

GUIDELINES

Child Protection

Rationale

Every child or young person is entitled to live in an environment free from physical or emotional harm, ill-treatment, physical or sexual abuse, neglect or deprivation. The well-being and safety of children and young people is a paramount concern. This includes the prevention of child abuse or maltreatment.

The interest and welfare of the child or young person will be the primary consideration when any action is taken about suspected abuse. Fairhaven supports the roles of statutory agencies (the Police and Oranga Tamariki) in the investigation of abuse and will report cases of suspected abuse to these agencies, following the process outlined below.

We will maintain a good working relationship with the statutory agencies and be familiar with the laws which serve to protect children and young persons from abuse. We will consult with these and other agencies with specialist knowledge when needed, and our staff will not assume responsibility beyond their level of experience or training.

Purpose

This Guideline guides the actions of staff whenever there is a concern about the abuse or mistreatment of children. This includes recording concerns, if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by a staff member or suspected abuse between children.

This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children that staff may encounter, including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by staff.

1. Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

Physical abuse - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.

Sexual abuse - any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.

Emotional abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

Family violence may be witnessed/experienced by children and involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

2. Training

Fairhaven is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are taken through the programme policy on child abuse.

3. Identifying child abuse and neglect

Every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

It is normal for people to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that staff should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if a pattern is noticed or several signs together cause concern.

Some signs of potential abuse / neglect

- Physical signs of abuse: unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases. Neglect: looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight
- Medical neglect (e.g. persistent rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).
- Developmental delays (e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- Behavioural concerns (e.g. age- inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to). Note: it is not important to identify what specific kind of abuse might be occurring. Staff simply need to be aware of and able to recognise the whole range of concerning signs.

4. Responding to child abuse

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989, any person who believes that a child has been or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Fairhaven staff will act on recommendations made by statutory agencies concerning the official reporting of

suspected abuse. **Staff will only consult with or inform families about any suspected or actual abuse, after consulting with the appropriate statutory agencies.**

Staff will respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour by writing down observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This will be kept separate from normal school records, planning and enrolment information etc.

Information volunteered by a child should be fully and accurately recorded. **No child should be interviewed or in any way questioned about the suspected abuse.**

No staff member will act alone about suspected child abuse but will consult with Senior Management. Where staff suspect child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, Senior Management is committed to promptly reporting the matter to the Police or the Child, Youth and Family. **Suspected child abuse must be reported to the Principal with details of the concern. No outside agency will be involved without the prior knowledge of the Principal.**

Staff who are responding to cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. Senior Management will maintain knowledge of such individuals, agencies and organisations in the community that provide support.

Any suspected abuse must be treated confidentially to safeguard the rights of the child or young person, parent or suspected offender.

In the case of a report from a third party to the school, the school will accept the information with little or no comment, then refer information to the appropriate helping agency, without becoming further involved. (The school may be involved at a later date).

If a staff member is implicated as being responsible for the abuse, contact with the Board of Trustees Chairperson shall be made immediately. The Board shall ensure that the interests of the staff member (refer to NZEI guidelines) and those of the child are met. EDUCANZ reporting requirements must be fulfilled.

Responding to a disclosure/concern about abuse

Child discloses abuse or abuse is suspected

Listen to the child Reassure the child (If the child is upset, offer re-assurance and help them to re-engage in an appropriate activity, under supervision)
Only ask open-ended questions e.g. "what happened next"?

If the child is upset, offer re-assurance and help them to re-engage in an appropriate activity, under supervision

If no immediate danger to the child then re-engage child in activities and explain what you will do next

If there is immediate danger to the child or safety is an issue, act with urgency – contact the Police

As soon as possible, formally record: Word for word, what the child said.

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 (e.g. any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns).

The action taken.

Any other information that may be relevant.

Other guidelines for communication with children

Do not interview the child (in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue).

Do not make promises that can't be kept, e.g., "I will keep you safe now".

Securely store relevant information: 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 taken, including any rationale.

Any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident).

Inform programme supervisor/manager and make decision re- further action

Notify Child, Youth and Family promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected.

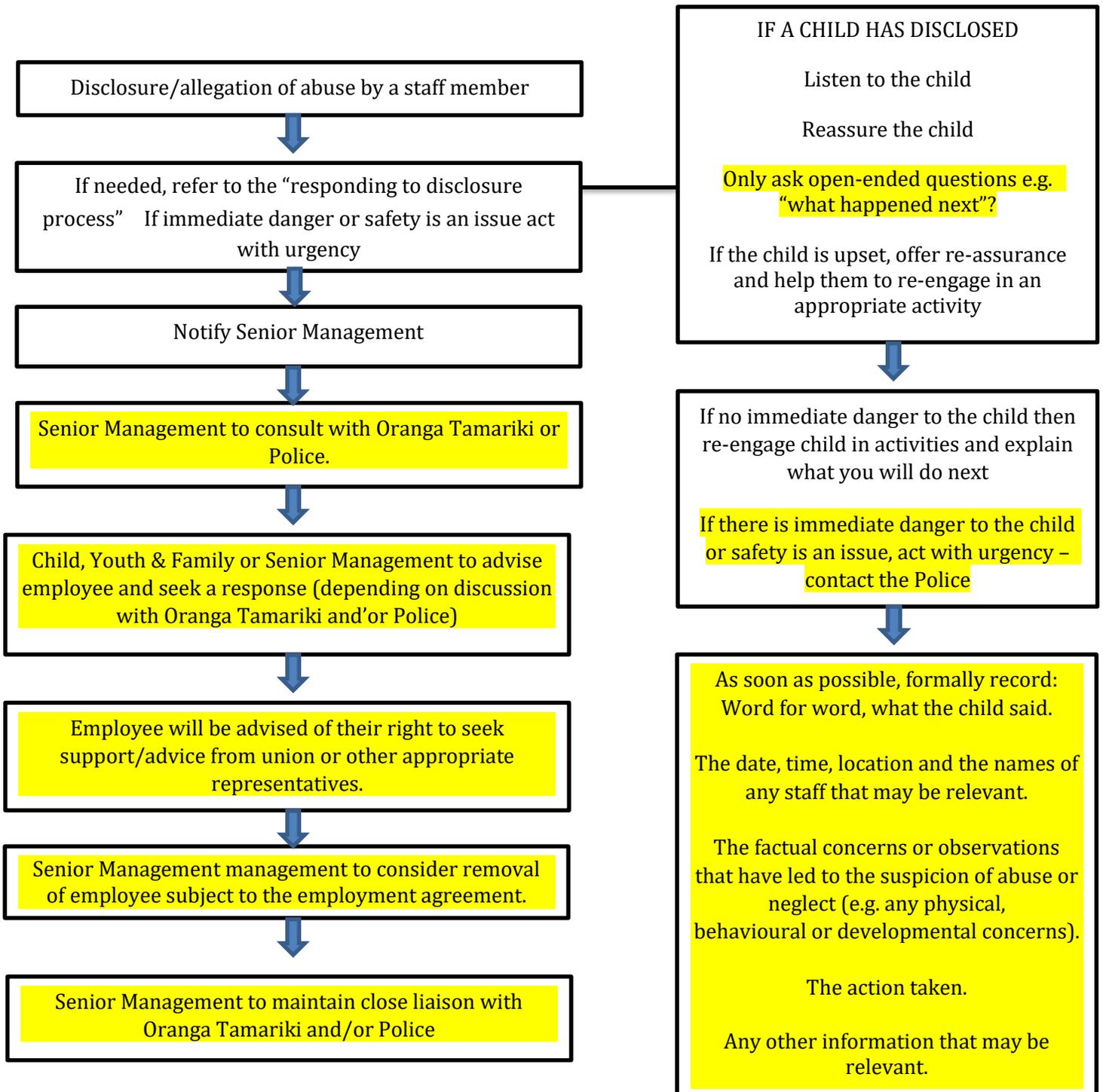
0508 Family (0508 326 459) contact@ot.govt.nz

The Principal and Senior Management Team are designated as child safety advocates and will be trained in child protection and responding to abuse.

5. When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member

Where it is suspected that child abuse has been carried out by a staff member (paid, unpaid or in any role), the matter must be reported promptly to Senior Management.

Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. This may require Senior Management to consider removal of the staff member from the school environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employment contract. All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.



6. Confidentiality and information sharing

Fairhaven Senior Management will seek advice from Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the Principal and Board Chairperson.

In general, when collecting personal information about individuals, privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

Staff may disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Oranga Tamariki under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

7. Peer abuse

Fairhaven School will ensure that the safety of the child or young person is paramount and no form of physical, sexual or verbal harassment or violence from peers will be sanctioned or minimized in any way.

While the situation is being evaluated, the children/young people concerned will be separated. It is essential to reduce further emotional trauma for the victims who may be fearful and distressed if they are in contact with possible abusers.

In some cases where the abuse has occurred at the school immediate suspension may be appropriate, as outlined in the stand down and suspension policy.

This organisation will make every effort to keep personal information as private as possible. Parents will also be asked to keep all information confidential to allow proper investigation and resolution.

Reviewed Term 2 BOT Meeting 2019