



Child Protection Policy

Rationale

The safety, well-being and care of children and young people are a foundational priority to St Patricks Catholic School. This includes vulnerable children who are at risk of harm to their well-being now and in the future as a consequence to the environment in which they are being raised.

For the purpose of determining a young person's well-being, the following environmental factors in relation the child's base needs must be considered: "Emotional, Physical, Social, Developmental and Cultural. As a Special Character school an emphasis is also placed on the spiritual virtues which impact a child/young person's Faith relationship with Christ.

St Patricks Catholic School aims to support and maintain partnerships with statutory agencies, grow in knowledge and understanding of legislation, and uphold statutory processes which serve best to reduce risks, prevent harm, identify and protect the welfare of children and young people in relation to

Physical Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Neglect

Sexual Abuse

The interest and welfare of the child or young person will be the primary consideration when any action is taken about suspected abuse. The school supports the roles of statutory agencies (the Police and Child, Youth and Family) in the investigation of abuse and will report cases of suspected abuse to these agencies.

Purpose

This policy guides the actions of St Patricks whenever there is a concern about the abuse or mistreatment of children. This includes recording concerns, if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by a staff member or suspected abuse between children at the school.

This policy 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.

Our children will leave our school continuing to be faithful, responsible and lifelong learners.

1. Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

Physical abuse - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.

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.

Emotional abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.

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.

Family violence may be witnessed/ experienced by children and involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

2. Training

The school is 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, sports & activities coaches, off and on-site parent volunteers and invited community programme leaders are taken through the programme policy on child abuse, responding to disclosure and Reports of Concern.

3. Identifying child abuse and neglect

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.

It is normal for people to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that staff should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if a pattern is noticed or several signs together cause concern.

4. Confidentiality and information sharing

The Privacy Act 1993 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. Note that, under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act, 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 Child, Youth and Family or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

5. Review

This Policy will be reviewed in 12 months from the date of signing and every two years thereafter or as required. These reviews will be comprehensive, and take into account the views of staff/stakeholders, and lessons-learned.

Child Protection Procedures

Responding to Disclosures

Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse:

In most instances, non-Child, Youth and Family Ministry staff will be dealing with information received from adults. If, however, a disclosure is received directly from a child, the following steps should be taken:

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 and have done the right thing.

Ask open-ended prompts – e.g.

“What happened next?”

Do not interview the child (in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts).

Do not make promises that can't be kept, e.g. “I will keep you safe now”.

If the child is visibly distressed

Provide appropriate reassurances and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities.

If the child is not in immediate danger

Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.

If the child is in immediate danger

Contact the Police immediately via 111.

As soon as possible formally record the disclosure

Record:

- what the child said, word for word
- the date, time and who was present.

Responding to suspected abuse or neglect - Report of Concern

In all cases where a member of staff has a concern about a child's safety or wellbeing they will report this to the principal. This needs to be done in a timely manner to best ensure the safety of the child.

When the concern is about actual or suspected abuse or neglect, this is to be reported to the Child, Youth and Family National Contact Centre on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459) where a social worker will assist you to complete the CYF Report of Concern attached to this policy.

Dealing with suspected abuse

The basic principles of dealing with disclosure are:

Respond to the person

Believe what they tell you and what you see.

Record

Record all initial statements and observations and concerns immediately to avoid misinterpretations or confusion at a later date.

Record any decisions made and actions taken.

Formally record the following points using the template provided :

- anything said by the child
- the date, time, location
- names of any people 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 St Patricks School and
- any other information that may be relevant.

Consult

Do not make decisions alone.

Consult with the Principal and make contact with someone with child protection knowledge; CYF contact centre 0508 326 459, Taumarunui Office duty Social Workers Ph: 07 904 5820 and/or Taumarunui Family Violence Coordinator Ph: (07) 895 5749

Child, Youth and Family will make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers & advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.

Ensure the safety of the child

Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child. If there is imminent risk call Police on 111.

The designated safe spaces within the school will be the sick bay, or alternatively the conference room.

Report

Decide to act on your concerns.

Do not leave it to someone else or hope it will not happen again.

Get support

Get support for yourself. Support can be accessed via the following sources:

Parish Priest of the Catholic Church of The Immaculate Conception Ph: 07-895 8030

NZEI members Ph:0800 693 443

Taumarunui Counselling Services Ph: 07-895 6393

And the school Principal

When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member

Where it is suspected that child abuse has been carried out by a staff member (paid, unpaid or in any programme role), the matter must be reported promptly to the Principal. Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. The following procedure will be followed:

Record

Disclosure by a child

If needed, refer to the “responding to disclosure process” above

If immediate danger or safety is an issue act with urgency

Consult

The Principal will consult with Child, Youth & Family or Police.

Child, Youth & Family or programme management to advise employee and seek a response (depending on discussions with CYF and/or Police)

Advise

Employee will be advised of their right to seek support/advice from union or other appropriate representatives.

Consider

Programme management to consider removal of employee from the programme environment subject to the employment agreement

Collaborate

Programme management to maintain close liaison with

Child Youth and Family or Police

Confidentiality

All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.

7. Confidentiality and information sharing

The Principal will seek advice from Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the designated child safety advocate.

The Principal may 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 Child, Youth and Family under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.



8. Peer abuse

The school will ensure that the safety of the child or young person is paramount and no form of physical, sexual, verbal or cyber relational harassment or violence from peers will be sanctioned or minimized in any way. Recording will be in accordance with the above “Responding to Disclosure” procedure and a record of concern produced.

While the situation is being evaluated, the children/young people concerned will be separated. It is essential to reduce further emotional trauma for the victims who may be fearful and distressed if they are in contact with possible abusers.

In some cases where the abuse has occurred immediate stand down may be appropriate, as outlined in both the schools discipline & behaviour policies.

The school will make every effort to keep personal information as private as possible. Parents will also be asked to keep all information confidential to allow proper investigation and resolution.

8. Child and staff safety – supervision guidelines

All staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff could be alone with children. This should be avoided wherever possible.

Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (i.e. not possible for toilets).

Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times and check to ensure what they are doing is appropriate. When completing Risk Assessment Management (RAM's) for learning outside of the classroom, the staff / child ratio and risk level are considered throughout preparation.

Be aware of situations where children are out of sight together (dens, play huts etc.) and supervise accordingly.

Visitors, Volunteers and Outside instructors to the school must complete all information required in the “sign in register” pertaining to the purpose of their visit and their motions should be monitored by staff present while on site.

Education outside the classroom activities that require one-to-one physical contact (i.e. classes in swimming, sports coaching etc.) parents and caregivers should be informed and give consent prior. All volunteers, outside instructors and parent helpers must be police vetted in accordance with the Safety Checks for Children's Worker's regulations set out in The Vulnerable Children's Act.

Unless requested by children or parents there is usually no need to assist school aged children with toileting. If the situation arises, ensure that another staff member knows who is assisting the child, and that parents are informed.

In some situations a child or young person may require more regular physical and or personal care assistance. If possible, involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies (such as Ministry of Education's Special Education Group) to assist. If this assistance is not available, ensure that staff 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 home without written parental consent.

Review schedule: Biennially