

SCHOOL PROCEDURE 08: PASTORAL CARE - STUDENT WELLBEING

VULNERABLE CHILDREN ACT REQUIREMENTS

The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 was part of a series of comprehensive measures brought in to protect and improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children.

www.mvcot.govt.nz/working-with-children/vulnerable-children-act-requirements/

Employment: Principles of vetting and screening

www.mvcot.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Safer-Recruitment-Safer-Children.pdf

Vetting and screening has two parts:

1. Gathering information about a candidate.
2. Evaluating that information to make a decision about whether a candidate is suitable for a given role.

Vetting and screening is not about ticking boxes to figure out if a candidate fits a particular profile of someone who might abuse children. Instead, it is about gathering enough information to paint a complete picture of a candidate, to exercise professional judgement about whether the person is suitable for a particular role.

During the process, the following principles should be remembered and applied:

- Look for patterns of concerning attitudes or behaviours – it is very rare that screeners will find a single piece of damning evidence suggesting a likely child abuser. Instead, people undertaking the screening of candidates need to be looking for patterns that allow for a professional judgement to be formed about the person's suitability. The patterns are likely to become evident in the candidate's background and responses to questions.
- Always consider the facts in context – the same facts (a criminal conviction, gaps in employment history, a negative reference), can take on different significance in different contexts. Whenever possible, give candidates an opportunity to respond to concerns about their suitability.
- If you have a doubt about a candidate, always follow it up – screeners should always ask follow-up questions until they are comfortable they fully understand the situation. For example if the candidate talks about rehabilitation, ask for evidence of this, which might include programmes entered into, periods without reoffending and the name of a qualified person who can testify to the candidate's suitability to work with children.

Ultimately, the vetting and screening process relies on the judgement of the person doing the checking. If this person does not have any child protection experience they should talk through the issues with a child protection specialist or with the organisation's Screening Officer, Designated Person for Child Protection or Child Protection Co-ordinator if one of those roles has been established. Ideally, one of these people would also be on the interviewing panel and will have made some of their own judgements.

There is no typical profile of a potential abuser. Some are charismatic and professional team members and leaders. Others are dutiful staff members who are notable for their helpfulness and willingness to take on extra responsibility. Some fit neither category. Detection is a difficult task. A candidate's attitudes and past behaviour are likely to indicate their ability and willingness to promote a child protection culture in the workplace. By assessing past behaviour and attitudes, employers gain opportunities to learn more about the way a person might behave in the workplace

Safety Checking

All children's workers need to be safety checked every 3 years. This includes both staff employed and staff engaged in your school or kura, whose work involves regular or overnight contact with children. They are classified as either core workers or non core workers.

Core workers

Core workers are either in sole charge or have primary responsibility or authority over the child or children in their care. Schools are now unable to employ a core worker who has a specified criminal conviction unless they hold a Core Worker Exemption (CWE).

Go to the [workforce restriction and the core worker exemption p 36 of the VCA guide \(external link\)](#)

WHAREORINO SCHOOL APPROACH:

Our approach is to work hand in hand with parents and whānau to create safer lives for at-risk students at Whareorino School.

We work together with other agencies, non-government organisations, and communities to put the child first, and ensure their voices are heard. Together we share information to those entitled to the information, and create one plan for the child.

It's everyone's responsibility

This approach must become part of our everyday processes and procedures, our behaviour, an expected and routine way of working.

It requires accountability at every level, from teachers, principal, board governors and outside agencies approached by the School, all, as appropriate, interacting directly with children and their families.

All working as one

When and where required, Whareorino School will endeavour to bring together practitioners and professionals from iwi, health, justice, education and social services to create a single plan to help and support children who are at risk.

How we work

There are key foundations to the way we work:

- being child-centred and family and whānau focused
- forming partnerships
- being informed by the evidence
- working together in trans-disciplinary teams.
- being strength focused
- utilisation of restorative practices

Families taking the lead

Importantly, families must agree to be part of this approach. The child and their whānau are then supported to lead the change to improve their wellbeing and support of the child's learning / education.

External specialist support / interventions

Parents / whānau must have agreed to an external support person or agency to be supporting their child/ren where there is an expectation by the parents / whānau of school working in partnership. In such situations and contexts, the school has the following expectations:

- pre-notification to the principal of intention to visit the school, including date and time
- principal informed with regards to purpose of visit and procedures relating to visit
- no photos or notes taken on other children outside of the family concerned
- debrief provided to the principal prior to departure from the school

- all adults to work collaboratively and cooperatively focused on the needs and interests of the child

One team working together; by working across sectors and organisations we can make sure the child gets the support they need.

The three levels:

This approach works across:

Governance

To prioritise existing services, resources and new ways of working to create joint responsibility for our at-risk tamariki.

Operational

To get practitioners and professionals from education, health, NZ Police, justice and the social service sector, to work together, put the needs of children first and share responsibility.

Practice

To improve the capability of the children's workforce to work in a child-centred, trans-disciplinary way in partnership with whānau.

Teaching and Learning

To provide ongoing health education, encompassing hauora, wellbeing and keeping ourselves safe.

Related Documents

- Procedure 06: Police Vetting and New Staff
- Procedure 07: Vulnerable Children Act 2014
- Procedure 27: Health and Safety
- Procedure 34: School Culture
- Procedure 52: Staff Appointments



PRINCIPAL

Dated: February 1, 2022