

## **MICHAEL PARK SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN POLICY**

### **CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION**

#### **Rationale**

Michael Park School is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all students.

This policy outlines the board's commitment to child protection and recognises the important role and responsibility of all our staff in the protection of children. It includes the board's expectations when child abuse is reported or suspected by us. We support the role of the police and the Ministry for Vulnerable Children (Oranga Tamariki) in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report any suspected/alleged abuse to the appropriate agency.

All staff members (including contractor, casual volunteers and designated volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and protocols and abide by them.

The board of trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care so they thrive, belong and achieve. We are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority. Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

In accordance with the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014, any person in our school/kura who believes that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually) ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived must follow school procedures and may also report the matter to a social worker or the local police.

The school will comply in full with any legislation currently in force, such as the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014, or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees.

#### **Guidelines**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Health & Safety Policy

Although ultimate accountability sits with the board, the board delegates responsibility to the principal to ensure that all child safety procedures are implemented and available to all staff, contractors, volunteers and parents.

Therefore, the principal must:

1. Develop appropriate procedures to meet child safety requirements as required and appropriate to the school
2. Comply with relevant legislative requirements and responsibilities
3. Make this policy available on the school's internet site or available on request
4. Ensure that every contract, or funding arrangement, that the school enters into requires the adoption of child protection policies where required

5. Ensure the interests and protection of the child are paramount in all circumstances
6. Recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their children
7. Ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, deal with disclosures by children and allegations against staff members and are able to take appropriate action in response
8. Support all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are understood and implemented
9. Promote a culture where staff feel confident they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal
10. Consult, discuss and share relevant information, in line with our commitment to confidentiality and information sharing protocols, in a timely way regarding any concerns about an individual child with the board or designated person
11. Seek advice as necessary from NZSTA advisors on employment matters and other relevant agencies where child safety issues arise
12. Make available professional development, resources and/or advice to ensure all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy
13. Ensure that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member

### **Supervision**

All staff, contractors and volunteers who are working with students must either be a registered teacher or directly supervised by a registered teacher or police vetted. All staff safety checks must be carried out prior to employment. Teacher trainee students on practicum in the school must be under direct supervision of the associate teacher. Parents assisting at school or attending camps and outings must be informed about and abide by school protocols. Students must be supervised at all times. Staff are expected to be mindful of safety and conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with the registered teacher's criteria and Teacher's Council code of ethics.

### **Prevention**

Everyone in the school community shares responsibility for preventing the abuse of students. For the safety and wellbeing of all, staff will be made aware of school policy and procedures relating to health and safety and child and youth protection. Michael Park's health curriculum will, in age appropriate ways, support students to assert their right to be safe, identify and respect personal boundaries, develop problem solving and social skills and gain the confidence to seek help. The school and kindergarten will promote positive parenting and access to appropriate information and resources for parents and whānau, relating to child and youth protection.

### **Objectionable material**

Staff will take all practicable steps to ensure content is age appropriate and prevent students being exposed to objectionable material (e.g. of sexually explicit or violent nature). This includes the resources students are given access to and relates to the school and kindergarten's cyber-safety protocols.

### **Reporting and acting on bullying**

Bullying is ongoing targeted behaviour aimed at another person and can happen in many contexts and situations including on websites and by cell phone. Examples include: physical aggression such as punching or hitting, verbal behaviour such as repeated teasing, threatening, taunting or name-calling, or non-verbal or physical behaviours such as repeated ignoring or excluding.

Any incidents of bullying will be reported, recorded and investigated in accordance with the Health and Safety policy and associated guidelines.

## Reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect

Effective child protection requires a full, accurate and prompt sharing of information.

When there is evidence or suspicion of child abuse, neglect, relationship violence or cyber-bullying reported, Michael Park's child and youth protection procedures will be enacted. In cases of cyber-bullying the health and safety policy and procedures also apply. Many people fail to report abuse in case their suspicions are wrong. The Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 protects people who notify concerns of abuse in good faith from civil and criminal proceedings. The student's safety should always be the paramount consideration in the notification process.

No decisions or actions in respect of suspected or actual child abuse, neglect, relationship violence or cyber-bullying are to be made by any staff member in isolation unless there are concerns for the immediate safety of the student. A consultative approach is essential to ensure the safety of the student and the staff member. Staff must discuss their concerns with the Principal, Deputy Principal or Kindergarten Leader as appropriate.

In situations involving complaints and disclosures care must be taken to consult Michael Park's policy and procedures relating to complaints and protected disclosure. Decisions about informing parents or caregivers about suspected or actual child abuse, neglect, relationship violence or cyber-bullying should be made after consultation between the school and Ministry for Vulnerable Children.

Where conflicting legislative requirements make decision-making pathways unclear, advice will be sought.

## Referrals from the school to outside agencies

Referrals to outside agencies (e.g. Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki) will be in accordance with school policy and procedure and the requirements of the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

## Referrals to school counsellor

Referrals to the school counsellor will take into consideration school policy and procedures, relevant legislation and the Code of Ethics of the New Zealand Counsellors Association. The student's safety and wellbeing are of paramount concern at all times. Under normal circumstances teachers initiating referral of a student to the school counsellor will obtain the written consent of both parents / caregivers. In situations where there is concern for the immediate safety or well-being of the student a counsellor referral may be made directly via the school Principal. In such situations the counsellor will assess the risk to the student and take responsibility for managing communication with the principal and parents / caregivers. As per MoE guidelines, any child can ask/request to see a school counsellor, however any referral to an external counsellor/agency requires parental consent. The clinician is responsible for accessing appropriate consent for any intervention and is bound by their own Code of Ethics regarding matters of consent and confidentiality.

## Record keeping

Any reported incidents or disclosures involving bullying or suspected abuse or neglect will be recorded according to incident procedures. This information will be stored securely and used by the Principal to identify any patterns or trends which will be reported to the Board.

**Review schedule:** Within 3 years

Ratified by Board/RSST:



Signed for BOT/RSST

Date: 19/06/2017