

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE

Otumoetai Intermediate School recognizes its responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. This policy provides guidance to staff on how to identify and respond to concerns about the well-being of a child or young person, including possible abuse or neglect.

The process for responding to a concern about a child or young person is in the Otumoetai Intermediate School Procedure Manual.

The Board of Trustees delegates responsibility to the Principal to ensure that all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, contractors, volunteers and parents.

PURPOSE

1. This policy outlines the Board's commitment to child protection and recognizes 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.
2. All staff members (including those in part-time and temporary roles, contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and protocols and abide by them.
3. The Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of young people in our care so they thrive, belong 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 or young person is our top priority. Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.
4. In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies – ie Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) and the NZ Police – this policy will also help our staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.
5. We recognize that in many of these cases, the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whanau. It is important for our organization to work with statutory and non-statutory agencies to respond appropriately and sensitively to the needs of vulnerable children and families/ whanau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.
6. We will work to maintain good working relationships with child protection agencies and support our staff to protect children from abuse by consulting with experts with specialist knowledge. Staff will be provided with the necessary professional development to

maintain their ongoing knowledge of identification of and responses to abuse and neglect.

DEFINITIONS

- **Child** – any child or young person aged under 17 years and who is not married or in a civil union.
- **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.
- **Ministry for Children (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 Child, Youth and family 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 terrorizing a child can also be emotional abuse
 - Exposure to family/whanau 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 enroll in education or inattention to education needs.

TRAINING

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognize 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 in regard to child abuse.
- Consulting with appropriate staff when concerned about a child or young person.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimize risk.
- Dealing with child/parents/family/whanau.

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 child 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 child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk with appropriate staff about this. It is important not to act alone. Often the pastoral team are working with children and whanau and hold private information that may be relevant. If staff are at all concerned about student safety, then they will consult with an appropriate person in the pastoral team.
- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the child. 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 recognize 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 recognize the signs of potential abuse:

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

We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:

- **Physical signs** – eg: looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight.
- **Developmental delay** – eg: small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills.
- **Emotional abuse/neglect** – eg: sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behavior, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm.
- **Behavioural concerns** – eg: disengagement/neediness, eating disorders/ substance abuse, aggression.
- **Neglectful supervision** – eg: roaming unsupervised late at night, left alone, no safe home to return to.
- **Medical neglect** – eg: untreated medical issue.

Every situation is different and staff will consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions.

Staff may consult with the Ministry of Children (Oranga Tamariki) through their Edassist contact line 0508 332 774 for guidance in an appropriate response. We also maintain close working relationships with the Tauranga Youth aide officers of the NZ Police and may consult with them when appropriate.

When we respond to a suspected case of child abuse, we will write down our observations, impressions and communications as per procedure and store these in a confidential register. This register will be kept separate from other student records and held securely by the Deputy Principal, Pastoral Care. Access to this register will be strictly controlled.

Staff involved in cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. The Deputy Principal, Pastoral Care has knowledge of individuals and agencies in the Tauranga community

that provide support. Where a staff member has been negatively affected by their involvement in responding to suspected abuse, they may access counselling or psychological support through the school's Employee Support process.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

The privacy and wellbeing of the student is paramount. Staff will speak their concerns only to the appropriately designated people (see procedures). Staff should be aware that:

- 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 the Ministry of Children (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.
- When collecting personal information about individuals, it is important to be aware of the requirements of the privacy principles, ie 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 the 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.

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.

CHILD SAFE PRACTICE GUIDELINES

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

REVIEW SCHEDULE

Within three years.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION

- Vulnerable Children Act 2014: Sections 18-19.
- Children's Action Plan Guideline: Safer Organisations, Safer Children: <http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz>.
- New Zealand School Trustees Association: www.nzsta.org.nz.
- Ministry of Education: www.education.govt.nz.
- Child Youth and Family Interagency Protocol: Breaking the Cycle: www.cyf.govt.nz.

RELATED POLICIES

- Health and Safety Policy.

RELATED SCHOOL PROCEDURES

- Behaviour Management.
- Dealing with Incidences of a Criminal or Illegal Matter.
- Dealing with Drugs.
- Administration of Medication.
- Education Outside the Classroom.
- Emergency Evacuation.
- Enrolling Children with Blood Borne Infections Diseases.
- First Aid.
- At Risk Students.
- Bullying Prevention.
- Child Abuse Allegations Against an Employee.
- Complaints Against Staff Member.
- School Mini-Van.
- Security on School Site.
- Responsible Use of Electronics.
- Protocols for Use of Electronic Devices at School.