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OTATARA SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

We are committed to providing a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse and recognise the obligation we have to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care. The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern, with the child at the centre of all decision-making. This policy is intended to protect all children staff may encounter – including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by staff.

The Otatara Board of Trustees will meet all existing statutory and contractual obligations, including matters relating to employment.

All staff members (including contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

This policy is part of our initial staff induction programme.

Policy principles

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- The Board recognises that every situation is different and that it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions.
- All staff (including contractors and volunteers) have a responsibility to discuss any child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect, with their team leader or the designated person for child protection (The Principal). With regard to Section 15 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 **any person may directly report** suspected harm, abuse or neglect to a social worker or constable (providing the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them).
- We support the roles of the New Zealand Police (the Police) and Oranga Tamariki – The Ministry for Children (OT) in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.
- We are committed to open and transparent relationships and recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their children. We will share concerns about child safety issues with the family/whānau unless this would result in an escalation of risk.
- We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.
- We will share information in a timely way and staff will discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the Principal.
- We are committed to promoting a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal. (It is normal for staff to feel uncertain, the important thing is that they recognise when something is wrong, especially if they notice a pattern, or several signs that make them concerned. Staff need to consider the overall wellbeing and risk of harm to the child, they do not need to be able to define or categorise the type of abuse or neglect).
- We will work in partnership with social service providers in our community to identify and address the needs of the child.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'BLW' followed by a stylized name.

Identifying possible abuse or neglect

For information about identifying child abuse see

<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/identify-abuse/> or Child Matters booklet – *How Can I Tell? Recognising Child Abuse* – (available in the school policy folder in the office foyer)

Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

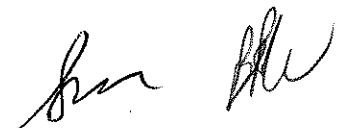
Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse:

- Listen to the child - disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child's cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language
- Reassure the child - let the child know that they:
 - Are not in trouble
 - Have done the right thing
- Ask openended 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".
- If the child is in immediate danger contact the Police immediately
- If the child is visibly distressed provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision
- If the child is not in immediate danger re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next
- As soon as possible formally record the disclosure - Record:
 - Word for word, what the child said
 - The date, time and who was present

Recording and notifying Oranga Tamariki (OT) of suspected child abuse or neglect:

Key considerations:

- Recording formally - Record:
 - 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, behavioural or developmental concerns)
 - The action taken by your organisation
 - Any other information that may be relevant
- Decision making - We encourage a discussion with the Principal, team leader or a colleague. Decisions do not need to be made alone.
- Notifying authorities - Notify OT promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected. A phone call to the National Contact Centre (see below) is the preferred initial contact as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options.
Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459) Fax: 09 914 1211 email: contact@mvcot.govt.nz
- Follow the advice of OT, this advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police. OT is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether work is needed with the family or to put them in touch with people in their community who can help.
- Storing relevant information (records assist in identifying patterns). Securely store:
 - The record of the concern
 - A record of any related discussions, (including copies of correspondence, where appropriate)
 - A record of any advice received
 - The action your organisation took, including any rationale
 - This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident)



• OT will:

*Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers in consultation with our organisation

*Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police

Allegations or concerns about staff

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, we will consult with OT or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They will also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. Ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations will be followed. We commit not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to a culture of child protection.

Confidentiality and information sharing

The Privacy Act 2020 and the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated.

Recruitment and employment (Safety checking)

Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet; identity verification; references and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, the applicant will not be employed.

Training and support

Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues
- Dealing with child/parents/family/whanau

Policy Review Date: February 2022

Next review Date: February 2024

Signed:



BOT Chairperson



Principal Otatara School