

Child Abuse

1. Teachers are concerned with the well-being and safety of their students and need to act in their best interests.
2. Children are vulnerable to sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect regardless of family situation, race, sex, age or socio-economic level. While all students need to take responsibility for protecting and caring for others, teachers are uniquely placed to help an abused student.
3. Teachers spend a great deal of time with their students, and through this daily contact are able to notice changes in a student's behaviour, learning and well-being.
4. Staff members are sometimes implicated in matters of abuse of students.
5. The safety and well-being of the child is paramount.
6. The school, therefore, must establish straight forward procedures, which are legally and professionally sound, for dealing with suspected or actual or historic abuse of students.

Guidelines and Procedures

At West Park School:

- The Principal or D.P. have the responsibility for co-ordinating action on the suspected, actual, or historic abuse of students. In the event that the Principal or DP are absent from school, the most senior staff member present will take responsibility for co-ordinating actions.
- It is the responsibility of the school's management to ensure that staff are sufficiently knowledgeable of all issues to be confident in making a statement on reporting actual abuse or reasonable suspicions of abuse.
- People who work at the school are reminded that they should present good role models in their dealings with children.
- Any reported abuse is reasonable cause to believe that abuse may have taken place.
- The list of abuse referral contacts for the child is, Police, Oranga Tamariki, Whare Mahana, Puketiro Child-Family Centre, R.T.L.B., S.E.S. liaison person, Te Whare Marae.
- No civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings shall lie against any person who discloses, provided the information was disclosed in good faith.
- Where abuse is disclosed to or suspected by a member of staff, but a member of staff is not implicated:
 - a. Any disclosure of the suspected abuse of a student to a staff member must be reported immediately to the Principal, by the staff member
 - b. Record keeping should begin - including documentation of **the exact words** the child spoke.
 - c. No leading questions may be asked of the child (the child cannot be interviewed any more than three times, otherwise evidence will not stand up in court). A decision will be made about informing the student's parents or caregivers after discussion with the Statutory Agency (Police, Oranga Tamariki).
 - d. The Principal will contact a statutory agency i.e. Police or Oranga Tamariki.
 - e. When there are suspicions that abuse is occurring in or out of school time, but not disclosed by a student, these suspicions will be reported immediately to the principal, who will keep a file, for a least the duration of the child's stay at school.

- f. In all procedures described above, confidentiality will be maintained. Communications should only be with people who need to know in order to promote the best interests of the student and school.
 - g. If interviews of students at school are requested by Police or Oranga Tamariki, the students need to be supported through this process. Oranga Tamariki, or Police will inform caregiver/s of the interview so they may have an opportunity to be present at the interview.
 - h. If no caregiver can be present the child will be asked if they would like a teacher present to support them through the interview.
 - i. The Principal may request they be dressed in civilian clothing and conduct the interviews in an appropriate manner.
 - j. The Principal will decide on how best to ensure that staff members involved with the student are kept informed, so that they know how they can best support the student and each other during any action taken.
 - k. In the case of a report from a third party to the school, the first course of action will be that the school will direct the third party to a Statutory Agency (Oranga Tamariki or Police).
- **Complaints Against Staff involving Abuse**
 - a. The child or children will be supported by being referred to a Statutory Agency (Police, Oranga Tamariki).
 - b. Where a staff member (other than the Principal) is accused of abuse of a student, the complaint will be made to the Principal. The Principal shall inform the staff member and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.
 - c. The Chairperson shall immediately inform the Board. If necessary, the Board will seek advice from an appropriate agency.
 - d. Any staff member so accused shall at the time of being informed of the allegations made against them have the right to professional support from NZEI or any other help agency they choose.
 - e. The staff member may be required to take leave with pay until the allegation has been dealt with through the legal system.
 - f. If the Principal is implicated, the complaint will be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The Chairperson will inform the Principal and Board. If necessary, the Board will seek advice from an appropriate agency.
 - g. Any procedures following an allegation against the Principal or staff member shall be in line with Part 10 of the most recent Primary Teachers, DP, AP and other unit holders Collective Employment Contract, or Part 8 of the most recent Principal's Collective Employment Contract.
- More information is available in the book 'Lets Stop Child Abuse Together', an Interagency guide to breaking the cycle, published by Oranga Tamariki.
 - All queries and referral calls go to the Call Centre number 058 326-459

Further note:

It is management's responsibility to:

1. Provide teachers with regular and ongoing training so that they identify signs of abuse or neglect.
2. Provide guidelines for everybody working with children from this school.
3. Provide procedures for dealing with cases of abuse or neglect.

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