



# Palmerston North Girls' High School

## Child Protection Policy

### **PRINCIPLE**

Palmerston North Girls' High School is committed to the prevention of abuse and to the well-being of children and young people. All services provided by Palmerston North Girls' High School adhere to the principles of partnership, protection and participation; and the rights and responsibilities accorded by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. All staff are expected to act in accordance with their professional code of conduct and maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

### **PURPOSE**

The Board acknowledges its responsibilities under current legislation and is committed to the prevention of abuse and to the wellbeing of children and young persons under the school's care through the provision of a safe physical and emotional environment for its students.

The procedures attached to this policy provide Palmerston North Girls' High School staff with guidelines by which to identify and respond appropriately to concerns of abuse and neglect and to understand their role in keeping children safe.

This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles. It is intended to protect all children that staff may encounter.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in response to changes in legislation.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **1. Safe Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers**

All appointments of staff or volunteers to positions that have unsupervised, direct, overnight and/or frequent contact with young people will be conditional on a safety check which will include verification of identity and certification (if relevant), interviewing, referee check and police vetting.

#### **2. Training of Staff**

Training will be given to all staff on a regular basis at the level appropriate to their role, to help them to identify suspected abuse and/or neglect, and to respond appropriately. This training could be provided by the school guidance team and/or MVCOT (Orana Tamariki) and NZ Police.

### **GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE**

#### **Definition**

Child abuse is the harming (whether physically, emotionally, sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person (The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act, 1989).

**Key Guidelines for Reporting Child Abuse include:**

- The child's safety should always be paramount, while simultaneously recognising the rights of parents/caregivers to participate in decision making about their children, and the rights of staff to perform their professional duties.
- A consultative approach is essential to ensure the safety of the child and the staff member. Staff must discuss their concerns with the HOD Guidance, Guidance Counsellor or a Senior Leader.
- All known risk factors will be taken into consideration when decisions about reporting to any agencies are made. Reports of child abuse or neglect will be made by a member of the Guidance Team and/or a Senior Leader.
- No decisions or actions in respect of suspected or actual child abuse are to be made by any staff in isolation unless there are concerns for the immediate safety of the child.
- Decisions about informing parents, caregivers or any authority will be made once discussion about the proposed reporting has been undertaken, if possible, with the affected student.
- Decisions about informing parents or caregivers will be made after consultation between the school and MVCOT (Orana Tamariki) or Police.
- All information relating to an allegation or report of abuse will be shared with MVCOT (Orana Tamariki) and/or Police upon request by that authority.

(Guidelines based on the protocol between MOE, STA and CYF, 2009)

**Allegations of Abuse**

Allegations of abuse will be considered seriously. Under no circumstances should the child making the allegation be exposed to unnecessary risk. All actions will be undertaken discretely and as confidentially as possible.

Allegations of abuse against staff are to be reported to the Principal and HOD of Guidance as soon as possible, alongside normal procedures for managing concerns and complaints.

**Related policies and legislation:**

The Vulnerable Children Act 2014  
Children's Action Plan (NZ Government)  
Employment/Vetting Policy  
Health and Safety Act



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#### **Training of staff**

Guidance staff to meet individually with new staff members that have contact with students to discuss policy and procedures around child protection.

Annual training to be given during a whole staff meeting. Written procedures to be made available to all staff.

#### **Indicators of Abuse**

It is the responsibility of staff to be vigilant, have knowledge and awareness of the indicators of abuse and to report any concerns that they may have around the wellbeing of students to the HOD Guidance, Guidance Counsellor or the Senior Leader (Pastoral) in that order of preference.

Indicators are signs or symptoms of abuse. Often there is a cluster of concerns rather than occurring in isolation.

Physical indicators may include bruises, burns, marking on skin, malnourished, unkempt and/or injuries not consistent with explanation given for them. Neglect or deprivation may be indicated by inadequate food, consistently unkempt appearance, unattended dental or medical problems, inadequate provision of basic necessities of school life.

Behavioural indicators may include cringing or flinching if touched unexpectedly, a change in emotional state (e.g. withdrawn or overly reactive), negative statements about self or others, concerning patterns of absence from school, substance abuse, frequent psychosomatic complaints, acting out behaviour (truancy or running away).

Information may come from other sources such as peers, school work, and members of the community.

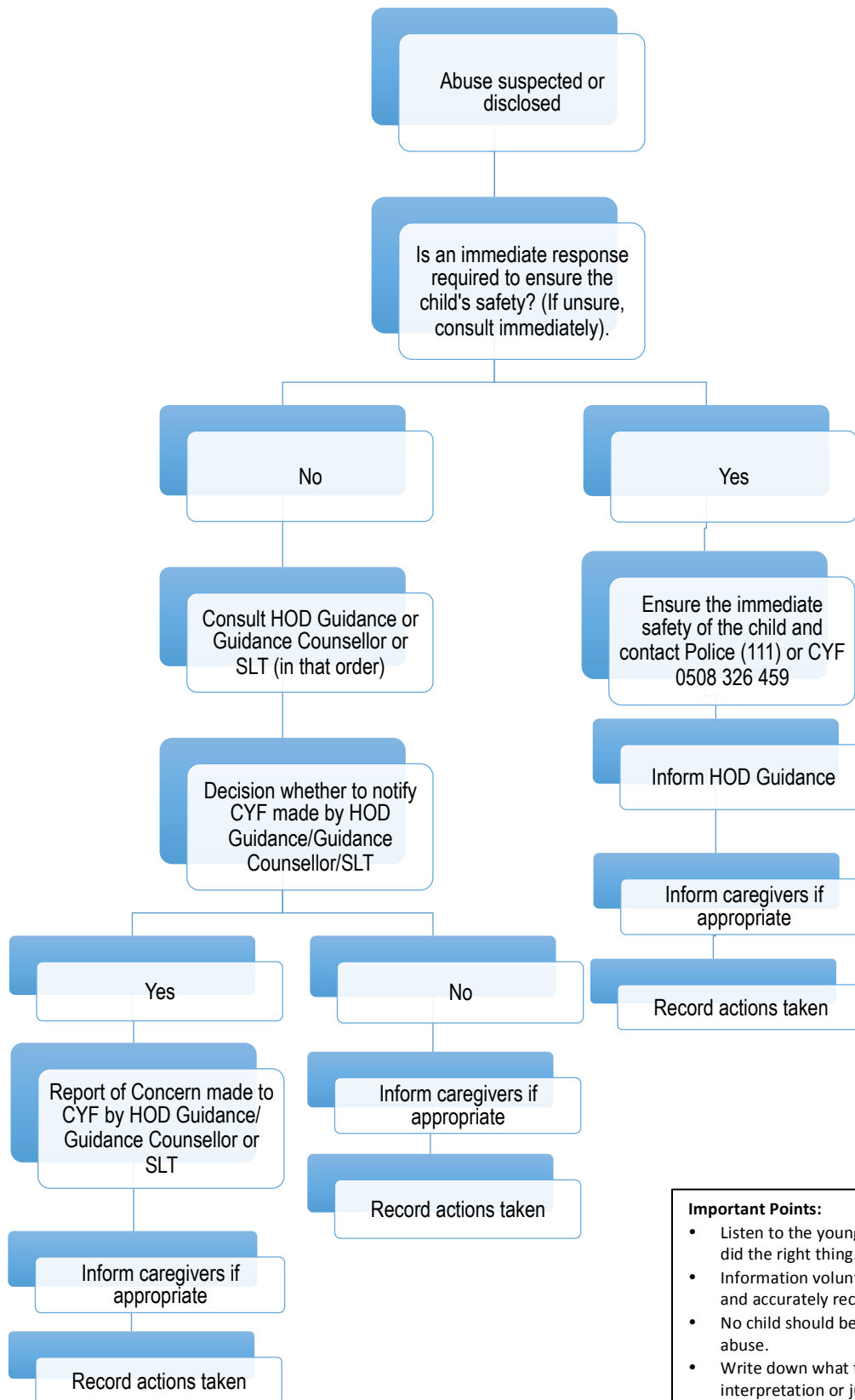
#### **Specific actions when suspecting abuse**

- If the young person is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety.
- Listen to the young person and reassure them they did the right thing in disclosing.
- Write down what the young person says verbatim, check the comments and events surrounding the concern are also recorded.
- Do not formally interview the young person. Obtain only necessary relevant facts.
- If the young person is not in immediate danger and is not upset, re-involve the student in usual school activities.
- If the young person is visibly upset provide with an activity under supervision with a familiar teacher or dean.
- Hold an immediate discussion with HOD guidance, a guidance counsellor or a Senior Leader (in order of preference).
- Following this process get support for yourself from appropriate people as required.



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- Important Points:**
- Listen to the young person and reassure them they did the right thing.
  - Information volunteered by the child should be fully and accurately recorded.
  - No child should be questioned about the suspected abuse.
  - Write down what the child has disclosed – without interpretation or judgement. Documentation may be subsequently used in court as evidence for either side. Notes should be written down during the talk with the child or as soon as possible afterwards.
  - In the case that the parents are alleged abusers advice will be taken from CYF regarding contact

## **Further Considerations**

- Sports Department – do they meet our policy/procedure statements
- Recent convictions -- apply for exemption?
- Procedures may need further work and elaborating on.