



ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

REVIEWED: SEP 2023

2023-2024





St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai

The Governors and staff of St Mary's Catholic High School fully recognise the contribution they make to safeguarding children. All staff and Governors believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment, which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual student.

Our school fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect students and support them in school. The policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers as all adults who come into contact with children in their work have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Aims of the policy

- to ensure that the welfare and safety of students are paramount and there is a climate of trust, where disclosures are taken seriously and acted upon quickly
- to support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence
- to raise the awareness of both teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse.
- to ensure that there are clear procedures for reporting Child Protection concerns, which are known to everyone
- to provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm
- to emphasize the need for good levels of communication between all members of staff
- to develop a structured procedure within the school which will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse
- to develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies
- to ensure that all adults within our school who have access to children are suitable
- to provide effective information, training and support for staff

There are three main elements to our safeguarding policy:

- **PREVENTION** Positive school atmosphere, teaching and pastoral support to students equipping them with the skills needed to keep them safe. Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children through referral checks with past employers and a good conduct certificate issued by DubaiPolice.
- **PROTECTION** By developing and following agreed procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases of abuse, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to Safeguarding concerns.
- **SUPPORT** To students and school staff and to children who have been abused

PREVENTION: Our School Commitment

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the **prevention** of harm to our students by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection. The school community will therefore commit to:

- establish and maintain an ethos where students feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to. For example through their relationship with their Class Teacher; Small Group work; Moral Education classes; PSHE and Activity Lessons
- ensure that all students know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty
- Include in the curriculum, opportunities which equip students with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to know to whom they should turn for help. (For example in the PSHE and Moral Education Program of Study)
- Ensure that wherever possible, every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and professionals from other agencies.
- Ensure that all staff and governors have access to information and regular training opportunities.



PROTECTION

All adults working with children have a responsibility to **protect** the students however some adults have specific responsibilities. These members of staff must receive additional appropriate training and support for their role.

Child Protection Officer

Second Designated Person for Safeguarding

Designated Governor for Safeguarding



All members of staff, including supply or temporary staff, volunteers and governors should know who the Designated Person for Safeguarding is within school. They should also know and understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse. Any member of staff with an issue or concern relating to Safeguarding should raise these immediately with the Designated Person. The Designated Person will liaise with the appropriate statutory authority, parents and other relevant agencies as appropriate.

The Role of the Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer has a specific responsibility to:

- Ensure all staff know who is responsible for Safeguarding issues
- Ensure all staff have read the Safeguarding Policy and procedures are being followed appropriately
- Ensure parents understand the responsibility put on school staff with regard to Safeguarding
- Develop and review the whole-school policy for Safeguarding Children.
- Organise regular Safeguarding training for staff and governors
- Co-ordinate action where child abuse is suspected
- Liaise and discuss issues with parent.
- Attend all meetings as required.
- Keep Safeguarding information and children's records in a secure confidential file and share information on a "need to know basis"

Dealing with a Disclosure

There are a number of things staff should do to support a child who chooses to make a disclosure:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what the child is saying noting the main points
- Talk normally without applying any pressure on the child and do not put words into the child's mouth
- Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault and that they have done the right thing by telling you
- Tell the child who you have to tell and explain why (Designated Person)
- Keep a full record (date, time, what the child said/did etc.)
- Allegations of child abuse should be given the highest priority and referred immediately to the Designated Person

Procedure:

- When a child reports an abuse, the teacher or responsible adult to whom the disclosure has been made, will convey the information to the CPO. This will be done as a matter of urgency especially when there is cause to believe that the abuse is recurring. As a first response, the report is immediately followed up with the child.
- A team to determine response is formed that may include the school nurses, doctors, counsellor and teacher involved. The aim of the team is to determine the most suitable reaction to ensure the safety of the concerned students.
- The outcome may include:
 - Advise the teachers concerned on appropriate support for the child.
 - Relaying the concerns to the family as required/appropriate.
 - Informing the concerned governmental agency to report suspected abuse for further action.
 - Provide the family with referral of external psychological evaluation and therapy.

Records and Monitoring

It is crucial to keep accurate records where there are concerns about the welfare of a child. These records are confidential and are therefore to be kept separately from the child's educational records.

All staff are made aware of the need to record and report concerns about a student or students within the school. The Designated Child Protection Officer is responsible for such records and at what time they should be released.

Confidentiality is essential and all Child Protection files are kept in a secure location in the Designated Child Protection Officer's office.

Categories of possible abuse

There are four main categories of potential abuse of which all members of staff should be aware. These are:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse

Signs of **Physical abuse** are the actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. Signs of **physical abuse** may include:

- unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- refusal to discuss injuries
- untreated injuries
- admission of punishment which appears excessive
- bald patches
- withdrawal from physical contact
- fear of returning home
- fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- aggression towards others
- running away.

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. Possible signs of **sexual abuse** may include:

- sudden changes in behaviour or school performance
- displays of affection in a sexual way inappropriate to age
- tendency to cling or need constant reassurance
- tendency to cry easily
- regression to younger behaviour, such as thumb-sucking, playing with discarded toys or acting like a baby
- complaints of genital itching or pain
- distrust of a familiar adult, or anxiety about being left with a relative, baby-sitter or lodger
- unexplained gifts or money
- depression and withdrawal.

Neglect is the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger – resulting in significant impairment of the child's health or development including non-organic failure to thrive. Signs of **neglect** may include:

- constant hunger
- poor personal hygiene
- constant tiredness
- poor state of clothing
- emaciation
- frequent lateness or non-attendance
- untreated medical problems
- destructive tendencies
- low self esteem
- neurotic behavior
- no social relationships
- running away
- compulsive stealing or scavenging.

Emotional abuse can be thought of as the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse. Signs of **emotional abuse** will include:

- physical, mental and emotional development lags
- admission of punishment which appears excessive
- over-reaction to mistakes
- continual self-depreciation
- sudden speech disorders
- fear of new situations
- inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- neurotic behaviour (for example, rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- Self-mutilation
- fear of parents being contacted
- extremes of passivity or aggression
- drug/solvent abuse
- running away
- compulsive stealing or scavenging.



It is important to note that these signs are not proof but can give rise to suspicion and these suspicions must be reported and logged.

SUPPORT

Supporting the Child

At Saint Mary's Catholic High School, we understand and recognise that a student who is abused or has been witness to abuse may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and may not view the world in a positive way. School may be the student's only secure and stable environment. This may result in them communicating their feelings through challenging or defiant behaviour or they may become withdrawn from situations. They may feel worthless, humiliated or helpless and have a sense of blame.

It is also recognised that some students who have experienced abuse may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered and sensitive approach in order that the student receives the support and appropriate help they require.

School staff can support all children through:

- Curriculum content
- The school ethos promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment which gives all a sense of being valued and respected.
- The school behaviour policy. Ensuring the pupil knows their behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not blamed for any abuse which has occurred
- A consistent approach from all staff
- Liaison with outside agencies to support the pupil and their families
- A commitment to develop productive and supportive relationships with parents in order to get the best outcomes for the student
- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness while not condoning aggression or bullying
- Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children

Supporting School Staff

School staff must protect themselves especially when meeting on a one-to-one basis with students. Staff should bear in mind that even innocent actions can be misconstrued. It is advised that any discussions with a child take place in a room with a window or the door should be left open.

Physical contact with students should be careful and appropriate at all times. There are occasions where a child may need to be touched e.g. following an accident, needing to be changed etc. Wherever possible this should be with two adults present.

Concerns against members of staff

If a colleague's activities are causing concern, staff should discuss them confidentially with the Principal who will discuss this with the CPO.

- All staff will be subject to a rigorous recruitment and selection procedure designed to recruit the best people for the job and deter unsuitable applicants.
- Should a student accuse a member of staff of physically or sexually abusing them, the matter should be referred immediately to the Principal who will immediately seek advice from the Designated CPO. Should the allegation be made against the Principal, the Designated CPO, the Chair of Governors and the Managing Director of the Vicariate's schools should be immediately informed.
- The Principal should consider whether there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant an investigation. In any case, the Principal should seek advice from the Chair of Governors and the Managing Director.
- The Managing Director will advise the Principal of the procedure to follow dependent on the allegation or incident. The member of staff should be kept informed of the procedure. The member of staff should be told not to discuss the allegation or incident with any other member of staff or students.
- The Principal will follow the Managing Director's advice and keep detailed notes of discussions with relevant staff.

Visitors to the school

All visitors must make themselves known to the Main School Office. They should be asked to sign in and out and read the Safeguarding Documentation by the Reception Area.

- **All members of staff** are responsible for asking visitors why they are on site, and ensuring they are not left alone with students.
- Care must be taken that visitors are not left unsupervised when students and young people are present. This includes visitors to school, parents, contractor setc.
- All parents/carers who volunteer in school should have attended an induction session.
- Visitors, who have no legitimate reason to be on site when students are present, must be asked to leave.
- A person should not be visiting regularly when students are present (other than to drop off or collect) as this could give them access to other students.

Staff Training

All staff in the school are aware of procedures to be followed and the signs of possible child abuse. All members of staff will develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse. All members of staff will know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse. All new members of staff will be given a copy of the Child Protection procedures as part of their induction into the school and be briefed by the Child Protection Officer.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Principal together with the Senior Management Team will monitor and evaluate this policy by:

- reviewing practice against the procedures outlined
- reviewing this policy in line with current guidance and research
- listening to children, staff and families and considering their views and comments

This policy should be read in conjunction with other related policies of St. Mary's Catholic High School:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Cyber Bullying Policy
- Counselling Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Counselling Policy

Next date of Review : June 2024