



## Child Protection Policy

Our Child Protection policy, along with supporting policies and procedures, applies to any student at Rototuna Primary School who is defined as a child under the Children's Act 2014 (Part 1, s. 5). Where this policy refers to "students" to maintain consistency with other school documentation, child protection requirements apply, with the exception of those outside the Children's Act definition.

### Child protection framework

As required by the Children's Act 2014 (s. 14), we have adopted this Child Protection policy as our framework for student safety at Rototuna Primary School. This policy contains provisions for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect, with further detail provided in Abuse Recognition and Reporting.

Guidance provided by Rototuna Primary School for the safety and wellbeing of students aligns with the principles of partnership/mahi tahi, protection/kaitiakitanga, and participation/whai wāhi; and the rights and responsibilities of all members of our school community as outlined by te Tiriti o Waitangi. We recognise the importance of involving family/whānau in decision-making, and we involve students in decision-making about themselves in age-appropriate ways.

Our child protection policy, along with supporting documentation, ensures we maintain student welfare as our primary concern, and keep the student at the centre of decision-making. We aim to safeguard our students from abuse and neglect by encouraging concerns to be recognised and shared, and having systems to respond when concerns are raised.

See Student Wellbeing and Safety for a list of policies and procedures supporting child protection at Rototuna Primary School.

## **Supporting student safety and responding to concerns**

We support the wellbeing/hauora of our students by establishing positive learning environments, and promoting respectful relationships between students and staff. We have a designated child protection person, who is the primary point of contact for concerns about students, including concerns about abuse or neglect. At Rototuna Primary School, this person is the principal. In situations of concern, we aim to work together and intervene early to support student safety and wellbeing.

We foster a safe atmosphere for our students to speak up if they feel that something is wrong or that they are being mistreated. We may use programmes to help students identify healthy and unhealthy relationships. Our school uses the Keeping Ourselves Safe programme.

- For further information about our whole-school approach to wellbeing.
- If a wellbeing concern is raised, or staff think that a student may require extra support, we follow procedures for Responding to Student Wellbeing Concerns.
- If there is a concern or disclosure of abuse or neglect, we follow procedures for Abuse Recognition and Reporting.

## **Concern response overview**

For information specific to the situations listed above, see the corresponding topic. Our response overview is provided here.

If there is immediate danger:

- Phone the police on 111.
- If possible, protect the immediate safety of the student.
- Following the incident, inform the designated child protection person.
- Record any actions taken.

## **If there is no immediate danger:**

- Record a factual account of any concerns that have come up, or any disclosures that are made.
- For any concerns, consult the designated child protection person, who works with relevant school staff and external agencies as necessary.
- The designated child protection person may consult with the principal and board to decide whether to share information externally.
- Where a concern does not warrant notifying Oranga Tamariki, the school may partner with social service providers to identify and address the needs of the student.
- If necessary, Oranga Tamariki investigates and advises relevant staff about any action that should be taken to support students.
- Decisions about informing parents or caregivers about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect are made after consultation between the school and Oranga Tamariki.
- All decisions are recorded in writing and kept in a secure child protection file, with any decision-making processes explained.

## **Child protection roles and responsibilities**

The board is responsible for ensuring all children's workers (core and non-core) employed or engaged by the school are safety checked before their appointment. Existing children's workers are safety checked every three years after the last safety check was completed.

If the school employs a staff member that is not considered a children's worker, they are police vetted if their role includes unsupervised access to students.

Staff have a professional responsibility to report any concerns about student wellbeing and safety, particularly in regard to abuse, neglect, or professional misconduct of other staff to the designated child protection person. For more information about staff training, responsibilities, and conduct expectations.

At Rototuna Primary School, our designated child protection person is the principal, who is the primary point of contact for concerns about students, including concerns about abuse or neglect. The designated child protection person is available and accessible to all other staff, and has experience and training in responding to child protection concerns.

## **Child protection partnerships**

Staff members work with relevant contacts within the school to best support students, and seek guidance from external agencies as appropriate. Unless there is immediate danger, staff members do not act alone on their concerns.

Rototuna Primary School works with Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police where appropriate, and liaises with partner agencies and community organisations to support early interventions with the goal of safe and effective abuse response. We share information if it is in the best interests of a student, as per information sharing provisions. In all circumstances, Rototuna Primary School is carefully guided by these provisions as well as privacy considerations.

## **External agency interviews**

If an external agency such as the police or Oranga Tamariki asks to interview a student on school grounds, the school ensures the rights of the student are upheld. If Oranga Tamariki contacts the school to interview a student, that student has the right to a support person if they wish. This support person (e.g. member of support staff, teacher, or principal) focuses on the safety and wellbeing of the student.

The police may contact the school to question a student. Students in this situation have the right to remain silent, and the right to a lawyer. If a student who is under 18 is interviewed by police, a nominated adult can support them.

## **Child protection review**

We acknowledge that child protection is everyone's responsibility and we share and review our Child Protection policy and procedures with our wider school community.

Child protection topics are reviewed at least once every three years as part of the SchoolDocs review cycle. Our designated child protection person and any other relevant staff are involved in reviewing policies and procedures related to child protection.

The principal assures the board that the Child Protection policy is in use, is being implemented correctly, and is publicly available

## **Legislation**

- Children's Act 2014
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Act 2017
- Privacy Act 2020
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

## **Abuse Recognition and Reporting**

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, phone the police on 111. If you are concerned about the wellbeing of a child, or want to discuss, report, or refer a concern, contact Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459 or [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz).

Abuse recognition and reporting processes at Rototuna Primary School are part of our wider Child Protection policy, which applies to all school staff, contractors, and volunteers, and is available to our school community. These procedures fulfil our requirements under the Children's Act (s. 14) to provide information on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

We expect staff to be alert to changes in student wellbeing or behaviour, and to recognise signs of neglect and abuse. We acknowledge that recognising, sharing, and responding to these concerns as early as possible is key to improving health outcomes for our students. The principal assures the board each year that staff are aware of indicators of abuse, and are familiar with our procedures for reporting abuse.

At Rototuna Primary School, our designated child protection person is the principal, who is the primary point of contact for concerns about students, including concerns about abuse or neglect. The designated child protection person is available and accessible to all other staff, and has experience and training in responding to child protection concerns.

Rototuna Primary School works with Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police where appropriate, and liaises with partner agencies and community organisations to support early interventions, with the goal of safe and effective abuse response. We share information with appropriate agencies if it is in the best interests of a student and will support their wellbeing or safety.

## **Overview of abuse response procedures at Rototuna Primary School:**

- Maintain awareness of the indicators of abuse.
- Support any person disclosing abuse.
- Ensure student safety. Contact the police if there is immediate danger, or Oranga Tamariki for support.
- Record all available information, including disclosures, observations, and concerns.
- Consult with the designated child protection person or seek support from an external agency. Do not act alone.
- The designated child protection person supports the student through systems within the school or external agencies.
- Any person that identifies abuse or receives a disclosure is also advised to seek support for themselves.

## **Recognising and responding to concerns**

Student safety and welfare is the primary concern of Rototuna Primary School staff. Our staff are trained to be alert to changes in student wellbeing or behaviour, and to recognise signs of neglect and abuse. Information sharing provisions allow staff to share safety and wellbeing concerns, which includes low-level wellbeing concerns through to observations or disclosures of abuse and neglect. If it is in the best interest of a student, staff members are encouraged to proactively and voluntarily share information with other people or organisations who may be able to help. We advise staff not to act alone when responding to child abuse concerns. This is to protect our staff members, and to avoid prejudicing any legal action. Unless there is immediate danger to a student, staff should consult with the designated child protection person or contact Oranga Tamariki. The designated child protection person reviews any relevant information and decides how best to support the student. This may include sharing information with external agencies, or making a report of concern.

If concerns raised by staff or student disclosures do not warrant a report of concern, the designated child protection person reviews any other evidence to see if there are repeated concerns relating to the student or their family. The designated child protection person decides if combined evidence meets a higher concern threshold and should be reported. The designated child protection person may organise extra support for the student and/or partner with external agencies to address student needs.

## **Recognising abuse**

Child abuse is defined as harm (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person (Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, s. 2). Neglect is the most common form of abuse, and is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.

Abuse and neglect are more likely to be recognised through observations of behaviour or physical indicators than through direct disclosures. We ensure that staff are able to identify signs of abuse and neglect, and encourage concerns to be shared with the designated child protection person. For a guide to definitions and indicators of child abuse, see the documents below. These provide examples in different situations of abuse, but are not a definitive list. For any queries, we recommend sharing concerns with our designated child protection person or Oranga Tamariki.

**See Definitions of Child Abuse below**

# Definitions of Abuse

**Child abuse** includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect, which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult, and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child. (Oranga Tamariki Act)

**SchoolDocs** appreciates the review of these definitions and associated child protection procedures by **Safeguarding Children**.

Type of abuse	Definition	Examples
<b>Physical abuse</b>	<p>Any acts that may result in the physical harm of a child or young person.</p> <p>Physical abuse covers harm that is deliberate, as well as unintentional harm that results from a deliberate action towards a child.</p>	<p>Physical abuse can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, strangling, suffocating, drowning, and poisoning.</li> <li>Physical abuse may also include a parent/caregiver exaggerating or deliberately causing symptoms of illness in a child, making a child think they are ill.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	<p>Any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.</p> <p>Sexual abuse may be categorised as <b>contact</b> and <b>non-contact abuse</b>:</p> <p>Contact abuse is defined as activity involving physical contact (e.g. unwanted touching).</p> <p>Non-contact abuse does not involve physical activity (e.g. exhibitionism, verbal harassment).</p>	<p>Sexual abuse can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Contact abuse:</b> Touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.</li> <li><b>Non-contact abuse:</b> Exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography, or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.</li> </ul> <p>A precursor of sexual abuse may be grooming, which covers actions deliberately undertaken by an adult, adolescent, or child to befriend and influence a child (and in some circumstances members of the child's family) with the intention of achieving the criminal objective of sexual activity with children.</p> <p>Grooming behaviours can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing secrets with a child.</li> <li>Engaging inappropriately with a child on social media.</li> <li>Non-sexual touching, e.g. tickling, hugging, or rough play.</li> <li>Allowing the child to break rules.</li> <li>Spending time with the child away from protective adults.</li> <li>Favouritism through giving gifts or money.</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional abuse</b>	<p>Any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired social, psychological, intellectual and/or emotional functioning/development.</p> <p>Emotional abuse may also be described as <b>psychological abuse</b>.</p>	<p>Emotional abuse can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism, or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting, or terrorising a child.</li> <li>Being threatened with harm, called derogatory names, being humiliated, witnessing others being abused (including pets or other animals).</li> <li>Exposure to <b>family violence</b> or <b>intimate partner violence</b>.</li> </ul>

## Definitions of Abuse (continued)

Type of abuse	Definition	Examples
<b>Neglect</b>	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning/development.</p> <p>Neglect is the most common form of abuse.</p>	<p>Neglect can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical (not providing the necessities of life, like a warm house, food, and clothing).</li> <li>Emotional (not providing comfort, attention, and love).</li> <li>Neglectful supervision (leaving children without someone safe looking after them).</li> <li>Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).</li> <li>Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education, or inattention to educational needs).</li> </ul>
<b>Family violence</b>	<p>Family violence is abuse against any person whom that person is, or has been, in a domestic relationship with (i.e. someone who is part of the same household).</p> <p>Family violence covers a wide range of controlling behaviours, commonly of a physical, sexual and/or psychological nature.</p> <p>Family violence typically involves fear, intimidation, or emotional deprivation.</p>	<p>Family violence can occur within a variety of close interpersonal relationships, such as between partners, parents and children, siblings, and in other relationships where significant others are not part of the physical household but are part of the family and/or are fulfilling the function of family.</p> <p>It can include child against adult, adult against child, adult against adult, and violence by someone against their other partner (see below).</p> <p>Common forms of family violence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spouse/Partner abuse (violence among adult partners).</li> <li>Child abuse/neglect (abuse/neglect of a child by an adult).</li> <li>Elder abuse/neglect (abuse/neglect of older people aged approximately 65 years and over, by a person with whom they have a relationship of trust).</li> <li>Parental abuse (violence by a child against their parent)</li> <li>Sibling abuse (violence among siblings).</li> </ul>
<b>Intimate partner violence</b>	<p>Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a type of <b>family violence</b>.</p> <p>IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship.</p>	<p>IPV includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological/emotional abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, damage to property, and threats of physical or sexual abuse towards an intimate partner.</p> <p>IPV is particularly harmful for children as the parent/carer may be diminished in their ability to meet their child's needs. IPV is strongly linked to serious neglect and other direct abuse towards children, such as physical and sexual abuse.</p>

### Sources

#### Safeguarding Children

**Oranga Tamariki | Ministry for Children:** Definitions of abuse, neglect and harm

**Ministry of Social Development | Te Manatu Whakahiato Ora:** NZ Family Violence Prevention Strategy

**Safer Organisations Safer Children:** Guidelines for child protection policies to build safer organisations

**NZ Family Violence Clearinghouse**



## See Indicators of Child Abuse below:

### Indicators of Abuse

Indicators may be observed in both **children** and **adults** that could signal that child abuse is occurring.

These indicators may be observed on their own or in combination. Abuse concerns should be shared with appropriate people or relevant external agencies/support services as soon as possible to best support any child involved.

Type of abuse	Indicators from children	Indicators from adults
<b>Physical abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosing abuse</li> <li>• Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bite marks, cuts</li> <li>• Fractured bones (especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to occur accidentally)</li> <li>• Pressure marks from fingers</li> <li>• Location and extent of injury does not fit the explanation given</li> <li>• Difficulty recalling how injuries happened or giving inconsistent explanations</li> <li>• Poisoning</li> <li>• Showing wariness or distrust of adults or particular individuals</li> <li>• Seasonally inappropriate clothing (to hide bruising or other injury)</li> <li>• Demonstrating fear of parents and of going home, running away</li> <li>• Becoming fearful when other people cry or shout</li> <li>• Being excessively friendly to strangers</li> <li>• Being very passive and compliant</li> <li>• Being violent to animals or other children</li> <li>• Being extremely aggressive or withdrawn</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overly rough play</li> <li>• Pinching, pushing, dragging, slapping, throwing, or shoving a child</li> <li>• Shaking an infant</li> <li>• When explaining causes of injury to a child, their story changes or is vague</li> <li>• Believing in physical punishment</li> <li>• Perspective of "Didn't do me any harm"</li> <li>• Delay in seeking medical help for a child</li> <li>• Hitting a child with hands or objects</li> <li>• Making threats to harm</li> <li>• Animal abuse</li> <li>• Restraining a child as a punishment</li> <li>• Force-feeding a child</li> <li>• Choking, strangling, or suffocating a child, even if only attempted</li> <li>• Lashing out or threatening a child in front of others</li> <li>• General low empathy</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosing abuse</li> <li>• Developmental delays (being behind peers of the same age)</li> <li>• Displaying low self-esteem</li> <li>• Tending to be withdrawn, passive, or tearful</li> <li>• Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour</li> <li>• Being overly compliant, trying to keep everyone happy</li> <li>• Being highly anxious</li> <li>• Complaining of headaches or stomach pains (psychosomatic complaints)</li> <li>• Displaying difficulties in relating to adults and peers</li> <li>• Avoiding certain people, places, and situations</li> <li>• Sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Regression (acting like a much younger child) e.g. soiling, wetting pants</li> <li>• When playing, behaviour may model or copy abusive behaviour and language</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rejecting a child (not giving them attention, love, and affection)</li> <li>• Calling a child names and/or publicly humiliating them</li> <li>• Frightening a child with threats</li> <li>• Misusing authority, power, or position of trust</li> <li>• Verbal abuse, yelling, swearing</li> <li>• Being critical of a child's efforts or ability</li> <li>• Bullying and intimidation</li> <li>• Forcing compliance</li> <li>• Unpredictable responses (sometimes kind, sometimes volatile)</li> <li>• Humiliation, making degrading comments/insults</li> <li>• Having unrealistic expectations</li> <li>• Severe or harsh interaction with a child</li> <li>• Exposing a child to adult issues</li> <li>• Shunning or rejecting a child</li> <li>• Lack of emotional responsiveness and low empathy</li> <li>• Having a harsh parenting style</li> <li>• Threatening a child with physical harm</li> <li>• Forcing a child to watch physical harm being caused to someone they love</li> </ul>

## Indicators of Abuse (continued)

Type of abuse	Indicators from children	Indicators from adults
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosing abuse</li> <li>• Acting in a sexual way with toys or objects</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Being withdrawn or clingy</li> <li>• Personality changes, such as seeming insecure or anxious</li> <li>• Complaining of headaches or stomach pains</li> <li>• Fear of particular people or places without an apparent reason</li> <li>• Experiencing problems with schoolwork</li> <li>• Sexually transmitted infections</li> <li>• Unusual or excessive itching or pain in genital or anal area</li> <li>• Changes in eating habits</li> <li>• Genital injuries (bruising, cuts, redness, swelling, bleeding)</li> <li>• Blood in urine or faeces</li> <li>• Pregnancy</li> <li>• Being secretive</li> <li>• Receiving gifts or favouritism from a particular person or people</li> <li>• Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for that child's age</li> <li>• Perpetrating sexual abuse</li> <li>• Inappropriate masturbation</li> <li>• Experiencing difficulty sleeping</li> <li>• Persistent soiling or bed wetting or regression (starting to wet the bed again having stopped)</li> <li>• Having difficulties relating to adults and peers</li> <li>• Unexplained absences, unexplained gifts or money (often signs of sexual exploitation)</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refusing to allow a child sufficient privacy</li> <li>• Insisting on physical affection</li> <li>• Selecting/Favouring a particular child</li> <li>• Abnormal interest in the sexual development of a child or teenager</li> <li>• Discussing or sharing sexual jokes or sexual knowledge/material with a child</li> <li>• Insisting on time alone with a child, including babysitting and outings</li> <li>• Spending most of their spare time with children</li> <li>• Buying children expensive gifts or giving them money for no apparent reason</li> <li>• Treating a particular child as a favourite</li> <li>• Frequently walking in on a child using the bathroom, changing rooms, or toilet</li> <li>• Grooming</li> <li>• Forced hugging and kissing</li> <li>• Encouraging a child to behave in sexually inappropriate ways</li> <li>• Voyeurism (secretly watching or filming children)</li> <li>• Exposing of genitals</li> <li>• Non-contact abuse can also involve failing to protect a child from seeing and hearing sexual activities, media, or conversations</li> </ul>
<b>Family violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosing family violence</li> <li>• Physical injuries</li> <li>• Concentration difficulties</li> <li>• Adjustment difficulties</li> <li>• Being anxious or nervous</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Fear of a parent, or partner of a parent</li> <li>• Isolation from friends and family</li> <li>• Unusual absences</li> <li>• Fear of conflict</li> <li>• Violent outbursts</li> <li>• Aggressive language</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being jealous and possessive</li> <li>• Exhibiting controlling behaviour, making all of the decisions</li> <li>• Threatening, criticising, blaming, or humiliating</li> <li>• Mood swings</li> <li>• Having a history of bad relationships</li> <li>• Having a dominant belief system that supports being controlling</li> </ul>

# Indicators of Abuse (continued)

Type of abuse	Indicators from children	Indicators from adults
<b>Neglect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosing neglect</li> <li>• Lack of sanitary protection for girls who are menstruating</li> <li>• Frequent hunger</li> <li>• Malnutrition</li> <li>• Poor hygiene with few self-care skills</li> <li>• Dental decay</li> <li>• Medical conditions not being managed, not improving, or getting worse</li> <li>• Seasonally inappropriate clothing</li> <li>• Being left unsupervised for long periods</li> <li>• Medical needs not attended to, being ill more than average</li> <li>• Stealing food</li> <li>• Staying at school outside of school hours</li> <li>• Often being tired, falling asleep in class or at meal times</li> <li>• Abusing alcohol or drugs</li> <li>• Demanding affection or attention from adults, including strangers</li> <li>• Displaying aggressive behaviour</li> <li>• Not getting on well with peers</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising needs of adults over needs and rights of children</li> <li>• Failing to attend to a child's basic needs</li> <li>• Unresponsive parenting</li> <li>• Failing to take the child for medical appointments</li> <li>• Leaving the child unattended</li> <li>• Repeated "accidents"</li> <li>• Being emotionally unavailable</li> <li>• Appearing to be indifferent to the child</li> <li>• Seeming apathetic or depressed</li> <li>• Believing children are unimportant and their needs are secondary to adults or community needs</li> <li>• Ignoring or belittling children's needs or rights</li> </ul>

**SchoolDocs** appreciates the input of **Safeguarding Children** in providing these indicators and for their review of associated child protection content.

If there is evidence of the indicators above, concerns should be shared with appropriate people or relevant external agencies/support services. In a school context, the recommended first point of contact is the designated child protection person. An overview of the abuse response procedures at school is provided below. For more information, see **Abuse Recognition and Reporting** on **SchoolDocs**.

## Abuse response overview:

- Maintain awareness of the indicators of abuse.
- Support any person disclosing abuse.
- Ensure student safety. Contact the police if there is immediate danger, or Oranga Tamariki for support.
- Record all available information, including disclosures, observations, and concerns.
- Consult with the designated child protection person or seek support from an external agency. Do not act alone.
- The designated child protection person supports the student through the school or external agencies.
- Any person that identifies abuse or receives a disclosure is also advised to seek support for themselves.

## **Managing disclosure**

While abuse is usually recognised through observation, students may willingly or accidentally disclose abuse. In this situation, we handle disclosure with care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the student, and to avoid prejudicing any legal action.

Any person who receives a disclosure is advised to:

- remain calm, and remember that the safety and wellbeing of the student is the primary concern
- offer reassurance, but do not make any promises or commitments that cannot be kept
- write down information about the time, date, location, and any people present during the disclosure
- write down what the student says in their own words, distinguishing between what the student says and any inferences made
- avoid formally interviewing the student
- ask open questions (rather than leading questions that may cause biased answers)
- ensure the student is supported and that there is a responsible adult at the school who is available to them throughout any investigation by external agencies
- inform the designated child protection person as soon as possible
- refer to Oranga Tamariki or the police if necessary.

We encourage staff to seek support for themselves in the event of abuse disclosure, either from a relevant support person at the school or through external support services.

## **Allegations against staff members**

Child abuse concerns involving staff members may come about through observation or disclosure. These may reflect conduct within the school environment, but we also respond to allegations regarding staff behaviour outside of school. Any allegations against staff are taken seriously and dealt with as a matter of urgency. If someone has been accused of abuse, the school may take steps to prevent contact between that person and students at the school. Any allegations against staff members should be reported to the principal. If a concern involves the principal, it should be reported to the board chair. See Protected Disclosure for the procedures that ensure staff feel confident they can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

The school reports allegations of child abuse by staff members to Oranga Tamariki and the police. It is the responsibility of these authorities to assess any evidence and investigate whether child abuse has occurred. The school does not directly investigate allegations.

While student safety is our primary concern, we follow a fair disciplinary process in cases of alleged abuse. We uphold the rights of staff to respond to allegations and seek independent advice. During an investigation by Oranga Tamariki or the police, the school does not conduct its own internal investigations that may prejudice an external decision.

We protect any actual or potential legal action by following the advice of authorities in terms of contact with students, family/whānau, and those facing allegations. If there is insufficient evidence for a criminal prosecution, and following the advice of authorities, the school may conduct its own internal investigation.

Abuse and neglect are classed as a serious breach of the Code of Professional Responsibility | Ngā Tikanga Matatika under the Teaching Council Rules 2016 (Part 3). If we have reason to believe that a teacher has engaged in this type of serious misconduct, we make a mandatory report to the Teaching Council of Aotearoa.

### **Sharing information and reporting abuse**

Under the information sharing provisions of the Oranga Tamariki Act, staff may proactively share information with other approved professionals (e.g. relevant members of staff, the board, and social, family, and community services) if it is in the best interests of the student. The decision to share information can be in response to general wellbeing concerns about a student as well as concerns of neglect and abuse.

Rototuna Primary School makes decisions about whether to report concerns to Oranga Tamariki or the police based on all available information. The reporting process may also involve other external agencies to identify and address student needs. The school consults with Oranga Tamariki and the police as required to decide who informs parents and/or caregivers, and when. For further detail about the information that Rototuna Primary School is able to share and request, see Sharing Student Personal Information with External Agencies.

### **Storing information**

We record all information in writing and keep this securely in a child protection file. The designated child protection person refers to this information when making decisions based on further evidence.

We store all information, including records documenting concerns, conversations, advice received, actions taken (including rationale), and any warnings issued, in accordance with our Privacy and School Records Retention and Disposal procedures.

The principal assures the board each year that staff are engaged with the Abuse Recognition and Reporting policy, including indicators of abuse and procedures for reporting abuse.