

# ST BEDE'S COLLEGE BOARDING HOUSE

## CHILD PROTECTION



As required by the Children's Act 2014 (s. 14), we have adopted this Child Protection policy as our framework for student safety at St Bede's Boarding House. This policy contains provisions for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

Guidance provided by St Bede's Boarding House for the safety and wellbeing of students aligns with the principles of partnership/mahi tahi, protection/kaitiakitanga, and participation/whai wāhi; and the rights and responsibilities of all members of our school community as outlined by te Tiriti o Waitangi. We recognise the importance of involving family/whānau in decision-making, and we involve students in decision-making about themselves in age-appropriate ways.

Our child protection policy, along with supporting documentation, ensures we maintain student welfare as our primary concern, and keep the student at the centre of decision-making. We aim to safeguard our students from abuse and neglect by encouraging concerns to be recognised and shared, and having systems to respond when concerns are raised.

### **Supporting student safety and responding to concerns**

We support the wellbeing/hauora of our students by establishing positive learning environments and promoting respectful relationships between students and staff. We have a designated child protection person, who is the primary point of contact for concerns about students, including concerns about abuse or neglect. At St Bede's Boarding House, this person is the Assistant Rector (Boarding). In situations of concern, we aim to work together and intervene early to support student safety and wellbeing.

We foster a safe atmosphere for our students to speak up if they feel that something is wrong or that they are being mistreated. We may use programmes to help students identify healthy and unhealthy relationships.

- For further information about our whole-school approach to wellbeing, see Student Wellbeing Procedure.
- If a wellbeing concern is raised, or staff think that a student may require extra support, we follow Student Wellbeing Procedures.
- If there is a concern or disclosure of abuse or neglect, we follow procedures for Abuse Recognition and Reporting.

### **Concern response overview**

Our response overview is provided here.

If there is immediate danger:

- Phone the police on 111.
- If possible, protect the immediate safety of the student.
- Following the incident, inform the designated child protection person.
- Record any actions taken.

If there is no immediate danger:

- Record a factual account of any concerns that have come up, or any disclosures that are made.
- For any concerns, consult the designated child protection person, who works with relevant school staff and external agencies as necessary.
- The designated child protection person may consult with the rector and board to decide whether to share information externally.
- Where a concern does not warrant notifying Oranga Tamariki, the school may partner with social service providers to identify and address the needs of the student.
- If necessary, Oranga Tamariki investigates and advises relevant staff about any action that should be taken to support students.
- Decisions about informing parents or caregivers about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect are made after consultation between the school and Oranga Tamariki.
- All decisions are recorded in writing and kept in a secure child protection file, with any decision-making processes explained.

### **Child protection roles and responsibilities**

The Board of Proprietors is responsible for ensuring all children's workers (core and non-core) employed or engaged by the school are safety checked before their appointment. Existing children's workers are safety checked every three years after the last safety check was completed.

If the Boarding House employs a staff member who is not considered a children's worker, they are police vetted if their role includes unsupervised access to students. The school also ensures all volunteers who regularly work with students are safety checked.

Staff have a professional responsibility to report any concerns about student wellbeing and safety, particularly regarding abuse, neglect, or professional misconduct of other staff, to the designated child protection person. For more information about staff training, responsibilities, and conduct expectations, see Staff Responsibilities for Child Protection.

At St Bede's Boarding House, our designated child protection person is the Assistant Rector (Boarding), who is the primary point of contact for concerns about students, including concerns about abuse or neglect. The designated child protection person is available and accessible to all other staff and has experience and training in responding to child protection concerns. Where they have concerns or concerns are reported to them, they must inform the Rector.

### **Child protection partnerships**

Staff members work with relevant contacts within the Boarding House to best support students and seek guidance from external agencies as appropriate. Unless there is immediate danger, staff members do not act alone on their concerns.

St Bede's Boarding House works with Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police where appropriate and liaises with partner agencies and community organisations to support early interventions with the goal of safe and effective abuse response. We share information if it is in the best interests of a student, as per information sharing provisions. In all circumstances, St Bede's Boarding House is carefully guided by these provisions as well as privacy considerations.



### ***External agency interviews***

If an external agency such as the police or Oranga Tamariki asks to interview a student on Boarding House, the boarding house ensures the rights of the student are upheld. If Oranga Tamariki contacts the boarding house to interview a student, that student has the right to a support person if they wish. This support person (e.g. member of support staff, Centre of Wellbeing, Assistant Rector (Boarding), or Rector) focuses on the safety and wellbeing of the student.

The police may contact the boarding house to question a student. Students in this situation have the right to remain silent, and the right to a lawyer. If police interview a student who is under 18, a nominated adult can support them.

### **Child protection review**

We acknowledge that child protection is everyone's responsibility, and we share and review our Child Protection policy and procedures with our wider boarding school community.

Child protection topics are reviewed at least once every three years as part of the internal review cycle. Our designated child protection person and any other relevant staff are involved in reviewing policies and procedures related to child protection.

### **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

All staff at St Bede's Boarding House have a responsibility for child protection. We put procedures in place to protect the safety of our students throughout recruitment, training, and safety checking, and ensure current staff are familiar with our Child Protection policy and procedures. We also promote awareness about student welfare to our wider school community.

### **Employment safeguards**

The St Bede's Boarding House Board of Proprietors is responsible for ensuring all children's workers (core and non-core) employed or engaged by the school are safety checked before their appointment.

Non-teachers employed by the boarding house are police vetted if they have unsupervised access to students. The school also ensures all volunteers who regularly work with students are safety checked.

### **Child protection training**

All staff, including any contractors or volunteers, are expected to be familiar with, and implement, our Child Protection policies and procedures. Staff must engage with our Abuse Recognition and Reporting procedure every year and are supported to uphold their responsibility for child protection. We support staff by:

- informing staff about our Child Protection policies as part of their induction
- having a designated child protection person who is available and accessible to all staff and has experience and training in responding to child protection concerns (at St Bede's boarding house, this person is the Assistant Rector (Boarding)).
- offering support as required through professional development and performance management programmes.
- making it clear that staff should discuss any concerns with the designated child protection person, and no one should act or make decisions alone.

Training is available for staff in child protection development/learning.

### **Staff responsibilities and conduct expectations**

Staff have a professional responsibility to report any concerns about student safety and welfare, particularly regarding abuse, neglect, or professional misconduct to the designated child protection person. We remind staff not to act alone when responding to student concerns unless there is immediate danger. If it is in the best interest of the student, staff members are encouraged to proactively share information with other people or organisations who may be able to help.

The designated child protection person at St Bede's Boarding House reviews safety concerns, along with any other relevant information, and decides whether to share information with external agencies, or make a report of concern. Any person who is concerned that a child is at risk of harm may also make a report of concern directly to Oranga Tamariki or the police. Oranga Tamariki and the police are primarily responsible for any investigation of alleged child abuse.

We promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can raise concerns without fear of retaliation. See Protected Disclosure Policy.

### **Contact between staff and students at school.**

We treat all students with care and dignity and ensure our methods of contact and communication support safe relationships between staff and students. We work with staff to create a safe and supportive learning environment and promote positive student behaviour. Unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, is managed through our school behaviour management strategies and procedures.

When staff are interacting with a student one-to-one, they ensure wherever possible that the space is not closed off from other people.

Staff take particular care with students who express themselves freely and seek close physical contact. When this is a concern, it is discussed with a parent or caregiver.

Staff are aware that students who require learning support may have needs with regards to safety and supervision.

Corporal punishment is prohibited, and staff avoid physical contact with students that could be considered intimate, sexual, threatening, or violent.

If a student attacks a staff member, they try to protect themselves without causing injury to the student involved and immediately report this incident to the Rector. Physical Restraint is a last resort and may only be used by authorised staff members to prevent imminent harm.

### **Out-of-school contact between staff and students**

Where possible, we seek to promote physical and emotional safety for our staff and students outside of school.

Staff are vigilant about safe and appropriate out-of-school contact with students, including through social media, texting, and emails.

During education outside the classroom activities and camps, staff ensure safe interactions, sleeping, and travel arrangements for all students, and follow the procedures in EOTC Procedures.



## **ABUSE RECOGNITION AND REPORTING**

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, phone the police on 111. If you are concerned about the wellbeing of a child, or want to discuss, report, or refer a concern, contact Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459 or [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz).

Abuse recognition and reporting processes at St Bede's Boarding House are part of our wider Child Protection policy, which applies to all school staff, contractors, and volunteers, and is available to our school community. These procedures fulfil our requirements under the Children's Act (s. 14) to provide information on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

We expect staff to be alerted to changes in student wellbeing or behaviour, and to recognise signs of neglect and abuse. We acknowledge that recognising, sharing, and responding to these concerns as early as possible is key to improving health outcomes for our students. The rector assures the board each year that staff are aware of indicators of abuse and are familiar with our procedures for reporting abuse.

At St Bede's Boarding House, our designated child protection person is the Assistant Rector (Boarding), who is the primary point of contact for concerns about students, including concerns about abuse or neglect. The designated child protection person is available and accessible to all other staff and has experience and training in responding to child protection concerns.

St Bede's Boarding House works with Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police where appropriate and liaises with partner agencies and community organisations to support early interventions, with the goal of safe and effective abuse response. We share information with appropriate agencies if it is in the best interests of a student and will support their wellbeing or safety.

### **Overview of abuse response procedures at St Bede's Boarding House:**

- Maintain awareness of the indicators of abuse.
- Support any person disclosing abuse.
- Ensure student safety. Contact the police if there is immediate danger, or Oranga Tamariki for support.
- Record all available information, including disclosures, observations, and concerns.
- Consult with the designated child protection person or seek support from an external agency. Do not act alone.
- The designated child protection person supports the student through systems within the school or external agencies.
- Any person that identifies abuse or receives a disclosure is also advised to seek support for themselves.

### **Recognising and responding to concerns**

Student safety and welfare is the primary concern of St Bede's Boarding House staff. Our staff are trained to be alerted to changes in student wellbeing or behaviour, and to recognise signs of neglect and abuse. Information sharing provisions allow staff to share safety and wellbeing concerns, which includes low-level wellbeing concerns through to observations or disclosures of abuse and neglect. If it is in the best interest of a student, staff members are encouraged to share information proactively and voluntarily with other people or organisations who may be able to help.

We advise staff not to act alone when responding to child abuse concerns. This is to protect our staff members, and to avoid prejudicing any legal action. Unless there is immediate danger to a student, staff should consult with the designated child protection person or contact Oranga Tamariki. The designated child protection person reviews any relevant information and decides how best to support the student. This may include sharing information with external agencies or making a report of concern.

If concerns raised by staff or student disclosures do not warrant a report of concern, the designated child protection person reviews any other evidence to see if there are repeated concerns relating to student or their family. The designated child protection person decides if combined evidence meets a higher concern threshold and should be reported. The designated child protection person may organise extra support for the student and/or partner with external agencies to address student needs.

### **Recognising abuse**

Child abuse is defined as harm (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person (Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, s. 2). Neglect is the most common form of abuse and is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.

Abuse and neglect are more likely to be recognised through observations of behaviour or physical indicators than through direct disclosures. We ensure that staff are able to identify signs of abuse and neglect and encourage concerns to be shared with the designated child protection person.

For a guide to definitions and indicators of child abuse, see the documents below. These provide examples in different situations of abuse but are not a definitive list. For any queries, we recommend sharing concerns with our designated child protection person or Oranga Tamariki.

- See Definitions of Child Abuse PDF document in Boarding Drive or <https://stbedes.schooldocs.co.nz/DefinitionsofAbuse.pdf>
- See Indicators of Child Abuse PDF document in Boarding Drive or <https://stbedes.schooldocs.co.nz/IndicatorsofAbuse.pdf>

### **Managing disclosure**

While abuse is usually recognised through observation, students may willingly or accidentally disclose abuse. In this situation, we handle disclosure with care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the student, and to avoid prejudicing any legal action.

Any person who receives a disclosure is advised to:

- remain calm and remember that the safety and wellbeing of the student is the primary concern.
- offer reassurance, but do not make any promises or commitments that cannot be kept.
- write down information about the time, date, location, and any people present during the disclosure.
- write down what the student says in their own words, distinguishing between what the student says and any inferences made.
- avoid formally interviewing the student.
- ask open questions (rather than leading questions that may cause biased answers)



- ensure the student is supported and that there is a responsible adult at the school who is available to them throughout any investigation by external agencies.
- inform the designated child protection person as soon as possible.
- refer to Oranga Tamariki or the police if necessary.

We encourage staff to seek support for themselves in the event of abuse disclosure, either from a relevant support person at the school or through external support services.

### **Allegations against staff members**

Child abuse concerns involving staff members may come about through observation or disclosure. These may reflect conduct within the school environment, but we also respond to allegations regarding staff behaviour outside of school. Any allegations against staff are taken seriously and dealt with as a matter of urgency. If someone has been accused of abuse, the Boarding House may take steps to prevent contact between that person and students at the school and boarding house.

Any allegations against staff members should be reported to the Rector. If a concern involves the Rector, it should be reported to the board chair. See Protected Disclosure for the procedures that ensure staff feel confident they can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

The boarding house and school reports allegations of child abuse by staff members to Oranga Tamariki and the police. It is the responsibility of these authorities to assess any evidence and investigate whether child abuse has occurred. The boarding house or school does not directly investigate allegations.

While student safety is our primary concern, we follow a fair disciplinary process in cases of alleged abuse. We uphold the rights of staff to respond to allegations and seek independent advice. During an investigation by Oranga Tamariki or the police, the school does not conduct its own internal investigations that may prejudice an external decision.

We protect any actual or potential legal action by following the advice of authorities in terms of contact with students, family/whānau, and those facing allegations. If there is insufficient evidence for a criminal prosecution, and following the advice of authorities, the boarding school, or school may conduct its own internal investigation.

Abuse and neglect are classed as a serious breach of the Code of Professional Responsibility | Ngā Tikanga Matatika under the Teaching Council Rules 2016 (Part 3). If we have reason to believe that a teacher has engaged in this type of serious misconduct, we make a mandatory report to the Teaching Council of Aotearoa.

### **Sharing information and reporting abuse**

Under the information sharing provisions of the Oranga Tamariki Act, staff may proactively share information with other approved professionals (e.g. relevant members of staff, the board, and social, family, and community services) if it is in the best interests of the student. The decision to share information can be in response to general wellbeing concerns about a student as well as concerns of neglect and abuse.

St Bede's Boarding House makes decisions about whether to report concerns to Oranga Tamariki or the police based on all available information. The reporting process may also involve other external agencies to identify and address student needs. The boarding school consults with the Rector, Centre of Wellbeing, Oranga Tamariki and the police as required to decide who informs parents and/or caregivers, and when.

For further detail about the information that St Bede's Boarding House can share and request, see our Privacy Policy.

### **Storing information**

We record all information in writing and keep this securely in a child protection file. The designated child protection person refers to this information when making decisions based on further evidence.

We store all information, including records documenting concerns, conversations, advice received, actions taken (including rationale), and any warnings issued, in accordance with our Privacy and School Records Retention and Disposal procedures.

**Date policy reviewed:** November 2023

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' or 'B' shape, followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

**Date of next review:** December 2024