

## **CHILD ABUSE and SAFETY**

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### **ACTION**

To safeguard the physical and emotional safety of children and ensure the school meets its obligations with regard to child abuse and safety.

### **GUIDELINES**

1. Where a complaint is received against a staff member the appropriate procedure as laid down in the relevant employment contract will be followed.
2. The school's insurance company is to be informed.
3. In cases of complaints against the principal the relevant clauses in his/her employment agreement will be followed.
4. All staff members will be given professional development to help them in recognizing signs of sexual abuse. (See Following Page).
5. **Disclosures:** Disclosures must be followed up immediately and the appropriate action taken. Refer the flowchart below.
6. Staff who suspect abuse must report the matter to the Principal and follow through with the process until a conclusion is reached. If the Principal isn't available then someone from the Senior Team or the SWIS. No outside agency will be involved without the prior knowledge of the Principal or senior member of staff. (Refer to next page for Definitions and signs of abuse.)
7. The principal will then contact the appropriate agency. This could be CYFS, NZ Police, Public Health Nurse, SWIS.
8. Confidentiality of the informant is protected at all stages.
9. Teachers implement the programme, 'Keeping Ourselves Safe', as part of the Health and Physical Education curriculum at all levels of the school.
10. The Principal is to keep staff members who are involved with the child informed, so that they continue to support this child.
11. All conditions of the 'Vulnerable Children's Act 2015' are met.
12. All regular day to day PTA members to be vetted.

### *What is child abuse and neglect? (definition from CYFS publication)*

**Physical abuse** is any physical injury done, non-accidentally, to a child by a parent or caregiver.

Physical abuse endangers the child's physical or emotional health or development. Shaking a baby is physical abuse.

**Emotional abuse** includes constant yelling, threatening, scaring a child, belittling them or playing games with their emotions.

**Sexual abuse** is when children and young people (sometimes even toddlers and babies) are used in a sexual way by someone older. This includes everything from obscene exposure, touching the genitals in a sexual way, to rape. It doesn't include normal sexual play between children of approximately the same age. Neglect occurs when children do not receive what they need for their physical and emotional well-being and development. Neglected children may not get enough love and affection, they may not have enough to eat, their injuries may be left untreated, their clothes may not be warm enough, they may be dirty and at risk of infection, or they may be left without adequate supervision.

### *What does abuse and neglect do to children?*

Children can be severely damaged by abuse and neglect. They are hurt physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Their self-esteem is damaged, sometimes permanently. The effects of this can go on for years – long after the abuse or neglect has stopped. In extreme cases they can die as a result of abuse or neglect. Abuse and neglect must be stopped. The sooner it can be stopped, the sooner the child can be helped to begin the process of healing.

### *How to tell if a child is abused or neglected.*

If a child or young person is being abused or neglected, they will be upset. There are some general signs that may indicate something is wrong.

#### **General signs of upset include:**

- *moodiness, irritability, excessive crying*
- *loss of appetite – changes in eating habits*
- *changes in behaviour at school, or towards other people*
- *personality changes*
- *withdrawn behaviour*
- *being afraid to go home, running away*
- *inability to concentrate*

- *having unexplained fears – of the dark, of being alone, of specific people (even relatives or friends),*
- *of places (for example, bedrooms and toilets)*
- *sleep disturbances – nightmares, fear of going to bed or sleeping alone.*

### **Physical abuse signs**

Bruises, burns, fractures, scalds or grazes.

- *These injuries may be accidental – but if a child seems to be hurt often, the injuries are getting more serious, or there's something odd about them, it could be abuse.*

### **Emotional abuse**

This isn't as easy to see as other types of abuse.

Children may:

- *tend to believe they are bad and worthless*
- *have problems getting on with others, or be hard to live with*
- *'shut off', or become too good*
- *have difficulty controlling anger.*

### **Sexual abuse**

Often the only sign may be some slight emotional upset. Children may:

- *complain of pain or irritation in the genital area, or get infections and urinary problems*
- *start doing things they've grown out of – like crying, wetting or soiling their pants, or clinging*
- *have inappropriate sexual play or sexual language*
- *give a coded message or say directly that they are being abused.*

### **Neglected children may:**

- *be sickly and fail to thrive*
- *look uncared for, undernourished, constantly dirty, ill or cold*
- *do badly at school through being tired, hungry or ill.*

### **Remember: neglect can be fatal.**

Children left unsupervised can die in house fires, be hit by cars or drown in baths or pools.