Protection, Support, and Assistance for Vulnerable Children Policy

Reviewed by Cambridge High School Board June 2024

Cambridge High School affirms the fundamental right of every student to learn to the best of their ability and potential in an environment that is positive, safe, friendly, caring and supportive of young people.

Background:

On 1 July 2014 the "Vulnerable Children Act" and other associated legislation passed into law.

The Act was amended with the passing of the "Vulnerable Children Amendment Act 2017" which also amended the "Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (also known as the "Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989").

These Acts form a significant part of comprehensive measures to protect and improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children and strengthen our child protection system.

The Education Sector must comply with these Acts.

These Acts strengthen and refine the procedures that Cambridge High School already had in place.

Definitions

Child means a person who—

(a) is under the age of 18 years; and

(b) is not married or in a civil union

Abuse – the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child.

Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

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Responsibilities of the Cambridge High School Board (the Board) and of the Principal

The Board:

- will ensure that the School's **"Protection, Support, and Assistance for Vulnerable Children – Procedures"** and **"Court Ordered Restrictions – Protection for Students – Requirements"** are implemented.
- is committed to protect vulnerable children from abuse and neglect possible from any of its actions, activities and staff.

The School:

* Will fully follow the requirements of the ***"Vulnerable Children Act 2014"*** and other associated Acts (including the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect in accordance with section 15 of the ***"Oranga Tamariki Children and Young People's Well-being Act 1989"***), Regulations, and Ministry of Education directives.

- is committed to support all staff to work in accordance with the policy, to work with partner agencies and community organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and of high quality and to always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- recognises the rights of the child to participate, in age-appropriate ways, in decision-making about themselves.
- intends to protect all children staff may encounter – including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by staff.
- recognises the important role and responsibility of all of our staff in the protection of children by identifying and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect and appropriately responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child.
- expects a commitment to work together to produce the best possible outcomes for the child and to work towards continuous improvement in child protection practices.
- will encourage a culture where staff feel confident to constructively challenge poor practice and raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

The Principal or a Deputy Principal (Strengthening Culture):

- will be the Designated Person for Child Protection and the champion for improving child protection practices within the School.
- will implement, manage, and monitor the Board's "***Protection, Support, and Assistance for Vulnerable Children – Procedures***" and "***Court Ordered Restrictions – Protection for Students –Requirements***" and
- will advise the Board as appropriate.

At Cambridge High School it is the expectation of the Board that students who have attempted suicide have a safety plan in place before they return to school. This plan will be negotiated between parent/caregivers, outside agencies that are involved with the student's care and our school counsellors. The plan will be shared by the counsellor with the school pastoral team (Senior Leadership Team and Deans) who will receive ongoing training with regards to confidentiality requirements in these sensitive matters. The sharing of the plan is necessary so that every effort is made to keep the student safe during school hours. Given the Coroner's recommendations in 2018 and most recently, in June of 2023 regarding the need for inter-agency sharing of life-saving information, it is expected that agencies who work with our Cambridge High School students and their parent/caregivers will ensure that they communicate high risk with our counsellors.

Presiding Member of Board

Principal