

DRURY SCHOOL: Policy 5.17

Suspected Physical or Sexual Child Abuse

Rationale:

The School has obligations under The Vulnerable Children's Act 2016 to ensure steps are taken to keep children safe.

Purpose:

The School has a clear responsibility to protect its pupils, as far as is humanly possible, from any form of abuse. It must exercise this responsibility in an objective and professional manner. The physical and psychological safety of the child must be paramount in all decisions made by the School.

Definition:

Abuse happens in four principle forms; sexual, emotional, physical and neglect - see Appendix 1 for individual definitions.

Guidelines:

Principals and staff are among those to whom a pupil may turn to seek help. Alternatively, they are in a position to notice signs of injury and distress that may suggest abuse is present.

The prime concern of the school is to refer, in confidence, any allegations to the agency best able to investigate and to act in the pupil's best interests, whether those persons are the parents, or the social workers.

In any discussion with outside agencies it is important for it to be established when the parents will be notified and by whom.

Procedures:

- 1 Teachers must be updated through professional development before implementing the Keeping Ourselves Safe programme in the school.
Parent consultation through a community meeting must be undertaken before implementation of the KOS programme.
- 2 Staff will be educated so that they are aware of symptoms of abuse and are able to follow the correct procedures to report this.
- 3 Staff are to bring to the attention of the principal all cases of suspected child abuse of which they become aware. It is important that teachers observe, date and note symptoms under a confidential file. Comments must be factual and objective.
- 4 If there is clear evidence that there is some truth in the allegation, the Principal will report the allegation to parents/guardians without due delay (unless the parents/guardians, siblings or relatives are directly implicated by the alleged abuse) and to the NZ Child Youth and Family Service (NZCYFS).
- 5 If the parents are not implicated, an interview should be arranged to discuss the matter. The meeting between parents and Principal/trained staff member should be to substantiate the possibility of the allegation and determine the next course of action (refer to CYFS guide for guidance). Approaches to the CYFS will be through the Duty Social Worker.
- 6 The general principle is that parents should be informed without due delay:
 - (a) Without due delay may be taken to mean immediately in those cases where neither a parent/guardian nor a sibling/relative of the pupil is directly implicated by the allegations of abuse.

- (b) Without due delay may be taken to mean after consultation with the CYPS in those cases where a parent, sibling or relative is directly implicated by the allegations of abuse. In these cases first contact with the parent will usually be made by the CYFS.

STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY: must be preserved – the names of all involved (child, family and others) must be disclosed only to those who need to know.

Neither the Principal nor the staff should confront any person identified as allegedly responsible for sexual or physical abuse.

REPORTING PROCEDURES:

- 1 If necessary ask only open questions i.e. What happened?
- 2 Record all conversation concerning abuse, verbatim if possible.
- 3 Support the Child or Young Person; do not promise you will keep this disclosure a secret.
- 4 Once suspicions of abuse are suspected the staff member is to refrain from asking any further questions.

Complaints Against Staff Involving Abuse:

1. The Principal will inform the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
2. If the complaint is against the Principal then any staff member may inform the Chairperson of the Board.
3. The validity of the allegation should be investigated by the principal/trained staff member through careful discussion with the reporting staff member, followed by consultation with other staff who may have had contact with the pupil. The principal/trained staff member will need to determine whether or not an interview with the pupil is necessary before taking appropriate action.
4. The staff member will be properly notified and advised to seek legal and / or union representation.
5. If there is clear evidence that there is some truth in the allegations, the Principal/trained staff member should report the allegation to parents/guardians without due delay (unless the parents/guardians, sibling or relatives are directly implicated by the alleged abuse) and to the NZ Child Youth and Family Service (NZCFS).
6. The staff member will be stood down on full pay once an investigation has begun. At this stage the rest of the staff may be informed. (Counselling will be made available to any staff member at this time).
7. An investigation will be performed in accordance with clauses 5, 7, 8 and 9 of the policy for “Complaints Against Staff Members”.
8. If the outcome of the investigation confirms the substance of the allegation, the staff member’s employment shall be terminated immediately.
9. If the outcome of the investigation does not confirm the allegation, the student will be removed from the staff member’s class (if applicable) and there will be on-going monitoring by the Principal. Both parties will be provided the opportunity for ongoing support.

CHILD ABUSE APPENDIX 1

SEXUAL ABUSE:

Sexual abuse involves dependent children in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent. While children usually display symptoms of sexual abuse some display no symptoms and the problem comes to the surface at a later date.

Apart from the usual types of sexual abuse, it should also be considered a warning sign when a child describes or mimics activities inappropriate for their age. Young children viewing pornographic material may be classified as being abused.

Symptoms include: sexual provocation, promiscuity, behavioural problems, being hostile, depressed, have poor concentration, and poor relationships. Self-image may be low. Of course, a child may have some of these and not be a victim of abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Physical abuse takes many forms. Symptoms may include bruises, black eyes, abrasions, burns, scalds, bites and fractures.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Emotional abuse is also regarded as very damaging to a child and can, in the long term, be more detrimental to a person. Emotional abuse can be a passive, neglectful thing or involved rejection, denigration and verbal abuse. Signs of emotional abuse include: disorders of infant/parent bonding, stunted growth, delayed development (especially speech or social interaction), apathy, listlessness, motor inhibition, behavioural problems, impaired school performance, low self-esteem, depression, sleep disturbances, anti-social behaviour.

NEGLECT:

Neglect involves obvious signs of repetitive unkempt physical appearance and cleanliness.

This may include parents or caregivers failing to take due care with medical treatment, provision of basic necessities of life and/or lack of appropriate adult supervision.

APPENDIX 2

REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT FLOWCHART.

