



# Pukekohe North School

Princes Street, Pukekohe. Phone 0-9-238-8552

## SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE POLICY

### Rationale:

All students will be treated with dignity and respect and have the right to have their needs met in a safe environment.

### Purpose:

1. To ensure the safety of the student is paramount.
2. To provide teachers with guidelines so that they can identify signs of abuse or neglect.
3. To provide guidelines for everybody working with students from this school.
4. To provide procedures for dealing with cases of abuse or neglect.
5. To provide guidelines of which help agencies will be used, interview procedures and how parents will be informed.

### Guidelines

1. Adults will be receptive and sensitive to students so that students feel listened to and believed.
2. In the case of a report from a third party to the school, the first course of action will be for the school to direct the third party to a helping agency without becoming involved. The school may become involved at a later date.
3. Parents will be informed, except where the student's welfare is likely to be threatened. Whichever agency is involved in the cases will be responsible for informing parents as they have the skills to handle the situation in the most appropriate way to support the student.
4. Members of the senior leadership will be the resource people in this area. Teachers who have concerns may discuss them with their Syndicate Leader, SENCO, the Deputy Principal or Principal. No outside agency will be involved without the prior knowledge of the Principal.
5. The Children and Young Persons Act overrides the Privacy Act so a staff member must report suspicions following the guidelines.
6. Information volunteered by the student should be full and accurately recorded. An in depth interview with the student especially regarding sexual abuse should not be attempted. This is the sole responsibility of the Children and Young Persons Service and/or Police. Any "leading questions" leading to disclosure can ruin evidence for further court proceedings and/or conviction, so interviewing must be left to those trained to do so.
7. When a student discloses abuse to a teacher, the teacher is to listen carefully, do not challenge the information and reassure that help will be sought.
8. The principal will ensure that staff members involved are kept informed so that they know how they can best support the student.
9. Teacher informs syndicate leader and principal.
10. The principal will record details and decide whether to:
  - 10.1 Refer to the Public Health Nurse
  - 10.2 Refer to a Medical Officer of Health
  - 10.3 Refer to the Social Welfare Department
11. From the first observed instance/indicator the teacher/teacher aide will keep a record of relevant factual observations including time, date and actual words involved. These records are to be kept confidential. The teacher/teacher aide should work towards building trust and confidence so that the student will feel safe to disclose if they are being abused.
12. The school will run the "Keeping Ourselves Safe" programme on a cycle basis. In the in-between years aspects of the Health and Physical Education programme will reinforce prior learning.

## Procedures

1. Teachers will use the checklists attached to help identify students at possible risk.
2. Keeping in mind student's welfare is paramount. Parents may be consulted about changes in behaviour to try to identify a reason. It may be caused by a change in the family's home circumstances.
3. All information/discussion will be confidential to the staff involved. Confidential data will be stored in one place known to the senior leaders. This data may be kept for the duration of the student's stay at the school. These records will be reviewed annually by the Principal.
4. Where a teacher is concerned about a student they may discuss it with a member of the senior leadership. If further investigation or action is felt necessary, the Principal will be informed.
5. Where further action is necessary the Principal will contact the Public Health Nurse without identifying the student and seek advice on the appropriate action.
6. Once the Public Health Nurse has been involved, she/he, and where appropriate the Police, will investigate and the school will act on the advice.
7. Support for staff and the student concerned will be sought from the agency involved.

## Complaints against staff involving sexual abuse

Once a helping agency is involved i.e. Step 6, the following procedures will be followed and will be in line with those set out in the Primary Teachers Collective Agreement re "Complaints against teachers".

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1. The Principal will inform the Chair of the Board of Trustees, or in the case of the complaint being against the Principal, the member of the senior leadership concerned will inform the Board Chair.
2. Both will then inform the staff member who will be advised to seek legal and/or union representation.
3. The school will inform the New Zealand Schools Trustees Association (NZSTA) and the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI).
4. The staff member will be suspended on full pay once an investigation has begun. In line with Section 2.21g of the Primary Teachers Collective Contract. At this stage the rest of the staff will be informed and counsellors made available as required.

## Conclusion

1. Parents and staff will be made aware of the procedures the school will take to protect students from any kind of abuse.
2. Staff will have firm guidelines to follow for any cases of suspected abuse.
3. Everyone who works in the school will be given a copy of the Code of Conduct and will know what behaviours are and are not acceptable when working with our students.

**Approved:** June 2020

**Date to be reviewed:** June 2022

## Sources:

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/child\\_abuse\\_physical\\_emotional\\_sexual\\_neglect.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/child_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_neglect.htm)

<http://www.findcounseling.com/journal/child-abuse/sexual-abuse-incest-statistics.html>

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/your\\_kids/safety\\_sexual.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/your_kids/safety_sexual.shtml)

Sexual abuse, which accounts for about 10 percent of child abuse, is *any* sexual act between an adult and a child. Such acts include:

- **Behavior involving penetration** – vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex
- **Fondling** – Touching or kissing a child's genitals, making a child fondle an adult's genitals.
- **Violations of privacy** – Forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom.
- **Exposing children to adult sexuality** – Performing sexual acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, telling "dirty" stories, showing pornography to a child.
- **Exploitation** – Selling a child's services as a prostitute or a performer in pornography.

The adult who sexually abuses a child or adolescent is usually someone the child knows and is supposed to trust: a relative, childcare provider, family friend, neighbor, teacher, coach, or clergy member. More than 80 percent of sex offenders are people the child or adolescent victims know. It's important to understand that no matter what the adult says in defense of his or her actions, the child did not invite the sexual activity and the adult's behavior is wrong. **Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.**

### Some signs of sexual child abuse

There's no easy way to tell if a child has been sexually abused. Some children may show changes in behaviour or emotional symptoms.

Children who have been, or are being, abused will often be very confused and uncertain about what to do and who to tell. Some children may not realise what has been done to them is abuse.

Often children who have suffered sexual abuse show no physical signs, and the abuse goes undetected unless a physician spots evidence of forced sexual activity. However, there are behavioral clues to sexual abuse, including:

- Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
- Brings up the subject of sexual abuse or drops hints, possibly testing your reaction
- Mentions an adult has asked him or her to keep a secret
- Is secretive about relationships with older children or adults
- Shows sexually explicit behaviour or uses sexual language inappropriate for their age
- Seductive behaviour
- Reluctance or refusal to undress in front of others
- Extra aggression or, at the other end of the spectrum, extra compliance
- Fear of a particular person or family member
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear
- Experiences pain or itching in the genital area
- Has bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vagina, or anal regions
- Has a sexually transmitted disease
- Seems very withdrawn or depressed for no obvious reason
- Has physical complaints with no obvious explanation, for example soreness or redness in the genital area

- Starts bedwetting or has very disturbed sleep
- Refuses to go to school
- Behaves very aggressively
- Self-harms
- Becomes reluctant to be with particular adults, or to go to activities he or she previously enjoyed
- Seems very clingy

- Tries to avoid being left alone with an adult in the family
- Shows fear of an adult or older child

Children who use the Internet are also vulnerable to come-ons by adults online. Among the warning signs of online sexual child abuse are these:

- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from people you don't know, or makes calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.
- Your child is using an online account belonging to someone else.