

Mairehau High School



Child Protection Policy

Rationale

Mairehau High School accepts that children have a fundamental right to have their needs met in an environment safe from abuse and neglect.

The school accepts its responsibility under the legislation for engaging in safe employment practices and playing a role in preventing and identifying child abuse and neglect.

The school's Board of Trustees, in accordance with the requirements of Part 2, Section 18 (a), (b), (c) & (d) of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, will:

- a) adopt this child protection policy
- b) ensure that the policy is available on the school website and is available upon request from the school office
- c) ensure that all agencies, contracts or funding arrangements fulfil the requirements of this policy
- d) review the policy every three years

Purpose

To recognise the critical role and responsibility that all staff have in identifying and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect and responding appropriately to concerns about a child's wellbeing.

To be committed to providing a safe environment, free from harm and physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

To follow robust processes and procedures in employment and on-going provision of training to minimise staff and students' exposure to risk.

To provide a network of support where abuse/neglect is identified.

To be committed to working with other children-related agencies to improve the well-being of vulnerable children.

Guidelines

All Mairehau High School students are covered by this policy regardless of age.

The Principal is required to ensure that leaders within the school work together with other children's agencies (e.g such as the Police, Oranga Tamariki, Social Workers, etc) to prevent incidents of abuse at school of all children by:

- annual training for all staff regarding child protection, including the issue of obtaining informed consent (for staff and students) regarding any physical contact and cultural expectations
- keeping up to date with government policy regarding Child Protection
- induction of support staff and volunteers includes sharing the Child Protection Policy
- police vetting of all staff and volunteers (including BOT members)

- maintaining relationships with external agencies
- communication with School Community Officer (SCO) to maintain this relationship and increase awareness of their role
- RAMs form to include how teachers can keep themselves and students safe on EOTC trips
- Each Learning Team will develop guidelines detailing best Child Protection practices to reduce the risk of abuse of students and increase safety to staff (to be attached to this policy).
- The School recruitment process ensures that applicants disclose all convictions, even those that are covered by the Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004.
- Staff/BOT members must disclose any relationships with students (whether pre-existing or developed through school e.g. sports coaching, babysitting, after-school jobs, etc.). The Principal or Child Protection coordinator will record any such disclosures and annually updated / stored in the staff members personnel file.

The Principal is required to ensure that leaders within the school work together with other children's agencies (such as the Police, Oranga Tamariki, Social Workers, etc.) to improve the well-being of children by:

- protecting them from abuse and neglect
- improving their physical and mental health and their cultural and emotional well-being
- improving their educational outcomes and their participation in cultural and extra-curricular activities
- strengthening their connection to their families, whānau, hapu and iwi, or other culturally recognised family groups
- improving their self-management skills and their contribution to society
- improving their social and economic well-being

The Principal will ensure that there are procedures (see below) to identify and respond to allegations regarding abuse.

The Principal will ensure that there are procedures (see below) in place to deal with the possibility of an allegation involving a staff member.

The Principal will appoint the school's Guidance Counsellor as the Child Protection Coordinator and ensure that the role is adequately resourced.

Education about consent and relationships

The school will implement the MHS health education curriculum based on regular community feedback and the New Zealand Curriculum, and ensure that it covers topics such as consent, interpersonal skills and healthy relationships.

In conjunction with staff training, the definition of consent within the school's health education curriculum, is the standard for all consent across the school.

Reporting and responding to incidents

The school has a responsibility to educate students about reporting any incidents and providing counselling options. The mana and dignity of every student is respected, where the student voice is listened to, and actions are taken to protect them.

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse is a broad term that includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential to cause or effect serious harm to a child.

Child neglect

Child neglect is the failure or omission to care for a child. This failure or omission to care can be physical, emotional, medical or educational or involve a lack of supervision.

Core worker: Core worker means a children's worker whose work in, or providing a regulated service requires or allows that, when the person is present with the child or children in the course of that work, the person is either:

- the only person present; or
- is the children's worker who has primary responsibility for, or authority over the child or children present

Non-core worker: means a children's worker who is not a core worker.

Confidentiality and Information sharing

The Privacy Act 1993, The Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Act 2017 and The Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 requires information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated.

Recruitment and Employment

- The Principal will ensure that safe recruitment practices in line with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and Section 78C and 78CA of the Education Act are in place. In accordance with these Acts, the school is required to police vet all core and non-core workers, who work at the school if they are likely to have unsupervised access to students at the school during normal hours.
- Contractors and their employees will be required to give assurance that employees have been police vetted, if they are likely to have unsupervised access to students at school during normal school hours.
- In addition to a police vet, core and non-core workers will also be subject to identity verification, references, and interviews. The school will seek a work history, and previous employers will be contacted. Teacher certification status to be checked. If there is any risk that an applicant might pose a risk to a child that applicant will not be employed.
- Notwithstanding the first and second bullet points above; if core children's workers, e.g. Public Health Nurses, Family Planning Nurses, Youth Workers, who have been safety checked by their employer have unsupervised access to students, the school will not proceed with a police vet but will seek an assurance from their employer by letter that this has been done.
- The school will keep updated records of police vetting of all appointed staff, including contractors and their employees who work at the school, with a schedule of renewal dates
- A statement of disclosure regarding previous and existing relationships between students/staff is completed

The Guidance Counsellor will be the school's Child Protection Coordinator.

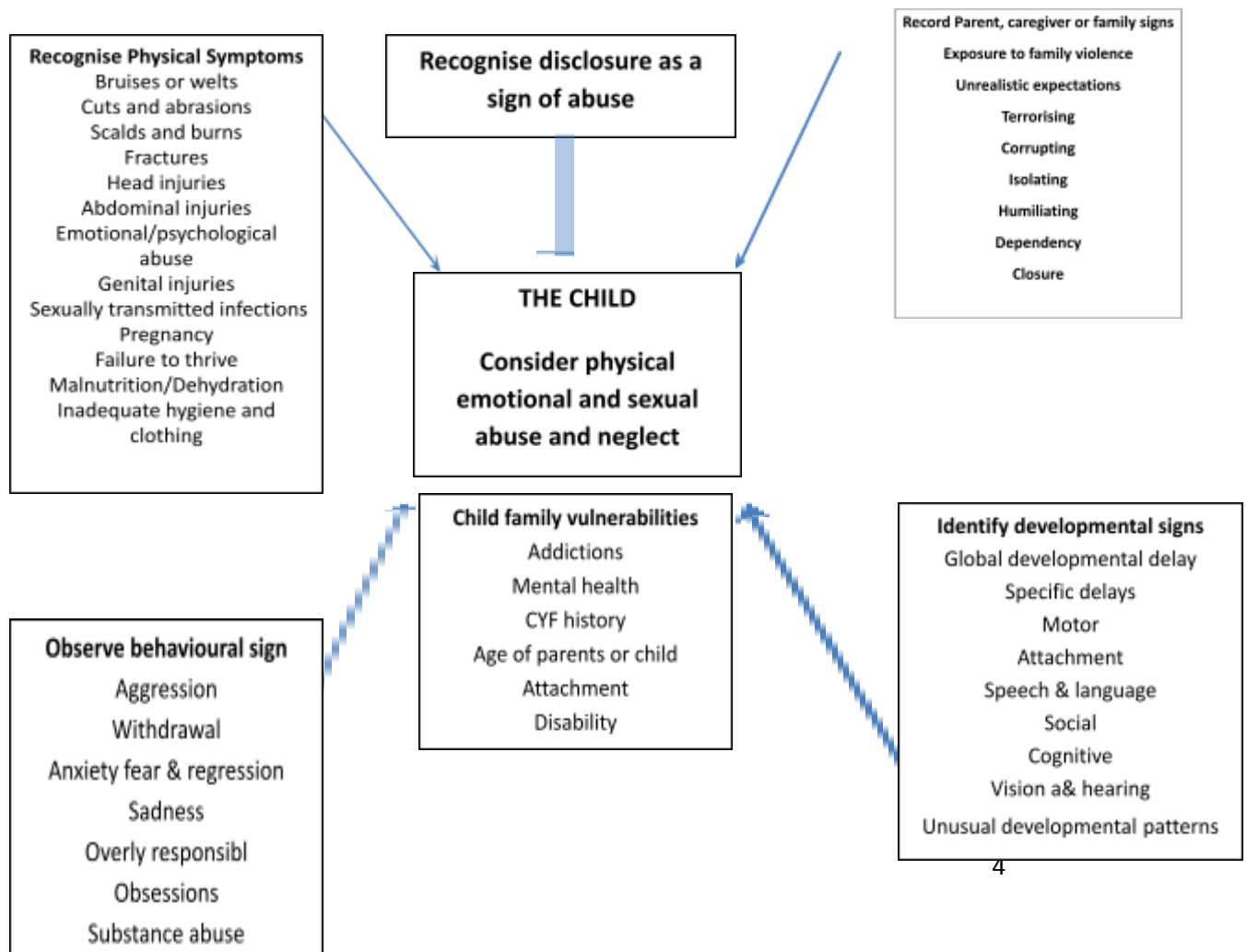
The school will delegate the Guidance Counsellor as the Child Protection Coordinator, whose responsibilities will include:

- Participation in the review of the Child Protection Policy and procedures as required
- Working with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure training of staff is available annually

- Developing a training plan relating to the identification and prevention of child abuse or neglect
- Co-ordinating the school's response to child abuse and neglect
- Working with SLT to ensure that documentation tools are in place and accessible to staff for the recording of care and protection concerns
- Receiving debriefs following events and ensuring that these enhance child protection practices
- Applying for and accessing the resources required to support the programme
- Providing support and advice to staff regarding prevention and identification of child abuse

Possible signs of abuse or neglect (for general teaching staff to develop awareness and/or provide information for referrals to other professionals and/or developing empathy for students)

The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below may indicate abuse or neglect. However, they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations, they may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person's situation and assessed by someone with specialist training where possible.



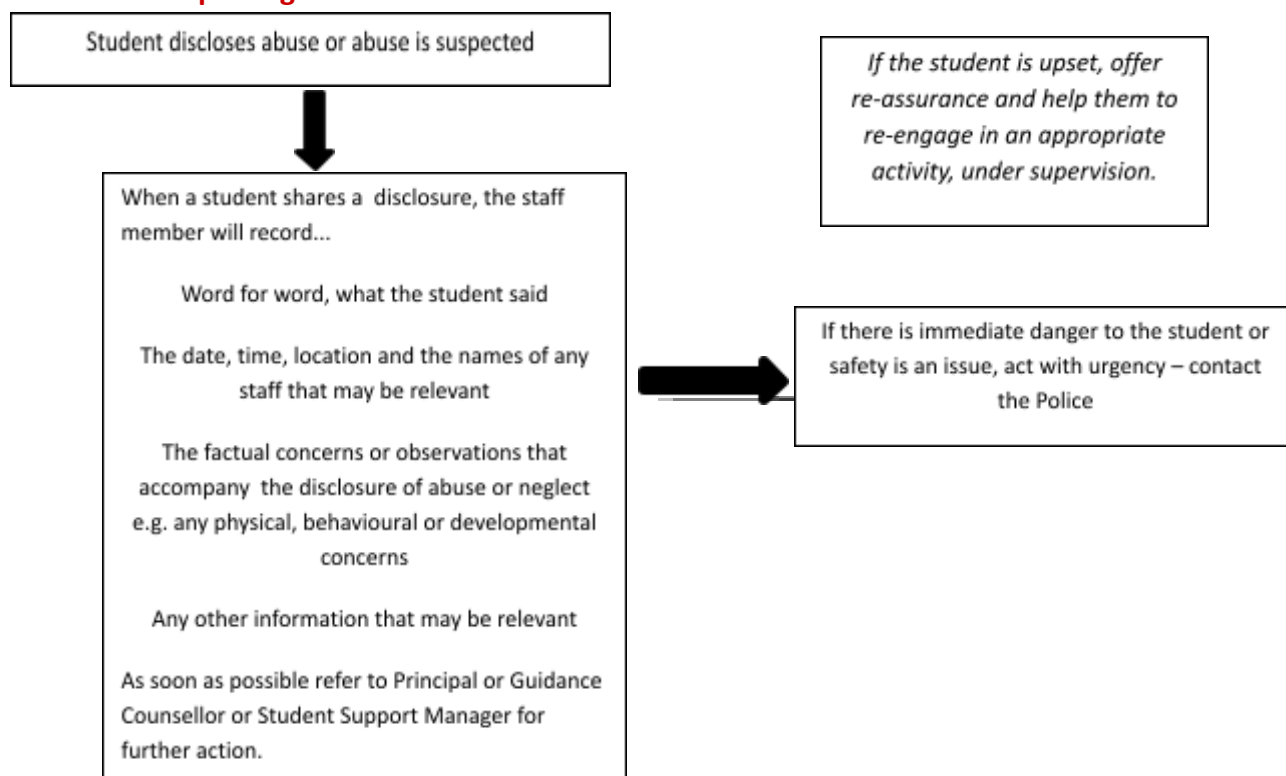
Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

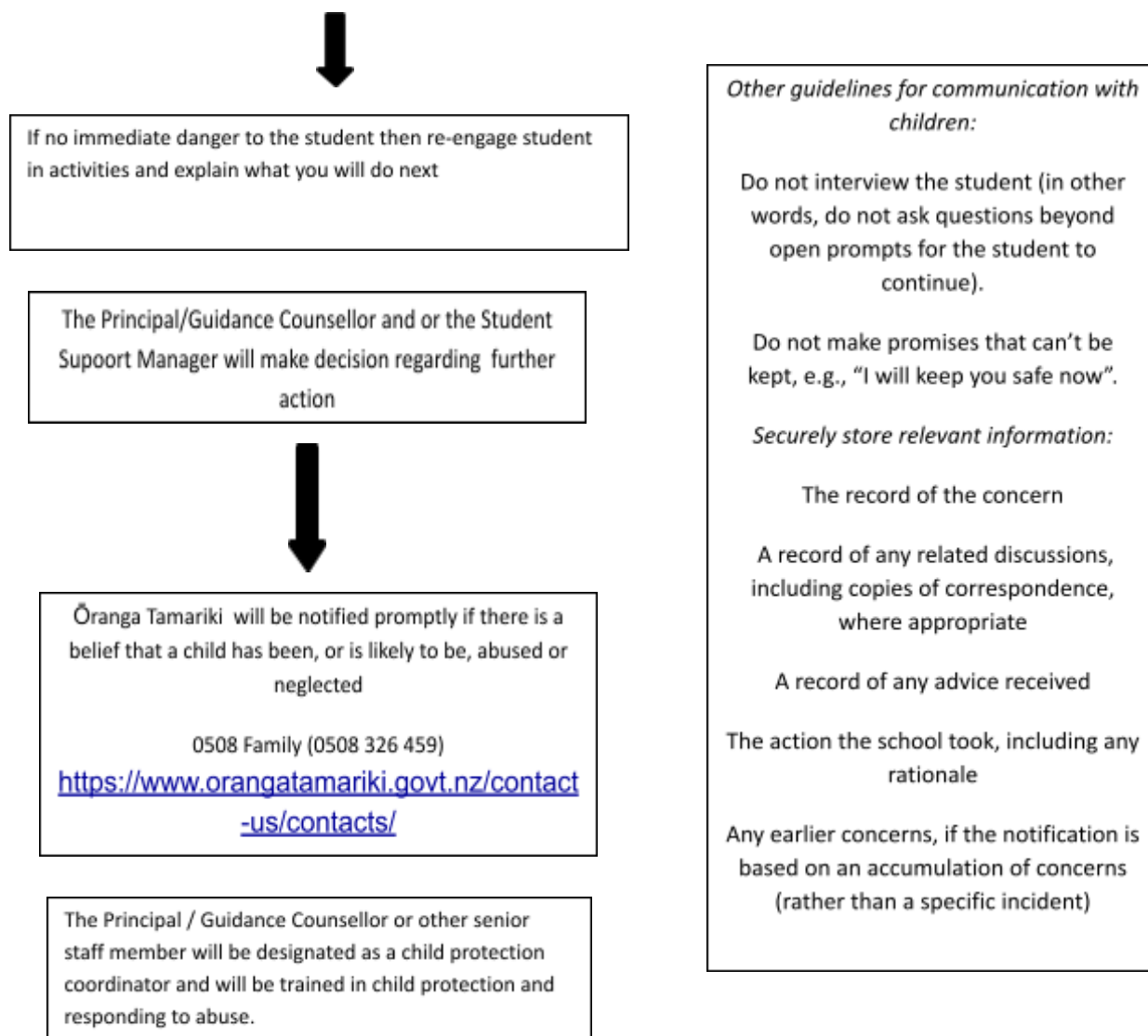
- There is a process to follow when an incident or suspicion of abuse or neglect is reported. See the 'Child Abuse Reporting Process' flowchart below.
- All suspicions or reports of incidents will be directed or reported to and discussed with the Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) or Principal as soon as possible.
- They will make a written report of the incident, which may include witness statements.
- If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse has taken place. In that case, the CPC will immediately take steps to protect any vulnerable child involved and may notify Oranga Tamariki
- In some situations, the CPC will refer the family to an appropriate statutory or non-statutory agency that can provide supportive services to the family or families and respond to the needs of vulnerable children in their care in a manner proportional to the level of need and risk.

Allegations or concerns about staff

- There is a process to follow when an allegation of child abuse is made in relation to a staff member. See "When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member" flowchart below.
- If there is a need to pursue an allegation of child abuse as an employer, the Principal or delegated person will consult with Ōranga Tamariki or the Police before advising the person concerned and informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice. The Principal will provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond.
- The Principal will notify the appropriate statutory authorities e.g. Teaching Council
- The staff member should be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.
- The school commits to not using *settlement agreements* where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some *settlement agreements* allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerns the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

Child abuse Reporting Process Flowcharts



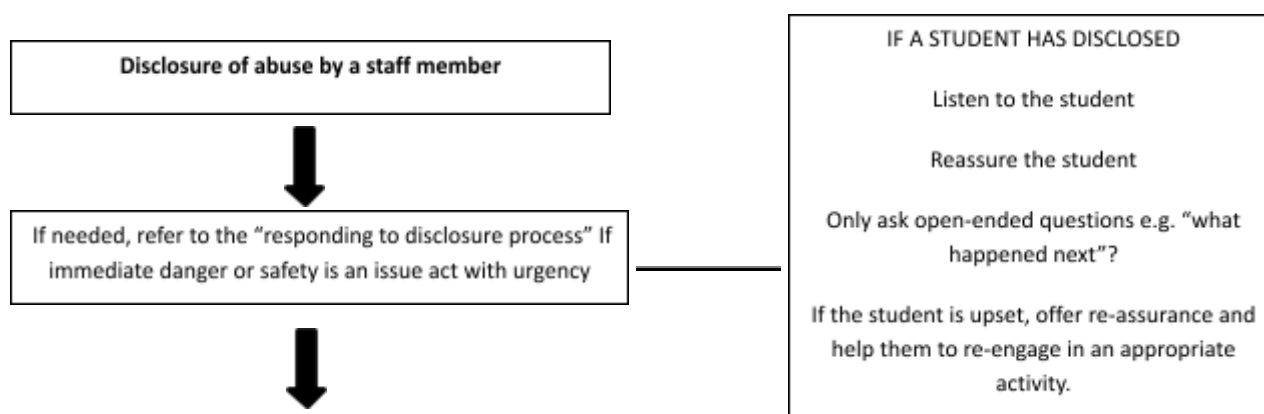


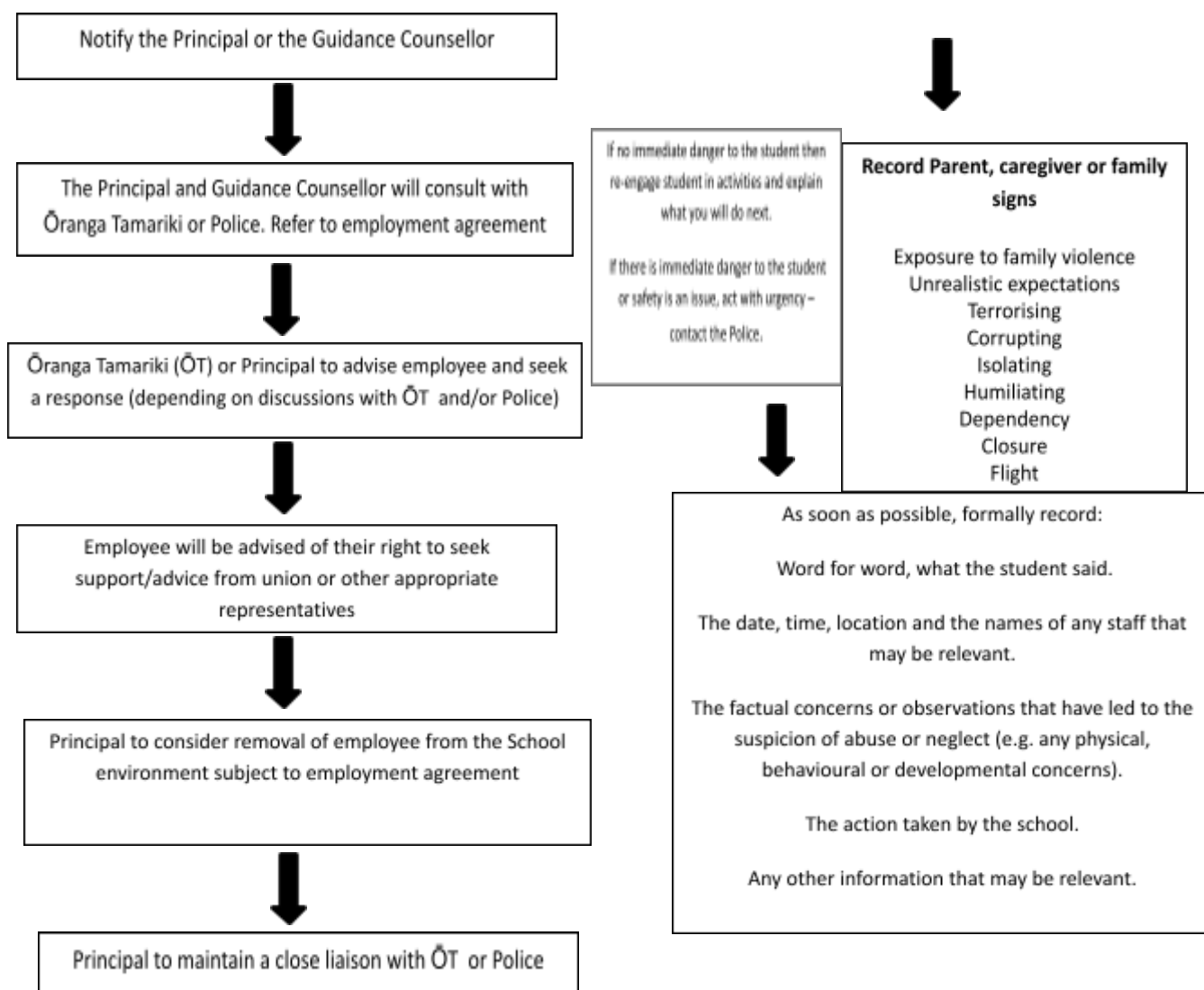
When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member

Where it is suspected that child abuse has been carried out by a staff member (paid, unpaid or in any school-related role), the matter must be reported promptly to the Principal.

Under no circumstances should the student making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk.

This may require the school to consider removing the staff member from the school environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employment contract. All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.





Prevention of possible abuse or neglect

The school is committed to ensuring that all staff can identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and know how to respond.

The school will provide training, resources and/or advice to enable all staff to carry out their roles in terms of this policy. The time to do this will be annually at the start of every school year.

Core and non-core workers will attend training, refresher training and regular updates which will ensure that they have the competence to identify and manage actual or potential abuse or neglect and empower them to keep our students safe.

This training will ensure that staff:

- Are conversant with the school's Child Protection Policy
- Understand child abuse and neglect and the indicators of child abuse and neglect
- Understand the standard of adult behaviour expected of adults in relation to children
- Understand how to minimise the risk of child abuse
- Understand their need to seek advice when child abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Understand the school's process once child abuse or neglect is identified or suspected
- Understand their legal obligations and responsibilities with regard to this process

- Understand that the school supports the role of the New Zealand Police and Ōranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies
- Understand the statutory referral processes and agency management of identified or suspected child abuse or neglect

Process for security or storage of information

Records will be kept separate from the usual system of student records and access to the records will be restricted (paper copy in the school safe/digital copy with the Principal only). They will be held for ten years.

Supporting Policies

- Appointment (recruitment) policies
- All Health and Safety policies
- Social Media Policy/Cybersmart
- Complaints Policy

Supporting Documents

- Safer Organisations Safer Children – Guidelines for child protection policies to build safer organisations
- Children’s Act 2014
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 2017
- “Working together to keep children and young people safe” is a resource for helping people recognise when families are vulnerable and how they can help, through to spotting the signs of abuse, whom to talk to, how to report their concerns, and what happens when a report of concern comes through to Ōranga Tamariki.
<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/working-with-others/>
- The various indicators of different types of abuse that can be found here:
<http://www.childmatters.org.nz/56/learn-about-childabuse/recognise-the-signs>
- Education Council: Our Code Our Standards
- National Administration Guidelines
- [MOE Child Protection Policy](#)

Review Date: March 2024

Date Ratified: 26 March 2024

Next Review Date: March 2027