

Marcellin College



Child Protection Policy

The Board of Trustees of Marcellin College has consulted with stakeholders in the formulation of this Policy.

RATIONALE

The Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care so they thrive, belong and achieve. We are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority. Advice will be sought through appropriate agencies in all cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

In line with section 15 of the Children, Young Person and Their Families Act, any person in our school who believes that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually) ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived must follow school procedures and may also report the matter to a social worker or the local police.

As part of its responsibilities, Marcellin College promotes, by education and publicity, awareness of child abuse, the unacceptability of child abuse, the ways in which child abuse may be prevented, the need to report cases of child abuse, and the ways in which child abuse may be reported, in line with special Catholic Character.

PURPOSE

In regard to student safety the National Education Guidelines (NAG 5) require a school board of trustees and Principal's of each state and state integrated school in New Zealand to:

- Provide a safe physical and emotional environment for 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:

- 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

1. The child's safety should always be the paramount consideration in the notification process.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Decisions about informing parents or caregivers should be made after consultation between the school and CYF.
5. All people have the right to be respected regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, belief system, sexual orientation or disability.
6. Marcellin College 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.
7. Ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, deal with disclosures by children and allegations against staff members and are able to take appropriate action in response.
8. Ensure that this policy forms part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member.
9. Police Vetting will be undertaken for all non teaching and unregistered employees every three years (as covered in the Police Vetting Policy).

Definitions

Child and Young Person: A child is someone under the age of 14 years and a young person is someone aged 14 years and over, but under 17 years who is not or has never been married or in a civil union (section 2, CYP&F 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 Child, Youth and Family 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 Board chair if the allegation concerns the Principal.
- The Principal or their nominated person in charge that received the information should contact CYF (0508 326 459) or local Police.
- If advised to do so, complete a referral form to CYF/Police.
- 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 NZSTA 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 CYF/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.
The Board chair should be advised.

Follow the advice of CYF/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 CYF 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 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 (or DPC in their absence).
- Guidance counsellor or nurse will interview student (or Principal in their absence).
- Inform the Principal, nominated person (or Board chair if the allegation concerns the Principal).
- Notify CYF Contact Centre or the Police.
- Obtain during the notification an indication of likely action and their time frames. Seek advice from CYF on what to tell the child or young person (decisions concerning after school arrangements and notifying the parents will be made by police and social workers in consultation with the school).
- Get support for yourself from appropriate people if needed.

Notifications should be made to the Police or the Child, Youth and Family National Contact Centre. The Contact Centre telephone number is 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459) or email CyfCallCentre@cyf.govt.nz

Signed

Board Chairperson

On behalf of, and with the authority of the Board on _____

Revised: November 2016

Next Review Date: 2019