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You Reap Tomorrow..

GHERAS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

GIS Safeguarding Policy

2022 - 2023

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SAFEGUARDING POLICY
2022-2023

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Review Officer: Social Worker / School Principal

Safeguarding Policy

Rationale

Gheras International School believes it is always unacceptable for a child/young person to experience abuse. We recognize our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by committing to practices that protect them.

We recognize that:

- The welfare of children/young people is always paramount.
- All children/young people – regardless of age, culture, nationality, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and racial heritage – have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in close partnership with children/young people, their parents/carers and other agencies are essential in promoting young people's welfare.

Qatari laws require that professional caregivers report child abuse. Therefore, all GIS staff that work with children are bound by the following criminal code.

> QATARI PENALTIES LAW (11/2004); Chapter 3; Article 189:
> *'The penalty of imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years and a fine not exceeding 10,000 Riyal or one of the two penalties shall apply to any public officer assigned to investigate crimes or identify them if he neglects to inform about the offence he knows about or postpones such information….'*

This policy applies to managers at all levels, the board of trustees, paid staff, unpaid volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff, contractors working in a school, students, and anyone else working/volunteering for or on behalf of GIS. All staff have a full and active part in protecting students from harm, even if their primary role is not teaching or caring for them.

The procedure for reporting suspicions of abuse is detailed in this policy.

This policy aims to:

- Outline our commitment to safeguarding children.
- Briefly explain the types of abuse and some of their signs.
- Explain our internal procedure for reporting abuse / suspected abuse.
- Make clear our expectations for confidentiality.

Procedures

1. Purpose

These procedures set out common values, principles, and beliefs and describe the steps that will be taken to meet our commitment to protect our students.

The purpose of the procedures is to:

- Provide a management strategy to prevent child abuse and protect students during our work.
- Protect GIS staff from unfair practices and processes.
- Provide GIS staff with clear guidelines on what to do in the case of suspected child abuse.

2. GIS's commitment

Awareness: we will ensure that all GIS staff are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to students.

Prevention: we will ensure that GIS staff minimize the risks to students through awareness and good practice.

Reporting: we will ensure that GIS staff are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of students.

Responding: we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect students where abuse concerns arise.

Further to the above, GIS will:

- Not permit a person to work with students if it has been identified that they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing.
- Take seriously all child abuse concerns raised to us by anyone.
- Take positive steps to protect students who are the subject of any problems.

- Support students, staff or other adults who raise concerns or are the subject of problems.
- Act appropriately and effectively in investigating or cooperating with any subsequent investigation process.
- Guide through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'.
- Listen to and take the views and wishes of students seriously.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and other professionals to protect students.

3. Categories of abuse

Child abuse can occur in a variety of forms, be it physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or bullying.

3.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may be slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may be bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures.

3.2 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can be name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person.
A child may also be subject to emotional trauma or abuse if they are forced to or inadvertently become a witness to domestic violence. Where this occurs deliberately, it is a form of abuse.

3.3 Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the necessities of life, such as food, medical treatment, adequate clothing, shelter and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk.

3.4 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing children to, or taking, pornographic photographs or other media/materials.
Child sexual abuse damages children physically, emotionally and behaviorally. Its initial effects and long-term consequences impact the individual, their family and the community.

3.4.1 Initial effects of child sexual abuse

These may include:

- Medical problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and physical injury.
- Emotional issues include guilt, anger, hostility, anxiety, fear, shame, and lowered self-esteem.
- Behavioural problems include aggression, delinquency, nightmares, phobias, and eating and sleeping disorders.
- School problems and truancy.

3.4.2 Who is most likely to abuse a child?

- Someone who is known to the child.
- Someone the child trusts.
- Someone the child's family trusts (ie. not a stranger).
- Someone who has access to the child.
- Someone who has experienced abuse as a child*.

*(Abel and Osborne, 1988).

4. How to recognize abuse

There are many common indicators of abuse, which may vary by cultural context – something important to note in an international school environment.

The following lists are not exhaustive.

4.1 Emotional signs of abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- Depression or extreme anxiety.
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Lack of motivation, interest and/or energy.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness.
- Obsessions or phobias.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.
- Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration.

4.2 Physical signs of abuse

- Any inconsistent injury with the explanation given to them.
- Injuries to the body in places not usually exposed to falls, wild games etc.
- Reluctance to change clothes among others (eg. for sports) or show parts of the body commonly accepted to be on show (eg. arms, legs).
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains.
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures, cuts, scrapes, etc., do not have a reasonable explanation.
- Infections and/or symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases.
- General bruises, scratches, or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury.

4.3 Signs of sexual abuse

- Any allegations, mentions or suggestions made by a child concerning abuse, sexual activity, unwanted physical contact etc.
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour and/or sexual vocabulary.
- Engaging in sexual play that is inappropriate for their age or inconsistent with the behaviour of their peers.

- Sexually provocative, flirtatious, or seductive behaviour with adults.
- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour.
- Open displays of sexuality.
- Lack of trust in familiar adults and excessive fear of strangers.
- General bruises, scratches, marks, or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury.
- Acting-out behaviour – aggression, lying, stealing, unexplained running away.
- Suicide attempts.

4.4 Signs of neglect

- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school, or frequently left at the end of school with nobody to collect the child.
- Clothing that is inappropriate enough to cause harm or discomfort (eg. no coat on cold days, uncomfortable or impractical shoes, filthy/smelly/shabby clothes, clothes that are uncomfortable and causing harm, clothes that are unsuitable for the child's age/gender).
- Body odour, unkempt hair, unbrushed teeth, dirty skin and general signs of poor hygiene.
- Signs of hunger, dehydration and/or poor nutrition.
- Excessive tiredness.
- Untreated wounds, injuries, medical conditions, dental problems and/or illnesses.
- Is frequently unsupervised, left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations.

NOTE: All teaching and non-teaching staff should complete the SAFEcic programme online.

5. Reporting signs or suspicions of abuse

The child's best interests and the desire to secure the best outcomes for the child should always govern decisions regarding what action should be taken in response to concerns.

5.1 Principles of reporting

Reporting suspected or actual child abuse is mandatory for all staff, volunteers and consultants of GIS.

Responsible reporting also means that any person making a report should remember that all concerns are allegations until they have been investigated. For this reason, it is essential for anyone raising a situation to follow the specific reporting guidelines set out below.

Confidentiality is expected within the reporting chain.

5.2 Procedures for reporting

Any staff member with a concern about abuse must immediately discuss their concern with a core team member. This team consists of:

- School Principal
- Social Worker
- Principal Assistant
- School Nurse
- School Deputy

Where staff are unable or unwilling to do this, they must raise their concerns directly with the School CEO.

Any information provided to the core team/CEO will be handled with strict confidentiality – informing only those who need to be involved. Furthermore, they will only take action if breaches of child protection law can be proven conclusively.

Discussions held with a core team member should focus on:

- Evidence that child protection has become a concern.
- The identified risks to the student.
- Measures to safeguard children and minimize risk.
- Action/next steps.

The core team will collaboratively assess the student and family's reported concerns and support needs. Next, they will decide whether and at what stage the issue should be reported to external bodies. Finally, they will determine the appropriate response (e.g. disciplinary process or urgent action if the student is judged to be at risk).

Having first discussed them with a core team member, the person reporting concerns must submit their concerns, allegations or disclosures in writing (signed and dated) as soon as possible to that core team member.

Records should be detailed and precise, focusing on what was said or observed, who was present and what happened. Naturally, speculation and interpretation may be present in the report, but they should be clearly distinguished from fact.

The above procedure applies if you wish to raise allegations of abuse against a member of GIS staff/volunteer, parent/family member of a GIS student or anybody else in the GIS family.

5.3 Confidentiality in Reporting:
Any concern, disclosure or allegation is alleged rather than proven at the point of reporting. Therefore, all such reports should be treated as highly confidential. It is the individual responsibility of each person in possession of information to maintain this confidentiality to the best of their ability.

Confidentiality means only passing information between those people with a professional need to know. In the first instance, these will be members of our core team. After that, the core team may need to share the information with other parties, including external organizations.

However, if urgent action is required to protect a student, it may begin before the reporting procedure.

5.4 How information will be recorded.
Records are maintained on all matters of child protection. The information will be recorded in files, either physical or electronic. The records will be kept secure either within a locked cabinet or secure electronic records.

NOTE: Only people who need to know in order to assist or advise need to know. This respects the student's, family's and/or staff's rights to privacy.

Otherwise, there might be gossip and rumours, or other people may be genuinely concerned.

6. General student and/or family welfare:
Sometimes concerns about a child may not be about abuse. Instead, you may be concerned that a student or family needs some help to ensure all the student's needs are met to address a particular problem. Examples of this might be when a child is suffering because of poverty, gets into trouble in the community, or has a disability and needs extra help. You can get them help by using the same reporting procedure in these instances.

Evaluation

This policy will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure continuous improvement and ensure that the policy continues to reflect best practice standards.

Appendices

1. GIS staff code of conduct:
While teaching and caring for students, GIS staff will:

- Treat students with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, birth or another status.
- Not use language or behaviour towards inappropriate students, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Do not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts.
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of students.
- Do not invite unaccompanied students into your home without the permission of their parent/guardian unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never exploit or harass children or access child pornography through any medium.
- Never communicate with students using social media.
- Never implement physical punishment or discipline of students.
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse by appropriate procedures.
- Never use students' images for your private purposes.

When photographing or filming a student for school-related purposes, GIS staff must:

- Before photographing or filming a student, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Before photographing or filming a student, obtain consent from the student or a parent or guardian of the student. As part of this, you must explain how the photograph or film will be used.
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive way.

- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a student when sending images electronically.

When at school, under the care of GIS, all staff are responsible for safeguarding all students and ensuring their welfare. Staff are expected to challenge any actions contrary to this and always maintain full supervision of children. When children are excused from lessons or activities (e.g. to use the toilet or go to the clinic):-

1. In Kg & Primary, they must be accompanied (by a member of staff or another student) and not allowed to go alone so that appropriate assistance can be sought if necessary.

GIS staff will use common sense and professionalism to avoid actions and/or behaviours that could be construed as any form of child abuse.

GIS staff will promptly report any suspected cases of child abuse to the School Counsellor or Senior Management Team.