

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES: CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Background.

1. Children are more vulnerable than adults to the conditions under which they live. Therefore, they are more affected than any other age group by societal actions and inactions. Since children spend a significant part of their childhood and formative years in schools, it is essential that the school environment is positive and nurturing, ensuring they feel safe and secure within the premises and with care providers.
2. The Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 maintains that all children have an equal right to access education in an environment that is safe, protective and conducive to the overall development. The challenges of gender inequality, eve-teasing, and sexual abuse in the school environment require increased awareness and synergy among parents, teachers, and schools.
3. The National Policy for Children, 2013, recognizes that 'childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own.' One of the key priorities of the policy is for the State to create a caring, protective, and safe environment for all children, reducing their vulnerability in all situations and keeping them safe in all places, especially public spaces, and protecting all children from all forms of violence, abuse, harm, neglect, stigma, discrimination, and deprivation.
4. Providing opportunities for children to share their grievances, concerns, fears, as well as their suggestions and views regarding their safety, is crucial for creating a child-sensitive atmosphere.

Purpose of Child Protection Policy.

5. This Child Protection Policy aims to provide clear direction to staff and others on expected codes of behavior in dealing with child protection issues. It also makes explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. This ensures that Child Protection concerns and referrals may be handled sensitively, professionally and in ways, which prioritizes the needs of the child.

Introduction.

6. The school recognizes its role in protecting children and supporting pupils. Our Child Protection Policy consists of three main elements and applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff. This policy applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff in school.

(a) **Prevention.** Promoting a positive and inclusive school ethos where all children feel safe and valued and providing pastoral support to pupils. We also strive to meet children's emotional needs and to teach them about personal rights and responsibilities.

(b) **Protection.** Following agreed procedures to ensure staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns.

(c) **Support.**

(i) Providing support to pupils and school staff who may have been abused.

(ii) Types of Abuse to be looked into as a Part of Child Protection Policy.

7. **Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment.** A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. Children may be abused in family, institutional, or community settings by known individuals or, less commonly, by strangers. These may include the following types:-

(a) **Physical Abuse.**

(i) Involves hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or causing physical harm to a child.

(ii) Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

(b) **Emotional Abuse.**

(i) Persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe effects on a child's emotional development.

(ii) Conveying any children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only so far as they meet the needs of other person.

(c) **Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children.** These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. Serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Emotional abuse is often involved in all types of maltreatment, though it can occur alone.

(d) **Sexual Abuse.**

(i) Involves forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

(ii) Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

(e) **Neglect.** Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely resulting in serious health or development impairment. Neglect may involve a parent failing to:-

- (i) Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- (ii) Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- (iii) Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- (iv) Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- (v) It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

8. **Governing Principles**. The Child Protection Policy is guided by the non-negotiable fundamental principles for realization of the rights of all children and includes in particular: -

- (a) **Principle of Best Interest of the Child**. The right of the child to have her or his best interest taken as primary consideration which is a substantive right, a fundamental interpretative legal principle and a rule of procedure. It also implies that institutions, services and facilities responsible for care or protection of children will conform to standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health and supervision; and reiterates the rights and duties of parents, guardians, other individuals legally responsible for them.
- (b) **Principle of Safety**. Ensures no harm, abuse, neglect, or maltreatment occurs while children are in contact with care providers.
- (c) **Principle of Equality and Non-discrimination**. All children shall be treated equal and given equal opportunity and treatment. There shall be no discrimination against a child on any grounds including gender, religion, caste, class, place of birth, disability etc. Stigmatizing vocabulary or language will also not be used in class or in the school.
- (d) **Principle of Confidentiality**. Every child has a right to protection of her/his privacy and confidentiality, in matters that call for such. Confidentiality shall be maintained when there has been abuse, especially when there has been sexual abuse.
- (e) **Principle of Participation**. Every child has a right to be heard, listened to and to participate in all processes and decisions affecting her or his interest and the child's views shall be taken into consideration with due regard to the age and maturity of the child. It has been noted that the right of a child to be heard is not only a right but should be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights. The parent/guardian and family of the child also have a right to such participation unless decided otherwise by the Competent Authority. It also enables a child to provide informed consent.

9. **School Commitment.** We recognize that high self- esteem, confidence, peer support and clear lines of communication with trusted adults helps all children, and especially those at risk of or suffering abuse. Our school will therefore establish and maintain environment where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to. This will be achieved through: -

- (a) School and senior leadership commitment to creating a supportive school environment.
- (b) The pastoral role of the class teacher working in partnership with the teaching assistant.
- (c) The role of the Principal, teachers, counselors and support staff who work with children identified as having additional social, emotional, physical or learning needs
- (d) Promoting pupil voice through the School Council
- (e) Ensure that children know that there are adults in the school who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty. This is promoted through assemblies, class discussions and the curriculum.
- (f) Include in the curriculum activities and opportunities for inputs which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe and / or communicate their fears or concerns about abuse.
- (g) Anti- Bullying Policy and related awareness efforts down to classroom level
- (h) Staff Codes of Conduct
- (j) Special Educational Needs Policy
- (k) E- Safety Policy
- (l) Student forums/ clubs to provide healthy outlets and learning opportunities which raise children's self- protection awareness, communication skills, emotional resilience and self- confidence and self- esteem.
- (m) Ensure that every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from other agencies.

10. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

- (a) The most important role is that of the Principal for Child Protection.
 - (i) Acting as the source of advice/ information within the school
 - (ii) Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and other related procedures
 - (iii) Delegating powers and responsibilities to the co-teachers to ensure everyone connected with Child Protection Policy
 - (iv) Referral of individual cases of suspected abuse as per mandated procedures
 - (v) Liaising with relevant agencies about individual cases
 - (vi) Ensuring that all staff knows what to do if they suspect that a child is being abused
 - (vii) Ensuring wide dissemination among parents of the School's duties and responsibilities under the Child Protection Procedures
 - (viii) Continuous training program for children and staff
 - (ix) Reviewing annually all safeguarding policies and procedures
- (b) **Role of the Co-Teachers.** The teachers will:
 - (i) Ensure the implementation of this policy, all procedures and other related policies
 - (ii) Ensure everyone connected with the school is aware of this policy
 - (iii) Work closely with the designated teacher and parents for child protection
 - (iv) Undertake training in safeguarding and child protection
 - (v) Be aware of the background of the children in their care
 - (vi) Be made aware of this policy and all other safeguarding policies and procedures during induction
 - (vii) Be aware of the names of the designated teachers
 - (viii) Be trained in identifying signs of harm and abuse
 - (ix) Be aware of the effects of abuse and neglect on children

- (x) Undertake training on responding to a child
- (xi) Be alert at all times to the signs of abuse namely physical, emotional, and sexual or neglect
- (xii) Know how to report any suspected case of harm or abuse
- (xiii) Respond immediately to any child
- (xiv) Report any concerns to the designated person or the deputy designated person.
- (xv) Know what to do if a child makes a disclosure.
- (xvi) Report any concerns they have on any aspect of the school community

11. **CONFIDENTIALITY.**

- (a) It is imperative that confidentiality is observed at all times as the protection of the child is paramount.
- (b) School personnel have a professional responsibility to share information with other professionals who are investigating a case.
- (c) A child, when confiding information to a member of staff, must be made aware that for the child's own sake this information cannot be kept secret.
- (d) The child must be reassured that the information will only be shared with the designated teacher who will decide which information needs to be shared, when and with whom.
- (e) All child protection records are regarded as confidential and will be kept in a secure place.

12. **INTERVENTIONS / MEASURES TAKEN.**

- (a) Taking into consideration the safety needs of the students and owing to the unfortunate events pertaining to students, the school has revised and tightened its security policies.
- (b) Immediate and urgent meeting was conducted for staff by the Principal to sensitize them about the safety measures in school and the reporting procedure if any case of abuse is noticed. Teachers and all employees of institutions were also made aware about the provisions of the POCSO Act.
- (c) In- house induction sessions were held for all teachers to include a specific module on gender sensitization.

- (d) The documents pertaining to teachers and support staff have been updated with the school. The staff has also been asked to get Police verification.
- (e) Duties for teachers and Student Council listed out for gate duty during dispersal and break time.
- (f) The access to school building by outsiders is controlled and visitors are monitored.
- (g) Various committees including Internal Complaints, Grievance Redressal, Sexual Harassment, Child Welfare, Anti- Bullying etc. are set up to serve as complaints and redressal bodies.
- (h) Complaint/ Suggestion box is provided in school so that students can make written complaints. Any complaint of sexual abuse, whether received through the drop box or otherwise will be acted upon immediately.
- (j) CCTV cameras were installed in school premises at all strategic places along with the warning.
- (k) Toll Free number and child helpline will be provided and made known and displayed on notice board along with names of teachers designated to handle such cases. Centralized Child helpline number 1098 will be popularized and displayed at prominent places in the schools.

No. SSG/TRG/Circular/2024-25
Sainik School Goalpara
Vill & Po. Rajapara
Dist. Goalpara (Assam)
Pin. 783133

Date: 25 March 2025

Distribution

All Housemasters/All class teachers
Sr Master/TRG/OS/Accts/QM/Mess/
NCC/All House appointments/School Website



(Y S Parmar) 
Col
Principal

Do's & Don't's

1. If a child wants to confide in you, you **SHOULD**
 - (a) Be accessible and receptive
 - (b) Listen carefully and uncritically, at the child's pace
 - (c) Take what is said seriously
 - (d) Reassure children that they are right to tell
 - (e) Tell the child that you must pass this information on
 - (f) Make sure that the child is ok
 - (g) Make a careful record of what was said.

2. You should **NEVER**
 - (a) Investigate or seek to prove or disprove possible abuse
 - (b) Make promises about confidentiality or keeping 'secrets' to children
 - (c) Assume that someone else will take the necessary action
 - (d) Jump to conclusions, be dismissive or react with shock, anger, horror etc
 - (e) Speculate or accuse anybody
 - (f) Investigate, suggest or probe for information
 - (g) Confront another person (adult or child) allegedly involved
 - (h) Offer opinions about what is being said or the persons allegedly involved
 - (j) Forget to record what you have been told
 - (k) Fail to pass this information on to the correct person (The Principal)
 - (l) Children with communication difficulties, or who use alternative/augmentative communication systems
 - (m) While extra care may be needed to ensure that signs of abuse and neglect are interpreted correctly, any suspicions should be reported in exactly the same manner as for other children

- (n) Opinion and interpretation will be crucial.
- (p) Recordings should
- (q) State who was present, time, date and place
- (s) Be written in ink and be signed by the recorder
- (t) Be passed to the Principal immediately (certainly within 24 hours)
- (u) Use the child's words wherever possible
- (v) Be factual/state exactly what was said
- (w) Differentiate clearly between fact, opinion, interpretation, observation and/or allegation.
- (x) What information do you need to obtain?
- (y) Schools have no investigative role in Child Protection
- (z) Never prompt or probe for information, your job is to listen, record and pass on

Ideally, you should be clear about what is being said in terms of who, what, where and when.

(aa) The question which you should be able to answer at the end of the listening process is 'might this be a Child Protection matter?'

(ab) If the answer is yes, or if you're not sure, record and pass on immediately to the Principal.

(ac) If you do need to ask questions, what is and isn't, OK?

(ad) Never asked closed questions i.e. ones which children can answer yes or no to e.g. Did he touch you?

(ae) Never make suggestions about who, how or where someone is alleged to have touched, hit etc e.g. Top or bottom, front or back?

(af) If we must, use only 'minimal prompts' such as 'go on ... tell me more about that ... tell me everything that you remember about that'

(ag) Timescales are very important: 'When was the last time this happened?' is an important question.

(ah) What else should we think about in relation to disclosure?

- (aj) Is there a place in school which is particularly suitable for listening to children e.g. not too isolated, easily supervised, quiet etc
- (ak) We need to think carefully about our own body language – how we present will dictate how comfortable a child feels in telling us about something which may be extremely frightening, difficult and personal
- (al) Be prepared to answer the 'what happens next' question
- (am) We should never make face-value judgments or assumptions about individual children. For example, we 'know that [child.....] tells lies'
- (an) Think about how you might react if a child DID approach you in school. We need to be prepared to offer a child in this position exactly what they need in terms of protection, reassurance, calmness and objectivity
- (ap) Think about what support you could access if faced with this kind of situation in school.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE & NEGLECT

Signs of Abuse.

Recognizing child abuse is not easy. It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk of harm from someone. You do however, have both a responsibility and duty, to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child.

The following information should help you to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse.

(a) Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises as part of the rough-and-tumble of daily life. Injuries should always be interpreted in light of the child's medical and social history, developmental stage and the explanation given. Most accidental bruises are seen over bony parts of the body, e.g. elbows, knees, shins, and are often on the front of the body.

Some children, however, will have bruising that is more than likely inflicted rather than accidental.

Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the 'soft' parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern, although this can be more complicated with burns, as these are often delayed in presentation due to blistering taking place sometime later.

- (i) Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- (ii) Multiple bruises- in clusters, often on the upper arm, outside of the thigh
- (iii) Cigarette burns
- (iv) Human bite marks
- (v) Broken bones
- (vi) Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge
- (vii) Changes in behavior that can also indicate physical abuse

- (viii) Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- (ix) Aggressive behavior or severe temper outbursts
- (x) Flinching when approached or touched
- (xi) Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
- (xii) Depression
- (xiii) Withdrawn behavior
- (xiv) Running away from home.

(b) **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs. There may be a developmental delay due to a failure to thrive and grow, although this will usually only be evident if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, for example when hospitalized or away from their parents' care.

Even so, children who appear well-cared for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of:

- (i) Children not being allowed to mix or play with other children.
- (ii) Changes in behavior which can indicate emotional abuse include
- (iii) Neurotic behavior e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
- (iv) Being unable to play
- (v) Fear of making mistakes
- (vi) Sudden speech disorders
- (vii) Self-harm
- (viii) Fear of parent being approached regarding their behavior
- (ix) Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress

(c) **Sexual Abuse**

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behavior that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously.

It is also important to remember that it not just adult men who sexually abuse children – there are increasing numbers of allegations of sexual abuse of children against women and sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by other children or young people.

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- (i) Pain or itching in the genital area
- (ii) Bruising or bleeding near genital area
- (iii) Sexually transmitted disease
- (iv) Vaginal discharge or infection
- (v) Stomach pains
- (vi) Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- (vii) Pregnancy

Changes in behavior which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- (viii) Sudden or unexplained changes in behavior e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- (ix) Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- (x) Having nightmares
- (xi) Running away from home
- (xii) Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- (xiii) Sexual drawings or language
- (vii) Bedwetting
- (xiv) Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia

- (xv) Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- (xvi) Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- (xvii) Substance or drug abuse
- (xviii) Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- (xix) Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- (xx) Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

(d) **Neglect**

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognize, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- (i) Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- (ii) Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- (iii) Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- (iv) Inappropriate clothing for the conditions.

Changes in behavior which can also indicate neglect may include:

- (v) Complaining of being tired all the time
- (vi) Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- (vii) Having few friends
- (viii) Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

(e) **Bullying**

Bullying is not always easy to recognize as it can take a number of forms. A child may encounter bullying attacks that are:

- (i) Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and other forms of violence or threats
- (ii) Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- (iii) Emotional: excluding (sending to Coventry), tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating.

Persistent bullying can result in :

- (iv) Depression
- (v) Low self-esteem
- (vi) Shyness
- (vii) Poor academic achievement
- (viii) Isolation
- (ix) Threatened or attempted suicide

Signs that a child may be being bullied can be:

- (x) Coming home with cuts and bruises
- (xi) Torn clothes
- (xii) Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced
- (xiii) Losing dinner money
- (xiv) Falling out with previously good friends
- (xv) Being moody and bad tempered
- (xvi) Wanting to avoid leaving their home
- (xvii) Aggression with younger brothers and sisters
- (xviii) Doing less well at school
- (xix) Sleep problems
- (xx) Anxiety
- (xxi) Becoming quiet and withdrawn