

RUAKAKA SCHOOL
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



Policy summary

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection. It includes our protocols when child abuse is reported to us or suspected by us. It also includes practice notes on measures to be taken to prevent child abuse. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

Purpose statement

We have an obligation to ensure the well-being of children in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and well-being of the child is our top priority when investigating 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.

We support families/whānau to protect their children.

We provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

Policy principles

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- We recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- We are committed to sharing information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the person in charge.
- We are committed to promoting a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

Definitions

Child abuse: Includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

Indicators of Child Abuse are:

➤ **Physical Neglect**

The child is not given proper food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision to the extent that there is serious risk to health and/or safety of that child

➤ **Emotional Neglect**

(This is very hard to define and detect).

It is often the case that the child is only ever criticised, always told that it is stupid, naughty or the cause of all family's problems.

➤ **Physical Abuse**

Where injuries are not caused by accident.

➤ **Sexual Abuse**

This includes all situations where a parent, caregiver or other person involves a child in sexual activity. This can range from touching through to penetration, or even the death of the victim. Indicators of sexual abuse in a child are:

- Physical injury and / or signs of physical illness, possibly related to genital or urinary functions, headaches or upset stomach.
- Becomes unusually fussy
- Washes frequently
- Refuses her / his favourite food; or an older child may suddenly refuse food
- An unusual fear of strangers
- Sudden extreme shyness
- Lack of enjoyment of favoured pastimes, TV programmes and activities
- Clinging to parents or extreme fear of being left alone
- Difficulty going to sleep, bedwetting, nightmares, sudden fear of the dark
- Return to earlier forms of behaviour or skills
- Changes in school behaviour
- Loss of child's sense of security
- Unable to adjust to the normal schedule
- Showing loss of memory, sometimes appearing preoccupied or troubled
- Depression
- Advanced sexual behaviour and/or acting out the sexual abuse with playmates
- Suicidal tendencies
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Running away
- Increased irritability and angry outbursts
- Pseudo-maturity, taking over parental responsibilities (*usually associated with incest*)
- Prostitution

At Ruakaka School:

- Staff must be receptive and sensitive to children so that children feel listened to and believed.
- Keeping safe and self-worth units will be taught as part of the Health Curriculum to increase children's self-efficacy in dealing with uncomfortable situations, and to help raise teacher's consciousness of the issues.
- Staff may be offered appropriate training regarding recognising and responding to cases of suspected abuse.
- Any staff who have concerns about any children are to discuss them with the Principal or one of the senior staff. No outside agency will be involved without the prior knowledge of the Principal.
- The safety of the child is paramount and if the child is in danger or in an unsafe situation, action needs to be taken quickly to secure his/her safety. Oranga Tamariki and police should be advised quickly.
- Accurate and full records shall be kept of disclosures for the duration of the child's stay at Ruakaka School.
- All information and discussions, including the identity of the informant, will be confidential to the staff involved. Data will be stored in one place known to the senior staff. This will be forwarded to the child's next school at the discretion of the Principal.
- Where further investigation or action is necessary, the Principal will contact the appropriate agency, give them the relevant information, and leave it in their hands. It is important to name the child as information may be already held by the Oranga Tamariki.
- Decisions about informing parents/caregivers will be made after consultation with Oranga Tamariki or police.

Guidelines to follow in situations when a child discloses abuse:

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.
Reassure the child	Let the child know that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are not in trouble• Have done the right thing
Ask open-ended prompts – eg. "What happened next?"	Do not interview the child (in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts). Do not make promises that can't be kept eg. "I will keep you safe."
If the child is visibly distressed	Provide appropriate 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	Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.
If the child is in immediate danger	Contact the police immediately.
As soon as possible formally record the disclosure in one place known to senior staff	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Word for word, what the child said.• The date, time and who was present.

Recording and notifying Oranga Tamariki of suspected child abuse or neglect:

What process to follow	For example	Key considerations
(i) Recording	Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anything said by the child The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (eg. any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns). The action taken by your organisation Any other information that may be relevant. 	Relevant information can inform any future actions.
(ii) Decision - making	Discuss any concern with the principal/senior leader or the designated person for child protection.	No decisions should be made in isolation.
(iii) Notifying authorities	Notify Oranga Tamariki promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected. A phone call to the National Contact Centre (see below) is the preferred initial contact with Oranga Tamariki as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options. Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459) contact@ot.govt.nz	Oranga Tamariki will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers in consultation with your organisation. Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the police.
(iv) Following the advice of Oranga Tamariki	Oranga Tamariki advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the police.	Oranga Tamariki is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether we need to work with the family or to put them in touch with people in their community who can help.
(v) Storing relevant information	Securely store: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The record of the concern A record of any related discussions, (including copies of correspondence, where appropriate). A record of any advice received. The action your organisation took, including any rationale. This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident). 	Records assist in identifying patterns.

Disclosure of abuse or neglect is made

- Listen to the child.
- Reassure the child.
- Ask open-ended prompts – e.g., :What happened next?"

If the child is visibly distressed

Provide appropriate 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

Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.

If the child **is** in immediate danger

Contact the Police immediately.

As soon as possible formally record the disclosure.

Record:

- Word for word, what the child said.
- The date, time, location and the names of any staff may be relevant.
- The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g. any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns).
- The actions taken by Ruakaka School.
- Any other information that may be relevant.

Decision - making

Discuss any concern with Principal or senior teacher or the designated person for child protection.

Notifying authorities

Notify Oranga Tamariki promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected.

Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459)

Email: contact@ot.govt.nz

Complaints against Staff involving Sexual Abuse:

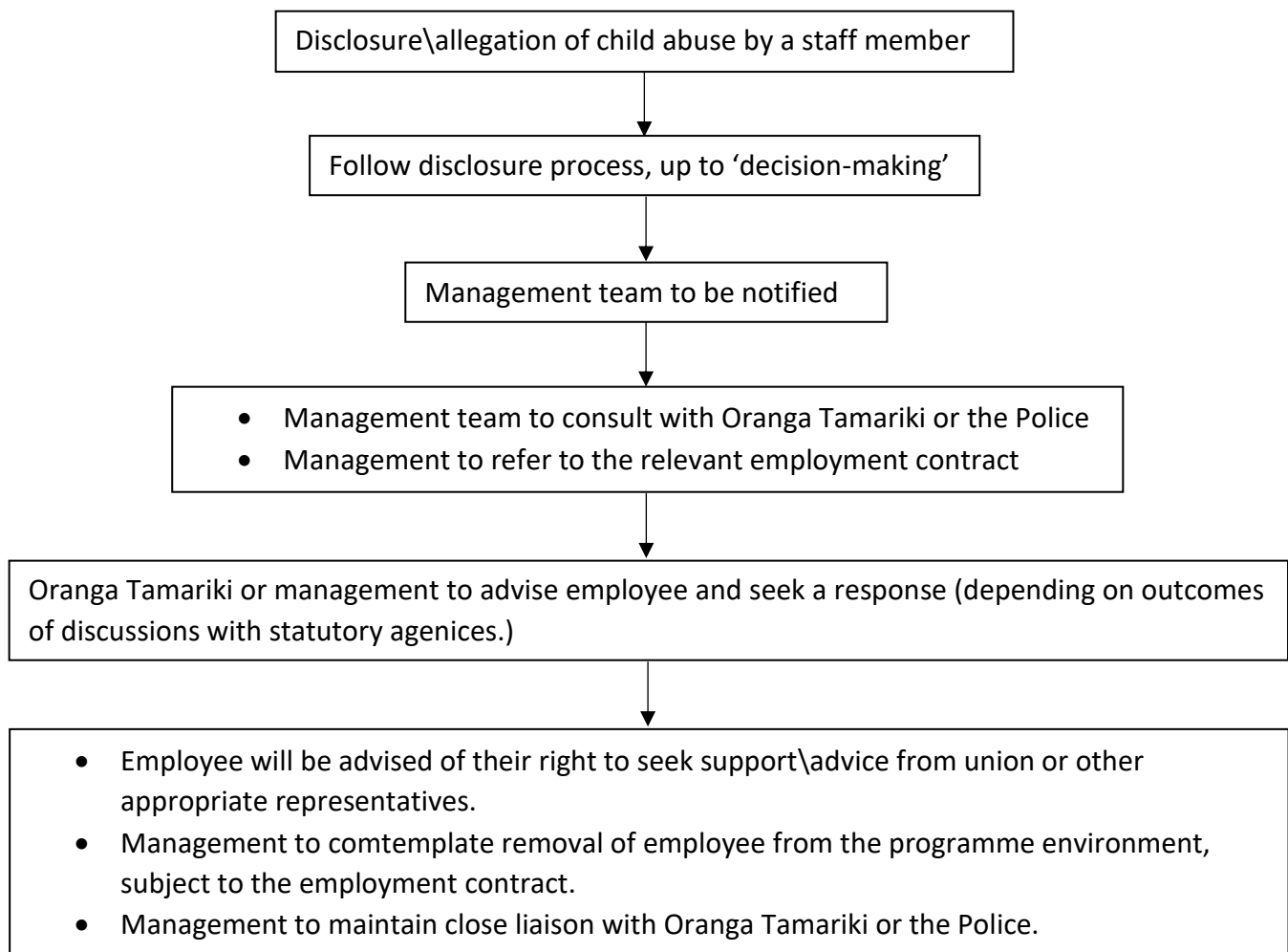
All matter involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the management team.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management may take steps to remove the staff member against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to requirements of applicable individual or collective employment contract and relevant employment law.

Once a helping agency is involved, the following procedures will be followed and will be in line with those set out in the Teacher's Collective Contract, the Support Staff in Schools, and the School Caretakers and Cleaners contract in regard to complaints against a staff member.

1. The Principal/Deputy Principal will inform the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.
2. Both will then inform the staff member who will be advised to seek legal and/or union representation, and be encouraged to seek personal professional support.
3. The school will inform the union.
4. The staff member will be suspended on full pay once an investigation has begun. In line with Section 2.21g of the teachers' Contract; 6.8 of the School Caretakers and Cleaners contract; 7.13.3 of the Support Staff in Schools contract. At this stage, the rest of the staff will be informed. The Ministry of Education must also be notified at this stage.

When an allegation is made against a member of staff



Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

It is mandatory for all concerns to be reported/referred to the Oranga Tamariki Coordinator within a time period which allows for effective consultation/advice to be given.

Ruakaka School recognises that in some cases the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whanau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non-statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important for our organisation to work with these to respond to the needs of the vulnerable children and families/whanau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

Policy established September 2016

Reviewed:

Signed: Principal

Signed: Board Chairperson