



GORDONTON SCHOOL

VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S POLICY

The board of trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children 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 is our top priority. Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

In line with section 15 of the Children, Young Person and Their Families Act, any person in our school/kura who believes 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 school procedures and may also report the matter to a social worker or the local police.

The board delegates responsibility to the principal to ensure that all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, contractors, volunteers and parents. Therefore, 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's internet site or available 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, 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 forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member

Review Date

Identifying possible abuse or neglect

Child abuse and neglect can take many forms. The important thing is for teachers to consider the overall wellbeing and risk of harm to the child and for them to use the appropriate procedures to act on their suspicions. Teachers are in the position to recognise when something is wrong.

Indicators of potential abuse
Physical signs - unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases.
Behavioural concerns - age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness aggression.
Developmental delays - small for age, cognitive delays, falling behind at school, poor speech and social skills
Emotional abuse - sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm
Disclosure – the child talking about things that indicate abuse.
Indicators of potential neglect
Physical signs – looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight.
Behavioural concerns – disengagement, neediness, eating disorders/ substance abuse, aggression
Developmental delays - small for age, cognitive delays, falling behind at school, poor speech and social skills
Emotional neglect - sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm.
Neglectful supervision – out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to.
Medical neglect – skin disorders or other untreated medical issues

Responding to suspected abuse or neglect and other concerns

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to either the principal, deputy and assistant principal who will follow procedures and where necessary take immediate steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and follow procedures and report the concern to Child, Youth and Family.

- Staff members will discuss suspicions with management team
- If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse having taken place, a member of the management team shall notify Child, Youth and Family
- Responding to a child in immediate danger – referral to the Police
- Responding when a child discloses abuse or when there are concerns about abuse or neglect phone Child, Youth and family to discuss appropriate next steps.

Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse:	
1. Listen to the child	Disclosure by children are often subtle and need to be handled with care, including an awareness of the child's cultural identity.
2. Reassure the child	Let the child know that they; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not in trouble • Have done the right thing

3. Ask open ended prompts e.g. "what happened next?"	Do not interview the child (in other words do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue) Do not make promises that can't be kept, e.g. " I will keep you safe now"
4. If the child is visibly distressed	Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities.
5. If the child is not in immediate danger	Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.
6. If the child is in immediate danger	Contact the Police immediately.
7. As soon as possible formally record the disclosure	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word for word what the child said • The date, time and who was present.

Recording and notifying Child, Youth and Family of suspected child abuse or neglect:

What process to follow	For example	Key considerations
1. Recording	Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything said by the child • The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant • The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g. any physical behaviour or developmental concerns). • The actions taken • Any other relevant information 	Relevant information can inform any future directions
2. Decision making	Discuss any concerns with management team	No decision should be made in isolation
3. Notifying authorities	Notify Child, Youth and Family promptly if there is a belief that the child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected. The preferred initial contact is the National Contact Centre. 0508 Family (0508 326 459) cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz	Child, Youth and Family will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers in consultation with us. 2. Advise what, if any immediate action may be appropriate, including referring to the Police.
4. Following the advice of CYF	CYF advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring concerns to the Police.	CYF is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether they need to work with the family or refer them to other people who can help

<p>5. Storing relevant information</p>	<p>Securely store:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The record of concern (digital copy). • A record of any related discussions, (including copies of any correspondence). • A record of any advice received. • Action taken. • Any other earlier concerns 	<p>Records assist in identifying patterns</p>
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Actions or concerns about staff

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be reported to the management team.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management may take steps to remove the staff member whom an allegation has been made from school. Advice and guidance will be sought from NZEI and NZSTA.

Consult with CYF and or Police before taking any further actions.

Definitions

- **Abuse**- the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of a child.
- **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.
- **Child** – any person or young person aged under 17 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** – principal / management team responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about an individual or want advice about child protection
- **Disclosure**- information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
- **Child, Youth and Family**- 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.
- **Safer recruitment and standard safety checking** – following good practices for pre-employment checking, VCA forms
- **Physical abuse**- any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, 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 purpose 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 emotion 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/whanau or intimate partner violence.
- **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 to look after them
 - Medical neglect – not taking care of health needs
 - Education neglect – allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in a school.
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- **Family violence** – covering a broad range of controlling behaviours, commonly of a physical, sexual and/or psychological nature that typically involve fear, intimidation or emotional deprivation. It occurs within a variety of close interpersonal relationships, such as between partners, parents and children, siblings, and in other relationships where significant others are not part of the physical household but are part of the family and /or are fulfilling the function of a family.