

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Background

The Children's Act 2014 requires all school boards to have a Child Protection Policy. As all staff members work directly with children, we are well placed to contribute to the protection of all children. We have a responsibility to ensure that our staff can identify the signs of possible abuse or neglect and are able to take appropriate action. Our Child Protection Policy goes beyond these minimum requirements and sets out how we'll build a culture of child protection within HRC Te Otu Mātua and Westbridge Specialist School. This policy encourages a culture of child protection that always safeguards and promotes the wellbeing of children. We are committed to working with our agency partners and the Children's Action Plan Directorate to build and promote a culture of child protection across both schools.

All employees, contractors and volunteers working for the schools are required to be familiar with this policy and any associated procedures and protocols.

Our Principles

Many of these are principles we encompass in everything we do. Some are specific to child protection.

1. We make the safety and wellbeing of children our primary concern, with the child at the centre of all decision-making when responding to suspected abuse or neglect.
2. We promote a culture where staff feel confident to challenge poor practice and raise issues of concern.
3. We recognise the importance of the family/whānau and their right to participate in decision-making about their children unless this would result in an increased risk to the child.
4. We all know we can report suspected child abuse and neglect to Oranga Tamariki – Ministry of Children or the Police.

Our commitments

To help us act in a way that reflects our principles we make the following commitments:

1. To work together to produce the best possible outcomes for the child.
2. To ensure all policies and initiatives are designed to promote (and be inclusive of) a child protection culture and to work towards continuous improvement in child protection practices.
3. To develop and maintain links with iwi, Pasifika, and other cultural and community groups to ensure that important cultural concepts (e.g., whakamanawa, whakapapa, te reo Māori, tikanga, kaitiakitanga, wairuatanga) are integrated, as appropriate, into practice.

4. To have open and transparent relationships with all whānau and other stakeholders of the schools, including sharing concerns about child safety issues with the family/whānau unless this would result in an increased risk to the child.
5. To support all staff to work in accordance with the policy, to work with partner agencies and community organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and of high quality and to always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
6. To share information relevant to the child's safety and well-being in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues, the manager/supervisor or the designated person for child protection.
7. To meet all existing statutory and contractual obligations, including matters relating to employment.

Policy review

Under the Children's Act 2014 we are required to review this Child Protection Policy every three years. The review will be undertaken by the combined board of trustees and will cover an assessment of the implementation and operation of the Child Protection Policy, including:

- the views of staff about the accessibility, relevance, and usefulness of the policy.
- whether any serious incidents have occurred, and how effective use of the policy was in resolving the incidents.
- how lessons learnt are reflected in subsequent reviews.

The Board is required to report on the implementation and ongoing operation of this policy in its Annual Report.

Prepared by: Combined Board of Trustees

Date of Approval: 3 November 2023

Review Date: November 2026

Version: 4