



CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

1. RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 Any member of staff, paid or voluntary, may directly witness child abuse or have allegations, made by a child or an adult, relayed to them. There may also be disclosures of abuse that have occurred prior to attending HC. Sustained abuse and neglect of children, wherever it occurs, can have major long-term effects on all aspects of children's health, development and well-being and their ability to sustain stable and meaningful relationships in the future. It is the intention of HC to ensure that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children at all times. This is achieved through consistent and agreed protocols regarding child protection, as well as the regular undertaking of awareness raising training.

1.2 Each member of staff must:

- Be aware of, and alert to, potential indicators of abuse or neglect and the procedures they are required to follow in responding to their concerns
- Record a factual account of any concerns they have, or that are brought to their attention
- Appropriately seek advice and support from the Child Protection Officer Who will then contact external agencies if appropriate
- Work in cooperation with the parents and caregivers, unless this compromises the safety of the child

1.3 It is the primary responsibility of staff to be vigilant, have knowledge and awareness of the indicators or neglect, potential or actual abuse and to report any concerns, suspicions or allegations of suspected abuse immediately and ensure that the concern is taken seriously and reported.

1.4 The statutory responsibility to investigate allegations of child abuse rests with Oranga Tamariki and the Police.

Role of the Principal

1.5 The role of the Principal is to:

- Ensure the needs and rights of children come first i.e. the safety and wellbeing of each child is paramount
- Receive information that suggests potential or actual risk of harm to a child who attends {School}, irrespective of whether the alleged abuse is current, past or likely to occur. The Principal will advise and support staff and, on the basis of the initial detail, will make a decision as to whether or not to delegate to the Child Protection Officer for further action
- Delegate to the Child Protection Officer for Child Protection (Deputy Principal) appropriate action and responsibilities as concerns are raised
- Make any referrals to the Guidance Counsellor in School or Oranga Tamariki as appropriate
- Ensure that all allegations are managed appropriately. No investigation will occur without appropriate consultation and a decision whether a response from Oranga Tamariki or the Police is required
- Ensure that allegations or complaints are appropriately referred to the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (EDUCANZ)
- Ensure that the Child Protection Policy is effectively implemented throughout HC
- Ensure that all staff are aware of, and have access to, full copies of the procedures for reporting child abuse
- Ensure that all staff are recruited and employed in accordance with the guidelines identified in the Employment Policy to identify those people safe to work with children
- Ensure that all staff receive child protection training.

Role of the Child Protection Officer

1.6 The role of the Child Protection Officer is to:

- Ensure the needs and rights of children come first i.e. the safety and well-being of each child is paramount
- Ensure and safeguard clear, confidential, detailed and dated records on all child protection cases. These must contain all available information relating to the cause for concern and any subsequent action taken, including when it has been decided not to make a notification to Oranga Tamariki or the Police. These records will be kept separate from student's records for the purpose of confidentiality
- Establish a close link with the relevant local agencies to ensure clear and effective communication and be a recognised contact within HC for agencies to contact regarding concerns
- Work closely and effectively with the Guidance Counsellor in School, ensuring information is appropriately shared to effectively safeguard the child
- Ensure that all staff are supported appropriately when dealing with child protection concerns
- Maintain a current awareness of the children identified on the Risk Register, and regularly highlight these children to the appropriate staff

- Consult with the Principal regarding all child protection concerns.

Role of the Howick College Board

1.7 The role of the Board is to:

- Ensure the needs and rights of children come first i.e. the safety and well-being of each child is paramount
- Support the Principal to ensure that all allegations are managed appropriately. No investigation will occur without appropriate consultation and a decision whether a response from Oranga Tamariki or the Police is required
- Support the Principal to ensure that allegations or complaints are appropriately referred to the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (EDUCANZ)
- Inform the Principal immediately should any member of the Board be aware of a concern for the well-being and safety of a child who attends HC
- The Presiding Member of the Board will be directly informed of any allegations of abuse against the Principal.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 All staff will respond to concerns of child abuse by following the identified procedures, consulting appropriately and collaborating with external agencies.

2.2 The procedures set out below will help staff with:

- The identification of abuse
- Handling disclosures, whether verbal or behavioural from a child
- Reporting procedures

Identification of abuse

2.3 If the Child Protection Officer for Child Protection is unavailable for advice and guidance then staff should consult with the Principal. At any time staff may seek advice from Oranga Tamariki (0508 EDASSIST (0508 332 774), edassist@ot.govt.nz) regarding child protection concerns.

Handling disclosures from a child

2.4 If a child makes a verbal disclosure to a member of staff it is important that staff take what the child says seriously. This applies irrespective of the setting, or the member of staff's own opinion on what the child is saying.

2.5 Under no circumstances should a member of staff attempt to conduct an investigation or deal with concerns regarding child abuse alone. Any incidents, concerns or suspicions must be reported following the procedures set out below.

Child-on-Child Harmful Behaviours

2.6 It is important to be aware that children can harm other children. These behaviours are outside of what may be considered the normal range, and can extend to bullying, violence or sexual assault. Therefore, when a child alleges inappropriate harmful behaviour by another child then the child protection procedures outlined in this policy must be considered for both the children.

Suicidal Concerns or Self-Harming Behaviours

2.7 It is important to be aware that children can harm themselves or attempt suicide. When a child identifies thoughts of suicide, or self-harming behaviour, this must be immediately notified to the Child Protection Officer or the Principal in their absence, via the Head of Counselling. If immediate action is required, phone the mental health team at the local hospital.

Reporting procedures

2.8 All concerns of potential, suspected or alleged abuse must be brought to the attention of the Designated Person for Child Protection. If the Designated Person for Child Protection is unavailable then consultation should occur with the Principal. A decision will be made as to whether to seek further advice or notify Child Youth and Family.

When reporting an incident staff should:

- Inform the Designated Person for Child Protection as soon as possible
- Record in writing all conversations and actions taken

2.9 Effective documentation, including referrals and notifications, must include the following:

- Record of facts, including observations, with time and date
- What was said and by whom, using the person's words
- What action has been taken, by whom and when

Keeping the child's family informed and involved

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

- The parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator
- It is possible that the child may be intimidated into silence
- There is a strong likelihood that evidence will be destroyed
- The child does not want their parent or caregiver involved and they are of an age when they are competent to make that decision

Sharing Information and Confidentiality

2.11 The safety of a child is paramount. At times, a child is unable to speak for or protect themselves. Therefore, Howick College (HC) has a greater responsibility to know when and how to share appropriate information with external agencies to protect the safety and wellbeing of children.

2.12 Giving information to protect children better is not a breach in confidentiality. Wherever possible the family/whanau should be kept informed of what information has been shared and to which agency, and for what purpose. Principle 11 of the Privacy Act, 1993, states "disclosure of the information is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious threat".

2.13 Should HC be contacted with a request for information or access to interview a child then the following procedure will be followed:

- Confirm identity and credentials of person requesting information
- Notify the Principal and Designated Person
- Identify specific information required and purpose
- Check information held – does LBC have the information requested
- Principal to identify way forward and provide permission
- Depending on the reason for the request, and risk to children as judged case by case, inform the family that information has been requested, by whom and seek permission. If this is a child protection issue, permission from the family is not required
- Document all steps in the process. Ensure that all documentation is placed on the child's Child Protection File.

Action to be taken by the Child Protection Officer

2.14 Concerns regarding alleged or suspected abuse will first be raised to the Designated Person for Child Protection. If further guidance is required then consultation will occur with the Principal. A decision will be made whether this information needs to be escalated to Oranga Tamariki.

2.15 All decisions taken, including if the concern does not require notifying Oranga Tamariki, must be recorded in writing and kept securely in a Child Protection File with the reasons clearly identified and explained.

Supporting Students

2.16 Students will be supported throughout this procedure by:

- The Guidance counsellors or a designated teacher acting as an advocate on their behalf
- Being kept informed of the process, who has been spoken with and what has been said
- Inclusion of parents/whanau in the process if appropriate, with the Guidance team being available to offer support for parents/whanau
- Encouragement to seek support from trusted friends if appropriate
- Counselling to mitigate the effects of the abuse/neglect and to build resilience
- If, after consultation, it is decided that a notification to a statutory agency is not appropriate, staff will work with family/whanau and the child to ensure appropriate support is in place. An in-school meeting may be an appropriate step in building strength and resiliency for the child and their family/whanau
- Referral to an outside agency if appropriate may be made.

3. SAFE RECRUITMENT OF STAFF

3.1 Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet; identity verification; references and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

4. TRAINING OF STAFF

4.1 All staff will receive child protection training at the level appropriate to their role. The Designated Person or Child Protection will undertake more intensive training. These persons will be accessible to staff to provide advice and support.

4.2 All staff will be given appropriate training covering basic awareness of child protection. This will include an overview of signs and indicators of abuse, and also the procedure for responding to actual or suspected abuse. This training will include:

- Roles and responsibility of staff regarding child protection
- Recognising and responding to the signs and indicators of actual or suspected abuse
- Ensuring staff understand and can follow the Child Protection Policy and the procedures for reporting a concern.

5. SAFE WORKING PRACTICES

5.1 A relationship between an adult and a child or young person cannot be a relationship between equals. There is a potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

5.2 Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. Adults who work with children must therefore act in a way that is considered to be safe practice.

5.3 Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. At no stage should any verbal or non-verbal engagement with a student be:

- Any form of emotional abuse e.g. shameful, derogatory, belittling or degrading, humiliating, favouritism, bias, exclusion, swearing, critical, cruel or exploiting any diversity, known insecurities or other personal factor.
- Any form of communication that ignores, permits or enables physical abuse, e.g. being oppressive, threats of harm, cruel and/or frightening.

- Any form of communication that is or may be perceived as being non-contact sexually abusive or suggestive behaviour, e.g. flirting, innuendo, sexting, taking imagery or exposing students to inappropriate messages, images or nudity, voyeurism, exploitation or any other engagement open to perceptions of abuse or grooming.

5.4 Digital resources and online platforms can all permit risks of misuse and subsequent child safeguarding risks for students. Our conduct expectations encompass all environments, physical and online environments.

- In addition to staff adhering to Howick College Staff Social Media Policy at all times, staff must make certain all conduct expectations are upheld when using any online platform or digital resources.
- All communication (e.g. phones, emails, social media, etc.) with students must be via Howick College resources, e.g. Howick College social media accounts, Howick College email, etc. Where possible, staff are to avoid using any personal resources.
- Should there be a need for direct communication between a staff member and a student that is outside of our mainstream communication structure, school principal and parental consent are required.
- When sharing information with or about a student(s), staff must be mindful of our applicable policies and procedures, as well as New Zealand privacy laws.
- Online conduct is held in the same regard as all other conduct requirements. Any breaches will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any breaches of the law will be reported to the Police.

5.5 When physical contact is made with a child this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Adults should use their professional judgment at all times, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child for the minimum amount of time necessary.

5.6 All staff are expected to behave in manners consistent with the expectations of Howick College. Staff should remain mindful that not all students like or feel comfortable with physical contact, and when any physical contact with a student is required, this has to be in accordance with safe practice. Physical contact must always uphold professional boundaries and should be in open environments and/or in the line of sight of others, e.g. other staff, adults or students. Physical contact should only be used when doing so is necessary to:

- Meeting the needs of the student, i.g. to provide first aid, etc.: and/or
- Meeting the needs of any instructional learning, e.g. to provide first aid, etc., and/or
- Meeting the needs of any instructional learning, e.g. sport development technique, instructional guidance, etc.

Physical contact should not:

- Be or promote unnecessary and/or inappropriate physical contact or affection towards a student,

- e.g.unnecessary/unwanted hugs, sitting a student on laps, cuddling, kissing, rough/boisterous play, etc.
- Be touch that has been declined, e.g. voiced or otherwise indicated as being unwanted touch (e.g. body language, movement, etc.).
- Be of a persona, nature, including performing care that students can perform on their own.
- Cause any pain, distress or harm.
- Be of a sexual nature or any sexual act (including exhibitionism, touching and fondling) in or outside of clothing.

5.7 Any sexual activity between an adult and a child or young person will be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action.

6. DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST MEMBERS OF STAFF REGARDING INAPPROPRIATE ACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

6.1 Howick College (HC) has a duty of care to the children it provides services to. A failure to report a significant concern about a child is a breach of that child's human rights.

6.2 Anyone who has reason to make a complaint will be made aware of the HC complaint process. There is potential that an issue raised as a complaint may also constitute an allegation of abuse. Any such complaint that raises a child protection issue will be referred directly to the Principal.

6.3 It must be remembered that making a disclosure or a complaint against someone in a position of power and authority is always difficult. The person making the disclosure may reconsider and express a wish to retract their allegation. At the outset, it must be clearly communicated with the child or adult that their concern is being taken seriously and will be responded to in accordance with this policy.

6.4 Allegations, suspicions or complaints of abuse against staff, volunteers or representatives of other agencies must be taken seriously and reported to the Principal who will deal with them immediately, sensitively and expediently within the procedures outlined in this policy. Concerns may be raised a number of ways e.g.:

- Directly by staff hearing or observing issues of concern or behaviour of concern
- Direct disclosure by the child or young person • Indirect disclosure e.g., through written or art work or through friends
- Complaint from a parent or caregiver or whanau member
- Reports by other colleagues or agencies
- As an anonymous report

6.5 If the allegation is against the Principal then this must be reported directly to the Presiding Member of the Board.

6.6 It is NOT the responsibility of staff to investigate allegations of child abuse. Allegations against staff will be discussed with the Board where a decision will be made if a notification to Oranga Tamariki is appropriate.

6.7 In all child protection cases, HC will cooperate fully with both Oranga Tamariki and the Police in their investigations and assessments.

6.8 If the Police decide to undertake a criminal investigation then the member of staff may be suspended, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure. It is important that no internal investigation is undertaken, and no evidence gathered that might prejudice the criminal investigation.

6.9 If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or inappropriate behaviour may have occurred. The allegation may represent poor practice by a member of staff which needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures.

6.10 A complaint or allegation against a member of staff may require a report to the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (EDUCANZ).

6.11 All staff have a responsibility to understand what constitutes appropriate behaviour in relation to children and young people. All staff have a responsibility to maintain appropriate standards of behaviour and to report lapses in these standards by others. Any concerns or reasonable suspicions of abuse should be reported to the Principal.

6.12 A person tendering his or her resignation, or ceasing to provide their services, will not prevent an allegation of abuse against a child being followed up in accordance with these procedures.