

POLICY 3.14

Child Protection Policy

RATIONALE

This policy outlines the Board of Trustees' commitment to child protection and recognises the important responsibility for all our staff in the protection of children and young people. It includes the Board's expectations when child abuse is suspected or reported. This policy is in line with the Children's Amendment Act 2018.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students at Bethlehem College thrive, belong, and achieve to the best of their ability. The College is committed to the prevention of child abuse, neglect and to the protection of all children.

As a State Integrated School, the Board of Trustees requires that all aspects of this policy align with the Special Character as set in the Deed of Integration.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure^[1]:

[1] The wellbeing of children and young people 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 and young people, as much as it is within our power to do so.

[2] Where physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect are suspected, the College must take appropriate action in the child's or young person's interest.

All staff members must be familiar with this policy, its associated procedures and abide by them.

The Board delegates responsibility to the Principal to ensure that all child safety procedures are clearly written and are accessible to staff, and that staff are updated twice a year on these procedures. The Board also delegates responsibility to the Principal to ensure that all child safety procedures are implemented.

Any person in the College 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 take action in the child or young person's interest.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

In the Bible, God reveals His heart for children; children are precious to Him. Psalm 139:13- 14 reminds us how God creates each child uniquely and Matthew 18:5 shows Jesus welcoming children. We must reflect this value for each individual child. We also see that God acts on behalf of the vulnerable. Psalm 10 reminds us that God is the protector of the weak: 'The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless' (v. 14). He also calls to account those who harm the powerless. (v. 15). Because of his care for vulnerable children, God calls his people to protect and defend them (Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 82:3-4). We are to do all we can to see children receive justice for wrongs done to them (Deuteronomy 27:19).

[1] Ensure in this policy means through applied professional codes of conduct, adherence to relevant legislation and delegation of responsibilities. Specific procedures are outlined in Appendix Three. **GUIDELINES**

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The principal shall:

1. Ensure that the interests of the child will be the chief consideration when any action is taken in response to suspected abuse or neglect.
2. Develop appropriate procedures to meet child safety requirements.
3. Comply with relevant legislative requirements and responsibilities.
4. Ensure that those employed as a member of staff working with children of Bethlehem College have been appropriately vetted^[2] and screened.^[3] This includes core workers and non-core workers as defined on page 4.
5. Ensure that any person engaged as a contractor who is likely to spend unsupervised time with children during school hours willingly submits to the process of police vetting; this includes Christian Education Trust contracted staff.
6. Safety check regular volunteers who will be alone with children.^[4]
7. Follow the safety checking procedure for staff.^[5] Police vetting confirmations will be kept on record for the duration of an employee's or contractor's tenure for at least 12 months after they are no longer in the employ of the college or Christian Education Trust.
8. Ensure staff follow the College's procedures for reporting suspected abuse. **[Appendix 1]**
9. Make this policy available on the College internet site.
10. Ensure that every contract, or funding arrangement that the school enters into requires the adoption of child protection policies where required.
11. Ensure the best interests and protection of the child are paramount in all circumstances. Recognise the rights of family/whanau to participate in the decision-making about their children, when appropriate unless this would result in an escalation of risk to the child.
12. Ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect **[Appendix2]**, deal with disclosures by children and allegations against staff members and are able to take appropriate action as outlined in the Child Protection Policy Procedures.

[2] Vetting means the formal process of obtaining checks from another agency, e.g. the Police vetting service, criminal record checks.

[3] Screening means an internal process for identifying suitable candidates – in this case, those who can be relied on to keep children in your care safe. Screening is about following a process to collect enough information so that you can be satisfied, having assessed the risks, that the applicant is safe to work with children in the role they are applying for. More specifically, it means verifying their identity, gathering information about them through application forms, interviews and reference checks, and finally checking what you know through the use of external checks like the Police vetting service.

[4] Volunteers Under the Children's Act the College is not legally required to safety check volunteers, but the Ministry of Education encourages this as best practice, especially if the person is a regular volunteer and will be alone with or have overnight contact with children. <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/9-checks-overview.PDF> A one-off volunteer (e.g. parent who attends a camp overnight) needs to be aware that the College may ask for them to be checked by statutory authorities.

[5] See Children's Act 2014 Part 3. <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/DLM5501618.html>

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13. The following steps must be carried out when dealing with a complaint against a staff member:

13.1 The Principal will consult with the appropriate senior staff to ensure implementation of the policy regarding reporting

13.2 The Chairperson of the Board of Trustees should be informed as soon as possible

13.3 The Principal will ensure records are kept of any comment by the pupil and the accused staff member, any complaints and/or allegations, and any follow-up action taken.

13.4 The decision to follow up on an allegation of suspected abuse or neglect against a staff member of the College should be made in consultation with the parents and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees

14. Ensure protection of children when there are custody arrangements.

14.1 Upon enrolment, parents are to indicate custody or specific contact / court / legal arrangements. They are also encouraged to notify the school of any change.

15. Support all staff to work in accordance with this policy; make available professional development resources and/or advice to ensure all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy.

16. Promote a culture where staff feel confident they can constructively challenge poor practice and issues of concern around treatment of students without fear of reprisal. Staff should recognise the power differential between adults and children and make every effort to reduce any significant and harmful imbalance.

17. 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 Head of School and Counsellor.

18. Seek advice as necessary from NZSTA advisers and other relevant agencies when child safety issues arise.

19. Ensure that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member. All staff will be upskilled twice a year on the Child Protection Policy and Procedures by the designated person for child protection; this person should also induct new staff at the beginning of each year.

20. File a Mandatory report with the NZ Teaching Council or other relevant regulatory body if:

- a teacher resigns from a teaching position, if within the 12 months preceding the resignation the employer advised the teacher that he or she was dissatisfied with, or intended to investigate, any aspect of the teacher's conduct
- a teacher ceases to be employed by the employer, and within the following 12 months the employer receives a significant and verifiable complaint.
- the employer has reason to believe the teacher has engaged in serious misconduct as defined below.

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Definitions of terms used in this Policy:

Child means a person who is under the age of 18 years Vulnerable Children Amendment Act 2017, 7Section 15 amended (Interpretation) In section 15(1)

Children's worker means a person who works in, or provides, a regulated service, and the person's work-
a) may or does involve regular or overnight contact with a child or children (other than with children who are co-workers); and b) takes place without a parent or guardian of the child, or of each child, being present.

Core worker means a children's worker whose work in or providing a regulated service (as defined in Schedule 1 of the Children's Act 2014) requires or allows that, when the person is present with a child or children in the course of that work, the person—

a) is the only children's worker present; or

b) is the children's worker who has primary responsibility for, or authority over, the child or children present

Non-core worker means a children's worker who is not a core worker.

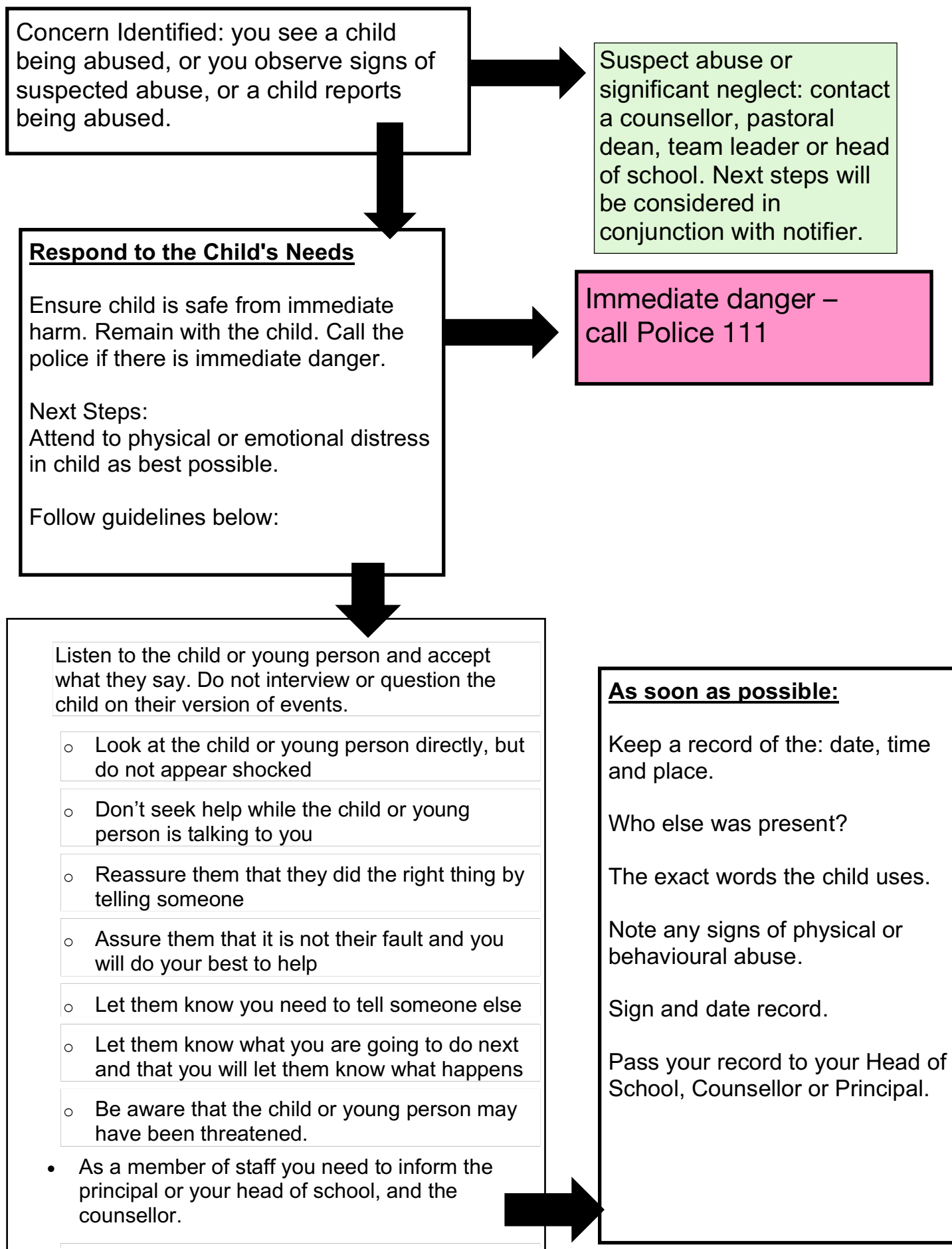
Serious misconduct is conduct by a teacher that adversely affects, or is likely to adversely affect, the wellbeing or learning of one or more students, or reflects adversely on the teacher's fitness to teach.

References:

1. Information on identifying possible abuse or neglect is detailed in '**Working together to keep children and young people safe. An Interagency Guide (Child, Youth and Family 2011)**
<https://www.mvcot.govt.nz>
2. See Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 Part
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/DLM5501618.html>
3. Any person 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 report the matter to the Principal or nominated person. For further information on reporting abuse go to:
<http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Traumatic-incidents-and-emergencies/MoE-STA-CYFProtocolForReportingActualOrSuspectedChildAbuse>
4. Te Pakiaka Tangata – Strengthening Student Wellbeing for Success.
<https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Supporting-students/Pastoral-Care-Guidelines-Te-Pakiaka-TangataNov2017.pdf>

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Suspected Abuse Response Flow Chart



Guidelines: To shape process and next steps.

Reporting Procedure:

Please raise your concerns with the correct person at the school. As a member of staff you need to inform the principal or your head of school, and the counsellor.

Considerations:

Only a minority of children and young people actively disclose abuse. Most child abuse is disclosed accidentally or through observation by an adult of a child or young person's behaviour, words and physical appearance.

Physical signs such as:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations
- Burn marks
- When a child or young person discloses abuse, this needs to be taken very seriously. It is important that any disclosure is dealt with appropriately, both for the wellbeing of the child or young person, and also to ensure your actions do not jeopardise any legal action against the abuser.

Other factors to consider in consultation with your head of school, counsellor or principal in how the child may be supported.

- No clear explanation for any of the above observed physical signs.
- Behavioural concerns such as emotional withdrawal, aggression or anxiety
- Developmental delays, changes or signs
- The child talking about or subtly mentioning things that may indicate abuse
- Parents seeming stressed or not coping on the money they have
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Parents not having friends or family to help
- Adults hitting or yelling
- Mental health problems
- Children are left home alone or seem to be neglected
- Children routinely not going to school

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

- Is the child's behaviour a sign of abuse or neglect, or are there other things going on in the family that could affect them?
- How is the child's behaviour?
- How is the child's development?
- Has the child or family hinted at, or said that something is wrong?
- Are there signs of family violence?
- Do I sense the family is struggling, or the child is at risk in some way?

Ref: <https://www.childmatters.org.nz/insights/handling-disclosures/>

<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/>

<https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/personal-community-safety/school-portal/information-and-guidelines/child-protection>

<https://www.govt.nz/browse/law-crime-and-justice/abuse-harassment-domestic-violence/child-abuse/>

APPENDIX 2 Indicators of abuse or neglect

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

Indicators are signs or symptoms that, when found either on their own or in various combinations, point to possible abuse, family violence or neglect. In many cases, indicators are found in combinations or clusters.

Indicators do not necessarily prove or mean that a child has been harmed. They are clues that alert us that abuse may have occurred and that a child may require help or protection. Sometimes indicators can result from life events, which do not involve abuse e.g. accidental injury.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any behaviour which results in physical harm to a child. If you're worried about a child being physically abused, the signs to look out for are:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions – particularly in unusual places like the face, on their back or tummy, buttocks, or the backs of their legs. Also look out for regularity of these injuries to see if there is a pattern forming
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations – many kids are active resulting in bumps and breaks, but people need to be thinking about how and why these injuries happen. Especially worrying are fractures to the head or face, and hip or shoulder dislocations. Be very concerned if this is happening in young babies, who are less active and not moving around enough to accidentally hurt themselves
- Burn marks – anywhere on the body are concerning, and if not easily explained need to be notified. Be mindful of burns in the shape of an object like a stove ring or iron, cigarette marks or rope burn
- The child or their parent – can't recall how the injuries occurred – or their explanations change or don't make sense.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse – any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including child sexual exploitation, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse is any act where an adult or a more powerful person uses a child or young person for a sexual purpose. This may be consensual or not, and can happen within or outside the family.

Most sexual abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts. Sexual abuse may include physical sexual acts or could be things like exposure to pornographic material and internet sites, or sexual conversations.

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The following signs are an indication that a child may be being sexually abused:

Physical indicators – like unusual or excessive itching, bruising, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in the genital or anal area, and urinary tract infections. Also be concerned and ask questions if there is ever blood in a child's urine or faeces, it's painful for them to go to the toilet, or if a child or young girl is showing signs of being sexually active. When pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease is identified, abuse must always be considered, especially in girls under 16 years.

Age inappropriate sexual play or interest – and other unusual behaviour like sexually explicit drawings, descriptions and talk about sex can indicate this type of abuse.

Fear of a certain person or place – children might be trying to express their fear without saying exactly what they are frightened of, so listen carefully, and take what they say seriously.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour where the child is rejected and put down. They may be isolated, constantly degraded and criticised, or negatively compared to others. As emotional abuse is a component of all abuse and neglect, the signs are often encompassed in the other abuse types. You may often see the same indicators as you would for neglect, along with other signs that are particular to emotional abuse.

The effects of emotional abuse may only become evident as the child gets older and begins to show difficult or disturbing behaviours.

A child who is emotionally abused may show the following signs in addition to what you would expect to see from neglect:

- Sleep problems like bed-wetting or soiling – with no medical cause, nightmares and poor sleeping patterns.
- Frequent physical complaints – real or imagined such as headaches, nausea and vomiting, and abdominal pains. This might coincide with the child being very underweight or dehydrated.
- Signs of anxiety – including poor self-esteem, being unable to cope in social settings and sometimes obsessive behaviour. Children who are abused are very sad and alone, and might talk about hurting themselves or ending their lives.

Neglect

Neglect is the most common form of abuse, and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, they are just as serious, leading to damaged self-esteem and a lost opportunity to thrive in the world. It can consist of:

- Physical neglect – not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, enough food and clothing.
- Neglectful supervision – leaving children home alone, or without someone safe looking after them during the day or night.

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- Emotional neglect – not giving children the comfort, attention and love they need through play, talk, and everyday affection.
- Medical neglect – the failure to take care of their health needs.
- Educational neglect – allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol children in school, or inattention to special education needs to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

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