



Child Protection Policy

To be read in conjunction with the *Child Protection Procedures*

Rationale

The **Parnell District School's** Board of Trustees is committed to the safety and wellbeing of students in our care so they thrive, belong and achieve through educational programmes, modelling of school values by staff, promotion of a safe and positive environment and policies and procedures designed to safeguard children from harm. We are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

This policy outlines the board's commitment to child protection and recognises the important role and responsibility of all our staff in the protection of children. It includes the board's expectations when child abuse is reported or suspected by us. All staff members (including contractors and volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and protocols and abide by them.

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.

Although ultimate accountability sits with the board, 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 in relation to the child safety 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 so 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; and
13. Ensure that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member.

Related documentation and information

- Further information including frequently asked questions (FAQ's) are available on the NZSTA website www.nzsta.org.nz
- Ministry of Education website www.education.govt.nz
- Vulnerable Children Act 2014
- Further information and sample child protection templates are available in the Children's Action Plan guideline Safer Organisations, Safer Children:
<http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/assets/CAP-Uploads/childrens-workforce/Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf>

Background

This child protection policy adheres to the following Acts: • Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994 • Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 • Privacy Act 1993 • Human Rights Act 1993 • Education Act 1989/1998 • Domestic Violence Act 1995 • Care of Children Act 2004 • Employment Relations Act 2000 • Child Young Person and their Families Act 1989 • Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights • Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

The child safety team (CST) will consist of:

- The principal
- A staff member with relevant training and experience, e.g. SENCO or a member of the Health curriculum team
- A member of the senior staff.



Child Protection Procedures

These procedures guide the implementation of the *Child Protection Policy*

1. Safety Checking of Staff

Parnell School ensures that all staff working with children, both paid and voluntary, have been appropriately safety checked.

1. All adults working with children are screened through a process to verify their identity, gather information through application forms, interviews and reference checks. (Appendix 1- available on 365)
2. This will include relievers, casual workers and others at the discretion of the school.
3. Teaching staff are police vetted as part of their registration process. All non-teaching staff will be Police vetted by the school. (See Police vetting policy 3.10)

2. Safe working practices

1. Staff will always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests and avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
2. All staff will agree to and follow the Parnell School's Code of Conduct and school values. All teachers will also abide by the Code of Ethics.
3. All staff should keep their personal and professional lives separate. This includes discouraging close personal relationships, coaching or care-taking activities of other people's children outside the work environment.
4. Staff are to inform their senior manager of any existing relationships with staff members, students, clients or their families that could constitute a conflict of interest, or place the staff member in a position of compromise.
5. Staff will take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and seek to promote the wellbeing of themselves and others. (See Appendix 2- on 365)
6. Staff will constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern in relation to the child safety.
7. The school will seek to avoid placing staff in situations where they are working alone with a child out of sight of others. Staff should also seek to reduce this risk by working with staff to ensure they are observable by others.
8. No child is to be placed in a room on their own but if a "safe place" is required for a child to calm themselves, this place should be developed with the senior management. The place will be somewhere that is observable.
9. All other Health and Safety school policies and procedures cover aspects of safe practice and should be read along with this policy and procedures.

3. Procedures for Suspected Abuse

1. When abuse is suspected or an allegation made against another person, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of child.
2. If suspicion of abuse arises, the staff member concerned will not act alone, but will follow the flow chart and consult with the Principal. (Appendix 3 on 365).
3. After consulting with the principal, the staff member will be asked to keep a daily record of the child's specific behaviour and physical indicators. Records will include dates and times of observations, and if appropriate a body diagram indicating position of bruising or injury and a description of the colour of bruising.
4. All records must be regarded as documents that can be requested by parents or other parties in legal disputes and therefore all suspicions and information will be recorded factually, and held confidentially. Anything that is an opinion or a personal concern will be identified as such and not as being fact.
5. The Principal will inform Child, Youth and Family or the Police where there grounds for concern are established.
6. Although the parent or caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, there may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed e.g. when the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator and may put the child at further risk or when custodial orders prevent this.

4. Procedures for Disclosures of Abuse

If a child voluntarily discloses abuse

1. Staff will not question a child who has disclosed abuse. However, it is important that a child is listened to and responded to appropriately.
 - Reassure the child it was right to disclose.
 - **DO NOT INTERVIEW THE CHILD**
 - **Record** this discussion in the child's language as soon as possible. Sign, date and keep this information confidential.
 - **Do not agree to keep the matter secret. Tell** the child that for abuse to stop - other adults need to be involved. Provide a support person for child.
 - **Support** the staff member involved in the disclosure. (Child Safety Team)
2. Report the matter to the principal immediately. As in cases of suspected abuse, the information and concerns will be made available only to those staff who have a need to know. This will be determined by the Principal.
3. The principal will inform CYPs and supply written records.
4. The principal will also inform chairperson of the board of trustees of any referral to statutory agencies. No names or details will be divulged.
5. As with where abuse is suspected, when a disclosure is made, the parent or caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, there may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed e.g. when the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator.

Note: In case of serious abuse, reporting to the New Zealand Children and Young Person's Service (NZCYPS) or the Police is mandatory.

- If it appears to be unsafe for the child to return home, the principal should consult with at least one other member of the CST, before contacting NZCYPS or the Police. Whenever possible this should be done before school finishes for the day.
- The outside agency will make the necessary arrangements for any further investigation.
- The school will, if necessary, provide a support person (not necessarily the classroom teacher) for the child during an interview with CYPs.
- The CST will seek feedback on the report and find out how best to support the child at school.

5. Information Sharing

1. Parnell School recognises that all staff must act within the legal requirements of the Privacy Act, Children, Young Person's and their Families Act, Health Information Act and other statutes. There are provisions within each of these acts for sharing information needed to protect children and enable other people to carry out their legitimate functions.
2. Parnell School will maintain a good working relationship with Child, Youth and Family and with Police, and be familiar with the laws that serve to protect children from abuse. We will consult with Child, Youth and Family, the Police, and with other appropriate agencies that have specialist knowledge to help us protect children from abuse.
3. The school will abide by custody arrangements and keep a copy of court orders on file.

6. Complaint against Employees involving Alleged Abuse

The following procedures will be carried out and will be in line with those set out in the relevant Employment Contracts.

1. When abuse is suspected or an allegation made against a staff member, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child.
2. Parnell School will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against any other person and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.
3. The principal will inform the chairperson of the board of trustees and follow complaints guidelines.
4. The employee will be informed of the allegation and advised to seek legal and/or union representation.
5. Once an investigation has begun, the complaint will be addressed in accordance with the employee's Employment Contract.
6. The employee will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any abuse related investigation and may be stood down on full pay for the period.
7. Staff will declare to the Principal any situation where there could be a conflict of interest, and provision made on a case-by-case basis about who will handle the process.
8. If the complaint is found to be upheld the staff disciplinary process will apply including referral of child abuse to Police or Child, Youth and Family.

9. If the police decide to undertake a criminal investigation then the member of staff may be suspended, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure. Any internal process still in action, will be suspended and no internal investigation or evidence will be gathered that might prejudice the criminal investigation.
10. If the Principal is aware that a member of staff it has placed on precautionary suspension also works with children for another organisation, either as an employee or a volunteer, it should ensure that the other organisation is informed of the suspension and the subsequent outcome. Consultation with Child, Youth and Family or the Police will determine how this information is conveyed.
11. The Principal will liaise with Child Youth and Family and the Police regarding the progress of the investigation.
12. If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is “reasonable cause to suspect” that abuse may have occurred. The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour of poor practice by a member of staff which needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures.
13. The principal will follow mandatory reporting guidelines to the Education Council.