

GARSTON SCHOOL Child Protection Policy

This supports National Administration Guideline 5.

Rationale:

This policy is based on the philosophy that "All children are treated with dignity and respect and have the right to have their needs met in a safe environment".

Purposes:

1. To ensure the safety of the child is paramount.
2. To provide teachers with guidelines so that they can identify signs of abuse or neglect.
3. To provide guidelines for everybody working with children from this school.
4. To provide procedures for dealing with cases of abuse or neglect.
5. To provide guidelines of which help agencies will be used, interview procedures and how parents or caregivers will be informed.
6. To provide ongoing education of staff in the recognition and course of action in dealing with possible child abuse. (Resource people - CYFS, Police Youth Officer, Area Health Board Staff.)
7. To ensure if possible that staff are informed of counselling taking place and to endeavour to keep communication between these agencies open.

Guidelines:

1. Adults will be receptive and sensitive to children so that the children feel listened to and believed.
2. The school will use the most appropriate agency for sexual abuse and the most appropriate agency for physical/mental abuse and/or neglect.
3. Any person may report to any agency with the powers to act.
4. In the case of a report from a third party to the school, the first course of action will be, the school directing the third party to CYFS or the police without becoming involved. The school may become involved at a later date.
5. "Feeling Safe", "Keeping ourselves Safe" and self esteem units will be taught as part of the Health Syllabus to increase children's assertive skills in dealing with uncomfortable situations, and to help raise teachers' consciousness of the issues.
6. Parents will be informed except, where the student's welfare is likely to be threatened. Whichever agency is involved in the cases will be responsible for informing parents as they have the skills to handle the situation in the most appropriate way to support the child.

Procedures:

Any complaint against the Principal should be directed to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees who must then seek legal advice from The N.Z.S.T.A. organisation.

- 1 Individual profiles are already kept on children. These will include observations on social development.
- 2 Keeping in mind children's welfare is paramount ... Parents may be consulted about changes in behaviour to try to identify a reason. It may be caused by a change in family circumstances.
- 3 All information/discussions will be confidential to the staff involved. Data will be stored in one secure place. This data will be kept for the duration of the child's stay at the school. It will be forwarded at the discretion of the Principal.
4. Where a teacher is concerned about a child, the Principal will be informed.
5. Parents will be informed of any concerns if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child.
6. Where further action is necessary the Principal will contact the appropriate agency without identifying the child and seek advice on the appropriate action.
7. Once an agency has been involved, only that agency and where appropriate the Police, will investigate and the school will act on the advice from those agencies.
8. Whenever a child is interviewed at school, a staff member the child has confidence in, should be present. Ideally that staff member will be briefed by the social worker or police officer prior to the interview regarding the level of support to provide.
9. Support for staff and the child concerned will be sought from the agency involved.

10. The person who in good faith reports suspected abuse to CYFS and the Police is protected from civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings.
11. The procedure for access by social workers or Police to a child in school is specific to the case.
12. Where parents or others involved in a complaint use the Privacy Act 1993 to request information provided by the child to the school, the school must give due consideration to the safety of the child if the information is disclosed. The request can be refused if the school believes that in providing the information the child may be put at risk (Privacy Act 1993 Section 29 (d)).
13. Section 66 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 requires government departments and crown entities (including schools) to provide information, on request, to the Police, CYFS social workers, and care and protection coordinators, where the information is needed to determine whether a child or young person is in need of care or protection. Where the Board or staff member receives such a request they are required to supply it. They should require a reference to the authority under which the information is being requested (i.e. reference to Section 66).
14. Access by social worker or Police to a child in school:

While the law does not require a CYFS social worker or the police to have consent from a parent or guardian to interview a child as part of an investigation into possible abuse or neglect, they generally try to obtain consent before a child is interviewed. On occasion it may not be possible or appropriate to obtain parental consent before a child is interviewed. This may be the case, for example, where a parent is the alleged abuser. In such circumstances the best interests of the child will determine the most appropriate approach.

Consent of school management is required before a child can be interviewed at the school. Under normal circumstances the school management allows this access as the paramountcy principle applies. The school does, however, have a right to deny the social worker or Police access to the child if parental consent has not first been obtained. In such an instance the social worker and/or police has the option of either obtaining parental consent or (if they believe this is not in the child's best interests) seeking a warrant from the Family Court. A warrant gives the social worker and/or police the authority to proceed with the interview and, if necessary, to take the child out of school for the interview.

Complaints against staff involving sexual abuse:-

Any complaint against the Principal should be directed to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees who must then seek legal advice from the N.Z.S.T.A. organisation.

Once a helping agency is involved i.e. Step 6, the following procedures will be followed and will be in line with those set out in the Teachers Collective Contract re. Complaints Against Teachers.

1. The Principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.
2. Both will then inform the staff member who will be advised to seek legal and/or union representation.
3. The school will inform the union.
4. The staff member will be suspended on full pay once an investigation has begun. In line with Section 2.21 g of the Teachers Collective Contract. At this stage the rest of the staff will be informed. (Councillors can be made available to any staff).

Conclusion:

1. Parents and staff will be aware of the procedures the school will take to protect children from any kind of abuse.
2. Staff will have firm guidelines to follow for any cases of suspected abuse.
3. Everyone who works in the school will be made aware of what behaviours are and are not acceptable when working with our children.

Date:

Review Date:

Principal:

Board Chairman: