

Henry Hill School



NAG 5 – HEALTH AND SAFETY

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 17th May 2016. Replaces Reporting on Sexual & Physical Abuse Policy adopted 12th August 2013. Reviewed and Ratified July 2019. Reviewed and Ratified 15 February 2023

Please read this policy in conjunction with: *The Education Act 1989, Vulnerable Children Act 2014, Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, Human Rights Act, Privacy Act, State Sector Act 1988, National Administrative Guideline 5, Employment Relations Act 2000.*

RATIONALE:

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.

All staff members (including contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, it's associated procedures and protocols and abide by them.

The well-being and safety of children is a paramount concern for us. This includes the prevention of child abuse or maltreatment. The interest and welfare of the child will be the primary consideration when any action is taken about suspected abuse. We support the roles of statutory agencies (the Police and Child, Youth and Family) in the investigation of abuse and will report cases of suspected abuse to these agencies, following the process outlined below.

The school will maintain a good working relationship with the statutory agencies and be familiar with the laws which serve to protect children from abuse. We will consult with these and other agencies with specialist knowledge when needed, and our staff will not assume responsibility beyond their level of experience or training.

PURPOSE:

This policy guides the actions of the school whenever there is a concern about the abuse or mistreatment of children. This includes recording concerns, if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by a staff member or suspected abuse between children at the school.

This policy 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, including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by staff as they provide their service.

GUIDELINES:

1. Roles and Responsibilities Of Staff

All staff are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children at school.

The Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care so they thrive, belong and achieve. They are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and well-being of the child is the Board of Trustees' top priority.

- Understand and implement legal obligations.
- Assign/delegate appropriate roles.
- Commit to a culture of child protection.
- Ensure that risk assessment is compliant with child protection requirements.

The Principal's role is to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to meet child safety requirements as required and appropriate to the school, and that all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, contractors, volunteers and parents.

- Apply board policy.
- Develop, review and implement procedures e.g. safety checks.
- Report child safety concerns
- Respond and refer child protection issues as required.
- Inform board, staff, community.
- Commit to a culture of child protection.

The responsibility for the management of allegations against staff is designated to the Principal, unless the allegation is against the Principal, in which the BOT Chair designated the responsibility.

A Designated Person for Child Protection / Can Kidz Champion is established and they take a lead role and take responsibility for child protection issues. The role involves:

- Being a source of advice and support for staff who may have child protection concerns.
- Ensuring the school's Child Protection Policy is reviewed regularly, and that staff are well informed.
- Ensuring staff have received child protection training to identify and respond to concerns about a child.
- Overseeing the maintenance and confidentiality of child protection records and documentation.
- Liaising with external agencies and notifying concerns to statutory agencies when necessary
- Serve on Interview Panels for the recruitment of new staff to ensure that the candidate is asked questions relating to child safety and well-being, and they will ensure the interview process has a 'child safety and well-being centred lens' in place.

If staff have any concerns regarding the safety and well-being of any child they should consult with any of the following people:

- a) Principal
- b) Designated Person for Child Protection / Can Kidz Champion
- c) BOT Chair

2. Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

Physical abuse - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.

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.

Emotional abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

Family violence may be witnessed/experienced by children and involve physical, sexual and

emotional abuse.

Some signs of potential abuse and neglect

- Physical signs of abuse: unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases. Neglect: looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight
- Medical neglect (e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).
- 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 child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to).

Note: *It is not important to identify what specific kind of abuse might be occurring. Staff simply need to be aware of and able to recognise the whole range of concerning signs.*

3. Training

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate child protection training. Staff will take part in annual child protection training. As part of their induction, new staff are taken through this Child Protection Policy and given training around how to recognise and respond to suspected abuse.

In Depth training will be provided for the Designated Person for Child Protection / Can Kidz Champion.

4. Responding to child abuse

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families 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.

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, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

It is normal for people to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that staff should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if a pattern is noticed or several signs together cause concern.

This school will act on recommendations made by statutory agencies concerning the official reporting of suspected abuse.

Any staff who have concerns for the well-being of any child should consult immediately with the Principal.

Staff should use the associated Action Plan Flow Charts: 'Reporting To A Disclosure/Concern About Abuse' or 'Reporting An Allegation Of Abuse Made Against A Staff Member'. Both are located on the wall of our First Aid Room, and available online in our shared Google Drive folder entitled 'Health & Safety' in the 'Administration' folder.

In cases where it is felt that a child is at immediate risk of harm, the Principal will notify the Police.

Staff will respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour by writing down observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This will be kept separate

from other anecdotal or cumulative information. Any written statements need to be passed to the Principal and will be kept in a secure place within the Principal's office.

Information volunteered by a child should be fully and accurately recorded. No child should be interviewed or in any way questioned about the suspected abuse.

No staff member will act alone about suspected child abuse but will consult with the Principal. Where staff suspect child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, the Principal is committed to promptly reporting the matter to the Police or the Child, Youth and Family.

Staff who are responding to cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. The school will maintain knowledge of such individuals, agencies and organisations in the community that provide support.

5. When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member

Where it is suspected that child abuse has been carried out by a staff member (paid, unpaid or in any other role), the matter must be reported promptly to the Principal. If the staff member is the Principal, the Board of Trustees Chairperson needs to be informed of the matter promptly.

Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. This may require the Principal to consider removal of the staff member from the school environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employment contract.

All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.

Staff are encouraged to seek support from NZEI or NZSTA in the first instance, and also will be supported to seek external support from outside agencies.

The Police or Child, Youth and Family may be informed dependent of the allegation of abuse.

6. Confidentiality and information sharing

The school will seek advice from Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the Principal.

In general, when collecting personal information about individuals, privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

Staff may 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 Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

7. Peer abuse

This school will ensure that the safety of the child is paramount and no form of physical, sexual or verbal harassment or violence from peers will be sanctioned or minimized in any way.

While the situation is being evaluated, the children concerned will be separated. It is essential to reduce further emotional trauma for the victims who may be fearful and distressed if they are in contact with possible abusers.

In some cases where the abuse has occurred at the school, immediate stand down or suspension measures may be appropriate.

This school will make every effort to keep personal information as private as possible. Parents will also be asked to keep all information confidential to allow proper investigation and resolution.

8. Child and staff safety – supervision guidelines

All staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff could be alone with children. This should be avoided wherever possible.

Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (i.e. not possible for toilets), and in the case of overnight trips or school camps the staff member should ensure that all contact with children occurs in plain sight of other staff. Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times and check to ensure what they are doing is appropriate.

Be aware of situations where children are out of sight together and supervise accordingly.

Visitors to the school should be monitored at all times by staff. All volunteers and outside instructors should be monitored also.

Unless requested by children or parents there is usually no need to assist school aged children with toileting. If the situation arises, ensure that another staff member knows who is assisting the child, and that parents are informed.

Staff must ensure that when administering medication or applying sunscreen, etc that they do so in full view of other staff.

Staff must ensure they do not use social media and technology to interact with children in any situation, unless it is directly linked to school learning outcomes.

In some situations a child may require more regular physical and or personal care assistance. If possible, involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies (such as Ministry of Education's Special Education Group) to assist. If this assistance is not available, ensure that staff are aware of the appropriate procedures when giving assistance.

Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child, unless an emergency requires it. Except in an emergency, children are not to be taken from the school without written parental consent.

9. Safe Recruitment Of Staff

The aim of this process is to reduce the risk of harm to children by safety checking people employed or engaged in work that involves regular or overnight contact with children. Volunteers should also be safety checked.

The following needs to be considered and implemented as part of the interview/induction process when assessing risk of harm when conducting safety checks:

- **Identity Confirmation**

- a) All applicants must provide one primary form of identification, e.g. NZ Passport or NZ full birth certificate if issued after 1 Jan 1988 with a unique ID number
- b) And provide a secondary form of identification, e.g. NZ Drivers Licence, Community Services Card, IRD Number.
- c) One of the forms of identification must include a photo.
- d) Applicants can also use electronic identification, e.g. RealME.

- **Risk Assessment**

Documentation

- a) Includes a chronological summary of the applicants work history for the preceding 5 years.
- b) Transcripts and proof of qualifications. Where possible verify these with the organisations that issued them.

Interview

We must consider:

- a) Would they pose a risk to children and if so, to what extent?
- b) What is their attitude to child safety?

Include questions to find out about

- a) The applicant and their qualifications.
- b) Their view on discipline and keeping children safe.

- c) Their attitudes and experiences when working with children.

Reference Checking

Find out if there are any gaps or differences from what the candidate told you by contacting referees:

- a) At least 1 but preferably 3 referees not related to the applicant's extended family.
- b) By phone using a landline or work number – it is very hard to verify who is on the end of a cell phone.
- c) Their immediate past employer.

- **Ongoing Evaluation**

Boards must ensure that;

- a) All staff are safety checked within 3 years of their last safety check.
- b) Non-teaching staff are police vetted every three years.
- c) The child protection policy is reviewed at least every 3 years.
- d) Note: Police vets will have been completed for all teaching staff every three years through the Education Council NZ.