# Operational Policy: Managing Ākonga attending BLENNZ Programmes (NAG 5)

## Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ

## Statement of Intent:

The Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) acknowledges that all ākonga attending BLENNZ programmes have the right to a safe, happy environment in which to work, play and learn, and to be treated with respect. The Board of Trustees and the staff of BLENNZ are committed to ensuring that BLENNZ has a philosophy and practice of working with ākonga in a positive and instructive manner, and that encourages them to develop into fully responsible, self motivated members of the community.

All programmes include the Homai Campus school, long and short term residential placement, play groups/whānau groups, curriculum and EOTC (Education Outside the Classroom) programmes for ākonga receiving services through Visual Resource Centres nationally.

## Policy Requirements:

1. This policy will be carried out according to the provisions of the Board of Trustees Child Protection Policy. The safety of ākonga will always be the first consideration.

2. BLENNZ staff will present a strong, positive and consistent role model, and will resolve conflict in a calm manner. They will exhibit positive guidance and control towards ākonga and will support through appropriate praise and encouragement.

3. BLENNZ staff will treat ākonga with respect and dignity irrespective of abilities, gender, culture or religious beliefs. They will avoid blame, harsh language and belittling or degrading responses. They will seek to understand the communicative intent of ākonga and respond appropriately to their efforts.

4. Ākonga will be encouraged to be responsible for their own actions, as appropriate to the individual’s level of development, and when in place, abide by mutually agreed behaviour contracts.

5. Ākonga will be encouraged to interact successfully with their peers and staff across BLENNZ services. Group work, team events and other activities that require cooperation and mutual support will be vital aspects of the learning environment.

6. Ākonga will be assisted to cope with difficult situations. Staff will ensure that programmes provide occasions where ākonga encounter the need to deal with difficult situations at an appropriate level so that personal development will be encouraged as ākonga are reinforced to make good choices and experience consequences of actions taken.

7. In situations where ākonga are liable to hurt themselves or another as a result of their actions, staff will redirect into another activity in the least retrictive manner, or follow the ākonga management plan.

8. Equipment, created objects or actions could be used in a violent or aggressive manner. BLENNZ will seek to educate ākonga on their appropriate and safe use. No toys (e.g. guns and swords) or equipment, applications (apps), gaming devices or software associated with violence rated R13 or over will be used in any BLENNZ programmes.

9. Staff will seek to understand and respond to the communicative intent of ākonga. Where specific behavioural interventions are deemed necessary, these will be developed in consultation with appropriate staff, parents, caregivers or whānau and other specialists if necessary, and fully documented through the individual plan (IP) process. Strategies will be reviewed at each IEP/IP meeting. Staff will familiarise themselves with, and strictly follow the interventions stated. The use of corporal punishment, physical ill-treatment, solitary confinement, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection is forbidden in any dealings with ākonga.

10. No interventions should be used, unless there is immediate risk to people or property, without first undertaking a functional analysis of the meaning of the behaviour. The principle of “least intrusive intervention” should be followed at all times.

11. Ākonga are not to be left distressed or engaging in self injurious behaviour, nor should they be disadvantaged by behaviour induced by factors outside of their control.

12. All incidents that involve ākonga behaving in a manner which poses a threat to themselves or others must be fully documented and action taken as outlined in this policy.

13. If ākonga exhibit severe behaviour problems all relevant issues will be reviewed including educational placement. In some cases involving ākonga of school age, the Principal may need to implement actions under Sections 13-18 of the Education Act 1989 and its amendments, which deal with stand down, suspension and exclusion procedures. This will be done following Ministry of Education guidelines.

14. Where appropriate staff will be provided with professional development opportunities in recognising triggers and managing the escalation of behaviours.

## Supporting Documents:

[Ministry of Education: Guidelines on Stand Down, Suspension, Exclusions and Expulsions](https://www.education.govt.nz/school/managing-and-supporting-students/student-behaviour-help-and-guidance/stand-downs-suspensions-exclusions-and-expulsions-guidelines/#sh-suspensions)

[Link to MOE website - Behaviour Services and Support](http://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/behaviour-services-to-help-schools-and-students/behaviour-services-and-support/)

[MOE Website: Guidelines to Minimise use of physical restraint in schools'](https://www.education.govt.nz/news/new-guidelines-to-minimise-the-use-of-physical-restraint-in-schools/#sh-restraint%20guidelines)

BLENNZ Code of Conduct Policy

BLENNZ Student Cybersafety Policy

BLENNZ policy on Ākonga Mental Health and Wellbeing

Approved: 

Date: 1 October 2023

Next Review: 2026