. Overly compliant behaviour
2. Acting – out, aggressive behaviour
3. Pseudo Mature behaviour
4. Hints about sexual activity. (Includes sexualised drawings and unexpected reactions to sexual/sexualised behaviour with others)
5. Persistent and inappropriate sexual play with peers or toys or with themselves, or sexually aggressive behaviour with others
6. Detailed and age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour (especially by young children)
7. Arriving early at school and leaving late with few, if any, absences
8. Poor peer relationships or inability to make friends
9. Lack of trust, particularly with significant others
10. Non participation in school and social activities
11. Inability to concentrate in school
12. Sudden drop in school performance
13. Extra-ordinary fears of males (in cases of male perpetrator and female victim)
14. Seductive behaviour with males (in cases of male perpetrator and female victim)
15. Running away from home
16. Sleep disturbances
17. Regressive behaviour
18. Withdrawal
19. Clinical depression
20. Suicidal feelings
21. Physical signs – interference with urination, defecation, menstruation and signs of injury (difficulty sitting/walking/not wanting to participate in P.E. – not wanting to undress for P.E.)

## **Conclusions**

1. Teachers will use the checklists attached to help identify children possibly at risk
2. Individual profiles are already kept on the child. These will include observations on social development

3. Keeping in mind children's welfare is paramount. Parents may be consulted about changes in behaviour to try to identify a reason. It may be caused by a change in the family's home circumstances
4. All information/discussions will be confidential to the staff involved
5. Whenever an interview is held with a child, an adult on the staff whom the child has confidence in must be present. The welfare of the child must be first priority and wherever that is compromised the interview must be terminated. Any staff members attending such interviews would need to have the ability to make this judgement
6. Support for staff and the child concerned will be sought from the agency involved

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