



THE INDIAN GROUP OF SCHOOLS, DUBAI

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY INCLUDING CHILD PROTECTION

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1. RATIONALE

The Indian High Group of Schools is committed to protect and safeguard the rights of all students and promote their welfare. The school creates safe environments for all stakeholders through robust safeguarding practices. Protecting and enhancing the welfare of the students is a collective responsibility of every person who deals with the children and the family also has a key role to play.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all stakeholders of the school community and families of all students. All stakeholders at school are made aware and trained to respond to concerns and keep up to date with the policies and practices.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Students should be treated with respect, consideration and dignity. Every student has the right to privacy and confidentiality. All learners should be allowed to participate in decisions involving their healthcare when such participation is not contraindicated.

4. TYPES OF ABUSES

Abuse of students can cause serious behavioral problems. Abuse can be classified under physical, emotional, sexual and potential abuse.

Physical Abuse:

An action that causes actual or likely physical injury to a student or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering is called Physical abuse

- Beating (with hands or objects).
- Pinching / Pushing.
- Hurling objects at a person.
- Making a student kneel for an extended period.
- Being made to stand for hours inside the class / outside the class / in the sun.
- Making a student-run in the playground for a long period proves injurious to health.
- Bullying.

Psychological Abuse:

Dealing abusively towards the child which may cause severe or permanent damage to the psychological growth and development of the child is called Psychological Abuse

- Any action that causes mental trauma for a student by severe or persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in behavioral problems
- Humiliating a student by calling him/her names (especially in front of his peers, teachers, and parents).
- Hurling verbal abuses at a student.
- Startling a student by banging on the desk or striking the desk with an object.
- Misrepresenting a student's learning disability as a discipline problem.
- Denying a student adequate time for Recess/Games.
- Abusing a student's parents in the class.
- Making negative comparisons to other students/siblings.

- Turning a blind eye to bullying.

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is the physical exploitation of a student that violates social taboos or family roles, resulting in serious emotional damage

Neglect:

Neglect means failure of the parents or caregivers to take care of the basic needs of the child and failure to provide the child with psychological, physical, mental and moral safety.

Cyber Abuse:

Cyber abuse is to harm or harass a student in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner through the use of the internet and social media. Cyber abuse includes posting rumors or gossips about a student on the internet bringing about hatred in other’s minds, or it may go to the extent of personally identifying the student and publishing materials severely defaming and humiliating him/her.

Potential Abuse:

Situations where medical and social assessments indicate a high degree of risk that a student may be abused in future, including the situation of another student in the same household having been abused or where there is a known abuser, is classified as potential abuse.

Bullying:

It is an act of intentionally and deliberately intimidating another student emotionally, physically, psychologically and or by cyber means

5. PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IN CASE OF ABUSE OF A STUDENT

Any child, in any family, and in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”. Key points for staff to remember when taking actions are:

- In an emergency take the action necessary to help the child.
- Report your concerns to the DCPO (Designated Child Protection Officer), Ms. Divya Salian (email: divya.vsalian@ihsdubai.org ; Tel. No: 043423909- Ext no. 1138) as quickly as possible, immediately when there is evidence of physical or sexual abuse and certainly by the end of the day.
- Do not start your own investigation
- Share information on a need-to-know basis only, do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family.
- Seek support for yourself if you are distressed or need to debrief.

What to do if a student makes a disclosure:

If a student discloses directly to a member of staff or volunteer, he/she must:

- Listen carefully to what is said and keep an open mind. You should not take a decision as to whether or not the abuse has taken place,
- Ask only open questions such as ‘How did that happen’? What was happening at the time? Anything else you want to tell me?
- Do not ask leading questions which may be considered as suggesting what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child’s mind. Depending on the situation, suggest it would be helpful to continue the discussion with the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) present but do not force the child to repeat what he/she said in front of another person.
- Never give undertakings of absolute confidentiality to a student: breaking a child’s confidence would be inappropriate, it is better to say that you might have to tell someone who will ensure

the correct action is taken, make notes of the details of the disclosure using the child's words where possible.

- Reassure the child they have done the right thing and tell them they are not to blame.
- Offer ongoing support.

Records should:

- Be handwritten
- Be accurate and descriptive, including the date, time and place of the conversation and the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence.
- Conduct regular risk assessments to check on the potential risks in case of students who may be experiencing abuse at home.
- Frequent meetings or telephonic conversations with parents to understand the current conditions and conduct risk assessment in case of risk to the students' overall wellbeing at home.
- Not have assumptions or any opinions.
- Indicate sources of information be clear and concise.
- Be signed by the person making it and use names, not initials.
- Be kept securely and handed to the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) as soon as possible.
- All evidence, for example, scribbled notes, mobile phones containing text messages, clothing, computers, must be safeguarded and preserved and passed to the DCPO.

All suspicions or complaints of abuse must be reported immediately to the DCPO except in the case of an allegation which itself involves a Designated Child Protection Officer; in which case the matter should be reported directly to the principal.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions will be recorded in writing and securely stored by the DCPO.

Staff should be concerned if a pupil:

- Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with children's activities.
- Regularly has unexplained injuries.
- Frequently has injuries, even when apparently reasonable explanations are given; offers confused or conflicting explanations on how injuries were sustained; exhibits significant changes in behavior, performance or attitude.
- Indulges in sexual behavior which is unusually explicit and/or inappropriate to his or her age.
- Discloses an experience in which he or she may have been significantly harmed.

Children missing education:

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs may be entitled to a full-time education. Our school recognizes that a child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and will follow the school procedures for unauthorized absence and for children missing education. Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency.

6. CYBER SECURITY GUIDELINES

Network Security

- Updates on school cyber network are carried out periodically and/or as required.

- Firewall installation and maintenance are mandatory to protect the school's cyber eco system.
- Appropriate network strategies are applied to restrict unauthorized access and to protect the cyber network against threats from devices connected to it.
- Periodic cyber network maintenance and performance audits are held to optimize school cyber infrastructure.

Data Security

- School leaders and ICT follow best practices of data governance, data management, data confidentiality and other data security measures for adequate protection of all kinds of school data.
- ICT ensures data backups and protection mechanisms are in place as per their policy and procedures, which are reviewed as appropriate from time to time.
- Routine data cleaning activities are carried out by ICT to enable accurate data-driven decision-making in academics and operations.
- Data access criteria are well planned and implemented.

Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullying is strictly prohibited, and disciplinary actions stipulated in safeguarding policy will apply to students reported and verified inappropriate online activity.
- Student online safety is paramount, and all necessary measures will be undertaken to protect students online.

7. SOCIAL-MEDIA GUIDELINES

- If any student is found using defamatory content against the school, teachers or other students, it should be brought to the attention of the Class Teacher and Supervisor immediately.
- Students will have the following action taken against them for their misconduct:
 - First-time violation will result in the student receiving an official written warning from the school.
 - The student's parents will be informed by the Supervisor. The student is expected to apologize to the person affected by this act.

The student will be counselled.

8. MISUSE OF SOCIAL-MEDIA

In case of Slander/Libel:

Misusing social media tools to defame or slander anyone would bear severe consequences. If any student is found using slanderous and libellous content against the school, teachers or students, it should be brought to the attention of the class teacher and supervisor immediately. Students will have the following action taken against them for their misconduct:

- First-time violation will result in the student receiving an official written warning from the school.
- The student's parents will be informed by the Supervisor. The student is expected to apologize to the person affected by this act.
- The student will be counselled.

In the case of fellow bullying students on online platforms:

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) have strong regulations proposed for cyberbullying. If students are found bullying their peers or juniors, action would be taken against them based on their severity level, as mentioned below:

- If the student is found to indulge in cyberbullying, he/ she would be reported to the Supervisor and Headmaster/Vice principal/Principal for the misconduct.
- The parents of the students will be duly informed.
- In case of repeat offence, the matter may be reported to KHDA, and the concerned student must perform community service work within the school or as deemed fit by KHDA under their regulation.

PREVENTIVE PROACTIVE MEASURES

- The provision of school systems for a safe and secure cyber infrastructure is reviewed periodically and/or as per needs, and corrective actions are performed to keep them up to date.
- Awareness programs on the school's policy & procedures to stakeholders and training workshops for leaders, IT staff & educators are planned as per requirements and delivered periodically.
- New staff are introduced to system provision and expectations during the induction program.
- Posters informing the guidelines and acceptable behaviours are placed strategically around the campus to educate staff, students and parents on the related information and procedure to be followed regarding the use of school cyberspace and social ground.

INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

- An emergency response team is formed to activate the quick response plan stipulated in ICT policy in accordance with Federal Decree-Law on combatting rumours & cybercrimes, UAE Information Assurance Regulation and Dubai Data Law.
- When an incident is reported, it is verified, and the course of action stipulated in ICT policy is revoked for support and quick resolution to avoid full-blown escalation.
- In case of severe security breaches, threats, and attacks, the aeCERT (UAE computer emergency response team) and/or concerned regulatory authorities are informed as appropriate, and subsequent steps are taken to combat the situation.

9. CARE AND PROTECTION OF STUDENTS OF DETERMINATION

Based on Law No. (2) of 2014 Concerning Protection of the Rights of Students of Determination in the Emirate of Dubai, the school prohibits exploiting or demeaning students of determination or abusing them in any way. Basic care and necessary protection are provided for students of determination.

Keeping in line with Federal Law No. (29) of 2006 concerning the Rights of People of Determination, the school guarantees students of determination equal opportunities in education in regular classes. School provides transport service to its students without prejudice to its responsibility for student safety and for transporting them from and to the school. Student affairs are administered professionally and impartially, and the school provides equality amongst students and prevents discrimination based on race, gender, nationality, religion, or social class.

10. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS AND STAFF

The principal will make all reasonable attempts to protect and otherwise support pupils who have disclosed information about possible child abuse incidents. Dealing with disclosure from a child is likely to be a stressful experience. The member of staff concerned should consider seeking support for him/herself and discuss this with the DCPO.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

Members of staff have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. Staff and volunteers are expected:

- to treat information, they receive about pupils in a discreet and confidential manner.
- to seek advice from the principal if they are in any doubt sharing information they hold, or which has been requested of them.
- to be cautious when passing information to others about a pupil.

Never guarantee confidentiality about a safeguarding concern (including parents / care givers or pupils) or promise to keep a secret. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities

12. RECORDS AND MONITORING

Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practice. Concerns and disclosures should be recorded in writing by the member of staff who receives them and passed to the DCPO without delay.

The DCPO, in consultation with the principal, will then decide on further action and any appropriate monitoring program for the pupil.

Records are stored in a dedicated filing system maintained by the DCPO in their office. When pupils with records in this filing system pass on to their next school, the principal is responsible for transferring information judged to be relevant to the child's next school

13. STAFF TRAINING

All staff including the teaching and non-teaching should receive safeguarding training as part of the CPD program. Staff are informed of any changes subsequently made.

14. INVESTIGATION, REFERRAL AND REPORTING

The DCPO will ensure that members of staff, students and other members of the school community, including Governors and volunteers are aware that it is their responsibility to:

- Protect children from abuse.
- Be aware of the school's child protection procedures in this policy.
- Know how to access and implement the procedures, independently, if necessary, keep a sufficient record of any significant complaint, conversation or event report any matters of concern to the DCPO.
- Undertake appropriate training, including refresher training which will be updated regularly in accordance with KHDA requirements.

It is not the responsibility of School staff to investigate suspected abuse. The school is not an investigation or intervention agency for child protection, but it has an important role to play at the recognition and referral stages.

On being notified of a complaint or suspicion of abuse, the DCPO will:

- Operate safeguarding procedures in line with the local procedures.
- Take into account the nature and seriousness of the suspicion or complaint. A complaint

involving a serious criminal offence will always be referred to the police.

- Take into account the wishes or feelings of the student. However, there may be times when the situation is so serious that decisions may need to be taken, after all appropriate consultation, that override a pupil's wishes.
- Take into account duties of confidentiality, so far as applicable.

If there is doubt over whether a referral should be made, the DCPO will consult with the relevant authorities on a no-name basis without identifying the family. However, as soon as sufficient concern exists that a child may be at risk of significant harm, a referral will be made without delay (and in any event within 24 hours). The DCPO, should follow up on the referral.

The DCPO will keep the principal informed of the case(s) unless the complaint involves the principal.

Staff must not investigate suspected abuse or any allegations against other staff but should refer the matter to the DCPO immediately.

If the child's situation does not appear to be improving the DCPO or the staff member with concerns should press for re- consideration to ensure concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

15. NOTIFYING PARENTS

The school will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a pupil with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DCPO will make contact with parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure.

In case of risk to students at home the DCPO will guide the parents on the safety measures available for support.

However, if the school believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problems, advice will be sought first from relevant UAE agencies.

16. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL STAFF

There is a named person(s) in our school who is the DCPO (Designated Child Protection Officer). The DCPO, from the circle of happiness, inclusion and wellbeing works closely with the school principal.

All members of the school staff have a responsibility to identify, and report suspected abuse and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students in the school. In doing so, they should seek advice and support as necessary from the DCPO.

All staff are expected to attend regular and relevant professional development sessions.

All staff are expected to provide a safe and caring environment in which children can develop the confidence to voice ideas, feelings and opinions. Children should be treated with respect within a framework of agreed and understood behavior.

All staff are expected to be aware of symptoms of abuse, report concerns to DCPO as appropriate and keep clear, dated, factual and confidential records of child protection concerns.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL DOCTOR/NURSE AND COUNSELLOR:

- The school Doctor/Nurse or Counsellor may be requested to provide physical treatment and emotional support after a child has been abused

- The doctor or nurse may be required to conduct an examination if there are physical injuries and write an initial report about the child's physical and emotional condition
- The doctor/ nurse and/ or counsellor can provide positive encouragement to the child, liaise with family members to determine how best to promote the child's safety both at school and at home.
- Child abuse can leave deep emotional scars and the School Doctor or Nurse should recognize these and help develop a rehabilitation plan in liaison with the DCPO and other appropriate staff in the case team.

In some cases, the child may have to take medication as a result of the abuse. The school doctor or nurse should ensure that all standards and procedures for administering medications in the school setting are met.

17. RELEVANT LEGISLATION OR AUTHORITIES

The Policy is underpinned by the fundamental principle of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 of which the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ratified on the 3rd of January, 1997 along with the UAE local laws (the Emirates Human Rights Association have launched a Federal Law, the Child Rights Law, which was to be established December, 2014).

18. INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC)

The first licensed non-profit shelter in the UAE for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, child abuse and human trafficking. It was established in July 2007 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to offer victims immediate protection and support services

In accordance with international human rights obligations, the Foundation provides a helpline, emergency shelter, and support services to women and children victims. DFWAC aims to protect physically, sexually and emotionally abused women and children, prevent ongoing abuse and the escalation of violence and promote social awareness through education and outreach.

DFWAC provides:

- Case management medical care
- Psychological support counselling
- Legal, consular and immigration assistance
- Helpline 800 111 or email help@dfwac.ae
- Website - www.dfwac.ae

Dubai Police Human Rights Department 24/7 Duty Officer 056 6862121

Latifa Hospital Child Welfare

Unit Tel: 04 2193000 Fax: 04
3241717

PO Box 4115 Dubai, UAE Working Hours: 24 Hours

Community Development Authority (Centre)

Any child in Dubai who needs help, protection from abuse, or advice can pick up the phone and dial 800-988 any time. Four social workers and psychologists at the Child Protection Centre in Al Barsha are on standby to assist residents under 18 years of age to ensure their rights are protected and upheld. The recently opened centre under the Community Development Authority (CDA) is part of CDA's comprehensive strategy to make Dubai the most secure and ideal environment for children to live. It is

tasked with rehabilitating, providing counselling, visiting and assisting children in need

Al Ameen Reporting (Dubai & Federal Police)

The Al Ameen Service officially launched in September 2003. Using this service, the people of Dubai can communicate confidentially with the authorities to keep abreast of development .in Dubai and on issues that concern them www.alameen.ae/en/

19. EFFECTIVENESS, REVIEW AND REVISION

This policy has been in effect since 2017. The policy is reviewed annually and/or whenever the regulatory and licensing bodies make changes in the regulations. It was last revised in November 2021 and then in April 2022.