

# REPORTING CHILD ABUSE (PHYSICAL / SEXUAL) AND NEGLECT POLICY

## Rationale

This policy acknowledges that boards of trustees have particular responsibilities under legislation as well as through social expectations to provide a safe environment that caters for the physical and emotional wellbeing of its students. Such an environment should aim to ensure that all children and young people are treated with dignity and respect.

## Purpose

The policy on reporting child abuse and neglect in schools will be successfully implemented with:

- an emphasis that the paramount consideration in such a policy is the welfare and interests of the child or young person
- a commitment to ensure that children and young people are provided with preventative education to enhance their safety and awareness
- the development of procedures for dealing with cases of current or historical abuse
- the identification of which external agencies should be used, what services they provide,
- what liaison is required along with appropriate referral procedures.

## Guidelines

New staff should be shown this policy as part of their induction.

Schools are able to provide preventative education in their delivery of the Health and Physical Education national curriculum statement. Students should have access to information about child abuse and appropriate responses to it through the relevant parts of this curriculum.

The principals shall be the safety advocate for the child or young person.

The vital role of cultural groups and local support agencies in supporting the policy should be recognised by schools/principals in their ongoing communication and liaison with their wider community. Similarly, the role of relevant statutory agencies should be recognised in the consultative process.

Decisions about informing parents or caregivers should be made after consultation between the school and the statutory child protection service called in by them.

## Recommended reporting procedures and flowchart

- • If the child or young person is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety.
- • Listen to the child or young person and reassure them but do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep.
- • Ensure that any information or disclosures by the child or young person are written down and check that comments and events surrounding the concern have also been recorded
- • Ensure that the child or young person has a responsible adult supporting them through this process and that the support role is clearly defined.
- • Do not formally interview the child or young person. Obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed
- Agree on appropriate course of action
- The principal ensures notification to NZCYPS or the police. Await further contact before taking any action
- After making sure the referral has gone to NZCYPS or the police get support for yourself from appropriate persons if needed.

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## CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST EMPLOYEES POLICY

### Rationale

This policy is made on the basis that all children and young people should be treated with dignity and respect and have the right to have their needs met in a safe environment. When allegations are made that threaten that safety, school management will act on those allegations while taking care to treat the employee fairly.

### Purpose

To ensure and/or provide:

- the safety of the child or young person is the first consideration
- that all complaints are taken seriously and dealt with effectively
- that in the case of a complaint against an employee, action is guided by the applicable employment contract and/or principles of natural justice
- clear guidance for management and employee in respect of any allegations received concerning children or young persons within the school environment.

### Recommended procedures

The recommended procedures should be followed in the event of suspicion or disclosure of abuse against an employee. The child or young person must be adequately protected.

Please note there are two procedures to be followed here:

- the reporting procedure in respect of the child/young person
- the procedure for dealing with the employee.

In all cases it is suggested that no one person should have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and the employment issues. These steps are to be followed when dealing with an employee:

The principal should ensure implementation of the **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect policy** regarding reporting.

1. The Chairperson of the School Board of Trustees should be informed as soon as possible.
2. The principal is advised to ensure records are kept of any comments by the student, complaints and/or allegations, and follow-up action taken.
3. The decision to follow up on an allegation of suspected abuse or neglect against an employee of the school should be made in consultation with the following:
  - NZCYPS
  - New Zealand Police
  - Chairperson of Board of Trustees.
5. The principal and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees will have a dual responsibility in respect of both the child or young person and the employee. As mentioned above it is strongly recommended that an immediate consultation is sought with the agencies involved. The purpose of this consultation is to enable the principal and the board chair to discuss the concern or allegation and to:
  - determine the extent of the assistance they can give to the investigation
  - consider the timeframe to be followed with regard to the possible conflict between what steps the board may take as an employer and possible police intervention
  - consider the employer role of the board in conjunction with any procedures outlined in relevant employee contracts.
6. When it has been determined the board should pursue the matter as an employer, the board should advise the person accused of the allegation and seek a response. It is vital that the employer should refer to the relevant employee contract in every case when proceeding with disciplinary action.
7. The employee complained against should be advised of their right to seek support/advice from:
  - NZEI, PPTA counsellor or field officer, or other appropriate union/representative
  - other relevant teacher's organisations if applicable.
8. Under no circumstances should the child or young person raising the concern or making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. This may require the board to contemplate removal of the employee from the school environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employee contract.
9. All actions of the board must be consistent and applicable with the collective employment contract or individual employment contract.
10. Boards should take care to ensure actions taken by the school do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by any external agency. It is strongly recommended that the board maintain a close liaison with NZCYPS and the police to achieve this.

\*\*If the principal is the accused staff member, the chair will act as child safety advocate with advice from NZSTA. The principal may seek advice from NZEI, NZPF and any organisation or person they deem appropriate.

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