

Child Protection Procedures

Safety Checking of Staff

St Thomas's School ensures that all staff working with children, both paid and voluntary, have been appropriately safety checked.

1. All adults working with children are screened through a process to verify their identity, gather information through application forms, interviews and reference checks.
2. This will include relievers, casual workers and others at the discretion of the school.
3. Teaching staff are police vetted as part of their registration process. All non-teaching staff will be Police vetted by the school.

Safe Working Practices

1. Staff will always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests and avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
2. All staff will agree to and follow the St Thomas's School Code of Conduct and school values. All teachers will also abide by the Code of Professional Responsibility.
3. All staff are discouraged from coaching or care-taking activities of St Thomas's children outside the work environment.
4. Staff are to inform their senior manager of any existing relationships with staff members, students, clients or their families that could constitute a conflict of interest or place the staff member in a position of compromise.
5. Staff will take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and seek to promote the wellbeing of themselves and others.
6. Staff will constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern in relation to child safety.
7. The school will seek to avoid placing staff in situations where they are working alone with a child out of sight of others. Staff should also seek to reduce this risk by working with staff to ensure they are observable by others.
8. No child is to be placed in a room on their own but if a "safe place" is required for a child to calm themselves, this place should be developed with the senior management. The place will be somewhere that is observable.
9. All other Health and Safety school policies and procedures cover aspects of safe practice and should be read along with this policy and procedures.

Procedures for Suspected Abuse

1. When abuse is suspected or an allegation made against another person, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child.
2. If suspicion of abuse arises, the staff member concerned will not act alone, but will follow the flow chart and consult with the principal. (Appendix 1)
3. After consulting with the principal, the staff member will be asked to keep a daily record of the child's specific behaviour and physical indicators. Records will include dates and times of observations, and if appropriate a body diagram indicating position of bruising or injury and a description of the colour of bruising.

4. All records must be regarded as documents that can be requested by parents or other parties in legal disputes and therefore all suspicions and information will be recorded factually and held confidentially. Anything that is an opinion, or a personal concern will be identified as such and not as being fact.
5. The principal will inform Oranga Tamariki or the Police where grounds for concern are established.
6. Although the parent or caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, there may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed e.g. when the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator and may put the child at further risk or when custodial orders prevent this.

Procedures for Disclosures of Abuse

If a child voluntarily discloses abuse

1. Staff will not question a child who has disclosed abuse. However, it is important that the child is listened to and responded to appropriately.
 - a. Reassure the child it was right to disclose.
 - b. **DO NOT INTERVIEW THE CHILD**
 - c. **Record** this discussion in the child's language as soon as possible. Sign, date and keep this information confidential.
 - d. **Do not agree to keep the matter secret.** Tell the child that for abuse to stop other adults need to be involved. Provide a support person for the child.
 - e. **Support** the staff member involved in the disclosure. (Child Safety Team)
2. Report the matter to the principal immediately. As in cases of suspected abuse, the information and concerns will be made available only to those staff who have a need to know. This will be determined by the principal.
3. The principal will inform Oranga Tamariki and supply written records.
4. The principal will also inform chairperson of the board of trustees of any referral to statutory agencies. No names or details will be divulged.
5. As with where abuse is suspected, when a disclosure is made, the parent or caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, there may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed e.g. when the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator.

Note: In case of serious abuse, reporting to Oranga Tamariki or the Police is mandatory.

- If it appears to be unsafe for the child to return home, the principal should consult with at least one other member of the Child Safety Team, before contacting Oranga Tamariki or the Police. Whenever possible this should be done before school finishes for the day.
- The outside agency will make the necessary arrangements for any further investigation.
- The school will, if necessary, provide a support person (not necessarily the classroom teacher) for the child during an interview with Oranga Tamariki.
- The Child Safety Team will seek feedback on the report and find out how best to support the child at school.

Information Sharing

1. St Thomas's School recognises that all staff must act within the legal requirements of the Privacy Act, Children, Young Person's and their Families Act, Health Information Act and other statutes. There are provisions within each of these acts for sharing information needed to protect children and enable other people to carry out their legitimate functions.

2. St Thomas's School will maintain a good working relationship with Oranga Tamariki and the Police and be familiar with the laws that serve to protect children from abuse. We will consult with Oranga Tamariki, the Police, and with other appropriate agencies that have specialist knowledge to help us protect children from abuse.
3. The school will abide by custody arrangements and keep a copy of court orders on file.

Complaint Against Employees involving Alleged Abuse

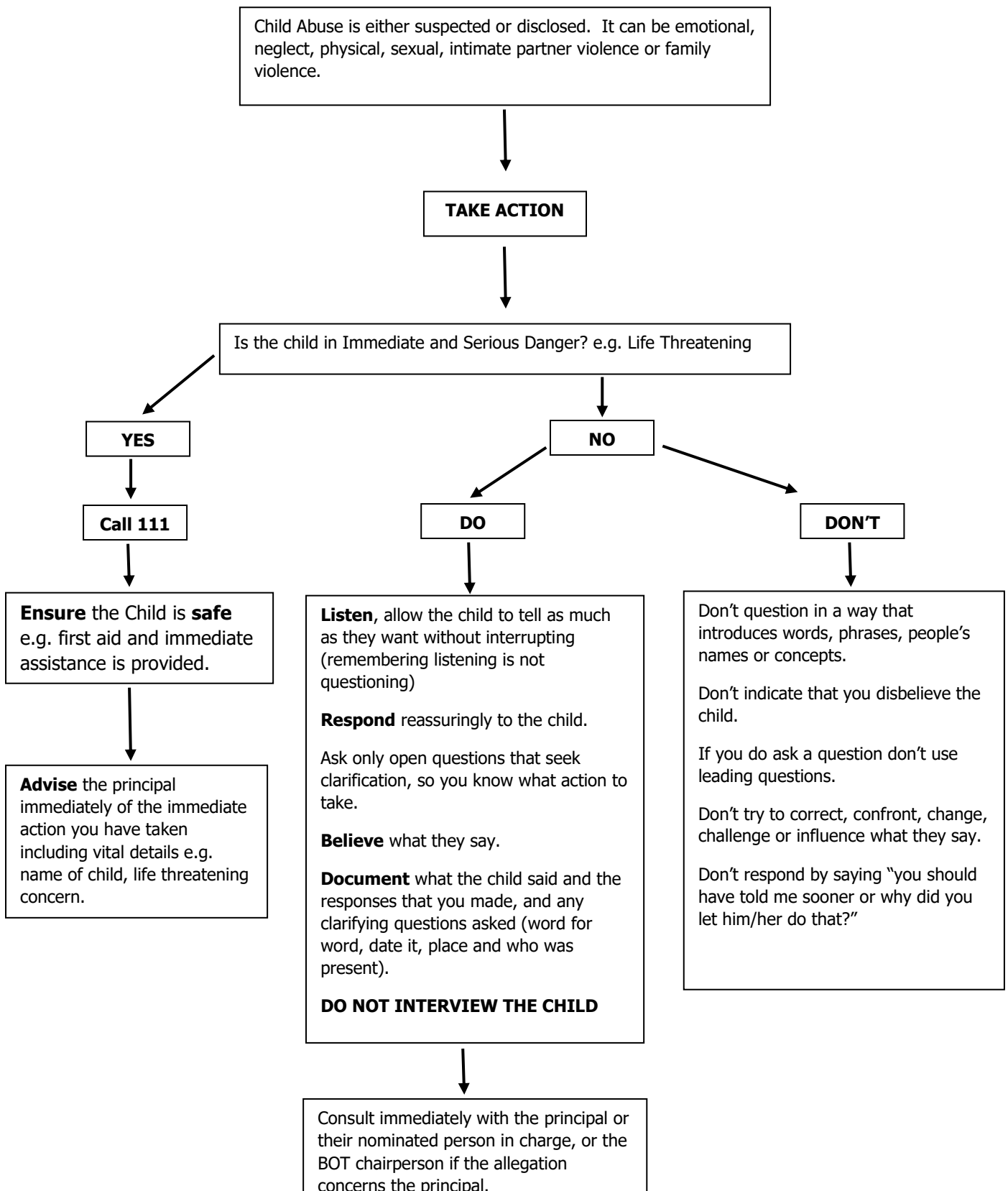
The following procedures will be carried out and will be in line with those set out in the relevant Employment Contracts.

1. When abuse is suspected or an allegation made against a staff member, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child.
2. St Thomas's School will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against any other person and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.
3. The principal will inform the chairperson of the board of trustees and follow complaints guidelines.
4. The employee will be informed of the allegation and advised to seek legal and/or union representation.
5. Once an investigation has begun, the complaint will be addressed in accordance with the employee's Employment Contract.
6. The employee will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any abuse related investigation and may be stood down on full pay for the period.
7. Staff will declare to the principal any situation where there could be a conflict of interest, and provision made on a case-by-case basis about who will handle the process.
8. If the complaint is found to be upheld the staff disciplinary process will apply including referral of child abuse to Police or Oranga Tamariki.
9. If the police decide to undertake a criminal investigation, then the member of staff may be suspended, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure. Any internal process still in action, will be suspended and no internal investigation or evidence will be gathered that might prejudice the criminal investigation.
10. If the principal is aware that a member of staff it has placed on precautionary suspension also works with children for another organisation, either as an employee or a volunteer, it should ensure that the other organisation is informed of the suspension and the subsequent outcome. Consultation with Oranga Tamariki or the Police will determine how this information is conveyed.
11. The principal will liaise with Oranga Tamariki and the Police regarding the progress of the investigation.
12. If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse may have occurred. The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour of poor practice by a member of staff which needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures.
13. The principal will follow mandatory reporting guidelines to the Education Council.

Reviewed June 2021

Reporting Process for Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse at St Thomas's School

Appendix 1



All records must be regarded as documents that can be requested by parents or other parties in legal disputes and therefore all suspicions and information will be recorded factually and held confidentially. Anything that is an opinion, or a personal concern will be identified as such and not as being fact.