

POLICY:

CHILD ABUSE

RATIONALE

All students are to be treated with dignity and respect and have the right to have their needs met in a safe environment.

PURPOSE

1. To ensure the safety of the student is paramount
2. To provide teachers with guidelines so that they can identify possible signs of abuse or neglect.
3. To provide procedures for dealing with cases of suspected, confirmed or disclosed abuse or neglect, giving guidelines of which help agencies should be used, response procedures and how parents or caregivers will be informed.

GUIDELINES

1. "Keeping Ourselves Safe" and related self-esteem units will be presented as part of the Health syllabus to increase student's assertive skills in identifying and dealing with uncomfortable situations.
2. Staff will have the opportunity through training to familiarise themselves with signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect and be made aware of the procedures when dealing with it.
3. Adults must be receptive and sensitive to students so that they feel listened to and believed, but not ask questions.
4. Concerned members of staff must discuss their concerns with the Principal/Acting Principal before any outside agency is contacted.
5. The Principal will contact the appropriate agency. I.e. Children's and Young Person Service (CYPS), Police, Public Health Nurse.
6. In the case of a report from a third party to the school, the first course of action will be for the school to direct the third party to the CYPS without becoming involved. The school may be involved at a later stage.
7. Once the appropriate agency has been informed and intervention has begun the school may hand over responsibility for the matter, if safety of the child has been established.
8. If there is abuse resulting from the actions of one child towards another – the children concerned will be separated immediately and supervised until the facts of what has occurred has been established and a satisfactory conclusion is reached: Refer CYPS or Police.

PROCEDURES

1. If a student discloses abuse to a staff member, that person should be receptive and supportive but not question the student.
Extreme care should be taken. Information, verbatim where possible, should be recorded as soon as possible after disclosure. Accurate records will be kept of factual details and observations, actions taken and referrals to outside agencies. The staff member will consult the Principal immediately.
2. All information/discussions will be confidential to the staff involved, but concerns can be stated in general terms to all teaching staff. Data will be securely stored separately from the student's progress card. This data will be kept for the duration of the student's stay at school.
3. Once CYPS or Police have been involved, they will take responsibility for any investigation and follow-up and the school will take advice from this agency.
4. Whenever the CYPS interview a student at school, an adult on the staff (whom the student has confidence in) must be present.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST STAFF INVOLVING ABUSE

1. The chairperson of the Board of Trustees will be informed.
2. All complaints should be made in writing and should be addressed to the chairperson or the Principal.
3. Once the CYPS or Police is involved procedures will be followed as set out in the employment contract.
4. If the staff member is not covered by an employment contract or the contract does not set out procedures for complaints against the employee then –
 - a) The Principal and the Chairperson will inform the staff member who will be advised to seek legal and/or other expert representation.
 - b) The staff member will be suspended on full pay once an investigation has begun.
5. Should the situation arise where the Police approach the school re teacher abuse of a child, the matter must go through the Board of Trustees using the Complaints against Teacher Policy.

CONCLUSION

1. Staff have firm guidelines to follow for any cases of suspected abuse.
2. Disclosure or suspicion of abuse will be investigated.
3. The onus of proof/ disproof is not on staff.