

# Child Safety and Protection Policy

## Policy Summary

Cornerstone Christian Preschool (CCP) is committed to promoting a culture of safety and protection for all children. The physical, emotional and spiritual safety of each child is paramount. All complaints of abuse and neglect will be taken seriously. CCP is committed to providing appropriate training, development and supervision in child protection. This policy incorporates three aspects:

- A. Preventative measures to ensure the safety of children
- B. Identifying possible abuse or neglect
- C. Action to be taken if abuse or neglect is suspected.

The Supervisor is the **Designated Person for Child Protection**.

This policy will be reviewed annually (refer to Strategic Plan) and consistency checked against documentation from Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, Children's and Young Peoples Well Being Act 1989 (Version as of 1 May 2023) and Police guidelines. Refer <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0024/latest/whole.html> and <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/personal-community-safety/school-portal/information-and-guidelines/child-protection>

## A. Preventative measures to ensure the safety of children:

- a. All adults employed by the Preschool will be safety checked. This involves all aspects required by *The Children's Act 2014*, and includes primary and secondary identity checks, satisfactory police vet, interview, professional membership check where applicable, job history and referee's reports. A risk assessment will be done by two parties (Chairperson or Management Committee member and Supervisor), and will be recorded, dated and signed. Periodic checking will be performed every three years.
- b. All employees are required to follow CCP policies, procedures and professional standards.
- c. CCP is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise, and respond to child protection issues. This policy will be reviewed annually by staff, and new staff are to be inducted into this process.
- d. In staff meetings the teachers will have regular conversations with each other, and voice any concerns.
- e. The teachers will immediately inform the Supervisor if child safety is in doubt.
- f. No non-paid personnel will be left unattended with preschool children.
- g. All visitors will report to staff, and sign the visitor's register.
- h. Children will be listened to, and their concerns taken seriously.
- i. There is a clear open-door policy to ensure staff are always visible to others including the children's bathroom/changing area at all times. Physical contact of children during changing or cleansing must be for the purpose of that task only. It is a requirement for teachers take appropriate steps to keep themselves and the children safe by alerting another staff member whenever it is necessary for them to assist in their toileting or in other care tasks. Teachers are to be aware and observant of children's wellbeing at all times.
- j. Where practical all parts of the outdoor area will be readily observable by staff. Also, where practical staff supervising children shall be observable by one other staff member.
- k. Whilst it is appropriate to respond to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking attention or who needs reassurance or comfort; it is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted attention or touching a child.

- l. No adults other than the teachers, or those authorised by teachers will change or toilet any children other than their own.
- m. Inappropriate practice for adults working with children:
  - Any form of verbal, physical force and or emotional ill treatment; corporal punishment e.g. smacking, wrist grab and dragging
  - Isolating / secluding children either physically or visually except when they are being isolated due to illness as per our health and safety policy
  - Immobilisation
  - Deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter, or protection
  - Use of blame, harsh language, belittling or degrading responses
  - Shaming or comparing children
  - Intimidating or threatening children
- n. All practical steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).

## B. Identifying possible abuse or neglect:

While there are different definitions and categories of abuse, the important thing to consider is the overall wellbeing and risk of harm to the child. It is not so important to be able to define or categorise the type of abuse or neglect.

Staff should feel empowered to act on suspected abuse or neglect, even when the symptoms or patterns of symptoms are subtle, while avoiding adhering to stereotypes and making assumptions. It is normal to feel uncertain. The important thing is that staff can recognise when something is wrong, especially a pattern, or several signs that cause concern.

Every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, or the arrival of a new sibling. Decisions should not be made in isolation and staff should talk to the Supervisor (the Designated Person for Child Protection).

### Signs of Abuse

(i.e., the harming (physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment or deprivation of a child). The indicators may include:

- a. **Physical signs** (e.g., unexplained injuries, burns, bites, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases).
- b. **Behavioural concerns** (e.g., age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression, moodiness, irritability, excessive crying changes in behaviour at preschool or towards other people, personality changes, running away).
- c. **Developmental delays** (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in preschool, poor speech, and social skills).
- d. **Emotional abuse** (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness, and evidence of self-harm).
- e. The **child talking** about things that indicate abuse. This could include exposure to pornographic, occultic, blasphemous material (e.g., books, magazines, video, computer games).

### Signs of neglect

(i.e., the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development). The indicators may include:

- a. **Physical signs** (e.g., looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight, untreated injuries).
- b. **Developmental delays** (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in preschool, poor speech, and social skills).
- c. **Emotional neglect** (e.g., sleepiness, threatening, yelling, scaring the child, belittling the child or playing games with the child's emotions)

- d. **Behavioural concerns** (e.g., disengagement/ neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression).
- e. **Neglectful supervision** (e.g., out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to).
- f. **Medical neglect** (e.g., persistent nappy rash problems, low self-esteem, obsessive or skin disorders or other untreated medical behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness, and evidence of self-harm).

Where abuse is suspected or alleged, immediate action is necessary to ensure the safety of the child and to prevent any problem from escalating. Child abuse should be seriously suspected when there is:

- no explanation of injury
- varying explanations of injury
- injury not likely to have happened as stated
- unreasonable delay in seeking medical attention
- several bruises at the same time, but on several different parts of the body
- bruises on softer parts of the body, e.g., inside arms and legs
- pain or irritation in the genital area
- sexually transmitted disease
- recurrent genital or urinary injury
- inappropriate sexual play
- a child states that they are being abused.

### C. The following actions will be taken if abuse or neglect is suspected:

Refer to the “Cornerstone Christian Preschool Child Protection Policy Flowchart”.

The Supervisor is the Designated Person for Child Protection. All cases of suspected abuse and neglect will be reported to the Supervisor, and the Supervisor will be the coordinator with all external agencies.

#### Action required if Supervisor implicated

All suspicions, observed incidents, or reports of incidents that implicate the Supervisor should be directed to the Chairperson of CCET as soon as possible. CCET will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and commence an investigation. CCET will perform other duties normally actioned by the Supervisor (e.g. reporting to Oranga Tamariki, NZ Teachers Council, Ministry of Education and Police).

#### When to call in what agency

Refer to the Flowchart to identify which agencies should be involved.

- **Police:** When responding to a child in immediate danger – contact the Police – phone **111** and the **Ministry of Education (MoE) 06 350 9850**.
- **Oranga Tamariki:** When responding to a child when the child discloses abuse or when there are concerns about abuse or neglect- a phone call to Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre – **0508 326 459**, email: **contact@ot.govt.nz** and **Ministry of Education (MoE)** to discuss appropriate next steps. Oranga Tamariki will:
  - look into the situation to see what might be happening;
  - make the decision to inform parents or caregivers in consultation with our organisation;
  - advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police or other support agencies.
- **Other appropriate agencies:** When responding to more general concerns about the wellbeing of a child, where referral to the statutory agencies (Oranga Tamariki, the Police or Ministry of Education) is not appropriate (It could be harmful to the wellbeing of the child and their family/whānau to make an inappropriate notification to the statutory agencies. Agencies could include a family/ whānau support agency in the community, such as: Parent Help, Iwi social services, Social Workers, Children’s Teams, family/whānau counselling agencies, budget services, mental health and drug and alcohol services, Plunket, Strengthening Families or Whānau Ora is more appropriate and the Ministry of Social Development.

(Ministry of Education requirement is under Health and Safety Criteria 34 (CB) 33 (HB)).

- **CCET** The Supervisor will contact the CCET Chairperson where there has been suspected child abuse that has been reported to Oranga Tamariki. The CCET Chairperson will make sure that this policy has been followed and that the appropriate external agency/s have been contacted.

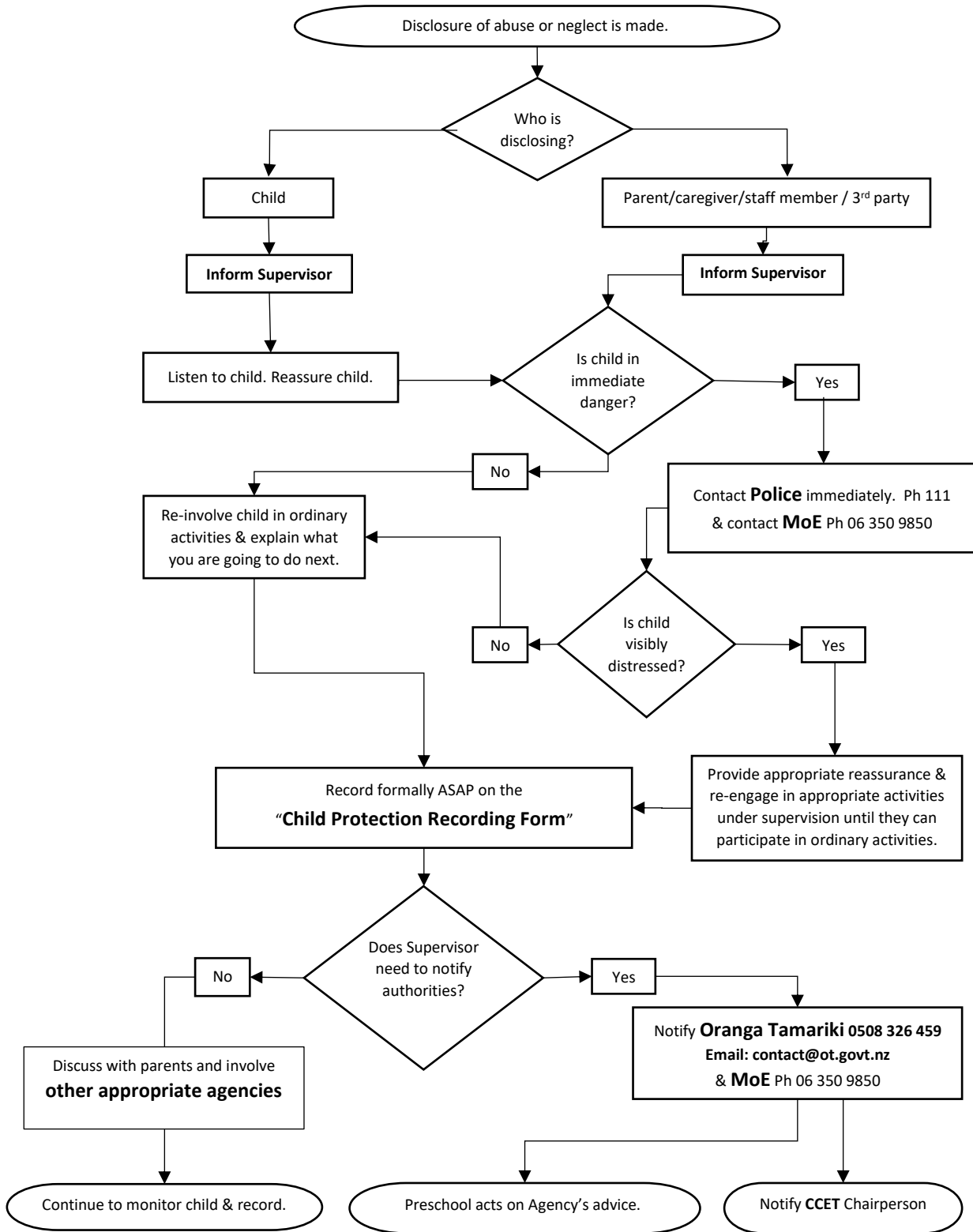
**When a staff member is suspected of abuse:** The Supervisor and the Chairperson will then meet with the staff member, who will be advised to seek legal representation. The staff member shall be suspended immediately on full pay whilst an investigation occurs. At this stage the rest of the staff will be informed. An initial report of any incident must be written down in full as soon as possible.

If the staff member involved is a registered teacher, then it is mandatory for the Employer to report the incident to the NZ Teachers Council and the Ministry of Education. The Supervisor will have no choice or discretion in this matter. The mandatory reporting to Teachers Council Aotearoa would be immediate and completed using the report form available on Teachers Council's website.

Staff members are entitled to a full and fair investigation. The impact of such an accusation and investigation on a staff member should be carefully considered. Care will be taken to ensure that the presumption of innocence of those accused or implicated will be maintained until investigations are complete. Counselling and/or time off will be offered to staff that have been accused wrongly.

**Parents** Decisions about when and who will inform the parent(s) and or caregiver(s) will be determined by Oranga Tamariki and/or NZ Police in consultation with CCP (note that all persons investigating or reporting are protected from civil and legal action by parents or others provided they acted in good faith), refer sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

# Cornerstone Christian Preschool Child Protection Policy Flowchart



## Guidance on responding to abuse or neglect:

i.	Privacy	The Child's privacy and dignity will be upheld. Protect the child's privacy by limiting the number of people who will be involved in discussions. Do not discuss the allegations with other parents or persons outside the preschool.
ii.	Listen to the child	Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child's cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.
iii.	Reassure the child	Let the child know that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are not in trouble.</li> <li>• have done the right thing. Let them know it's not their fault and that you'll do your best to help.</li> </ul>
iv.	Ask open-ended prompts – e.g. "What happened next?"	Have a conversation but do not interview the child (in other words, <b><u>do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue.</u></b> ) Do not put words in the child's mouth. Allow them to tell only as much as they want. Do not make promises that can't be kept, e.g., "I will keep you safe now".
v.	Storage of information	All observations shall be kept in writing. These are to be kept confidential in the locked bottom drawer of the Supervisor's desk.  A detailed paper trail will be kept. This will be held securely and confidentially. It can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the "Child Protection Recording Form"</li> <li>• a record of any related discussions, (including copies of correspondence, where appropriate).</li> <li>• a record of any advice received.</li> <li>• The action your organisation took, including any rationale.</li> <li>• This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident).</li> </ul>

## Supporting documentation:

*The Children's Act 2014*

*Education and Training Act (2020), Part 2, Sections 24 and 30, and ECE Regulations (2008) "Ill Treatment of Children".*

*United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>*

*Safer Organisations Safer Children – Guidelines for child protection policies to build safer organisations – Children's Action Plan, Identifying, Supporting and Protection Vulnerable Children*

*Child Protection Policies v 2.3 Feb 2015*

*Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/>*

*NZ Police – Child protection guidelines <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/personal-community-safety/school-portal/information-and-guidelines/child-protection>*

*Te Rito – NZ Family Violence Prevention Strategy, Ministry of Social Development, 2002 <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/planning-strategy/te-rito/index.html>*

*Te Aorerekura – National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence <https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/national-strategy/>*

*Education and Training Act (2020) <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS170676.html>*

*ECE Regulations (2008) <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412501.htm>*

# Child Protection Recording Form

The "Child Protection Recording Form" contains

- a. date, times, locations & names of staff involved
- b. word for word description of what the child said
- c. factual concerns/observations related to the suspicion of abuse/neglect, e.g., physical, behavioural, developmental concerns.
- d. action taken by Government Agencies/Service.
- e. any other relevant information.



## Child Protection Recording Form

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Staff names involved:**

**Describe word for word what the child said:**

**Factual concerns/observations related to the suspicion of abuse/neglect, e.g., physical, behavioural, developmental concerns:**

**Action taken by Governmental Agencies/Service:**

**Any other relevant information:**