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Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

A Guide to Keeping Students Safe at St Andrew's International School

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Appendix 1: Definitions and Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Child Protection at St Andrew's

SAIS is committed to the protection and safeguarding of all students. This document outlines policies and procedures regarding child protection, including, but not limited to their protection from the sexual misconduct of adults. This document includes specific policies, a code of conduct and procedures to be followed should an incident occur.

Goals of this Policy

All members of the SAIS community are committed to the safety of children and young people. This is achieved by:

- contributing to the provision of safe learning environments for children and young people
- taking appropriate action to make sure they are kept safe at school
- communicating to the school and wider community our commitment to safeguarding children

This policy outlines how SAIS will:

- create an environment where children and young people feel secure, have their viewpoints valued, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- continue to develop awareness in all staff of the need for safeguarding student wellbeing in all aspects of their work and their responsibilities in preventing sexual misconduct.
- ensure that all staff are aware of the referral procedures and child protection officers within the school.
- provide a systematic means of monitoring all students who have been identified as being in need of protection.
- ensure that outside agencies are involved as appropriate.
- ensure that key concepts of the school's Child Protection Policy are communicated to students, faculty, staff and parents
- ensure that children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- provide information for parents and carers outlining the procedures laid down by this policy
- ensure we practise safe recruitment in checking the suitability of all staff and volunteers who work with children

Child Protection Team

The Child Protection Team at St Andrew's consist of the Principal and the two Child Protection Leads (CPL). Should one of these be absent the 'deputy' CPL's will be consulted.

Whole Staff Responsibilities

This school recognises that because of their day-to-day contact with children, school staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The school's leadership team is responsible for ensuring that the school community is informed about policy and procedures. All faculty and staff take collective responsibility for the safeguarding of students. The school will therefore:

- establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are heard.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried about anything.
- Include opportunities in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.
- Follow the procedures set out in this policy..
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and its staff for child protection by providing a copy of this policy on request and posting a copy on the school website.
- When appropriate, inform parents of any concerns, where this does not place the child at greater risk.
- Notify the school counselor or a member of the leadership team if there is an unexplained absence of several days.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout reporting procedures, data collection, and information storage.

Child Protection Lead (CPL) Responsibilities

The Child Protection Leads and deputy Leads are appointed annually, one male and one female member of faculty, preferably.

The school Counsellor is kept separate from this process so that he or she can provide counselling support, which will be confidential.

- Ensure that the school governing board, faculty and staff are fully aware of and understand their responsibilities and obligations under this policy.
- Ensure they have received appropriate training including induction or initial training and attend refresher training every two years or more frequently as required.
- Ensure every member of staff, governor and volunteer knows the name of the designated CPL, their role and their contact details.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and for referring any concerns to the designated CPL.
- Ensure that whole school training occurs every two years so that every member of staff, every governor and all volunteers can fulfil their child protection responsibilities effectively.
- Keep written records of child protection concerns that are kept securely and separately from the main pupil file and use these records to assess the likelihood of risk.
- Ensure that copies of child protection records and/or records of concern are transferred as appropriate (separate from pupil files) when a child leaves the school.
- Ensure that where a pupil leaves the school, necessary information is transferred to the new school in a timely manner.

Responsibilities of adults within the school community:

- All adults are required to be aware of and alert to the signs of abuse.
- If an adult identifies that a child may be in an abusive situation, they should record their concerns and report them to the CPL as soon as practical.
- If a child discloses allegations of abuse to an adult, they will follow the procedures attached to this policy.
- If the disclosure is an allegation against a member of staff, they will follow the allegation procedures attached to this policy.

As a school, we will educate and encourage pupils to keep safe through:

- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are communicated to the students.
- A school ethos that promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The creation of a culture that helps children to feel safe and able to talk freely about their concerns, believing that they will be listened to and valued.

Child Protection Procedures

The prime concern at all stages must be the interests and safety of the child. Where there is a conflict of interests between the child and parent, the interests of the child take precedence.

If a member of staff suspects abuse (e.g. through outward signs of physical injury, unusual behaviour or inappropriate language) they must:

- Record their concerns.
- Report it to the CPL as soon as possible after the disclosure.
- Consider if there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention and if so contact the nurse.
- Make an accurate record (which may be used in any subsequent court proceedings) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the occurrence, of all that has happened, including: details of dates and times of their observations; dates and times of any discussions they were involved in; any injuries; explanations given by the child / adult, and what action was taken. These notes may be made immediately after the disclosure.
- The records must be signed and dated by the author and passed to the CPL within 24 hours.

Following a report of concerns from a member of staff, the CPL must:

- Decide whether or not there are sufficient grounds for suspecting child abuse. This may necessitate a discussion with the Child Protection Team following which a decision will be taken as to how to manage the situation and whether or not a referral to the Department of Social Services is called for.
- Actively monitor the situation should it be concluded that there is no immediate risk of harm.
- Confirm any referrals in writing to the Principal and Board member responsible for CP issues, within 24 hours, including the actions that have been taken. The written referral should be made using the referral form attached to this document.
- The Principal and both CPLs will meet to assess the situation or allegation and decide on the next steps.
- If a child is in immediate danger and urgent protective action is required, the Department of Social Services and/or police should be informed.
- The decision as to whether to contact the Department of Social Services rests with the CPL and the school's leadership. The decision will be made in the child's best interests.
- Where there are doubts or reservations about involving the child's family, the CPL should clarify with the Principal and possibly the Department of Social Services or the local police whether the parents should be told about the referral and, if so, when and by whom. This is important in cases where the police may need to conduct a criminal investigation. Where appropriate, the CPL should help the parents understand that a referral is in the interests of the child and that the school will be involved in the police investigation.
- When a pupil is in need of urgent medical attention and if there is suspicion of abuse the child is immediately taken to the Accident and Emergency Unit at a hospital. If there is suspicion of abuse the CPL and Principal will determine the next steps. The CPL should seek advice about what action the Department of Social Services will take and about informing the parents, remembering that parents should normally be informed that a child requires urgent hospital attention. If the suspected abuse is sexual then the medical examination should be delayed

until the Department of Social Services and/or the police can liaise with the hospital, unless the needs of the child are such that medical attention is the priority. If a decision is made not to inform the parents, there must be a responsible adult with the child at all times, whether from the school, Department of Social Services or the police.

- Documentation: The report notes and minutes of any meetings are kept in a register that is maintained by the CPL. This is a paper file that is kept in the Principal's office in a locked filing cabinet.

When dealing with allegations against staff, governors and volunteers, the CPL will:

- Report any concerns about the conduct of any member of staff or volunteer to the Principal within 24 hours of the complaint
- If an allegation is made against the Principal, the concerns need to be raised with the Board Chairman as soon as possible and within 24 hours

When a Child Confides in a member of staff:

As a member of staff, you should:

- Give the child undivided attention
- Show concern, support and warmth, but don't show emotions, distress or negative reactions. Be reassuring
- You can say "That must have been sad/hard for you," or "It's right to tell someone because you need help."
- Ask if the child has told his/her parents if the alleged abuse is outside the home or the other parent, if one parent is implicated
- Listen and be supportive. It may also be appropriate to check that the child is indicating abuse or neglect
- Ask if the child is hurt or might be in need of medical attention
- Establish if the incident has happened recently and who the child is saying has hurt her/him
- Make careful records of what was said after disclosure, put the date and time when the child spoke to you, put the location and names of the people who were present, as well as what was said, using the child's own language and colloquialisms. Then sign it, and hand your record to the CPL immediately. Keep a copy of your notes
- Look after yourself and consider seeking support from the school Counsellor

As a member of staff, you should not:

- Make promises you can't keep, such as complete confidentiality - you should explain that you may need to pass information to other professionals to help keep them or other children safe
- Malign the character of the alleged perpetrator
- Jump to conclusions
- Ask leading questions
- Ask for lots of details about the alleged event(s)
- Speculate or accuse anybody yourself
- Pre-empt or prejudice an investigation by leading the child with closed questions

Questioning Skills

To avoid leading questions when clarifying what a child has said, you should use open questions with a child rather than closed questions.

The following table gives some examples of both.

Open Questions	Closed Questions
Tell me... Explain to me... Describe to me...	Do..? Did...? What..? When..? Where..? Who..?

Avoid using "Why" as this can confuse a child and lead to feelings of guilt.

Initial Responses to Child

When a child has made a disclosure, it can be a relief for them, however they are likely to feel vulnerable and confused. Here are some examples of what can be said to a child;

DO say:

"Thank you for telling me."

"I am sorry it has happened to you."

"I am going to help you, and will tell you what I am going to do."

"It should not have happened."

"You are not to blame."

DO NOT say:

"It will be alright soon."

"This will stay between us"

...Or any statements or promises that you will not be able to fulfill.

Corporal Punishment

St Andrew's International School prohibits corporal punishment in all circumstances within the school. It is considered a form of physical abuse and is strictly forbidden in our community, as outlined in our Professional Teacher Standards and Code of Conduct. Any staff member who engages in corporal punishment will be subject to dismissal.

We recognise that in The Bahamas, some forms of physical discipline by parents remain culturally accepted and are not illegal. While the school cannot control parental discipline practices, we take the position that corporal punishment is harmful to children's wellbeing.

Staff responsibilities:

- In school: No corporal punishment of any kind is permitted.
- If a child discloses corporal punishment at home:
 - Listen, reassure, and record factually in the child's own words.
 - Report to the Child Protection Lead (CPL) within 24 hours.
- If a staff member observes signs that may indicate corporal punishment at home (e.g., unexplained injuries, fearful behaviour, repeated references to being hit):
 - Record the concern factually, including dates, times, observations, and explanations given.
 - Report to the CPL within 24 hours.
- Next steps:
 - A single or minor incident will normally be logged and monitored internally, recognising the local cultural and legal context.
 - Repeated disclosures, visible injuries, escalation, or evidence of serious harm will be reviewed by the CPL and Child Protection Team to decide whether referral to external agencies is required.
 - Regardless of referral, pastoral support will be provided to the student.

Rationale:

This approach ensures that all staff take consistent action when faced with either disclosures or observable signs, while acknowledging the cultural and legal framework of The Bahamas.

Safe Professional Culture

Faculty and staff must be cautious to avoid physical contact with students that could be misconstrued. We acknowledge that Bahamian culture is one in which public displays of affection are common; however, any such adult contact with students must be child-initiated, age-appropriate, and culturally/contextually sensitive. We have a number of students with Special Educational Needs in our school who lack the ability to decide where and with whom physical contact is appropriate: they require particular and careful professional judgement.

Physical contact may be required to remove a pupil from a dangerous situation or an object from a pupil to prevent either harm to themselves or others. This should be recorded on the correct form and reported to the CPL and Principal.

The privacy of children in situations such as toileting, showering and changing clothes must be respected. When it is necessary to supervise children in these situations, at least two adults must be present and intrude only to the extent that the health and safety of the children require. Adults must also preserve their own privacy in these situations.

It is the adult's responsibility to set and respect boundaries. When a child attempts to involve an adult in inappropriate behaviour or conversation, the adult must reject the overture and report the conversation to the CPL.

Whenever possible when supervising school-organised overnight activities or field trips, adults should not share sleeping quarters with children other than their own. If sleeping quarters must be shared, ensure that there are multiple children in the room with the adult and that the adult sleeps alone in his or her bed.

All staff and volunteers should:

- Work in an open and transparent way, avoiding any actions that would lead a reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions
- Dress appropriately for their role
- Wear their school ID badge and blue lanyard at all times while on campus (those staff exempted from wearing the lanyard for safety reasons should clip the badge in a prominent position).
- Never use a physical punishment of any kind
- Understand their position of power and influence over children and not misuse it in any way. This includes but is not limited to:
 - accepting regular gifts from children
 - giving personal gifts to children
 - giving unearned preferential treatment to children
 - In situations where restraint is needed, staff must follow the protocols given during the training
- Recognise their influence and not engage in activities out of school that might compromise their position within school.

- Not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils outside of school. This includes:
- Not communicate with pupils in inappropriate ways, including personal e-mails and mobile telephones
- Not pass your home address, phone number, email address or other personal details to students
- Not transport pupils in your own vehicle without prior management approval
- Not contact children through social networking sites
- Only use the school system to exchange email with pupils. Do not use your personal email account(s)
- Be careful about recording images of children; do this only when it is an approved educational activity and ensure that once uploaded, images are then permanently deleted from any personal devices
- Ensure that all areas of the curriculum are age appropriate in terms of their content.
- Allow children to change clothes with levels of respect and privacy appropriate to their age, gender, culture, and circumstances
- Avoid working in one-to-one situations or conferring special attention on one child unless this is part of an agreed school plan or policy
- Only arrange to meet with pupils in closed rooms when senior staff have been made aware of this in advance and given their approval
- Not access inappropriate material via the internet
- Not allow boundaries to become blurred and unsafe in more informal settings such as out of school activities

All staff, volunteers and governors should inform the Principal immediately if:

- There are any incidents or issues that might lead to concerns being raised about your conduct towards a child
- There is any suggestion a pupil may be infatuated with you or taking an above normal interest in you

Employment Screening

Procedures for recruitment are fully outlined in the SAIS Safer Recruitment Policy.

All personnel, staff, teachers, volunteers, and other members of the community whose potential employment or volunteer service involves direct contact with, and/or the potential for unmonitored access to children (including any individuals who regularly provide transportation to children) are given thorough reference and police checks, including review of criminal and sexual offender records.

Likewise, SAIS asks all contractors, vendors and service providers to provide a written guarantee that a background check was completed on any individual sent by the contractor to provide onsite services.

The elements of a comprehensive background check include:

- Written application and a “statement of suitability” requiring a signature stating that the applicant knows of no reason or prior circumstance that would preclude him/her from working safely with children
- Personal interview
- Credential check
- Reference checks
- Criminal history background check (local, national, international options depending on where the applicant is coming from and the position being sought).
- Sex offender registry check, such as World Check (in some Western countries)
- Statement that all background screening accomplished by or on behalf of SAIS will comply with relevant privacy laws

SAIS reserves the right to conduct background screening and makes this explicitly clear to employees and volunteers, at any time after employment or volunteer service has begun – and will do so periodically. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in the

information provided by the applicant, whenever discovered, will result in disqualification from, or termination of employment or volunteer service from SAIS.

Policy Review

This Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal, the designated Child Protection Leads, and the Board of Governors. The review will ensure that the policy remains up to date with current legislation, international safeguarding standards, and best practice in schools. Amendments will be approved by the Board and communicated to all staff, volunteers, parents, and students. Interim updates may be made at any time if new statutory guidance or safeguarding concerns arise.

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Appendix 1: Definitions and Indicators

What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or caregiver fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is a physical punishment inflicted on a child by a teacher or any adult in any authority, such as the guardian, as a form of discipline, and may be considered as physical abuse. We recognise that this is historically a part of Bahamian culture.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve name-calling, withholding or not returning gestures of affection. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed 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. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse or refusal of antenatal health services. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or caregiver failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; • Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

The nature of neglect

Neglect is a lack of parental care. Poverty, lack of information or lack of adequate services can be contributory factors.

Neglect can include parents or caregivers failing to

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter;
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision or stimulation;
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Research has highlighted the following examples of the neglect of children under 12: • frequently going hungry

- frequently having to go to school in dirty clothes
- regularly having to look after themselves because of parents being away or having problems such as
- drug or alcohol misuse
- being abandoned or deserted
- living at home in dangerous physical conditions not being taken to the doctor when ill • not receiving dental care

Neglect is a difficult form of abuse to recognise and can be mistakenly seen as less serious than other categories. It is, however, very damaging: children who are neglected often develop more slowly than others and may find it hard to make friends and fit in with their peer group.

Neglect is often noticed at a stage when it does not pose a risk to the child. Research would suggest that an appropriate intervention or conversation at this early stage can address the issue and prevent a child continuing to suffer until it reaches a point when they are at risk of harm.

Neglect is often linked to other forms of abuse, so any concerns school staff have should at least be discussed with the designated CPL.

Indicators of neglect

The following is a summary of some of the indicators that may suggest a child is being abused or is at risk of harm. It is important to recognise that indicators alone cannot confirm whether a child is being abused. Each child should be seen in the context of their family and wider community and a proper assessment carried out by appropriate persons. It is important to keep in mind that if you feel unsure or concerned, you must do something about it. Don't keep it to yourself.

- Physical indicators of neglect
- Constant hunger and stealing food
- Poor personal hygiene - unkempt, dirty or smelly
- Underweight
- Dress unsuitable for weather
- Poor state of clothing
- Illness or injury untreated
- Looking sad

- False smiles
- Behavioural indicators of neglect
- Constant tiredness
- Frequent absence from school or lateness
- Missing medical appointments
- Isolated among peers
- Frequently unsupervised
- Stealing or scavenging, especially food
- Destructive tendencies

Emotional Abuse

The nature of Emotional Abuse

Most harm is produced in low warmth, high criticism homes, not from single incidents. Emotional abuse is difficult to define, identify, recognise, and/or prove. Emotional abuse is chronic and cumulative and has a long-term impact. All kinds of abuse and neglect have emotional effects, although emotional abuse can occur by itself. Children can be harmed by witnessing someone harming another person, as in domestic violence.

It is sometimes possible to spot emotionally abusive behaviour from parents and caregivers to their children, by the way that the adults are speaking to, or behaving towards children. An appropriate challenge or intervention could affect positive change and prevent more intensive work being carried out later on.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse: Developmental issues

- Delays in physical, mental and emotional development
- Poor school performance
- Speech disorders, particularly sudden disorders or changes.
- Aggressive behaviour
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Acceptance of punishment that appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation (I'm stupid, ugly, worthless etc.)
- Neurotic behaviour (such as rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- Self-mutilation
- Suicide attempts
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging
- Acting out
- Poor trust in significant adults

- Regressive behaviour – e.g., wetting
- Eating disorders
- Destructive tendencies
- Arriving early at school, leaving late
- Social issues
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Withdrawal from social interaction
- Over-compliant behaviour
- Insecure, clinging behaviour
- Poor social relationships
- Emotional responses
- Extreme fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations (“I deserve this”) • Fear of parents being contacted
- Self-disgust
- Low self-esteem
- Unusually fearful with adults
- Lack of concentration; restlessness, aimlessness
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

Physical Abuse

The nature of physical abuse

Most children collect cuts and bruises quite routinely as part of the rough and tumble of daily life. Clearly, it is not necessary to be concerned about most of these minor injuries. But accidental injuries normally occur on the bony prominences – e.g., shins. Injuries on the soft areas of the body are more likely to be inflicted intentionally and should therefore make us more alert to other concerning factors that may be present.

A body map (Appendix 3) can assist in the clear recording and reporting of physical abuse. The body map should only be used to record observed injuries and no child should be asked to remove clothing by a member of staff of the school.

Indicators of physical abuse / Factors that should increase concern

- Multiple bruising or bruises and scratches (especially on the head and face). Clusters of bruises – e.g., fingertip bruising (caused by being grasped)
- Bruises around the neck and behind the ears – the most common abusive injuries are to the head. Bruises on the back, chest, buttocks, or on the inside of the thighs • Marks indicating injury by an instrument – e.g., linear bruising (stick), parallel bruising (belt), marks of a buckle
- Bite marks
- Deliberate burning may also be indicated by the pattern of an instrument or object – e.g., electric fire, cooker, cigarette
- Scalds with upward splash marks or tide marks (rings on the child's arms, legs, or body, indicating that a portion of the child's body has been immersed in hot water) • Untreated injuries

- Recurrent injuries or burns
- Bald patches
- In the social context of the school, it is normal to ask about a noticeable injury. The response to such an enquiry is generally light-hearted and detailed. So, most of all, concern should be increased when:
 - the explanation given does not match the injury
 - the explanation uses words or phrases that do not match the vocabulary of the child (adults words) no explanation is forthcoming
 - the child (or the parent/caregiver) is secretive or evasive
 - the injury is accompanied by allegations of abuse or assault

You should be concerned if the child or young person:

- is reluctant to have parents/caregivers contacted; runs away or shows fear of going home
- is aggressive towards themselves or others; flinches when approached or touched
- is reluctant to undress to change clothing for sport; wears long sleeves during hot weather
- is unnaturally compliant in the presence of parents/caregivers; has a fear of medical help or attention
- reports a punishment that appears excessive

Sexual Abuse

The nature of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is often perpetrated by people who are known and trusted by the child (e.g., relatives, family friends, neighbours, babysitters, people working with the child in school, faith settings, clubs or activities)

Characteristics of child sexual abuse:

- It is often planned and systematic – people do not sexually abuse children by accident, though sexual abuse can be opportunistic
- Grooming the child – people who abuse children take care to choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent
- Grooming the child's environment – abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other caregivers especially) are not suspicious of their motives.