

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The health, safety and well-being of all our children is of utmost importance to all the adults who work in our school. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school.

Protecting children is everyone's responsibility at the school and this includes reporting any act committed by a parent, guardian or any other person, to a child enrolled in the school which results in neglect, physical or emotional injury or sexual harm.

All staff have a duty and will report any suspected or disclosed issues of child protection to the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)/Child Protection Team. If the threat is immediate or on-going it will be reported to the appropriate local safeguarding authorities as set in place by the UAE.

Purpose

The safeguarding of the students from harm is the highest priority here at Manthena American School. Students have a right to feel safe and protected from significant physical and emotional harm both inside and outside of school and safe to confidentially report any wrongdoing. This policy is a critical part of promoting the welfare of our students; it is designed to inform our staff regarding the signs of child abuse and to equip them with the knowledge on what to do in the event of suspected abuse. This policy defines abuse, outlines signs of abuse and explains the procedures for investigating and reporting suspected cases.

Definition of Child Abuse

As per the UAE Wadeema's Law (Federal Law No. 3 of 2016), the following are definitions as it pertains to the policy:

1. *Child abuse* : every action or omission that would lead to the harm of the child and prevent the latter's upbringing and growth in a sound, safe and healthy manner.
2. *Child neglect*: failure of the parents or the custodian to take necessary actions to preserve the child's life, as well as his/her physical, mental and moral integrity from risks and to protect his/her various rights.
3. *Violence against children*: deliberate use of force against any child by any individual or group that would lead to actual harm to the health, growth or survival of the child.
4. *Child pornography*: production, display, publication, possession or circulation of a picture, film or drawing through any means of communication, social media platforms or other means where the child is shown in a disgraceful manner in a sexual act or sexual show, whether such act is real, virtual or simulated.
5. *Child Protection Specialist*: The person licensed and appointed by the competent authority or the concerned entities-as the case may be- to preserve the rights of the child and prevent the latter's upbringing and growth in a sound, safe and healthy manner.

Aims

This policy ensures that all staff in our school can follow the necessary procedures with regard to a child protection issue inclusive of abuse, neglect, violence and pornography.

It aims:

To raise awareness and identify responsibility in reporting possible cases of abuse;
To ensure effective communication and following the adopted protocol and confidentiality channels when dealing with child protection issues;
To inform all parties of the correct procedures to use in the case of a child protection issue.

Enforce the UAE Wadeema's Law

Article 2 (2) Protect the child from all forms of neglect, exploitation and abuse and from any physical and psychological violence that exceeds the limits of the Sharia and the Law, such as the rights of the parents and their equivalents to discipline their children.

Article 2 (4) Protect the best interests of the child.

Article 2 (5) Raise awareness among children on their rights, obligations and duties in a society in which justice, equality, tolerance and moderation prevail.

Article 2 (7) Spread the culture of child rights as widely as possible using appropriate means.

When to be concerned

Staff should be concerned if a student:

Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with the child's activities

Regularly has unexplained injuries

Frequently has injuries even when apparently reasonable explanations are given

Offers confused or conflicting explanations about 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 harmed.

Dealing with disclosure

If a student discloses that he or she has been harmed in some way, the member of staff should:

Immediately contact the Chief Child Protection Officer or identified liaisons.

The officers will:

Accept what is being said

Allow the child to talk freely

- Reassure the child they are safe, but not make promises that it might not be possible to keep
- Not promise confidentiality, as it might be necessary to refer the case to the appropriate authority
- Reassure the pupil that what has happened is not their fault
- Commend the student for reporting and ensure that their safety is priority
- Listen rather than ask direct questions
- Ask open questions rather than leading questions
- Not criticize the perpetrator
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.

Procedures

When a child reports abuse, the staff member will inform the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) as soon as possible if there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring. They will then take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident. At this stage he/she will:

Determine if physical harm is evident, take student to the Health Office to perform exam/take photos if needed.

Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.

Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school.
Communicate to parents as needed.

The DCPO will then form a school-based response team to address the report. The response team may include the school representatives from the Health Clinic, counselor, teacher, and other individuals as the DCPO sees fit. In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually, and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Actions that may take place are:

- Discussions between the child and the DCPO to gain more information.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor, or administrator.
- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.
- Consultation with local authorities.

Subsequent to a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect, the following actions may take place:

- The DCPO will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The DCPO will provide the child's teachers with ongoing support and provide strategies for the teacher to use.
- The DCPO will maintain contact with outside therapists, in order to update the therapist about the progress of the child in school, and to keep the school informed about the progress of the therapy.
- The School Principal refers the case to local authorities for further action.

Responsibilities of the whole school staff

There is a named person(s) in our school who is the DCPO. This is the Principal, Dean of Students or the Social Counselor. 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 mandated to attend regular and relevant professional development sessions as it pertains to child safeguarding.

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
- report clear, dated, factual and maintain confidentiality of child protection concerns.

Specific responsibilities of the School Health Office and Counselor:

The school doctor/nurse or counselor 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 counselor can provide positive encouragement to the child, liaise with family members 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.

Specific responsibilities of the HR department and Security

- When recruiting any member of the teaching staff or support staff with access to children, all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure compliance as far as possible with the following:
 - Provision of an up-to-date police 'good conduct' letter and/or criminal records check
 - That two or more references are taken up from previous employers with follow-up questions about the applicant's compliance with any Child Protection procedures
 - A declaration signed by the prospective employee on any application form and/or contract that s/he has not been convicted or undergoing court or disciplinary proceedings for any offence involving child abuse and/or breach in exercising a duty of care for children
- The security staff undertake to be vigilant and adhere to the procedures governing the access, detailed record-keeping, provision of a visitor's pass to be worn for ease of identification and monitoring of visitors to the school

Roles and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and visitors to Manthena American School.

The staff at MAS have a responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of our students. All staff must report any suspected incidents of child abuse to any one of the Designated Child Protection Officer's (DCPO's). The following persons are DCPO's for all child protection issues here at Manthena American School:

- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Social Counselor

The DCPO's will:

Follow the agreed procedures (refer to Appendix B What to do on Disclosure)

- Know how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse (refer to Appendix A)
- Provide advice and support to staff
- Maintain relevant records of incident reports (refer Appendix C)
- Keep all information confidentially and safe in a locked cabinet
- Know when and how to submit a referral to outside agencies (refer Appendix D)

Relevant legislation or authorities

This 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 January, 1997 along with the UAE local laws.

School Commitment-Recruitment, Training and Selection

The school safer recruitment procedures will be followed for all staff employed by the school. All staff (both teaching and non-teaching), including volunteers who apply to work at the school, will be subject to a rigorous recruitment process to ensure, as far as possible, their suitability to work with children and eligibility to work in the UAE. At least, two references will be taken up and they will be required to give evidence of their qualifications.

Staff will be provided with a copy of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and code of behavior and will be required to sign a document certifying that they have read it and agree to abide by its contents.

All these policies are applicable when students go on trips away from school. At least one male and one female will be present to support students.

Framework

Child Protection is the responsibility of all staff and especially those working with children. The Designated Senior Person for Child Protection at DAAS are the Principal, Vice Principal and the Social Counselor and are in charge of child protection/ safeguarding matters.

The school will disseminate policy and training for all staff. Staff should discuss any concerns regarding Child Protection with school leadership.

The Principal is responsible for reporting issues related to this policy to the CEO/ Board. Board members will not be given specific details relating to child protection situations.

Allegations against staff or the Principal

Teachers who hear an allegation of abuse against another member of staff should report the matter immediately to the school leadership. If it the behavior of the School Principal that is concerning, the employee should report the issue to the Human Resources Manager.

Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed annually, though any deficiencies or weaknesses in children protection arrangements will be remedied without delay. The Principal and an identified special committee will undertake an annual review of the school's Child Protection/ safeguarding policies and procedures and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged.

DATE FOR REVIEW August 2020

APPENDIX A

CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Is actual or attempted physical injury to a child where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

- Unexplained injuries or burns (particularly if they are recurrent)
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Aggression towards others
- Self-destructive tendencies

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs such as to have a severe effect on the behavior and development of the child. This includes conveying to children the feeling that they are worthless or unloved.

- Physical/mental/emotional developmental lags
- Admission of punishment which seems excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations
- Neurotic behavior (eg, rocking, thumb sucking etc)
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Self-mutilation
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

SEXUAL ABUSE:

Where a child may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect, exploits the child, directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) – including organized networks. This definition holds whether or not there has been genital contact and whether or not the child is said to have initiated the behavior.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, behaviors
- Loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking, needing previously discarded cuddly toys
- Becoming withdrawn, isolated
- Inability to focus
- Reluctance to go home
- Bed-wetting

- Drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'extra good'
- Over-reacting to criticism
- Have outbursts of anger/irritability

NEGLECT:

Refers to persistent or deliberate failure to meet a child's physical or psychological needs eg. a failure to provide adequate food, clothing or shelter, failure to protect a child or failure to provide adequate medical care. It may also involve neglect or failure to give adequate response to a child's emotional needs.

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Frequent lateness and/or unexplained non-attendance
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor peer relationships
- Stealing

Adopted: March 2021

Revised/Amended:

Next review: June 2021 or when new legislation is passed

Distribution List:

- CEO/ Board
- Principal
- Section Heads
- Academic Staff
- Parents
- Students

APPENDIX B

WHAT TO DO ON DISCLOSURE

Stay calm

(Don't over-react, however shocked you may be)



Reassure and explain that they have done the right thing in telling.

(Do not promise confidentiality; explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed)



Report to Principal immediately



Principal or delegate records in writing as near verbatim as possible and as soon as possible on a Disclosure Form

(Use the child's own words, make your record as soon as possible after the event, so that you don't forget anything, and include information about what action was taken afterwards)



Gather school-based response team to identify next steps



Local Authorities

Documented Case

APPENDIX C

Manthena American School

DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE FORM

Name of Person Making Allegation/Disclosure: Click or tap here to enter text.

Date: Click or tap to enter a date. **Time:** Click or tap here to enter text.

Parent(s) Name and Contact Details: Click or tap here to enter text.

Nature of Disclosure:

(Continue on separate sheet as required, recording as close to verbatim as possible)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Name and Signature :
.....

Role :
.....

Date and Time :
.....

Copy provided to Principal for further action.