

NAPIER INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Child Protection Policy

Summary

Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children, including prevention of child abuse or maltreatment, is a paramount goal of this organisation. This policy provides guidance to staff on how to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of a child, including possible abuse or neglect.

- The process for responding to a concern about a child in Appendix C of this policy.

The interests of the child will be the paramount consideration when any action is taken in response to suspected abuse or neglect. This organisation commits to support the statutory agencies (and the New Zealand Police (the Police)) to investigate abuse and will report suspected cases and concerns to these agencies as per the process in this policy.

Our Designated Person for Child Protection, Tim Van Zyl, will be responsible for the maintenance and annual review of this policy, in addition to carrying out the responsibilities outlined in this policy. Staff will not assume responsibility beyond the level of their experience and training. Our organisation commits to ensure staff have access to the training they need.

This policy was authored by Wendy Gray on the 1st July 2015. A digital copy can be found on our website. It is consistent with Police guidelines and will be updated when new guidance is issued.

Purpose, scope and principles

Our child protection policy supports our staff to respond appropriately to potential child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect. It is our organisation's commitment to protect children from abuse and to recognise the important roles all of our staff have in protecting children.

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

In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the Principal and the Principal to refer to the statutory agencies - i.e., and the 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.

We recognise that in many of these cases, the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and nonstatutory 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. Contact details for agencies and services in our community are provided as an appendix to this policy.

To ensure that this organisation demonstrates continual improvement in child protection practice, we will work to maintain a good working relationship with child protection agencies and support our staff to protect children from abuse by consulting with experts with specialist knowledge and providing the necessary training options.

We also commit to explore opportunities to work with other providers, including from other sectors, to develop a network of child protection practice in our community.

This policy applies to all staff, including contractors and volunteers.

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.
- **Designated person for child protection** - the manager/supervisor or designated person responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about child protection policy.
- **Disclosure** - information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
- - 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 Oranga Tamariki 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 terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
 - Exposure to family/whānau 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 enrol in education or inattention to education needs).

Training

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are made aware of the policy on child protection.

Identifying child 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, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

- We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to the Designated Person for Child Protection - we shouldn't act alone.
- 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 recognise 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 cooccurrence between IPV and the physical abuse of children.

We recognise the signs of potential abuse:

- *Physical signs* (e.g., unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases).
- *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., ageinappropriate 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).

We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:

- *Physical signs* (e.g., looking rough 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).
- *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).

- *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).

- *Behavioural concerns* (e.g., disengagement/neediness, eating disorders/substance

Every situation is different and staff will 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.

This organisation will always act on the recommendations of statutory agencies, including and the Police. We will only inform families/whānau about suspected or actual abuse after we have discussed this with these agencies. When we respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour we write down our observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This is kept separate from our other records and access will be strictly controlled.

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

Confidentiality and information sharing

We will seek advice from and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the Principal or designated agent. Staff should be aware that:

- 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 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 under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

Child safe practice guidelines

To avoid situations where staff may be alone with children, all staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff may be alone with children. Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (excludes toilets). Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times.

Visitors should be monitored at all times by staff and volunteers and outside instructors should be monitored by staff.

If activities require one to one physical contact (i.e., classes in swimming, gymnastics etc.) parents and caregivers should be advised.

Where a child or young person requires assistance, e.g., if they are intellectually or physically disabled, if possible involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies (in education such as the Ministry of Education's Special Education group) to assist. If this assistance is not available, ensure that the staff members are aware of the appropriate procedures when giving assistance.

Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it. Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from our organisation's premises, or from the programme we provide, without written parental consent.

Appendix 1

The Designated Person for Child Protection is the champion for improving child protection practices within your organisation and also a source of advice and expertise for staff seeking assistance.

They should be either a manager/supervisor or someone within your organisation who is knowledgeable on child protection issues, ideally both. They will be the primary point of contact for escalating any concerns about a child, including abuse or neglect.

It is important that the designated person is familiar with the signs of potential abuse, the most effective ways of handling concerns and the legal framework for child protection (including the Vulnerable Children Act 2014). Consider offering professional development for the designated person.

Appendix 2

Organisations with cultures of child protection are ones where:

- Child-centred decision-making informs action, recognising the vulnerability of children.
- There is a culture of staff constructively challenging poor practice and staff feel confident they can raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
- They work towards continuous improvement in their child protection practices.
- They recognise the importance of early intervention.
- They support the principle of applying the least intrusive intervention necessary to protect vulnerable children.
- Concerns about the safety of children are taken seriously and responded to quickly.
- There are clear policies and procedures in place that are accessible to staff, along with sources of advice on good practice.
- Staff receive the training they need to respond to the needs of children accessing the service, including understanding the signs and symptoms of potential abuse or neglect, cultural frameworks for working with children and their families/whānau and responding appropriately where a concern is raised or an allegation is made (including ones involving staff).
- Staff understand safe practice. For example, when and how to touch, comfort or discipline children and what is expected of them when they are alone with a child.
- Staff understand the importance of working together, with professionals from other sectors, to better address the needs of vulnerable children.
- Safer recruitment procedures are used.
- Families/whānau seeking help for their children feel safe and trust the quality of support they receive.

Appendix C

CHILD ABUSE DISCLOSURE

1. Procedures to be followed in cases of suspected child abuse, will differ in case where there is:-

- a. An urgent safety need to such an extent that the child cannot return home that day; or
- b. The need for a thorough planned investigation when the child is not at immediate risk of further abuse.

2. Staff are to bring all cases of suspected abuse of pupils to the attention of the Principal, or, if not applicable, to the BOT. This includes cases of suspected physical (including neglect) emotional or sexual abuse.

3. Teachers who have a disclosure made to them in class will accept the disclosure with little or no comment but follow the matter up with the Principal without delay.

4. The Principal, after careful discussion with the reporting teacher, will gather all information the school has about the child. If urgent, as in (a) above, the Principal will make an immediate referral to the Police or Social Worker of the Children and Young Persons Service, Department of Social Welfare. The child's caregivers will be advised of any action taken by the statutory agencies involved as required under the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act. This will be as soon as it is appropriate depending upon the child's safety, the need for follow-up or referral to another agency. If (b) then the Principal will refer to statutory agencies after full consultation with appropriate staff and other professionals involved. The caregivers will be advised if any action is planned by the agency taking the action.

5. If a staff member is implicated as being responsible for the abuse, contact with the Board of Trustees Chairperson shall be made immediately. The Board shall ensure that the interests of the staff member (refer to NZEI guidelines) and those of the child are met.

6. Any reporter of suspected child abuse is protected from any criminal civil or disciplinary action by Section 16 Children, Young Person and their Families Act. The prime concern of the school will be to refer to persons with the statutory obligation to investigate and necessary act to protect the child. The school's primary concern then is to support the pupil in any subsequent action.

7. It is necessary that accurate factual records be kept of possible abuse e.g. students appearance, behaviour or comments. Any written records must be handed to the principal. These records will become part of the principal's investigation.

8. Parents or legal caregivers will be informed depending on the circumstances. If someone in the student's home situation is directly implicated by allegations of abuse, the principal, acting out of concern for the student's welfare, should first report the matter to the appropriate agency, such as Police or Social Welfare. The agency will be in the best position to advise the Principal how to inform the parents or caregivers, without putting the student further at risk. If the student's welfare is not threatened by revealing the details of the alleged abuse to parents or caregivers, then they should be informed immediately.

9. If outside agencies are allowed to interview students at school, the interview should proceed in accordance with this policy. Police or social workers may request interviews at school. Acting in the student's best interest, the Principal may decide to agree to such a request. Parents or caregivers are to be informed of the request for an interview, unless the student's welfare is likely to be threatened.

10. To support the student, the Principal or an appropriate staff member must be present at the interview. Interviews should not be prolonged unnecessarily and are to be conducted in a manner appropriate to the school environment and to the age of the student. If, out of concern for the student's welfare, the parents or caregivers are not at present at the interview, the Principal must come to a clear understanding with the interviewer of the method by which parents or caregivers will be informed.

11 The Principal will ensure that any staff members involved in the process will get any support necessary for their well being

Signed _____ Review / /
BoT Chairperson