

Child Protection - Policy

Rationale

Students at Tauranga Adventist School thrive, belong and achieve to the best of their ability. The school is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children.

“Child”, in the context of our school’s child protection policies, means a child or young person aged under 18 years - Children’s Act 2014.

Delegations

Although ultimate accountability sits with the board, the board delegates responsibility to the *Principal/Tumuaki* to ensure that all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, volunteers and parents.

Staff

Staff must be receptive and sensitive to students so that students feel listened to and believed. Staff members are trained to consider overall wellbeing and risk of harm to the child, which includes recognising the **definitions and symptoms** of neglect, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children. It is normal for staff to feel uncertain. The important thing is that they can recognise when something is wrong, especially if they notice a pattern or several signs that make them concerned. Staff should feel empowered to act on suspected abuse and neglect, even when the patterns of symptoms are subtle while avoiding adhering to stereotypes and making assumptions.

Students

Students should know what to do and who to talk to if they are being harmed, feel uncomfortable, or want to disclose abuse. Our school uses the Keeping Ourselves Safe programme.

Acting on Concerns

The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, defines child abuse as the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.

- If a concern about a child doesn't amount to a suspicion of abuse or neglect, the school may choose to involve and work with, community social service providers to identify and address the needs of the child. Our designated person for child protection knows who to contact.
- If a concern does amount to a suspicion of abuse or neglect see below.

Unless the information was disclosed or supplied in bad faith, the person making the disclosure cannot be prosecuted.

Responding to a child

- If you believe a student is being abused, act immediately to ensure their safety.
- Inform the principal and agree on an appropriate course of action, in a timely manner.
- Listen to the student and reassure them, but do not make any promises or commitments that cannot be kept.
- Ensure that any information or disclosures made by the student are written down.
- Ensure the student is supported and that there is a responsible adult at the school who is available to the student throughout the investigation, and afterwards.
- Ask open-ended questions. **Do not formally interview the student.** Only obtain necessary and relevant facts. Record word-for-word what the student says. Include the date, time, and who was present, in any written notes.

Reporting concerns

As above, inform the principal and agree on an appropriate course of action, in a timely manner.

Any person can make a direct referral to the Police, or Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children if they believe a child is being abused.

- Make a referral to Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children:
 - for an urgent referral, call the Contact Centre 0508 EDASSIST (0508 332 774), or the Police.
 - for a non-urgent referral, follow the process on the **Children's Teams** (referrals) section of the website, or email edassist@ot.govt.nz if you don't use Children's Teams.
- After making the referral, get support for yourself, if needed.
- **Deciding when and who will inform the parent(s) and/or caregiver should be determined by Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children and police, in consultation with the school.**
- Advise the Board.

Storing Information

Securely store records documenting concerns, conversations, advice received, actions taken (including rationale), and any warnings issued. Keep this concern with any other concerns as records help identify patterns.

Safe Practice Professional Development

Creating a culture of care and protection of children requires that staff have the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to work together effectively to implement our school's policies and procedures.

Tauranga Adventist School has a designated person for child protection who has the knowledge to provide guidance and expertise to school staff. This person is the principal. All staff who work closely with students should have the skills necessary to recognise and respond to suspected abuse and neglect.

We inform staff about the school's child protection policies as part of their orientation, and skills needed to implement our child protection policies are included in professional development and performance management programmes.

Training is available for staff in child protection development/learning.

We expect a high degree of professionalism from our staff in working with children and encourage staff to keep their professional and personal lives separate.

Legislation

- Children's Act 2014
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Children, Young Persons, and their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Act 2017

Board Chair: Alison Sewter

Reviewed: 24.08.2022	Next review: August 2025
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