



SCHOOL POLICY 1.1

Responding to a Child Talking About or Disclosing Abuse

Date: May 2025

Responding to a Child Talking About or Disclosing Abuse

A child may try to find different ways to tell you that they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Talking about abuse is really scary for children and therefore they may share things in a way that is confusing, vague about details, use a very quiet voice or merely hint at things that aren't right, or they might act out with toys, or use words that suit their age.

It is unusual for children to make up situations of abuse. If a child tells you about abuse, or hints at it in some way, here are some guidelines to follow:

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.
- Be understanding and take what they say seriously.

Reassure the child:

- Let the child know that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Let them know it's not their fault and they are not in any trouble.
- Accept what they have to say and don't use critical statements like, "why didn't you tell me sooner?"
- Let them know it's not ok for things like this to happen to kids.
- Tell them you will get help.

Don't ask questions or interview the child:

- Do not interview the child or ask them leading questions. Just listen and reassure them. Interviewing the child can interfere with their information to you.
- Do not make promises that can't be kept, such as promising confidentiality or to keep them safe from harm.
- **Do not inform family or parents unless advised by healing agencies.**
- The best response might be: "Thank you for telling me about that, now I need to talk to someone so we can make sure you're safe."
- **If the child is in immediate danger, contact the police immediately.**
- Attend to any physical or emotional distress in the child, take to hospital if appropriate.
- If the child is visibly distressed, provide reassurance 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 and is not visibly distressed, re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.

Reporting Process for Child Abuse

The reporting process is followed after you have seen a child being abused, OR you have observed signs of abuse in a child OR a child has disclosed being abused AND you have responded to the child's needs as outlined in our process from responding to a child disclosing abuse.

Are you a staff member?

- Immediately inform your Principal or Deputy Principal (DP).
- The DP will report the information to the Principal.
- If the suspected abuser is the Principal, inform the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees or Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459 (0508 FAMILY) or the Police: Dunedin Central: 105.

Prepare a written record:

- Date, time and place of observation or disclosure of abuse
- Names of anyone present
- What the child says – exactly using their words
- Any physical or behavioural signs of abuse

GIVE THIS TO THE PRINCIPAL OR DP

Are you the Principal?**Principal's Actions:**

- Gather information (MVCOT – Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki)
 - Ensure you have a full report from the staff member who identified the abuse and they have signed it.
 - Offer the staff member support. Tell them what actions you will take.
 - Ring MVCOT or one of the agencies to discuss your concerns.
 - MVCOT will tell you if you need to do a formal report about your concerns.
 - Do not conduct an investigation or assume you have the expertise.
 - Inform the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees (Stephen Charles).
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Review

This procedure will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or identified school needs.

Approved by Board of Trustees: date

Next Review Date: May 2027

Principal's Signature: _____