

# Child Protection Policy

## Rationale:

This centre is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, therefore provide a safe environment for children, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

## Purpose:

To provide our staff guidelines by which to identify and respond appropriately to concerns of abuse and neglect; and to understand their role in the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child will always be given priority when examining suspected or alleged abuse.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected / alleged abuse to these agencies.

## Issue Outline:

Child abuse and neglect is not acceptable. Children need our protection. Where protection is not adequately provided by the adults responsible for the child, others need to step in to ensure the child receives adequate protection.

## Definitions:

**Child Abuse** is defined in Section 2, Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, as:

*"the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person."*

**Physical Abuse** is the non-accidental infliction of physical injury to a child and/or any intentional unwanted contact to something close to their body, such as clothing. Sometimes abusive behaviors do not cause pain or leave bruises, but is still unhealthy.

\*Examples of physical abuse:

- Scratching, punching, pushing, pulling, biting, strangling, burning or kicking a child
- Use of weapons on / or throwing objects at a child
- Pulling hair or grabbing at clothing a child is wearing
- Smacking hands or bottom of a child
- Grabbing and holding a child's face to make them look at something
- Holding a child to prevent them from leaving or being forced to go somewhere.
- Intentionally making a child sick or appear sick to seek attention (Munchausen Syndrome)

**Emotional Abuse** includes non-physical behaviors such as *psychological and verbal abuse*. These forms of abuse encompass actions on a child that effect the child's development of self-esteem and sense of security.

\*Examples of emotional abuse:

- Calling a child names or putting them down
- Yelling and screaming at a child
- Intentionally embarrassing a child in public
- Preventing a child from seeing loved ones such as family members
- Damaging a child's belongings when in an angry mindset
- Blaming a child for the reason they are behaving abusively
- Threatening to hurt others and / or things a child love such as a pet.
- Rejection, ignoring, criticizing or belittling a child
- A child witnessing domestic violence and/or drug/alcohol abuse



**Sexual Abuse** is any activity with a child occurring before the age of legal consent that is for the sexual gratification of an adult or a significantly older/dominant child.

\*Examples of sexual abuse:

- Touching of breasts, genitals and/or buttocks for personal sexual fulfillment
- Taking pornographic photos of a child
- Exhibiting and showing a child personal genitals or pictures of these for sexual pleasure
- Having sexual intercourse with a child below legal age established for consent (Rape)
- Forcing a child to perform sexual acts on another and/or performing sexual acts on a child (including the use of sex organs and/or others objects).

**Neglect** "is a pattern of behavior which occurs over a period of time, the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

\*Neglect may be:

- Physical – failure to provide necessary basic needs of food, shelter or warmth (beyond the constraints of imposed by poverty)
- Medical – failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child. (including failure to collect a child from preschool when unwell or injured)
- Schooling – failing to see that a child receives a proper education
- Abandonment – leaving a child in any situation without arranging necessary care for them and with no intention of returning
- Neglectful supervision – failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision
- Refusal to assume parental responsibility – unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child."

**(\*The above are examples of the each type of abuse, however the ways in which children suffer each type of abuse is not limited to the examples provided.)**

### **Responsibility to report a child in need of protection:**

Whether you are a teacher, a friend, a family/whānau member, or a neighbour there are things you can do to protect children from abuse and neglect –

*Every action counts, just think...what might be the consequences of doing nothing?*



### **Signs and Symptoms to look out for:**

There are many signs and symptoms that can indicate a child is being abused or has been abused. These do not necessarily mean abuse has taken place, however these signs and symptoms may help adults recognize that *something is wrong*. The 'possibility' of abuse should be examined if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any one of them to a heightened degree. Remember also that some children may show NO outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone.

- Being over affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way that is inappropriate for the child's age
- Medical conditions - such as chronic itching or pain in the genitals, venereal diseases, depression, self-harming, etc.
- Attempts made to run away
- Becoming clingy, insecure, withdrawn/isolated and changes in personality
- Regression back to younger behavior patterns – thumb sucking, wetting themselves, the return of a discarded cuddly toy etc.
- Eating habits change – sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Loss of security and trust vs. new fear of someone
- Day and/or nightmares
- Worried about clothing being removed during toileting etc.
- Unusual drawing, art work or story telling
- Wanting and trying to be 'VERY GOOD or PERFECT'
- Wearing inappropriate clothing for the season – e.g. long sleeve tops and pants on a hot day but not wanting to change, regularly wearing 'dress-ups' that cover the whole body
- Unexplained reoccurring injuries or injuries that don't match the explanations given
- Refusal to explain injuries
- Fear of physical contact with others
- Aggression or striking back if touched
- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual self-depreciation (I'm silly, I'm not good at that etc.)
- Neurotic behaviors (rocking, hair twisting etc.)
- Overreaction to an accident or a mistake
- Extreme fear of new experiences
- Constant hunger / scavenging
- Poor personal hygiene and poor state of clothing
- No or low social skills
- Constant tiredness
- Untreated medical issues

**(\*The above are examples only, the ways in which children react is not limited to the examples provided.)**



### **The Basic Principles for dealing with a Disclosure:**

- 1) **Respond to the person (adult/child)** – believe what they tell you and possibly what you see. (refer to section below)
- 2) **Consult and Get Support**– Don't make decisions alone. Consult with your supervisor. Take time to consult thoroughly in order to make well-informed decisions. The tasks and situation will be upsetting and stressful.
- 3) **Record** – Record all discussions, your concerns and observation you have made (refer to section below)  
**Ensure the Safety of the child**- If you think there is an immediate risk of the child being abused again take action immediately this means contacting the police or Child, Youth and Family.
- 4) **Report**- Act on the disclosure- don't leave it to someone else or hope that it won't happen again.

### **Guidelines for Response of Disclosure:**

- Listen Only – let 'them' tell you, do not put words in their mouth, allow them to tell only as much as they want.
- Five Rules –
  - *Believe what they say*
  - *Say you're glad they told you*
  - *Say you're sorry that happened to them*
  - *Let them know it not their fault*
  - *Let them know you will help them*
- Let them know that they are not the only one – This sort of thing happens to others children too sometimes.
- DO NOT over react- A child's initial disclosure is a critical moment. He or she will be monitoring every reaction you display.
- DO NOT panic – If a child judges you unable to handle the situation, they may close off and not disclose any more of the story.
- DO NOT criticise – Don't say things that condemn the child such as "why didn't you stop them?" Or "why didn't you tell me sooner?"
- Ensure the child's immediate safety – Try not to alert the alleged abuser
- Seek support and record all facts.

### **Guidelines for Recording:**

- Put all the information down clearly and concisely
- Be Specific and Objective
- Be up to date
- Records should Include -
  - What you observed
  - What you heard word for word
  - What the child told you word for word
  - When, where, how, who was present etc.
- Record 'all' interactions you have with regards to the case in your records (who you spoke to, where they were from what was discussed, the date and the time) this should included
  - Telephone calls (even if no answer)
  - Home visits (even if no answer)
  - Consultations and discussions with others
  - Contacts with agencies and other people involved.
  - Email or other written correspondence (keep records of all)



### **Action Plan & Procedures for Teachers if they Suspect Abuse:**

- Make sure you know what abuse and neglect are and how to recognise the signs.
- Take observations and note down your concerns, record this information in the critical incidences folder in the office filing cabinet – ensure you include all facts, date, time, persons involved, photos if applicable and appropriate (Note no genitals), your name and those of any others you have discussed the information with or who was a key witness, encourage all parties to sign the information as a correct record of events. This information is confidential, the only people who should have access to this information is the immediate staff; and the New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki and the Vulnerable Children's Hub to protect the child's privacy.
- Inform the centre supervisor of the incident and/or concerns you have.
- Any staff member may directly report suspected child abuse to the Oranga Tamariki (0508 FAMILY) and or to the New Zealand Police, however it is highly recommended the decision to inform outside agencies should be based on facts and evidence; and preferably after consultation with other team members and management.
- Records will be kept of any formal discussions regarding the issue by the staff member whom reported. If a staff member believes their concerns are not serious enough to contact the New Zealand Police or Oranga Tamariki, but are great enough to raise concerns, they are strongly recommended to contact the Vulnerable Children's Hub (0800 FOR OURKIDS – 0800 367 687) as they are a contact point for frontline professionals and practitioners who can provide further support.
  - *For further details on sharing information please refer to our Privacy Policy.*
- Management must be informed of any reporting whether it be before or after the report is filed.
- While it is the right of anyone to directly contact the authorities of suspected child abuse, it is the recommendation of First Learners to firstly inform management of the decision so the management team can provide further support and guidance to supervisor and/or staff member as they act as an advocate for the child/children.
- *If a member of staff has concerns regarding a colleague, they must take immediate action and inform Supervisor/Management straight away.*
- *Under NO circumstances should a member of staff attempt to conduct an 'investigation' or deal with concerns relating to child abuse alone – the statutory responsibility to investigate allegations of child abuse rests with the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki NOT the centre.*

### **Actions & Procedures to take if Allegations are made Against a Member of Staff:**

The child protection actions plan & procedures will be followed if the allegations are made against a staff member. If allegations are made against a member of staff, the management may grant that employee discretionary leave while a formal investigation takes place. The suspected person will have no further access to the child/children while the investigation continues. The employee is assured of fair treatment according to their employment contract. Support will be provided for the child/children, reporting person and staff members. In the case of a staff member accused of abuse management would oversee the employment issues and another member of staff will be nominated to oversee the child protection issues.

### **Child on Child Harmful Behaviours:**

In the case of a child's behaviour or actions causing harm to another child (or children), our Centre's Behaviour Management Policy will be followed.

### **Keeping the Child's Family/Whānau Informed:**

Although the parent/caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, therefore may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed. This may happen when:

- The parent / caregiver is the alleged perpetrator
- It is possible the child will be intimidate into silence
- There is a strong possibilities evidence may be destroyed



## **Guidelines and Safety Procedures:**

### **Safety Checking of Staff:**

All new employees, relievers and volunteers will be subject to a police vet before there is any contact with children. Screening checks will require a minimum of two forms of identification, one of which **MUST** be a Photographic ID. Only Management/Supervisor/ESM have the authority to confirm and sign identification documentation, and they must meet the worker in person before they do so.

Management will decide whether the position being filled is '**A Core or a Non-Core - Children's Worker**'. A core children's worker is any person employed who may at times work alone with; or have primary responsibility or authority over children. A non-core children's worker is a person employed who will **NEVER** work alone with; or have primary responsibility or authority over children.

As well as a police vet, First Learners Management will conduct an interview with all new employees and also complete checks of employment history, qualifications/certification, references and identity.

Police vetting will be undertaken every three years on all staff members and will include Certificated Teachers.

Should anyone refuse permission for these screening procedures they will forfeit their employment opportunity.

Staff will undergo an induction process to ensure they are aware of all First Learners policies and procedures and follow these correctly.

### **Education:**

- Professional development budget will allow for on-going training of staff on how to detect and respond to suspected child abuse.
- Pamphlets and information will be available for parents/caregivers.
- Prior to any programmes being introduced to the children at the centre parents/caregivers will be consulted.
- Parents/caregivers will be informed about our child protection policy and the complaints procedure through newsletters and the annual review process. These will be available for parents/caregivers to read at any time in the parents' policies and procedures folder. Our complaint procedure is on the parent notice board at all times for their reference if required.

### **Other Safety Initiatives:**

- Parents/caregivers are encouraged and welcomed to visit the centre and participate in activities at any time.
- All trainees, volunteers, visiting tutors, and informal helpers working within the centre must sign in, they will not be left alone with the children, and they will not undertake any toileting or nappy changing of children.
- No employee will be allowed to take children off the centre grounds without parent's written permission.
- Excursions can only happen if a minimum two adults are present on the excursion and a minimum of two adults remain at the centre if children remain.
- There are always two staff members present in the centre when children are booked and / or present. No staff member is to be left alone at the centre while children are present.
- Toileting areas will have no barriers so as to hinder viewing by staff or parents/caregivers within the centre. However each toileting area will have a toilet that allows for some sense of privacy for the child using it.
- A daily register will be kept of all assisted toileting in the nursery, transition and the preschool areas.
- Any changes to a child's clothing for any reason is recorded.
- Sleeping and resting children will be supervised (refer to the monitoring and resting policy)
- Teachers are encouraged to position themselves in view of other staff member when and where possible.
- Teachers are encouraged to seek support and guidance during challenging behavior management for the protection of the child and the teacher. First Learners Behavior Management Policy must be followed when dealing with challenging behaviors.
- Management ***strongly*** recommend teachers avoid 'personal relationships' with children and their families/whānau and if they do have these relationship, they need to make it public; make it authorized; and make the right call, to protect themselves.
- Professional boundaries are maintained for the protection of child as well as the professional reputation, trust and profession of the teacher. Staff are reminded regularly about maintaining 'professional relationships and boundaries' (including social media) through document reviews, performance reviews, and conversations.



### **Alignment with Other Policies:**

- Alcohol and Mind-Altering Substances Policy
- Behavior Management Policy
- Changing and Bathing Children
- Complaints Policy
- Excursion policy
- Sleeping Children Policy

### **Legislation / regulation references:**

- Care of Child Act 2004
- Crimes Act 1961
- Domestic Violence Act 1995
- Education Act 1989
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Health Act 1956
- Human Rights Act
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (formally known as Children, Young Persons and their Families Act)
- Privacy Act 1993
- Vulnerable Children's Act 2014
  
- **Licensing Criteria 2008**
  - HS31: A process for the prevention of child abuse and a procedure for responding to suspected child abuse. Documents are consistent with Oranga Tamariki New Zealand Police Guidelines.
  - HS32: all practicable steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).
  - GMA7: Suitable human resource management practices are implemented
  - GMA7(a): All children's workers who have access to children are safety checked in accordance with the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014
  
- **Education (ECS) Regulations 2008**
  - Part 2 : Standards - Subpart 2: Standards for Licensed Centres:
  - 45: Premises and Facilities Standards: General (1) (a)(ii) '... provide safe and healthy practices'
  - 46: Health & Safety Practices Standards: General (1) (a) '...take reasonable steps to promote good health and safety of children..'
  - 47: Governance, Management and Administration Standard: General: (1) (c) '...appropriate documentation and records are (i) developed, maintained and regularly reviewed.' (ii) made available where appropriate (e) '...provide staff adequate professional support...'
  - 56: Ill treatment of Children
  - 57: Health and Safety of Children
  - 58: Collection of Children from a Centre
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