

INTRODUCTION

McAuley High School, the Ministry of Education, Te Whakarōputanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa (the New Zealand School Boards Association) and Oranga Tamariki are committed to ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

It is the responsibility of every employee of McAuley High School to ensure the safe emotional health of students in its care. Staff has an important role and responsibility in accurate recognition at an early stage of children/young people who are abused or at risk of abuse, and adults at risk of abusing children/young people. In line with McAuley High School's Values and Vision the school has a role to ensure that abuse and neglect is not tolerated. Appropriate action needs to be taken when sexual, emotional and/or physical abuse or physical or emotional neglect is disclosed.

PURPOSE

In regard to student safety the Childrens Act 2014 require a school Board and Principals of each state and integrated school in New Zealand to:

- Provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students;
- Promote healthy food and nutrition for all students; and
- Comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees.

The purpose of this protocol is to establish an agreed approach to the reporting of child abuse and neglect by those working within schools. The protocol will ensure that:

- Section 15 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 is followed;
- The welfare and interests of the child or young person are the first and paramount considerations;
- Suspected and actual abuse of a child is responded to and recorded appropriately; and
- Effective child protection requires a full, accurate and prompt sharing of information (as permitted within the law).

GUIDELINES

We adhere to the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand's National Safeguarding Guidelines (<https://safeguarding.catholic.org.nz/documents-policies>), and to Section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 which provides that:

Any person who believes that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed, ill-treated, abused (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), neglected or deprived, or who has concerns about the well-being of a child or young person, may report the matter to the chief executive (of Oranga Tamariki) or a constable.

1. All cases of suspected child abuse must be reported to either the school based social worker, the school-based psychologist, or Oranga Tamariki.
2. The child's safety should always be the paramount consideration in the notification process.
3. 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. A consultative approach is essential to ensure the safety of the child and the staff member. Staff must discuss their concerns with the principal or nominated person/advocate. Where applicable follow the Board's complaint policy.
5. Decisions about informing parents or caregivers should be made after consultation between the school and either the school based social worker, the school-based psychologist, or Oranga Tamariki.
6. All people have the right to be respected regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, belief system, sexual orientation or disability.
7. McAuley High School will respond to abuse with due sensitivity to the culture, beliefs and religion of victims and their families. This may require involvement of appropriate cultural support persons, including interpreters where necessary, from the earliest opportunity after abuse has been identified.

Definitions

Child and Young Person: A child is someone under the age of 14 years and a young person is someone of or over the age of 14 years, but under 18 years who is not or has never been married or in a civil union (section 2, Oranga Tamariki Act).

Abuse occurs when children, elder persons or partners experience harmful physical, psychological, verbal, sexual, material or social effects caused by ill treatment, violence or other behaviour, by another person.

Neglect occurs when a person experiences harmful physical, psychological, sexual, material or social effects as a result of another person failing to perform behaviours which are a reasonable obligation of their relationship to that person and are warranted by that person's unmet needs. In cases where this results because of the person's own actions, this is termed self-neglect. This does not include children.

Physical abuse includes acts of violence that may result in pain, injury, impairment of disease. This may include hitting, choking, or in any way assaulting another person. There is usually visible evidence of physical abuse (bruising, fractures, burns, lacerations etc), though the differences between accidental injury and abuse can be slight and require expert investigation.

Notification, referral and reporting are all terms used to describe making a report of concern to Oranga Tamariki and/or Police.

Psychological abuse includes any behaviour that causes anguish or fear. Intimidation, harassment, damage to property, threats of physical or sexual abuse and (in relation to a child/young person) causing or allowing the child/young person to witness the physical, psychological or sexual abuse of another person. Concerted attacks on an individual's self-esteem and social incompetence resulting in complete social isolation.

Sexual abuse includes any forced or coerced sexual behaviour imposed on an individual, including sexual acts imposed on a person unable to give consent.

Material abuse includes the illegal or improper exploitation and/or use of a person's funds or other resources.

REPORTING PROCESS FOR SUSPECTED OR DISCLOSED CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is either suspected or disclosed.
Ensure the child or young person is safe from immediate harm.

Physical/behavioural observations and anything said by the child should be carefully documented (include date, time, who was present).
Consult immediately with the principal or nominated person in charge, or other staff member if the allegation concerns the Principal.
The Principal or their nominated person in charge that received the information should discuss with the school based social worker or contact Oranga Tamariki, or local Police where appropriate.
If advised to do so, complete a referral form to Oranga Tamariki/Police.
The Board's Presiding Member should be advised.
If there is disruption to the school or community, negative impacts on other children and/or staff, media interest or a public profile, seek support from Special Education Traumatic Incident Coordinator (0800 84 8326).

Alleged abuse by board employee, including the principal shall follow NZSBA guidelines.

Alleged abuse by non-staff.
The Principal or nominated person should:

(1) The reporting procedure in respect of the child/young person:
Follow the advice of the school based Social Worker or Oranga Tamariki/Police.
Avoid further risks to the child(ren), or young person(s).
Ensure there is no contact between the child and the person whom the allegation is against.

Follow the advice of Oranga Tamariki/Police.

(2) Process for employee investigation.

Initiate an initial employment investigation.
Maintain close liaison with the police and avoid any action that may compromise their investigation.
Immediately seek advice from NZSTA or another approved employment advisor and advise your insurer.
It is important that no one person has responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and employment issues as there is potential for there to be tension between the two.
Notify the employee of the allegation and advise of the potential consequences.
Consider whether it is appropriate for the employee to remain in the school (follow advice).
Advise the employee of the right to seek support from union or other representatives.
The Board needs to determine whether they will defer their process while the police do the preliminary investigation, or whether they will proceed. Criminal investigations are separate from any employment investigation that the employer will follow.
Ensure records are kept of any comments or event relating to the complaint(s) and/or allegations, and follow-up action is taken.

Deciding when and who will inform the parent(s) and/or caregiver will be determined by Oranga Tamariki and Police in consultation with the school.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS WHEN REPORTING CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

- If the child or young person is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety.
- Listen to the child or young person and reassure them they did the right thing in disclosing.
- Write down what the child or young person says, check that comments and events surrounding the concern are also recorded.
- Do not formally interview the child or young person. Obtain only necessary relevant facts for when clarification is needed.
- If the child or young person is not in immediate danger and is not upset re-involve the student in usual school activities.
- If the child or young person is visibly upset provide appropriate activity for them under supervision with someone familiar (i.e. teacher) until they are able to re-join classroom activities.
- Hold immediate discussion with guidance counsellor, school social worker or student support personnel.
- Inform the Principal, nominated person, or other SLT member if the allegation concerns a student, inform the Board Presiding Member if the Principal.
- Notify Oranga Tamariki Contact Centre (contact@ot.govt.nz) or the Police.
- Get support for yourself from appropriate people if needed.
- If the child is in immediate danger call the Police on 111.

Presented to the Board:

Approved: 2025

To be Reviewed: 2028