



## **4. Child Protection Policy**

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## 4.1 Rationale

St Margaret's College ("SMC") is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and to the prevention of child abuse.

- 4.1.1 This Policy aims to uphold the safety and well-being of children by ensuring that there are adequate child protection systems in place. The following guidelines will assist the Trust Board, Executive Principal, Associate Principal and SMC staff in dealing with child abuse and neglect, and the management of child abuse allegations against any employees.
- 4.1.2 Section 15 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (CYP&F Act) provides that: *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 may report the matter to a social worker or a constable.*
- 4.1.3 The purpose of this Policy is to establish an agreed approach to the reporting of child abuse and neglect by those working within SMC. The protocol will ensure that:
- (a) The welfare and interests of the child or young person are the first and paramount considerations.
  - (b) Suspected and actual abuse of a child is responded to and recorded appropriately.
  - (c) Effective child protection requires a full, accurate and prompt sharing of information (as permitted within the law).
- 4.1.4 The inter-agency guide to "Working together to keep children and young people safe" provides more indepth information and should be read in conjunction with this protocol. A copy is available from the parent library and copies are also available from the CYF website at:  
<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/27713-working-together-3-0-45ppi.pdf>
- 4.1.5 **Scope:** This Policy applies to all pupils, workers, volunteers, visitors and whanau and encompasses all those who work with, care for or help SMC children or young persons.

## 4.2 Definitions

- 4.2.1 **Child and Young Person** - A child is someone under the age of 14 years and a young person is someone aged 14 years and over, but under 17 years who is not or has never been married or in a civil union (section 2, CYP&F Act).
- 4.2.2 **Child Abuse** - Child Abuse means the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person (section 2, CYP&F Act). Child abuse/neglect includes:
- (a) Physical abuse – any acts that may result in the physical harm of a child or young persons. It can be, but is not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating,

biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.

- (b) 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.
- (c) Emotional/psychological abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development e.g. family violence, exposure to illegal activities, rejection, exposure to family/whanau or intimate partner violence, intimidation, constant criticism.
- (d) Neglect – neglect is the most common form of abuse, and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be medical neglect, abandonment, neglectful supervision, emotional, educational.

4.2.3 **Notification Referral Reporting** - Notification, referral and reporting are all terms used to describe making a report of concern to Child, Youth and Family and/or Police.

### 4.3 Safe Working Practices

#### **Guidelines for the prevention of child abuse/neglect:**

- 4.3.1 All permanent staff will be familiar with the CYF inter-agency guide “Working together to keep children and young people safe” to ensure they are aware of the signs to look out for.
- 4.3.2 Leaders will be encouraged to attend any courses which aim to support teachers to:
  - (a) Understand their role in supporting vulnerable children, and keeping them safe.
  - (b) Understand what to look out for.
  - (c) Gain a working knowledge of how to respond to vulnerable children.
  - (d) Understand the Vulnerable Children’s Act & Children’s Action Plan.
  - (e) Understand the process when Child, Youth and Family receive a report of concern.
  - (f) Build a network with others in our community.
  - (g) Understand the role of “The Vulnerable Children’s Hub” in Christchurch as an important support network.
- 4.3.3 Volunteering adults and parents visiting or working with students in an educational context will be well supervised and visible in the activities they perform with children.
- 4.3.4 Teachers are expected to act in a professional manner at all times in accordance with the Practising Teacher Criteria. There is also an expectation that all non-teaching staff will also work within these guidelines when dealing with children and their families. Teachers and non-teaching staff are expected to know exactly the expectations of behaviour according to the Criteria.
- 4.3.5 Staff should promote professionalism in working with children at all times, through clearly established standards of adult behaviour with children.

- 4.3.6 Staff are to keep professional and personal lives separate, including on-line, and close relationships with parents are discouraged. Staff should be aware of “Professional Dangerousness Practices”. This is to ensure objectiveness in the sight of any reports or disclosures.
- 4.3.7 It is not good practice to hold images of SMC's students on private mobile devices outside the scope of your role at SMC. Photographs and videos of children should never be shared in a public domain (ie personal Facebook accounts).
- 4.3.8 Planning for activities off-site, including EOTC, should include identification of potential risk to students in public places. SAPs should include strategies, for example, children going to public toilets (ie always in pairs), safety in motels/cabins at night, safety strategies for activities where there is likely to be general public, strategies for transport arrangements – especially in private or school vehicles. Clear briefing of all participants should be a starting point.
- 4.3.9 Appointment of employees and volunteers will be in accordance with the Safe Recruitment Policy to ensure that there are thorough checks on all staff before employment. Non-registered teachers will be required to be Police vetted. See Safe Recruitment Policy.
- 4.3.10 This Policy will be regularly reviewed in consultation with parents and staff to ensure that all parties are aware of this Policy, reporting procedures and the procedure for making any complaint.

#### **Guidelines for reporting child abuse/ neglect**

- 4.3.11 The child's safety should always be the paramount consideration in the notification process.
- 4.3.12 No decisions or actions in respect of suspected or actual child abuse are to be made by any staff member in isolation unless there are concerns for the immediate safety of the child.
- 4.3.13 A consultative approach is essential to ensure the safety of the child and the staff member. Staff must discuss their concerns with the Head of the School, Associate Principal and/or the Executive Principal.
- 4.3.14 Decisions about informing parents or caregivers should be made after consultation between SMC and CYF.

#### **4.4 Reporting Process for Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse**

##### **Responding to suspected abuse or neglect:**

- 4.4.1 There is a process to follow when an incident or suspicion of abuse or neglect is reported. See the '*Child Abuse Reporting Process*' flowchart below.
- 4.4.2 All suspicions or reports of incidents will be reported to and discussed with the Child Protection Coordinator as soon as possible.
- 4.4.3 S/he will make a written report of the incident or concern.

- 4.4.4 Securely store the record of concern of any related discussions including copies of correspondence (where appropriate), a record of any advice received, the action taken and any rationale for this. This concern should be stored with any earlier concerns if the notification is based on acculmination of concerns. The repository for this will be KAMAR.
- 4.4.5 If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse has taken place, the designated Leadership Team person or Executive Principal will immediately take steps to protect the child and may notify The Vulnerable Children's Hub or Child, Youth and Family or the Police.
- 4.4.6 Staff may not deal with incidents of suspected, alleged or actual abuse without support from the Executive Principal. Incidents of suspected, alleged or actual abuse shall be dealt with sensitively and with awareness of the need to maintain confidentiality and the privacy of those involved.
- 4.4.7 Sometimes the involvement of statutory agencies will be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families. In these situations, SMC will refer the family to an appropriate statutory or non-statutory agency which can provide supportive services to the family and respond to the needs of the vulnerable children in their care in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

**Allegations or concerns about staff:**

- 4.4.8 All matters involving allegations against the staff need to be escalated to the Executive Principal.
- 4.4.9 Where an allegation has been made against an employee, to ensure the safety of the child or young person the Executive Principal will notify the employee of the allegation and consider whether it is appropriate for the employee to remain in school. This will be done following advice of NZSTA and in accordance with the requirements of the applicable individual or collective contract and relevant employment law.
- 4.4.10 If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer:
- (a) The Executive Principal or delegated person will consult with Child, Youth and Family or the Police.
  - (b) The Executive Principal will advise the person concerned and inform them that they have a right to seek legal advice.
  - (c) The Executive Principal will provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond.
- 4.4.11 The staff member should be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.
- 4.4.12 SMC commits to not using *settlement agreements* where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some *settlement agreements* allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerns the safety or well-being of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

### **Information required for reporting:**

4.4.13 When a notification is made to Child, Youth and Family SMC needs to provide the following information in the attached notification:

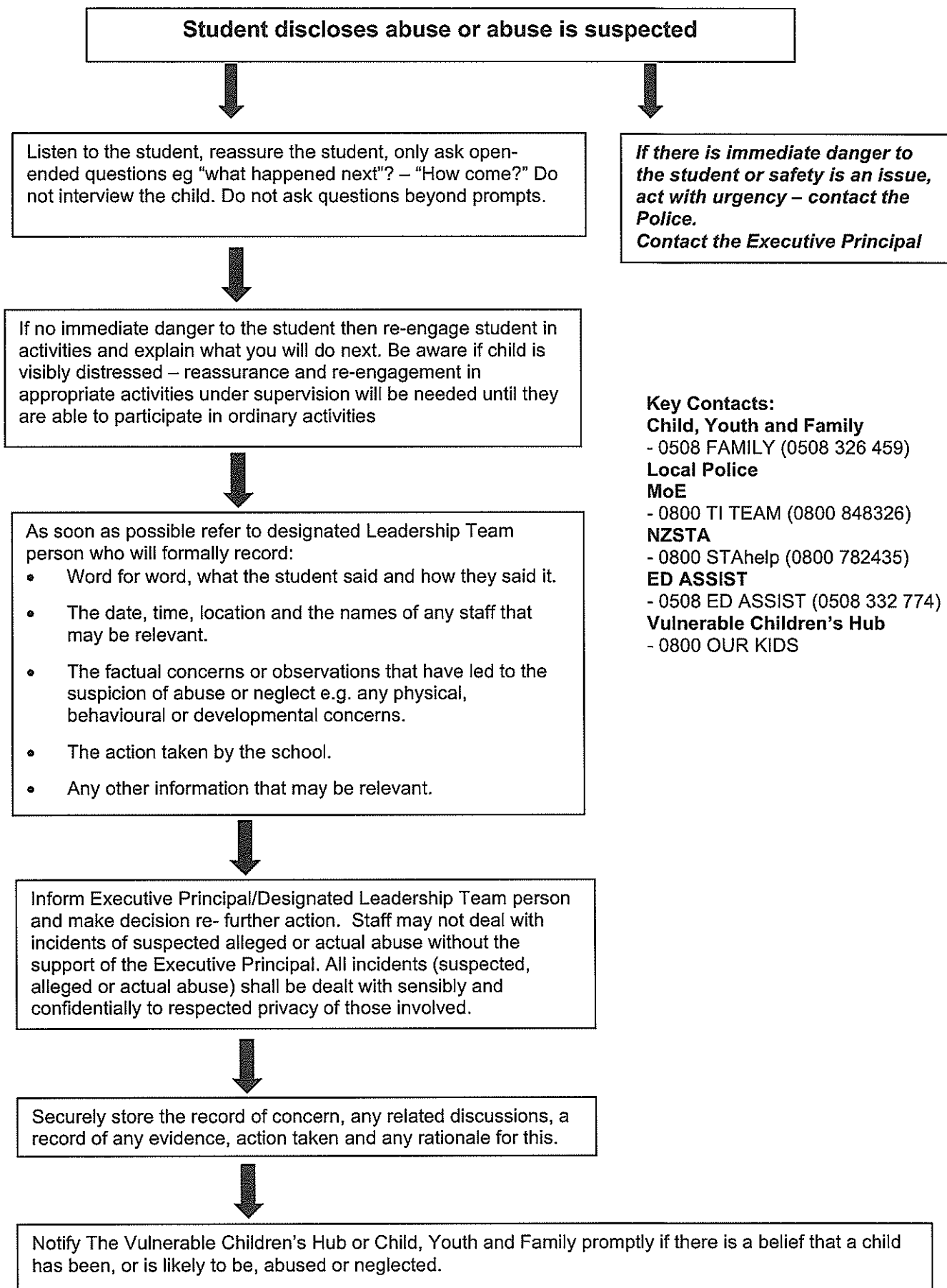
- (a) Name of child/children (also known as/nicknames).
- (b) Date of birth (if known).
- (c) Ethnicity (if known).
- (d) Name of caregivers, parents and other family members and current living situation.
- (e) Current legal custodians.
- (f) Reasons why it is believed that the child or young person is at risk.
- (g) Other significant background information.
- (h) The name of the contact person for Child, Youth and Family.

### **Working with Agencies:**

4.4.14 Interviews on-site with Child, Youth and Family or Police: all enquiries and interview requests must be dealt with in accordance with the Privacy Act, the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act and the Official Information Act. Any enquiries and interview requests must be referred to the Principal. A member of the Senior Leadership Team must check for identification of the person enquiring including physical ID checks or telephone verification. The College will follow the advice and guidance of the agencies involved.

4.4.15 All telephone calls, emails or correspondence with agencies must be verified before any information is to be shared. This may include asking for a phone number with an extension, evidence of person communicating with, verification of authenticity of communication. All communication is to go through the Senior Leadership Team in the first instance.

## 4.5 Child Abuse Reporting Process Flowcharts





## 4.6 Identifying the Signs of and Symptoms of Abuse

4.6.1 It is normal to feel uncertain about identifying potential abuse or neglect. The important thing is that staff can recognise when something is wrong, especially if they notice a pattern, or several signs that make them concerned. Every situation is different and it is important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reading conclusions. The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below may indicate abuse or neglect. However they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations that may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person's situation. No decision is to be made in isolation.

### 4.6.2 Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm:

#### Physical Abuse

- Strangulation or suffocation
- Poisoning
- Burning or scalding
- Bruises or welts
- Cuts and abrasions
- Fractures or sprains
- Abdominal injuries
- Head injuries
- Internal injuries

#### Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Aggressive, destructive
- Mistrust of adults
- Anxious and jittery
- Vacant or frozen stare
- Low self worth
- Passive and compliant
- Inappropriately dressed
- Relationship difficulties
- General anti-social behaviour

### 4.6.3 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any act or omission that results in impaired psychological, social, intellectual and /or emotional functioning and development of a child or young person:

#### Emotional Abuse

- Continued criticism, threat, humiliation, accusations, inappropriate expectations
- Rejection, isolation or oppression
- Exposure to family violence
- Exposure or involvement in anti-social and/or illegal activities
- Negative impact of caregivers' mental or emotional condition
- Negative impact of substance abuse in the home
- Deprivation of affection

#### Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Difficulty developing normal relationships
- Slow development
- Regression
- Apathy, depression, habitually frightened and nervous
- Habit disorders – sucking, biting, rocking
- Markedly low self-esteem
- Very clingy and possessive
- Overly compliant and apologetic



#### 4.6.4 Neglect

Any act or omission that results in impaired physical functioning, injury, and/or development of a child or young person:

##### **Types of Neglect**

- Physical neglect
- Neglectful Supervision
- Medical Neglect
- Abandonment
- Refusal to assume parental responsibility
- Emotional Neglect
- Educational Neglect

##### **Indicators of Neglect**

- Severe non-organic failure to thrive
- Stealing, hoarding food, hunger
- Withdrawal from and mistrust of adults
- Anger and aggressive behaviour
- Delayed development – poor learning skills
- Apathy and withdrawal, unsmiling
- Irritability
- Physical signs (eg looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight, poor personal hygiene).
- Neglectful supervision

#### 4.6.5 Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse in any act or acts that result in the sexual exploitation of a child or young person, whether consensual or not

##### **Sexual Abuse**

- Contact and/or Non-contact abuse
- Exhibitionism
- Voyeurism
- Penetration of vagina or anus
- Encouraging child to perform such acts
- Involvement in pornography
- Suggestive behaviours or comments
- Exposure to pornographic material
- Genital/anal fondling
- Oral Sex

##### **Indicators of Sexual Abuse**

- Changes in behaviour or personality
- Sexualised behaviour
- Advanced sexual knowledge
- Promiscuity
- Crying, sadness, withdrawal, sensitivity
- Fears, phobias, anxiety
- Feeling unloveable/unloved
- Regression
- Learning difficulties

#### 4.7 Review and link to other Policies and Documents

4.7.1 This Policy is to be reviewed at least every three years.

4.7.2 This Policy is available on the website and in printed format from the Office.

4.7.3 This Policy links to:

- (a) EOTC Policy
- (b) Recruitment Policy
- (c) Staff Handbook
- (d) Staff induction procedure
- (e) School ICT agreement
- (f) Whanau and Other Volunteer Help

# Child Protection Policy

Approved by:

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Signature: 

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