



Child Protection Policy





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Introduction

At Al Ain American School, we believe that all children have a right to be safe, protected from abuse and able to reach their full potential. The prime concern must be the interests and safety of the child. All staff members have a pastoral duty of care towards the students. The day to day contact with individual children, places the staff at AAAS in a strong position to observe outward signs of abuse, unusual changes in behavior or a failure to develop socially, physically, emotionally or academically.

The needs of children are paramount and are the main focus of all our work. Staff can play a crucial role both in the initial identification of possible abuse and in monitoring the development and progress of children who have been identified as being at risk of significant harm.

The intention of this policy is to ensure that appropriate action is taken where it is alleged that a child is suspected of being abused, or is actually being abused. The problems related to identifying and dealing with child abuse can only be tackled effectively when all concerned have a heightened awareness of the subject. Once child abuse is suspected, the aim should be to minimize the damage to the child and promote recovery.

However, we view Child Protection as more than simply acting when suspicions arise or information is revealed. We also have a vital role to play in preparing children to resist abuse and to become responsible, caring and confident adults.

Definitions of Child Abuse

‘Child abuse and neglect’ is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where the standard 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 harm.

There are four broad categories of abuse which are generally recognized

- Neglect: failure to meet a child’s basic physical and emotional needs
- Physical abuse: causing injury or suffering to a child
- Sexual abuse: involvement of a child in sexual activity
- Emotional abuse: persistent emotional ill treatment of a child

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

Roles and Responsibilities

Al Ain American School has a responsibility to protect students through the:

- Provision of a safe environment in which students can learn and develop
- Practice of safe recruitment
- Use of the curriculum to understand what is and is not acceptable behavior, how to speak up regarding their concerns and how to become (as an adult) safe and effective parents
- Recognition of significant harm and possible offences against children
- Support to students who have been abused
- Appointment of a designated member of staff with responsibility for Child Protection

1. The Role of Teachers and Support Staff

Child Protection is everybody's responsibility. When not at home or another 'caring base', children spend more time in school than anywhere else. Teachers have a very close relationship and contact with children who generally trust them unreservedly. Al Ain American School may be providing a safe haven and perhaps the only place where a child feels comfortable and able to talk to adults. Class teachers or support members of staff are in a unique position to detect changes in a child's behavior over time, or to observe a child's failure to thrive.

Class teachers or support members of staff may be the first to pick up early warning signs that a child is being exposed to abuse of a physical, emotional, or sexual kind. Abused children may turn to teachers or support staff to discuss their worries and request their help. Young children, particularly, may view the teacher as a neutral figure whom they can trust and confide in.

Teachers and support staff are frequently chosen by children when they need an adult to talk to about their abuse (the **Point of Disclosure**). An important aspect of the teacher's or support staff's role is in the early detection of abuse, knowing what to suspect and how to respond.

Relevant opportunities can also be found for reinforcing Child Protection themes across the curriculum as well as in more informal aspects of school life.

Each individual teacher will:

- establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- record any concern over the welfare of children in their class, (only facts should be recorded and not opinions or interpretations) See Appendix A
- inform the Principal and/or the Child Protection Officer if any form of Child Abuse is suspected.
- if appropriate, and only after reporting to the Principal and/or the Child Protection Officer, communicate concerns to other adults working with the child
- integrate child protection issues into relevant teaching and learning to help children protect themselves.

All staff will:

- communicate **any** concerns to the Principal and Social Worker and keep written records of concerns, even where there is a lack of evidence
- respect the confidentiality of all concerned regarding the welfare of children
- cooperate as required with enquiries from relevant agencies regarding Child Protection matters

How to react when a child wants to talk about abuse

Staff should:

- Accept what the child says
- Reassure the child that he/she was right to tell you
- Keep calm and listen
- Be honest
- Let the child know you'll need to tell someone – do not promise confidentiality
- Let the child know that even if he/she has broken a rule, he/she is not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened
- Never push for information
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let him/her know what happens
- Immediately refer to the Principal and/or Child Protection Officer
- Make accurate, factual, signed, dated and timed written notes as soon as possible of what was said, observed and done. (See Appendix A)

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 parents (or inform them of the referral in cases of sexual abuse or other complex cases)
- Question potential witnesses
- Conduct medical examinations
- Delay referral

The designated Child Protection member of staff (Social Worker) is responsible for:

- The provision of advice and support to staff
- Maintaining accurate and secure child protection records (body maps and Critical Incident
- Recording (see Appendix A)
- Monitoring attendance and development of children who are at risk
- Ensuring that all relevant information about a child is disseminated to appropriate staff within the school
- Ensuring complete records are sent to receiving schools, whether a child changes as a natural progression or for any other reason
- In consultation with the Principal, referring an alleged case of child abuse to the police

Preventing Unsuitable People from Working with Children

Thorough pre-appointment checks will be made by HR on people who will come into unsupervised contact with children. Teachers are asked to produce a CRB check. Two references are taken up on all staff employed within Al Ain American School.

Staff appointed from countries without CRB checks should produce an Abu Dhabi Police Check.

Allegations against staff

All staff members at Al Ain American School are prohibited from applying more than specified types and levels of restraint to those children for whom they are professionally responsible.

Volunteers who work with children are also expected to maintain standards of conduct comparable to those prescribed for colleagues in paid employment.

All complaints against staff will be fully investigated by the Principal.

Enquiries will be conducted in the strictest confidence so that information can be given freely, without fear of victimization and in a way that protects the rights of staff and children.

In the case of serious allegations it is likely to be necessary to suspend the member of staff immediately until the investigation is concluded. In other cases, it may be appropriate to modify the individual's duties to ensure they are not left unsupervised to care for children.

It is important in dealing with allegations of child abuse for there to be the fullest co-operation possible between all concerned.

Whistleblowing – Letting People Know

Young children especially, cannot be expected to always raise concerns about the behavior and actions of an adult who they work with in school.

It is important that an atmosphere is created in school where it is acceptable to raise concerns. This should be encouraged from both staff and children. Concerns that are raised should be taken seriously and acted upon. Details provided and decisions made should be recorded.

All staff should therefore be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

Physical Intervention

Physical punishment of any kind must never be used on students.

Our policy is that staff must only ever use physical intervention/restraint as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimum force necessary to prevent injury to another person.

Physical intervention of a nature which causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under Child Protection or disciplinary procedures.

Appendix A

CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT CHART

Date	Incident	Child's Explanation	Adult's Explanation	Action or Outcome

Monitoring & Review

This policy is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Created	Reviewed
10/11/2015	20/06/2016