

## **Unattended Children Policy**

Gore and Maitua libraries are dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit the library, participate in programmes, access the library collections and use the internet computers. The libraries provide a family-friendly space.

Library staff assisting and supporting children to use the library will do their best to ensure their safety and well-being. However they do not provide supervision for unattended children<sup>1</sup> and are not responsible for their safety. The libraries are not equipped for this purpose and library staff are not trained or qualified to care for children.

### **Children up to age seven**

Children aged 0-7 years should not be left unsupervised in the library. In addition to safety risks, they can easily become frightened, distressed, anxious or insecure. These feelings can easily lead to a child behaving inappropriately.

- An adult caregiver is required to actively supervise any child under eight years old.
- A child under eight may not be left in the supervision of another child under 14 years.

Gore Library reserves the right to notify the Police if a child under the age of eight years is left unattended in the library, or under the supervision of a child under 14 years.

### **Children aged eight to thirteen years**

Confident children aged 10 or older may visit the library without an adult caregiver, however children aged 8-10 years, and some 11-13 year olds, are not sufficiently mature to be left without adult supervision for more than a short time. Before an adult caregiver allows a child to visit the library without an adult caregiver or leaves a child unattended in the library for a short time, they should:

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<sup>1</sup> Maitua Library offers after school supervision most Tuesdays and Thursdays during the school term, with optional attendance. Supervision is within the library and staff are not responsible for the safety of unattended children when they leave the library.

1. Ensure the child feels confident about being left alone.
2. Ensure the child knows where the adult caregiver is and who they can contact if there is a problem.
3. Consider whether any situation could possibly arise that the child might be unable to comfortably handle and talk to him or her about possible scenarios, checking that he or she knows what to do, for example, what the child should do if the adult caregiver is unable to meet the child at the arranged time.

If all of the above conditions are met satisfactorily, the adult caregiver should:

4. Advise library staff that they are sending their child to the library without adult supervision or leaving their child unattended.
5. Provide library staff with clearly written information that includes:
  - a) the child's name and age
  - b) the adult caregiver's name and a phone number where that person can be reliably contacted
  - c) the expected time that the child will return to adult supervision

Police will be notified if staff have any concerns about a child or teen's well-being, he or she is not picked up at the stipulated time, contact with the adult caregiver is not successful, or any other situation that arises which means active supervision is immediately required.

### **Truancy**

Children and teens aged 5-15 years who are not home-schooled must be in school on school days from 9.00am to 3.00pm. If a pupil is at the library during school time without school or adult caregiver supervision, they must show written proof from their school or adult caregiver excusing them from school on that day. Library staff will report instances of truancy to the Truancy officer, the school and/or the Police.

### **Behaviour**

Any person, including a child, behaving in an antisocial way that disturbs the peace, compromises the safety of others, or denies easy access to or enjoyment of the libraries by others, will be asked to behave appropriately. If that person does not or cannot control their behaviour they will be required to leave the premises. Certain behaviour may require Police intervention and a trespass notice may be issued against the person.

## Internet use

- A child may not use the computers for longer than two hours on any day.
- During periods of high use of the internet computers, in the interest of fair access, the libraries reserve the right to limit the number of sessions to one per person per day.
- If a child (or adult) shows unwillingness to observe library rules, he or she may be denied computer access for a period stipulated by the Library Manager.

This document references Child, Youth and Family, New Zealand Ministry of Social Development

<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/about-us/who-we-are-what-we-do/frequently-asked-questions.html#QWhatdoesthelawsayaboutleavingchildrenunder14homealoneorunsupervised7>

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