

# CHILD ABUSE

## Purpose

The Board of Trustees has particular responsibilities under legislation as well as through social expectations to provide a safe environment that caters for the physical and emotional well being of our students. Such an environment should aim to ensure that all students and young people are treated with dignity and respect.

The recommended policy on reporting child abuse and neglect in schools will be successfully implemented with:

- An emphasis that the paramount consideration in such a policy is the welfare and interests of the child or young person (CYPF Act (S6))
- The provision of guidelines and training for teachers and others working with children and young people in the school environment
- A commitment to ensure that children and young people are provided with preventative education to enhance their safety and awareness
- The development of procedures for dealing with cases of current or historical abuse
- The identification of which external agencies should be used, what services they provide, what liaison is required along with appropriate referral procedures

## Guidelines:

It is expected that the Board of Trustees will need to facilitate training for all staff to help them to identify suspected abuse and/or neglect and to be able to respond appropriately. It is recommended that training needs be identified and planned regularly in consultation with staff.

The implementation of a training policy, individual Boards and/or Principals should liaise with CYFS and New Zealand Police.

Further support can be provided by:

- Guidance counsellors
- Visiting teachers
- Education psychologists attached to Specialist Education Service (SES)
- Personnel who can provide further assistance to students

Schools are able to provide preventative education in their delivery of the Health & Physical Education national curriculum statement. Students should have access to information about child abuse and appropriate responses to it through the relevant parts of this curriculum.

A useful way of managing suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect is for a staff member to be nominated as a safety advocate for the child or young person.

The vital role of cultural groups and local support agencies in supporting the draft policy should be recognised by schools/principals in their ongoing communication and liaison with their wider community. Similarly, the role of relevant statutory agencies should be recognised in the consultative process.

Decisions about informing parents or caregivers should be made after consultation between the school and the statutory child protection service called in by them.

### **Recommended Reporting Procedures and Flow Chart:**

- If the child or young person is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety
- Listen to the child or young person and reassure them but do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep
- Ensure that any information or disclosures by the child or young person are written down and check that comments and event surrounding the concern have also been recorded
- Ensure that the child or young person has a responsible adult supporting them through this process and that the support role is clearly defined
- Do not formally interview the child or young person. Obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed
- Inform the Principal
- Hold immediate discussion with guidance counsellor or child safety advocate
- Agree on appropriate course of action
- The Principal ensures notification to CYFS or the Police. Await further contact before taking any action
- After making sure the referral has gone to CYFS or the Police, get support for yourself from appropriate persons if needed