

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY Volume-2

2020-2021



HABITAT SCHOOL
AL JURF, AJMAN

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Child Protection: An Introduction

The President of UAE His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued a UAE Federal Law No-3 of 2016 on Children's Right also referred to as Wadeema's Law. *The law details the scope of the responsibility of the competent authorities and institutions, including the state to ensure care and protection of children, among others to, Protecting the child's right to life, staying alive and developing, having all necessary opportunities and to enjoy a free, secured and developed life, protecting the child from any form of negligence, exploitation and maltreatment and from any physical and psychological violence, protecting the child's best interest, educating the child of his rights and duties and commitments.*

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

The health, safety and well-being of all our children are of paramount 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 our 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 Child Protection Officer (CPO)/Child Protection Team.

Child Protection Team in Habitat School Al-Jurf

School Child Protection Officer

[CPO: Mr. Bala Reddy Ambati (Principal)]

Child protection team members

- Mr. Hamza Kollath (Administrative Officer)
- Ms. Tinu Linto (School Nurse)
- Ms. Sasneem Sanoop (Head of the Counselling Department)

Aims of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the school established and ensures student protection measures in place to:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children can feel safe, learn, and are encouraged to talk and are listened to without any apprehension of safety and security concerns.
- Protect them while in the school's care from all acts and omissions constituting physical abuse, emotional abuse, cyber-attack, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, and bullying.
- Promote students' health, welfare and well-being.
- Identify and support those students who may have suffered such abuse or neglect, as strongly enforced by the UAE Federal Law No.3 of 2016 on Child Rights, and other relevant UAE laws.
- Data protection of students by securing their personal information.
- Raise awareness among students on their rights, obligations and duties in a society in which justice, equality, tolerance and moderation prevail.
- Emphasize that all school staff are mandated reporters of cases of abuse whether inside or outside the school.
- Define duties and responsibilities of school Principal and school staff for responding to suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will be understood as;

- **Child:** Every human being born alive and below eighteen years old as per the Georgian Calendar.
- **Violence against children:** An intentional use of force which may lead to the harm of the child's health, growth or being alive by any individual or a group.
- **Child's Best Interest:** Putting the child's interest above all other considerations and giving it the highest priority at any circumstances regardless to the interests of other parties.
- **Custodian of the Child:** The person who is legally responsible for the child or who is legally assigned to take care of the child.
- **Protection Officer /Specialist:** A person who is commissioned and authorized by a competent authority or the concerned entity, as the circumstances may require, for maintaining the child's rights and providing protection.
- **Child Mistreatment:** Any act or restraint which may lead to the harm of the child and precludes his/her upbringing and growth in a right, secured and healthy manner.
- **Child Negligence:** Failure to take necessary arrangements by parents or a custodian assigned to take care of the child in relation to the child's life protection and the child's physical, psychological, mental and ethical safety from danger as well as protection of his/her various rights.
- **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.

Promoting Students' Health, Welfare and Well-being in School

As students' health, safety, welfare and wellbeing are top priority, the school has a responsibility to provide child protection by:

- Maintaining a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.
- Practicing safe staff recruitment.
- Using an effective curriculum to clearly define what is and is not acceptable behavior, how to speak up regarding concerns and how to become (as an adult) a safe and respectful citizen.
- Recognizing and reporting incidents of harm and possible offences against children.
- Supporting children who have been abused.
- Appointing a designated member of staff to take primary responsibility for child protection.

Conduct and Discipline of Students

The school adheres to all guidelines by the Ministry of Education in regards to student conduct expectations and discipline.

- Corporal punishment of any kind must never be used with student.
- Staff working with young children should avoid holding children, picking children up unless they are distressed.
- Physical intervention / restraint must only be used by staff members as a last resort. All measures of restraint must use the minimum force necessary, in order to prevent harm or injury to the child.
- Staff must be mindful of the nature in which they use verbal or non-verbal communication.
- Discipline measures should always be handled in a manner that protects the child's dignity and self-esteem.

Cyber Safety and Security

Cyber safety is the safe and responsible use of information and communication technology. It is not just about keeping information safe and secure, but also about being responsible with that information, being respectful of other people online, and using good 'netiquette' (internet etiquette).

Safety Challenges - Related Terms

- **Cybercrimes** are offences that may be committed against individuals, companies or institutions by using computers, internet or mobile technology. Cybercriminals use platforms such as social networking sites, emails, chat rooms, pirated software, websites, etc., to attack victims. Children are also vulnerable to various types of cybercrimes.
- **Cyber Grooming** is growing as one of the major cyber threats faced by children and teenagers. It is a practice where someone builds an emotional bond with children through social media or messaging platforms with an objective of gaining their trust for sexually abusing or exploiting them. The cyber groomers can use gaming websites, social media, email, chat rooms, instant messaging, etc. by creating a fake account and pretending to be a child or having the same interests as of the child.
- **Cyber bullying** means using internet or mobile technology to intentionally harass or bully someone by sending rude, mean or hurtful messages, comments and images/videos. A cyber bully can use text messages, emails, social media platforms, web pages, chat rooms, etc. to bully others.

The school has a zero tolerance policy for incidents of Cyberbullying and will take actions as per the national guidelines and laws in case such incidents occur

Supervision of Students during School Hours and After School Activities

- **During School Hours:** All teachers, school leaders and support staff are responsible for the safe care of the students. Teachers are responsible for maintaining a safe and secure classroom environment. They are expected to be carefully monitoring students during all scheduled contact time. In addition to teaching time, teachers are assigned designated supervision responsibilities.
- **After School:** All children involved in after school extra-curricular activities are closely monitored by supervising adults. The adult must accompany all children to the designated area for pick-up after the completion of activities. The supervising adult may not leave until the last student is picked up by his /her parent or authorized adult.

School Building Safety, Transportation and Field Trips:

The school takes multiple measures to ensure students safety at all times .The school building is well maintained and equipped with security surveillance cameras and with security personnel who manage entry and exit to the campus. Bus transportation for field trips and other events is provided by the school. Students are properly supervised by the staff members. Bus nannies provide supervision to ensure the safety and well-being of children.

- **Applicability:** This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and visitors to the school including school teaching, administration staff, transport staff, cleaning staff and classroom assistants.
- **Responsibility:** It is a moral, ethical and legal responsibility for any teaching professional or other staff member to report suspected cases of child abuse, neglect or safety concern to designated child protection officer. The staff school has a responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of our students.

All staff must report any suspected incidents of child abuse to the Child Protection Officer (CPO) or any other member of the school Child Protection Team [CPT].

As per UAE law, *'where a child's safety or physical, psychological, moral or mental health is endangered', a 'notification is mandatory for nurses, doctors, social specialists or whoever is entrusted with the protection, care or education of children.'* From Article (47), p 68 Wudeema Law

Child Protection Officer [CPO]

There is a CPO in the school. This is normally the Principal. But he/she may delegate this responsibility in some circumstances.

He /she must,

- Act on concerns raised before him by school staff or students in accordance with provision of this policy and relevant legal provisions
- Keep clear, dated, factual and confidential records of child protection concerns.

All Teachers and Administrative Staff Members must:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- Inform CPO and a senior leader if any form of child abuse is suspected.
- Raise awareness about child protection by integrating with relevant teaching and learning lessons.
- Communicate all concerns of potential abuse to senior leaders.
- Ensure confidentiality.
- Respect children as individuals and engage them in conversations.
- Cooperate as required with inquiries from the school and relevant agencies regarding child protection matters.
- Attend regular and relevant professional development sessions.
- 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.
- Know what to do in case of disclosure.
- Report concerns to CPO or CP team members.

Specific responsibilities of the School Doctor/Nurse and Counselor

- The school Counselor and Doctor/ Nurse may be requested to provide physical treatment and emotional support after a child if and when required.
- The Counselor and Doctor/ 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 as the case maybe.
- The Counselor and Doctor/ Nurse 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 Counselor and Doctor/ Nurse and should recognize these and help develop a rehabilitation plan in liaison with the CPO 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.

How to react when a child wants to talk about abuse

Staff should:

- Accept what the child says.
- Reassure that the child has the right to tell you and that you believe the story.
- Keep calm and listen.
- Let the child know you will need to tell someone - do not promise confidentiality.
- Let the child know that even when s/he has broken a rule, s/he is not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let him / her know what happens.
- Immediately refer to CPO or delegate senior school leader.
- Make accurate, factual, signed, dated written notes as soon as possible of what was said, observed and done and handover to CPO or delegate senior school leader

Staff must not:

- Question children.
- Suggest alternatives to what a child has said.
- Get the child to write about, or depict their experience in some other way.
- Question potential witnesses.
- Conduct medical examinations.
- Delay referral.

Reporting of Incidents within the School, and to Parents

The school has reporting mechanisms in place that provides for clear and efficient communication within the school and to parents. This foregoing is applicable to all staff.

Related Document(s) (as required):

- Child Protection procedures and flow chart
- Child Protection Forms
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Cyber Safety and Security Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 POCSO Act

The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age, and regards the best interests and well-being of the child as being of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child. It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography, and deems a sexual assault 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, like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor. People who traffic children for sexual purposes are also punishable under the provisions relating to abetment in the Act. The Act prescribes stringent punishment graded as per the gravity of the offence, with a maximum term of rigorous imprisonment for life, and fine.

Child abuse and neglect have devastating effects on children that can last a lifetime. Abuse and neglect can increase the possibility of a child having a developmental delay and long-term emotional disabilities. These children also have an increased risk of involvement in drugs, sexually risky behavior and behavioral disabilities. Child abuse may be physical, sexual or emotional.

Child Abuse Signs

Child abuse and neglect are generic terms that encompass all ill treatment of children including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where the standards of care does not adequately support the child's health or development. Children may be abused or neglected through the infliction of harm or through the failure to act to protect from harm.

There are five categories of abuse which are generally recognized:-

1. Neglect: Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or emotional needs.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Failure to protect a child and to provide food, clothing, shelter or 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

2. Physical Abuse: Causing injury, harm or suffering to a child through means such as: hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, drowning, and suffocating. It 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.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Unexplained injuries or burns (particularly if they are recurrent)
- 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

3. Sexual Abuse: Involvement of a child in sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. There are three types of sexual offenses against children: rape, molestation, distribution or production or possession of child pornography

Signs and Symptoms:

- Age- inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, behaviors.
- Loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking, needing previously discarded toys.
- Becoming withdrawn and isolated.
- Inability to focus.
- Reluctance to go home.
- Outbursts of anger or irritability
- Over-reacting to criticisms.

4. Emotional Abuse: Persistent emotional ill treatment of a child. For example: conveying to a child that he / she is worthless , unloved inadequate , imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations , causing feelings of fright or danger. Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs has a severe effect on the behavior and development of the child. This includes conveying to children the feeling that they are worthless or unloved.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Physical/mental/emotional
- Developmental lags. Over reaction to
- Mistakes.
- Fear of new situations.
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful
- Situations. Neurotic behavior (e.g.: Rocking, Thumb sucking etc.)
- Fear of parents being
- Contacted.
- Extremes of passivity or aggression.

5) Self-harm or self-abuse

These categories overlap and an abused child does frequently suffer more than one type of abuse.

Note: The signs and symptoms of abuse given are indicative and not exhaustive

ANNEXURES

DISCLOSURE - PROCESS FLOW
<p>Stay Calm (Don't over-react, however shocked you may be)</p>
<p>Listen, Hear and Believe (Listen carefully, take it seriously)</p>
<p>Give time for the person to say what they want (Don't make assumptions and don't offer alternative explanations, ask questions beginning with 'Tell me about...Explain...Describe... Avoid 'who, what, when, where' questions)</p>
<p>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)</p>
<p>Record 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)</p>
<p>Report to the CPO</p>

DISCLOSURE FORM
Child Safeguarding and Protection

Child's Name : Class /Section: Date of Birth:

Please fill and submit to the school Child Protection Officer [CPO].

- Staff should not make any undertakings to absolute confidentiality.
- Staff should not investigate a situation.

Details of Concern (Please give full factual details including dates and time)

Date / Time:

Description given by child / adult:

Date:

Person Reporting :

Signed:

To Whom reported:

Action Taken (to be completed by the Child Protection Officer):

Date : Signed:

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as it deemed appropriate, but no less than one year. This policy review will be undertaken by the principal or nominated representative.