

Child Protection Policy

Every child has the right to life and survival and to be shielded from any form of hardship, abuse or neglect, including physical, psychological, mental and emotional abuse and neglect; and to a chance for harmonious development and a standard of living adequate for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social growth. In the case of a child who has been traumatized, every step should be taken to enable the child to enjoy healthy development - Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO 2012)

MAIS is committed to providing an atmosphere that is inclusive, non- threatening and safe - that promotes student learning and personal growth. The school will take all reasonable measures to protect each student from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another student, and deal appropriately and sensitively with every suspicion or complaint of abuse.

This Child Protection Policy states its:

- Purpose,
- Preventive Measures,
- Defining Child Abuse,
- Signs of abuse,
- Reporting of abuse
- Post reporting procedures

(The policy also includes a format to be used for reporting incidents of abuse).

01 Purpose

The Child Protection Policy aims to provide an understanding, to the school community, of the issues related to child protection and the school's position and arrangements thereof. The policy should enable staff members to be alert to and identify possible signs of abuse and develop good practice with respect to child protection issues. It prescribes their code of conduct and responsibilities towards protecting their students.

This policy emphasizes that child protection concerns and referrals should at all times be handled sensitively, confidentially and professionally and in ways which prioritise the needs of the child.

It aims to reassure parents that students are not placed at risk while in charge of members of staff and that there are clear procedures and systems of redressal in the event of any harm occurring to any student. Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting student welfare and this policy makes reference to, and is consistent with other school policies such as the Anti-Bullying Policy and the e-Protection Policy.

02 Preventive Measures

The school has put in place several measures and practices intended to safeguard children, and these will run concurrently through the school year. These are in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Public Instruction, Govt. of Karnataka (23/07/2014), Police Department advisory issued by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy (F. No: 1-16/2012-EE-4, 26/03/2014), with regard to Child Protection.

In addition, the Code of Conduct lists out the responsibilities of staff members with regard to the safety of children.

(2.1) THE SCHOOL

1. The names, addresses and identifying information of all staff have been registered in the nearest police station.
2. Job applications are scrutinized and staff are being hired from responsible agencies.
3. Staff members are required to be aware of and sign a Code of Conduct acknowledging that they have understood and will abide by it.
4. A Child Protection Committee has been constituted, with a Child Protection Officer who will be the point of contact for all issues of safety; Ms. Radhika Srinivasan D'Costa has been appointed the Child Protection Officer for a term of three years. The Child Protection Committee consists of a member of the Ujwal Trust, the Senior Management Team, the Counselling Team, a subject matter expert, a lawyer, students and a parent.
5. A Child Protection Policy has been drawn up.
6. An e-Protection Policy has been drawn up.
7. An Anti-Bullying Policy has been drawn up.
8. No corporal punishment.
9. Students and staff have ID cards that are up to date.
10. Students leave school only with people who have authorized ID cards.
11. Students who use school buses are accompanied by a staff member.
12. Security personnel check the entry of every individual into the school premises and visitors are required to make an entry in the visitor's log book.
13. A female security staff has been hired to monitor staff and student movements in the school campus.
14. Attendance is taken by the class teachers in the morning, after lunch and at the end of the day.
15. The school premises are well lit.
16. CCTVs have been installed at crucial places around school.
17. Separate toilets have been built for Staff/Faculty and for boys and girls.
18. Regular maintenance and tracking of school vehicles is carried out.
19. There is provision for first level medical attention on campus.
20. The school regularly holds staff meetings and communicates with parents to discuss issues related to school safety.
21. Life skills classes cover what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour, ways in which children can keep themselves safe, and how they can report any unsafe behaviour that they experience, or are witness to.
22. Parenting workshops address pertinent issues such as safe internet usage, supervision, responding to children in developmentally relevant ways, and practices of positive parenting.
23. Teachers and parents are encouraged to make referrals to the Counselling Department, for children who exhibit emotional and behavioural difficulties.

(2.2) CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF MEMBERS WITH REGARD TO CHILD PROTECTION

All staff members are to be made aware of the Child Protection Policy and sign a statement that they are aware of the contents - the behaviour expected of them and their responsibilities with regard to child protection..

03 Definition of Child Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect

For the purpose of this policy a child is a bonafide student of MAIS wherein age of the child is not under consideration. The term child abuse is used to describe all the ways; physical and/or emotional, sexual, and through negligent treatment, by which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust. An adult may abuse a child both by inflicting harm and by failing to prevent harm. It refers to the damage that has been, or may be done, to a child's development, dignity and physical or mental health.

It is the prerogative of the Child Protection Committee/ Child Protection Officer to decide whether actions not covered in the classification below qualify as abuse.

Alternatively, a child may abuse another child sexually. These complaints will be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy. A child might abuse another child physically or emotionally and such incidents will be dealt with keeping in mind the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

There are four categories of abuse:

(3.1) PHYSICAL ABUSE: Physical abuse is the use of aggression that results in a bodily injury, and may include, but is not limited to of the following-beating, slapping, pushing, biting, pinching, burning, punching, choking, shaking, boxing or twisting ears, making a child assume an uncomfortable position such as standing on a chair, facing the wall, in addition to other forms of physical/corporal punishment.

(3.2) SEXUAL ABUSE: This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or gives consent. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may also include, but are not limited to non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. In addition to defining the above acts of sexual abuse, the POCSO Act, 2012, deems a sexual act to be 'aggravated' under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority vis-à-vis the child. Sexual abuse of a child by another child may involve (but is not restricted to) uninvited comments or sounds of a sexual nature; sharing of sexually explicit texts, images, or pornography; and sexually inappropriate gestures or touch. School will respond to complaints regardless of where the abuse takes place; in school, outside of school, or on virtual platforms.

(3.3) EMOTIONAL ABUSE: This may involve emotional ill-treatment of the child causing psychological harm, mental harassment, and includes but is not restricted to sarcasm, criticism, humiliation, calling the child names, verbally intimidating, using derogatory remarks, ridiculing or belittling a student with regard to his/her gender, ability levels, academic achievements and family background, shaming a student and labeling a student as difficult. It may also involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It can also involve age inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, or causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger.

(3.4) NEGLECT: This is the persistent failure (when the adult is in the position to), to meet the physical, emotional and educational needs of a child. Physical needs include nutritious food, clothing, shelter and/or medical attention. Emotional neglect is characterized by the adult's failure to notice and respond to the child's feelings, and expressed emotional needs. Educational neglect is signified by the failure of a caregiver to enroll a child into a school at the mandatory school age. In a learning environment it is the failure of an educator to include the child in the learning session.

04 Signs of Abuse

Children who are being/ have been abused are often afraid to disclose the abuse, due to feelings of confusion, guilt and shame, especially if the abuser is a parent, caregiver, close family member, or friend. It is therefore crucial for adults to be vigilant to signs of abuse, some of which have been listed below. (Reference source-www.enfoldindia.org)

While these signs do not necessarily indicate the presence of abuse, this is a possibility that must be further explored.

(4.1) OBVIOUS SIGNS OF ABUSE

1. Disclosure by the child- the child says he/she has been abused, or asks a question that gives rise to that inference.
2. Detection through pregnancy, child suffering from Sexually Transmitted infections, child having genital injuries.
3. There is no reasonable or consistent explanation for a child's injury/injuries; the injury is unusual in kind or location; there have been a number of injuries; there is a pattern to the injuries.
4. Unusual gait/ child has difficulty while sitting, standing, walking or while shifting posture.

(4.2) SIGNS THAT LEAD TO THE SUSPICION OF ABUSE

1. Sexualized behaviour - writes, draws, plays or dreams of sexual or frightening images; thinks of self or body as repulsive, dirty or bad; exhibits adult-like sexual behaviours, language and knowledge. These are some examples but are not an exhaustive list.
2. Observed difficulties with mood- the child could seem withdrawn, moody, sullen, tearful and generally does not seem to enjoy class activities

3. Changes in eating patterns, with sudden weight loss or gain.
4. Changes in sleep patterns, falls asleep in class, reports nightmares.
5. Sudden unexplained change in the child's behaviour with him/her becoming either clingy, or withdrawn, expressing school refusal, being frequently absent from school, attempting, or expressing a desire to run away from home.
6. People/place avoidance, asks to drop subjects with a particular teacher and seems reluctant to discuss the reasons.
7. Child is threatened by physical contact, clings or flinches if touched unexpectedly.
8. Sudden onset of bed wetting, thumb sucking, complaints about aches and pains, nausea, general ill health.
9. Evidence of self-injurious behaviour, which could include scratching, cutting, burning etc.
10. Use of alcohol and drugs, smoking of cigarettes.
11. Lack of personal care or hygiene.
12. Child feels uncomfortable without a full sleeve jacket regardless of weather, shows reluctance to change out of uniform before and after P.E.
13. The child appears to have difficulties in establishing peer relationships- could be aggressive, violent, withdrawn, sexually precocious etc.
14. The student appears neglected, e.g. dirty, hungry, inadequately clothed, has an untreated illness.
15. The student is reluctant to go home, or has been openly rejected by his/her parents or carers.

05 Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Abuse

This section of the policy will cover information on:

(5.1) AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

(5.2) PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ABUSE

(5.3) REPORTING ABUSE

Every reported complaint will be taken seriously with the aim of providing relief and protecting the best interests of the child in a manner that is sensitive.

(5.1) AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

The Child Protection Officer will:

1. Act as a first point of contact for staff on all child protection issues.
2. Provide support and advice to staff when an issue of child protection arises and decide what action to take.
3. Liaison with identified teachers to create as required suitable crisis response plan and interventions.
4. If a formal complaint has been made, will ensure that the student and his/ her family are aware of medical, legal and psychological options and support available.
5. Liaise with external legal or non- governmental agencies if required

(5.2) PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ABUSE

All suspicion or complaints of abuse must be reported at the earliest possible and definitely within 24 hours to the Child Protection Officer. Copies of the report form can be obtained from the Child Protection Officer.

(5.3) REPORTING ABUSE ON SCHOOL PREMISES OR SCHOOL RELATED ACTIVITIES

- The Child Protection Officer is to be informed at the earliest.
- Principal and parents of the child are to be informed.
- This policy is in accordance with the POCSO Act, 2012. The best interests of the child will be considered as primary to any decision regarding reporting.

Appropriate legal action will be taken against individuals filing false or malicious reports.

Reporting abuse at home

- The Child Protection Officer is to be informed.
- Principal and parents or designated parent (if the other parent is involved) of the child are to be informed.
- Measures to keep the child safe are to be constituted.
- The best interests of the child will be considered as primary to any decision regarding reporting. Parents will be informed of the range of possible legal, health and psychological options for dealing with the situation and be provided with the relevant information for reporting. The school will extend support to the child and other family members and liaison with required external/legal agencies to address the abuse and its impact.

06 Procedures Post Reporting

The following is the process that will be followed for complaints of sexual abuse:

- The Child Protection Officer will inform the Principal and the parents.
- A report will be registered with the Special Juvenile Police Unit.
- Following a risk assessment, the child will be referred to appropriate health, legal, psychological or other services.
- The child and his/her family may also avail of counseling support in school provided by the Counselling Services Department.
- The Child Protection Officer will ensure that the written report includes the appropriate action taken as a result of the student's disclosure and this will be filed.
- Reports will be maintained by the Child Protection Officer and secured in a safe location.
- Given that sexual development in children is sensitive and complex, the school's response will account for this if the complaint is of a sexual nature and is between children. The school's responses to complaints of a sexual nature among children need to be nuanced and will be informed at all times by the best interest of the child.
- The school child protection team may conduct an enquiry if required and recommend suitable measures.
- The school will support appropriate measures that would help the child and his/her family in their recovery process.

Important Contact Details

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