



## MORRINSVILLE COLLEGE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### Rationale

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

All staff members (including contractors and in many cases volunteers) are expected to be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and protocols and to abide by them. As staff we are concerned with the well-being of our students. Students suffering from abuse may suffer behaviour changes which can severely disrupt their academic and social progress.

In line with the 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.

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, parents and identified volunteers in the Board's policy booklet which is available for viewing from the Board Secretary at the school Office and on the school's website.

### Policy

The school will ensure that a clear Child Protection Policy is in place, distributed to and understood by staff, and available to students and their parents/caregivers, and operating effectively.

### Procedures:

If child abuse or neglect is suspected then the following procedures must be followed in order to obtain the best help for the student and to protect staff members.

1. The school will provide preventative education through elements of the former My Friends Youth resiliency programme which is part of the Year 9 Health and Physical Education curriculum, and by annually endeavouring to ensure the delivery of the Mates and Dates programme delivered by Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS) to Years 9 and 10 students over a five-week period.
2. A staff member with suspicion or knowledge of abuse of a student should immediately report this to either the Principal, a Deputy Principal or a Guidance Counsellor. If disclosure/suspicion occurs on our school site, ensure that the child or young person is safe from immediate harm. If this occurs through any connection on social media, it is not appropriate for you to respond through social media – instead, refer this immediately to one of the Guidance Counsellors, or, if they cannot be reached, the Principal or a Deputy Principal.
3. The staff member reporting the abuse must at all times maintain confidentiality and communication should be only with those people who need to know.
4. The staff member initially reporting the abuse may ask for a support person to be present.
5. If a student is disclosing information to a staff member about abuse the staff member should listen carefully without challenging the information and should seek to reassure the student, indicating that further help will be sought. The staff member should refer the student to the Principal, a Deputy Principal or a Guidance Counsellor.
6. The staff member should not formally interview the child or young person, but obtain only necessary relevant facts for when clarification is needed.
7. The staff member must ensure that accurate records are kept as these can later be used as evidence in court. Purely factual records should be recorded (ie. the details for the alleged abuse as first reported), together with a straightforward account of any observation of the student's appearance or behaviour.

**Do not express any opinion in your notes.**

8. If the incident upsets the staff member, then get support for yourself from appropriate people (like one of our Guidance Counsellors) as needed.
9. Once the abuse has been reported by a staff member, it then becomes the responsibility of the investigating Principal, Deputy Principal or Guidance Counsellor to try to verify whether there is a case of abuse, or whether there may be a case of abuse, after which they must take action and advise an external agency as soon as possible (eg the Police, Oranga Tamariki). The staff member should no longer be involved, unless this is requested by the student and the staff member agrees to this.
10. The Principal, Deputy Principal or Guidance Counsellor investigating the suspected abuse should determine whether the child or young person is in immediate danger and whether they are visibly upset. If neither of these factors are evident, then an effort should be made to re-involve the student in usual school activities. If the child or young person is visibly upset, provide an appropriate place for time out (eg in the Guidance Centre waiting room) until they are able to rejoin the classroom activity.
11. The Principal will ensure that where there is an allegation of child abuse against an employee of the school, an investigation is initiated using the proper procedures as set out in the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement.

### **Possible Signs of Abuse and Neglect Which May Be Exhibited**

#### Physical

Unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight

#### Developmental Delays

Small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills

#### Emotional

Sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm

#### Behavioural

Age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression

#### Talk

Talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure)

#### Neglectful Supervision

Out and about, unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to

#### Medical

Skin disorders or other untreated medical issues

### **Other General Principles of the Child Protection Policy**

The school will:

1. comply with relevant legislative requirements and responsibilities
2. ensure that the interests and protection of the child are paramount in all circumstances
3. recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their children
4. promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal
5. consult, discuss and share relevant information in a timely way with the Principal, Senior Leadership Team, school counsellors or Board, in line with the school's commitment to confidentiality and information-sharing protocols, regarding any concerns about an individual child
6. seek advice as necessary from NZSTA or PPTA advisers on employment matters, and other relevant outside agencies where child safety issues arise
7. make available relevant professional learning, resources and/or advice to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in keeping with this policy
8. ensure that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for all new staff members.

References:

[Children's Act 2014 No 40 \(as at 28 October 2021\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf \(orangatamariki.govt.nz\)](#)

Reviewed: 18.5.22

N Te Ahu

BOARD CHAIR