

PUNI SCHOOL
BAS3 Health, Safety & Welfare - CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

BACKGROUND:

All disclosures must be reported to the principal. The principal must report all disclosures to Oranga Tamariki or relevant agency.

All children are vulnerable to abuse regardless of family situation, race, sex, age or socio-economic level. Children who are abused feel shame, guilt, fear and embarrassment.

As teachers, we are in a position where we develop close relationships with the children within our classes and school and are therefore quick to note possible signs of abuse. We can provide an open ear, reassurance, begin to rebuild positive images of oneself, but basically be an avenue out of the abuse situation.

Child abuse is everyone's problem. Children are abused physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. The effects of the abuse go on for years even after it has stopped. The sooner it can be stopped, the sooner the child can be helped begin the long process of healing.

PHYSICAL abuse is often physical punishment that gets out of control, but some abuse is deliberate and is meant to hurt the child. It includes severe beatings, burns, bites, fractures, scalds and actions that result in injury or death.

EMOTIONAL abuse includes constant yelling, threatening, scaring the child or always being critical.

SEXUAL abuse is when children (sometimes even toddlers and babies) are used in a sexual way by someone older. This includes everything from touching the genitals in a sexual way to rape.

NEGLECT is when children are consistently deprived of food, love or care. Neglected children get no love and affection, they may not have enough to eat, their injuries may be left untreated, their clothes may not be warm enough, they may be dirty enough to be at risk of infection, or they may be left alone for longer than they can manage.

HOW TO TELL:

The most common signs of **PHYSICAL** abuse are bruises, burns, fractures, scalds or grazes. These injuries may be accidental - but if a child seems to be hurt often, or there is something odd about the injuries, it could be abuse.

EMOTIONAL abuse is not as easy to see as other types of abuse. Emotionally abused children tend to believe they are bad and worthless. They may have problems getting on with others or be hard to live with. Some children "shut off" and become too good. Others find it hard to control their anger.

Often the only sign of **SEXUAL** abuse may be some slight emotional upset. Abused children may complain of pain or irritation in the genital area, or get infections and urinary problems. They may have nightmares or be scared - of the dark, people (even relatives and friends), places (bedrooms, toilets), being alone, and so on. They may start doing things they have grown out of - crying, wetting or soiling their pants or clinging. If they say they have been abused, it is most probably true.

Children who are **NEGLECTED** suffer physically, emotionally and mentally. They may look uncared for, undernourished, constantly dirty, or ill. Being tired and hungry may make them do badly at school. Often, these children feel bad about themselves and may not get on with their classmates.

THE NEED TO REPORT:

Child abuse needs to be reported because it is likely to go on until someone gets help - and the people involved may be too ashamed or too distressed to get help for themselves.

Abused children are in danger. They could die. By reporting abuse, you can help make sure a child in danger is made safe **NOW**.

When children are being abused, they are usually too scared to tell anyone. They cannot help themselves. Too often, the people they should be going to for help are the ones who are abusing them.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Abused students often:

- Lose their spontaneity and creativity
- Find it difficult to express themselves orally or in written form
- Are tired due to lack of sleep through fear of further abuse or nightmares.
- Experience a sore genital area leading to discomfort pain and restricted movements.
- Have difficulty thinking ahead - due to fear of on going abuse.
- Find it difficult to concentrate and remember factual information as they try to forget their abusive situation.
- Use glue or alcohol to help them forget.
- Act in a tough manner to suppress feelings.
- Feel dirty bad and different.
- Find it difficult to take part in group activities
- Demonstrate overt sexuality beyond a child's years.
- Become isolated.
- Some students tattoo, jab or cut themselves.
- Become extreme (e.g. become obsessively conscientious, frequent washing).
- Draw attention to themselves (shouting out, saying rude words, running away).

We need to examine as whole the variety of signals a child may present. Where children show unexplained changes of behaviour, we need to look for the cause.

INTERVENTION:

- Once suspicions have been aroused a teacher should make a careful confidential note of suspicions, any disclosures, noting possible dates and times.
- Confirm his/her fears with the Principal and a colleague.
- Upon agreeing to proceed further, the school Health Nurse will be contacted immediately.
- After the Health Nurse's visit and all suspicions appear correct, Oranga Tamariki will be contacted by the School Principal.

THE TEAM WILL:

- Seek information held by the school
- Approach the non-abusing family member involved
- Assess the situation as to passing the case over for the:
 - Evidential Unit
 - Interview the child
 - Diagnostic Unit
- Proceed with a court case
- Proceed with counselling

TEACHERS RESPONSIBILITIES:

Upon disclosure or suspicion, the Puni School staff member who has the closes relationship with the child will be designated as the child's confidante.

When a child is being interviewed by an agency, a teacher may be present to support the student. There is no legal requirement to do so however.

HOW CAN WE HELP OUR ABUSED CHILD?:

- A secure, structured classroom
- A student centred atmosphere
- Clear instructions
- Sincere specific praise
- Ignoring negative behaviour (when possible)
- An adult providing guidelines, realistic expectations and consistent nurturing
- A buddy system

OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES:

It may be deemed necessary to approach the following as the very best agencies to deal with individual students.

Maori Women's Welfare League	Ph:	04 473 6451
Parent Help	Ph:	0800 4 PARENT
Pacific Island Women's Refuge	Ph:	09 6344662
Oranga Tamariki		0508 326 459
Pukekohe Police		09 237 1700
Victim Support		0800 842 846

Complaints Involving Physical or Sexual Abuse Against Staff.

All actions will be adhere to the appropriate Collective Employment Contract.

Upon receiving information to suggest that there may be a case to answer to the following procedures will be followed:

1. The principal, or a member of the Senior Management Team will inform the Chairperson of the Board.
2. The staff member will be informed in writing of the specific matters causing concern.
3. The staff member will be advised of the right to request representation at any stage.
4. The staff member will be suspended on full pay once an investigation has begun. This is in line with Section 3.4 of the Collective Contract. At this stage the rest of the staff will be informed.

Reviewed by the Puni School BOT: October 2025

Next Review Date: October 2026

**PUNI SCHOOL
ABUSE REFERRAL FORM**

Students Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fathers Name: _____

Mothers Name: _____

Caregivers: _____

Siblings:	_____	Ages:	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

DETAILS OF CURRENT CONCERN:

DATES AND TIMES OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

THE CHILD'S STORY

ANY OTHER DETAILS/PREVIOUS ABUSE

Flow Chart Of Action

