

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

SUMMARY:

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection.

When allegations are made of events or issues that threaten that safety, school management will act on those allegations while taking care to treat the employee fairly.

PURPOSE:

- We provide a safe environment, free from physical, verbal or sexual abuse.
- We support families/whānau to protect their children.
- We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children 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. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse.
- We support the roles of the New Zealand Police (the Police) and Child, Youth and Family in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.

POLICY PRINCIPLES:

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- We recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- We are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the Person in Charge.

DEFINITIONS:

- Child abuse: Includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT:

- All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to the Principal or Deputy Principal as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and report the concern to Child, Youth and Family.

- If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse having taken place, the Principal or Deputy Principal shall notify Child, Youth and Family.
- In many cases, where the well-being of vulnerable children is a concern, the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non-statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important for our organisation to work with these to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.
- Staff members will discuss suspicions with a Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

ALLEGATIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT STAFF:

- In the cast of a complaint against an employee, action is guided by the applicable employment contract and Long Bay College procedures for dealing with complaints against a staff member.
- If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with Child, Youth and Family or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary discipline policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING:

- The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF Act, 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 Child, Youth and Family or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT (SAFETY CHECKING):

- Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet; identity verification; references and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

This policy is intended to be consistent with the requirements of the Privacy Act, 1993 and should be read in conjunction with the Long Bay College Counsellor Confidentiality Policy.

New/Reviewed	Tabled	Adopted	Signed
New 14/3/16	24/5/16	24/5/16	By Robyn van der Sande, Chairperson

DEALING WITH CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATIONS PROCEDURES

1. Long Bay College will make every effort to ensure that students are safe and that they receive expert support.
2. The recommended procedures should be followed when dealing with a child abuse allegation.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES:

The recommended procedures should be followed in the event of suspicion or disclosure of abuse against an employee. The child or young person must be adequately protected.

If the child or young person is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety, preferably by taking the student to the College Guidance Counsellor, or to a Deputy Principal.

The Principal to ensure the child/person making the notification has a support person.

The Guidance Counsellor and Deputy Principal will:

1. Listen to the child or young person and reassure them but do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep.
2. Not ask leading questions or pass judgement on any person.
3. Ensure that any information or disclosures by the child or young person are written down, preferably by the student, and check that comments and events surrounding the concern have also been recorded. For example, dates or incidents and places the incident/s took place.
4. Not formally interview the child or young person. Obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed.
5. Inform the Principal (unless implicated in any way).

The Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal (unless implicated in any way) will meet with urgency and decide upon an appropriate course of action, including notification to parents/caregivers and/or other persons as appropriate.

The Principal will ensure notification to Children, Youth and Family or the Police.

The Principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

NOTES:

1. The Principal is advised to ensure records are kept of any comments by the student, complaints and/or allegations, and follow-up action taken.
2. The decision to follow up on an allegation of suspected abuse or neglect of care against an employee of the school is made by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. Relevant outside agencies should be consulted.
3. Where the allegation is made against an employee of Long Bay College, then the Complaints Policy is to be followed with particular attention to Appendix 2.
4. The Principal and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees will have a dual responsibility in respect of both the child or young person and the employee.
5. Under no circumstances should the child or young person raising the concern or making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. This may require the Board to contemplate removal of the employee from the school environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employee contract.
6. The Board will take care to ensure that wherever possible, actions taken by the school support investigations or actions by relevant outside agencies.