

PUAHUE SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Rationale

This policy outlines Puahue School's commitment to child protection. It includes our protocols when child abuse is reported to us or suspected by us. It also includes practice notes on measures to be taken to prevent child abuse. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

Purpose

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and 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 when investigating suspected or alleged abuse.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police (the Police) and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.

We support families/whānau to protect their children. We aim to provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

All members of Puahue School Board, Teaching Staff and Support Staff are to be regularly reminded of this policy. They are to be aware that the school and wider learning community must not be beholden to the 'rule of optimism' that indicators of abuse or neglect can be minimised. A precautionary approach should be taken and, in the event of inaction elsewhere in the hierarchy, any Board Member, Staff Member or Support Staff person is to take direct action with Oranga Tamariki or the police to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

Policy Principles

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- We recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- We are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues or the Person in Charge.
- We are committed to promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal. The definition of 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.

- Identifying possible abuse or neglect The Oranga Tamariki ‘*Signs of abuse and neglect*’ chart is at Annex A.

Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

The *Child Abuse Reporting Process flowchart* is at Annex B.

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to the Principal as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and report the concern to Oranga Tamariki.

If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse having taken place, the Principal shall notify Oranga Tamariki.

In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies (i.e., Oranga Tamariki and the Police), this child protection policy will also help staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.

In many of these cases the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non-statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important for our organisation to work with these to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

Staff members will discuss suspicions with a senior staff member. Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

Allegations or Concerns About Staff

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with Oranga Tamariki or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.

We commit not to use ‘settlement agreements’, where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some settlement agreements allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and Children’s and Young People’s Well-being Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the OT Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Recruitment and Employment (safety checking of core and non-core workers)

Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include:

- Interview
- New Zealand Police vet check (repeated every 3 years)
- Comprehensive identity verification
- Work history check
- Verbal referee check

The Role of Parents/Volunteers

Parents/Volunteers are requested, but cannot be compelled, to complete a New Zealand Police Vet Check process and identity verification processes before accompanying children on overnight EOTC experiences.

Training, supervision and support

Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- How to reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk.
- Dealing with child/parents/family/whānau. This policy will be part of the initial staff induction programme. Related documentation and review This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

CONCLUSION:

The Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that every child in our care receives the protection they are entitled to expect from our learning community.

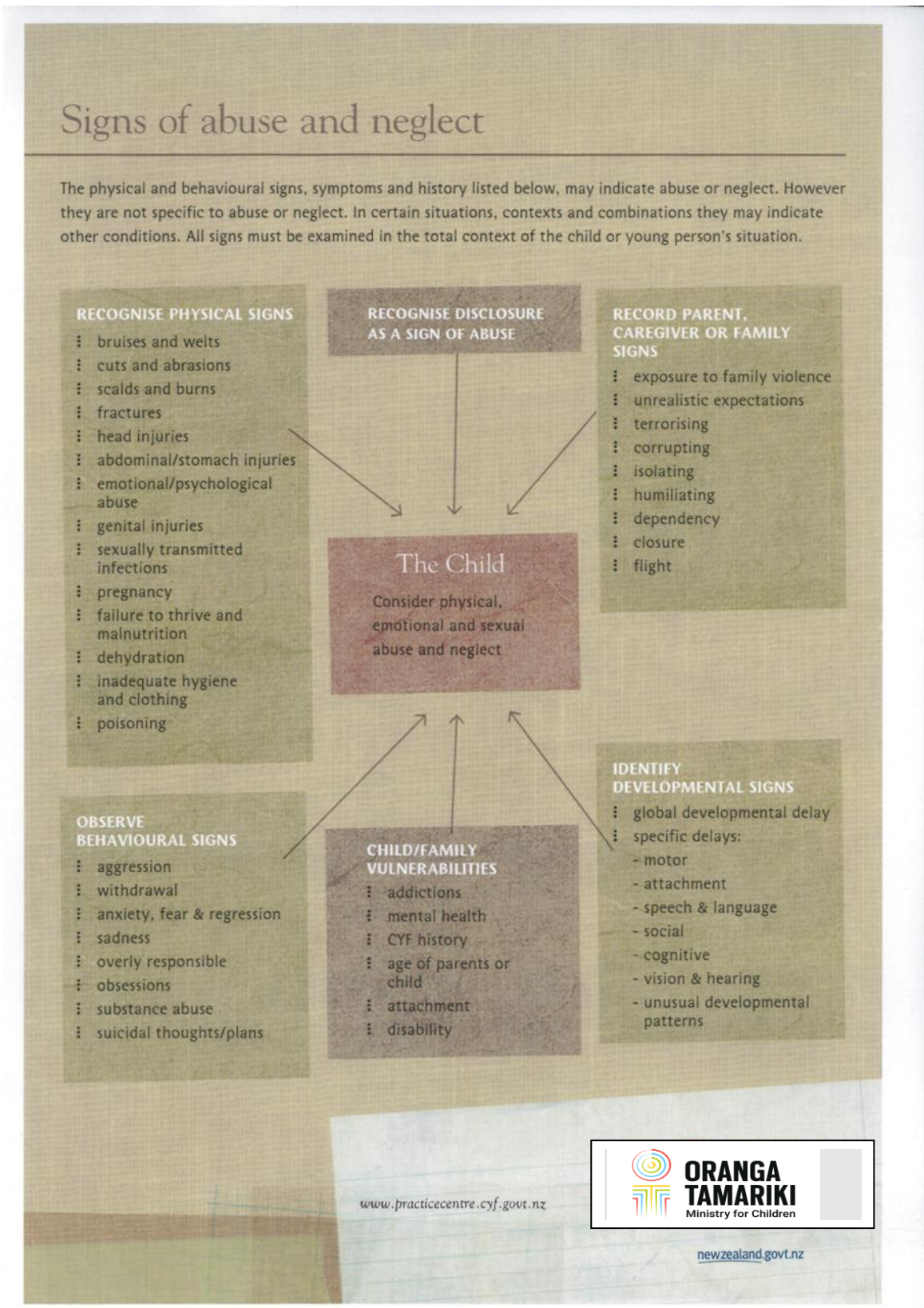
Chairperson _____ Date _____

Principal _____ Date _____

Review Date: _____

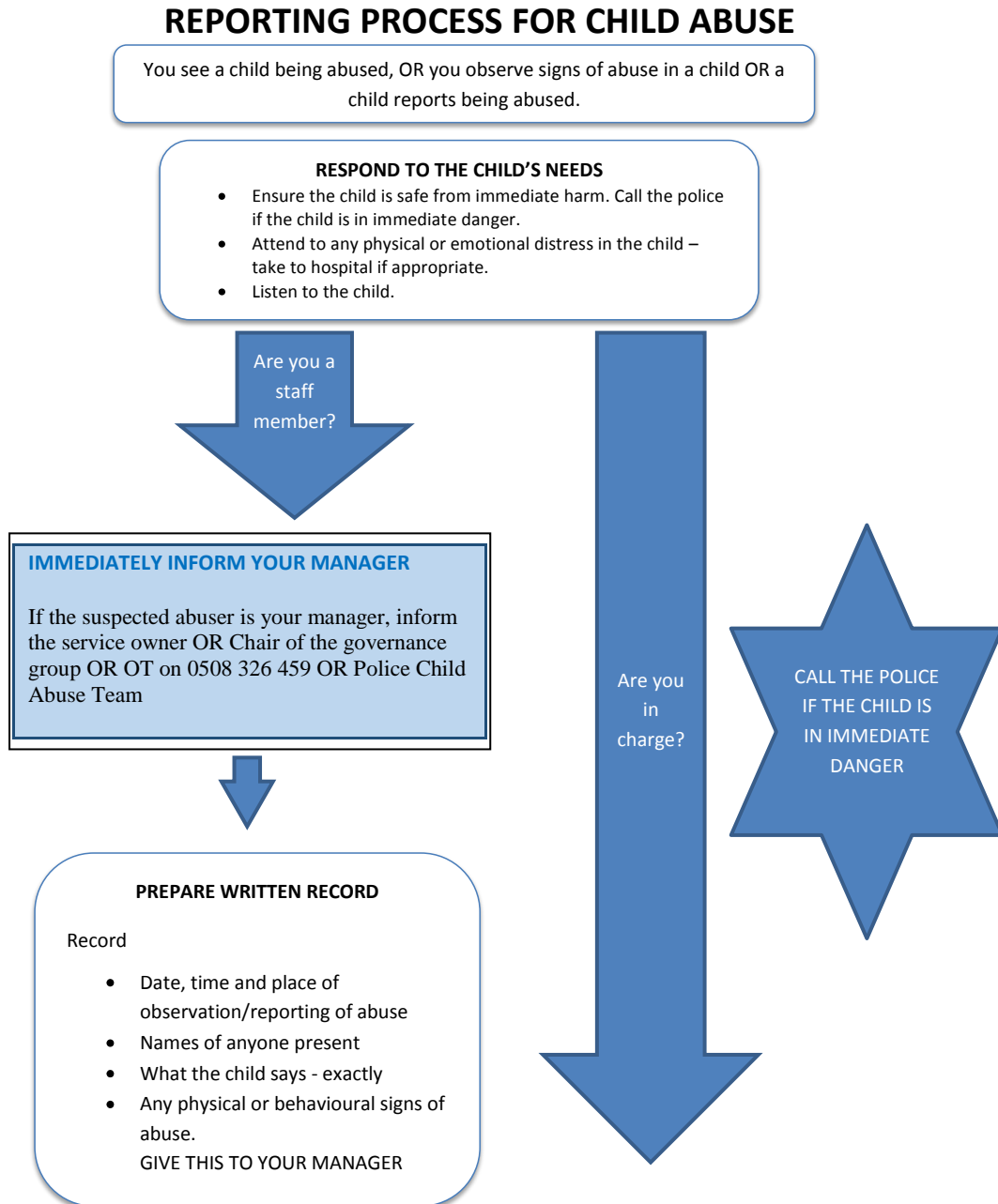
Annex A:

Oranga Tamariki 'Signs of abuse and neglect' chart.



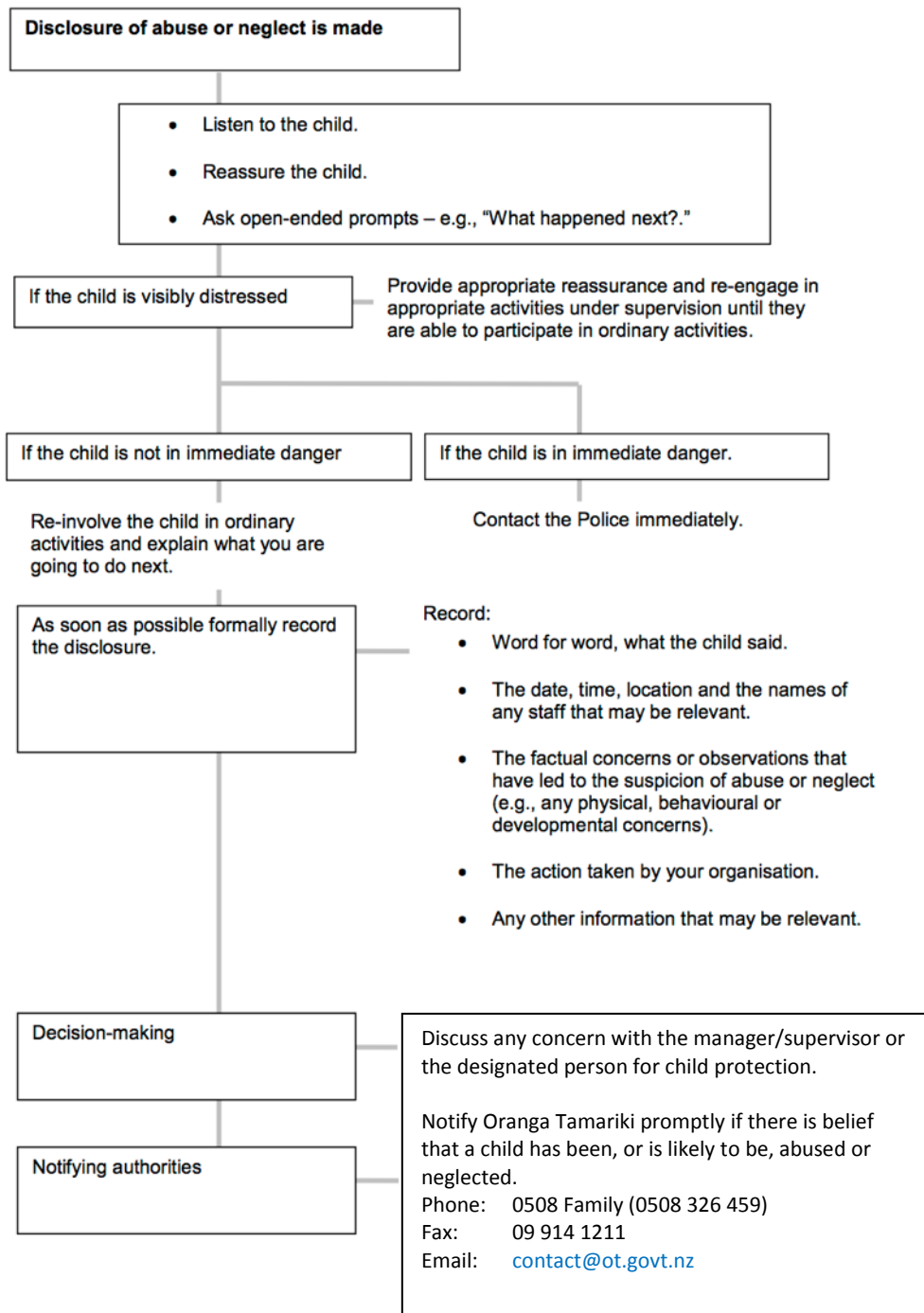
Annex B:

Reporting Child Abuse Flow Chart.



Annex C:

Procedure if Disclosure of Abuse or Neglect is Made by a Child



Annex D:

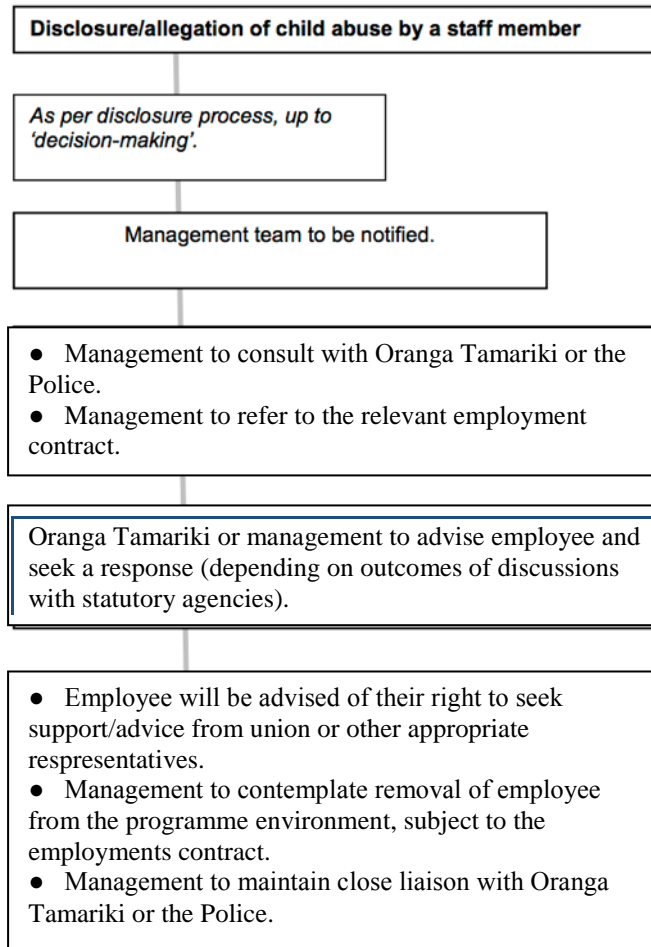
Procedure if Allegation of Abuse or Neglect is Made by Against Staff



When an allegation is made against a member of staff

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the management team.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management may take steps to remove the staff member against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to the requirements of the applicable individual or collective employment contract and relevant employment law.



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