

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Policy summary**

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection and recognises the important role and responsibility of all our staff in the protection of children. It includes the Board's expectations when child abuse is reported or suspected by us.

All staff (including regular contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

### **Purpose statement**

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and 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 when investigating suspected or alleged abuse.

Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

We provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

### **Reporting of Suspected or Actual Child Abuse or Neglect**

Any person in our School who 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 the School Child Protection Procedure and must also report the matter to a social worker or the local police.

### **Delegations to Principal: general**

The Board delegates to the Principal responsibility for ensuring all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, contractors and parents. The principal must:

1. Develop appropriate procedures to meet child safety requirements as required and appropriate to the school
2. Comply with relevant legislative requirements and responsibilities
3. Make this policy available on the School website and 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. Ensure the interests and protection of the child are paramount in all circumstances
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 and its related procedures, 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 development, resources and/or advice to ensure all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy
13. Ensure that this policy and its related procedures form part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member

### **Delegations to Principal: Safety checks and vetting**

Core workers: Under this policy the following workers at the School are considered to be core workers under the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014:

- anyone undergoing vocational training;
- all paid employees, including teachers, teacher aides, office staff and caretakers
- all contractors who are a children's worker, including paid bus drivers for school trips and school camps.

Tradespeople and other contractors who are not providing education services are not core workers and do not need to be safety checked.

The Board delegates responsibility to the Principal to:

1. Ensure all paid employees and contractors (and persons undertaking vocational training at the School) who provide education services are safe and competent to work with children;
2. Provide a culture that is open and accountable and makes child safety and welfare a priority.
3. Safety check in accordance with the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 (VCA):
  - a. New core workers in accordance with the (VCA), including relief teachers;
  - b. All existing core workers by 1 July 2018;
  - c. All existing non core children's workers by 1 July 2019;
  - d. All bus drivers who may be transporting students during normal school hours or on school trips. **[Discussion point: checking is mandatory. Suggest we undertake these safety checks instead of the Bus Society].**
4. Not employ or engage a core worker convicted of specific offences as defined in the VCA.
5. Police vet: in accordance with legislative requirements;
  - a. wherever reasonably practicable, all volunteers who will be have overnight contact with students on a School camp. **[Discussion point – this is not mandatory. Suggest police vet, not full safety check]**
  - b. regular workers in the School who are directly funded by parents/caregivers and may be alone with children, including music teachers **[Discussion point: this is not mandatory. Includes music teachers]**
  - c. other volunteers who may have regular contact alone with students where it is reasonably practicable and the Principal considers it is best practice. **[Discussion point – this is not mandatory. Specify any others? Consider: bible in schools, spelling parents etc. This is just to give the Principal an**

**extra discretion for any unforeseen situation where it might be best practice to police vet]**

- d. where reasonably practicable, contractors where it is not practicable for them to either work in a fenced off area or otherwise prevent them having a more than 50% chance of unsupervised contact with children. **[To discuss – Ministry directive but not very practical]**
6. Require contracting companies, including the Pukekohe East Bus Society, to adopt a child protection policy as soon as practicable. **[Note: Board will draft a recommended policy for the Bus Society, for it to consider]**

**Reviewed:**

**Review schedule:** Within 3 years

**Related procedures**

- **Safety checks procedure**
- **Induction Procedure**
- **Child Protection Procedure**

**Other related documentation and information**

- Further information including frequently asked questions (FAQ's) are available on the NZSTA website [www.nzsta.org.nz](http://www.nzsta.org.nz)
- Ministry of Education website [www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)
- [Vulnerable Children Act 2014](#)
- Further information and sample child protection templates are available in the Children's Action Plan guideline Safer Organisations, Safer Children: <http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/assets/CAP-Uploads/childrens-workforce/Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf>

## CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

### 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.

### Identifying possible abuse or neglect

The Child, Youth and Family 'Signs of abuse and neglect' chart is attached to this policy.

For information about identifying child abuse see <http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/27713-working-together-3-0-45ppi.pdf>.

This resource produced by Child, Youth and Family is for people in social service agencies, schools, healthcare organisations, community and other groups who have close contact with children and families/whānau. It includes useful information about identifying possible child abuse and an assessment framework. Copies are also available in the office.

### Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

The 'Child Abuse Reporting Process' flowchart is attached to this policy.

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to the Person in Charge as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and report the concern to Child, Youth and Family.

If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse having taken place, the Person in Charge shall notify Child, Youth and Family.

If the concerns are about vulnerable children whose needs are not serious enough to contact Child, Youth and Family or the Police, they may be reported to the The Vulnerable Children's Hub. This is a contact point for frontline professionals and practitioners in Hamilton city, Christchurch city and South Auckland to raise concerns about vulnerable children whose needs are not serious enough to contact Child, Youth and Family or the Police. Contact the Vulnerable Children's Hub **0800 367 687**.

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), this child protection policy will also help staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.

In many of these cases the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non-statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important for our

organisation to work with these to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

Staff members will discuss suspicions with a senior staff member.

Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

### **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 and the School's Child Protection Policy, Safety Checking Procedure and Appointment and Recruitment Procedure. For core workers 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.

### **Training, supervision and support**

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.
- How to reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk.

- Dealing with child/parents/family/whānau. This policy will be part of the initial staff induction programme.

**Related documentation**

Child Protection Policy

Safety Checks Procedure

Induction Procedure

Attached Flow Charts x2

**Review schedule:**

This procedure will be reviewed at least every three years.

**Reviewed**

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