



Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

Greenwood International School strongly believes in the safety and welfare of all the children in its care. The School's responsibilities are exercised through special procedures. The School's Child Protection Policy exists to provide a structured framework within which such procedures can be established and operated.

Aims

- To ensure, that the school operates in a way that prioritises care for the individual child.
- To make sure that all the teaching and support staff at the school are aware of and implement the correct procedures that apply in cases that involve Child Protection issues or abuse in its four main forms; physical, verbal/emotional, sexual and neglect.

In order to do this the School will:

- Ensure that each child is known and recognized as an individual by everyone.
- Ensure that all teaching and support staff understand that it is their responsibility to refer suspicions or allegations of child abuse to the School Counselor as the main point of contact.
- Ensure that all the teaching and support staff is aware of the main types of child abuse and to be able to detect the signs of distress and symptoms of child abuse in order to respond appropriately.
- To provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behavior in dealing with child protection issues; reporting procedures and bounds of confidentiality.
- To make explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures so that child protection concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child.
- Organize periodic in-service training for all staff on child protection issues and procedures.
- Provide a counseling service to children subjected to any form of abuse (in-house and local agencies).

Child Protection Team

The Child Protection Team at the school consists of four members; the principal, the deputy principal, the school doctor and the school counselor.

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Types Of Child Abuse, Potential Abuse and Bullying

Child Abuse

- a) **Physical Abuse-** Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering (*examples include:* hitting, shaking, slapping, burning or use of any object that leaves marks on the body).
- b) **Verbal/Emotional Abuse-** persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment, inappropriacy, or rejection (*examples include:* shouting, threatening, insulting, intimidating, undermining, blaming, judging, saying things that make the child feel unloved, unsafe or unwanted).
- c) **Sexual-** Sexual abuse is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in the criminal code of UAE Ministry of Interior and the UAE judicial law. It also includes intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for reasons other than hygiene or child care purposes. Therefore, it is an actual or likely exploitation of a child by involvement in sexual activities without informed consent or understanding, or that violate social taboos or family roles (*examples include:* An adult intentionally initiating sexual contact with a child for his/her own gratification, inappropriate touching and molestation, rape, watching pornography or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution or sexual acts). **The grooming process** which is a process during which sexual perpetrators teach their victims that sexual acts are a form of love and so tend to shower their victims with love and care which often aids in presenting the victims as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms. This process also results in victims accepting the blame onto themselves and having feelings of guilt and shame. Sexual abuse requires far more diligent care than other forms of child abuse and confidentiality in reporting, handling and investigating is essential.
- d) **Neglect-** The persistent or severe neglect of a child which results in impairment of health or development (*examples include:* absence of adequate fulfillment of the child's basic needs such as food or shelter, neglecting the child emotionally, medically or educationally, improper care to attire and hygiene).

Potential abuse

In certain situations where children may not have been abused but where social and medical assessments indicate a high degree of risk that they might be abused in the future, including situations where another child in the household has been abused, or where there is a known abuser.

Bullying

Any persistent and uninvited behavior which insults, hurts or intimidates someone (includes cyber bullying). It is a type of abuse that falls under physical or verbal/emotional abuse.

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Possible Indicators of Abuse

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises on the body (face, neck, back, arms and legs at various stages of healing).
- Bald spots, human bite marks, unexplained burns or lacerations.
- Excessive covering of arms and legs.

Sexual Abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level.
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in a child of any age.
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding in the oral, genital, or anal areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting

Verbal/Emotional Abuse

- Depression and anxiety
- Low self-esteem and confidence
- Poor social skills
- Increase/decrease in body weight

Neglect

- Diminished body weight
- Constant hunger
- Inappropriate attire and poor hygiene (ex: lice)

General signs and symptoms

- Isolation and withdrawal
- Addiction
- Sleep and appetite disturbance
- Aggressiveness and impulsivity
- Decline in academic performance or general poor school performance

These indicators of abuse and neglect will be used by the staff members as a guideline for reporting to the School Counselor, who will determine if the case needs further attention and investigation. A report must be made when a staff member has reasonable doubt to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All reports are confidential and presented to the School Counselor.

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Perpetrators that can be involved in child abuse

Most perpetrators are well known individuals to the child. They can be within the child's social, academic, ethnic and religious circle (parents, staff members (teaching and support staff), students, relatives and friends etc.).

1. Alleged abuse of a minor by a minor:

- a. If a student reports to any teaching or support staff that he/she has been abused by a minor, this staff personnel should only resort to asking the child open-ended questions and then reporting the findings/observations to the School Counselor.
- b. The School Counselor, in consultation with the Child Protection Team, will investigate the situation (talk to both child and perpetrator) and determine whether or not the allegations hold any merit.
- c. If the abuse is of physical or verbal/emotional nature, then it may fall under bullying and can be resolved on the level of School Counselor interventions with the support of the teaching staff and Heads of sections.
- d. If the abuse falls under sexual harassment or abuse, then the principal is notified as part of the Child Protection Team by the School Counselor and a contact is made to the hotlines provided by the Child Protection Unit at the CDA (Community Development Authority) or the DFWAC (Dubai Foundation for Women and Children).
- e. Students are sent for counseling and for medical checkup to the clinic, if required.
- f. Parents are informed by one representative of the Child Protection Team at the school.
- g. The affected student receives counseling services from the School Counselor and his/her school adjustment is monitored by the Child Protection Team.
- h. Record keeping is crucial throughout the entire process in a confidential manner.

The student who has been the victim can refer the case directly, or by the help of a student, to the School Counselor.

2. Alleged abuse of a minor by a parent:

- a. If a student reports to any teaching or support staff that he/she has been abused by one of his/her parents, this staff personnel should only resort to asking the child open-ended questions and then reporting the findings/observations to the School Counselor.
- b. The school counselor, in consultation with the Child Protection Team, will investigate the situation (talk to the child) and determine whether or not the allegations hold any merit.
- c. If the allegations do not fall under "abuse", the parent is called to the school and advised.
- d. If the allegations seem to fall under "abuse", the Child Protection Team initiates contact with the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC.
- e. The affected student receives counseling services from the School Counselor and his/her school adjustment is monitored by the Child Protection Team.
- f. Record keeping is crucial throughout the entire process in a confidential manner.

The student who has been the victim can refer the case directly, or by the help of a student, to the School Counselor.

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3. Alleged abuse of a minor by a relative/family member:

- a. If a student reports to any teaching or support staff that he/she has been abused by a relative or family member, this staff personnel should only resort to asking the child open-ended questions and then reporting the findings/observations to the School Counselor.
- b. The School Counselor, in consultation with the Child Protection Team, will investigate the situation (talk to the child) and determine whether or not the allegations hold any merit.
- c. If the allegations do not fall under “abuse”, the parent is called to the school and advised of the relative/family member’s interactions with their child.
- d. If the allegations seem to fall under “abuse”, the Child Protection Team initiates contact with the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC and the parent is notified.
- e. The affected student receives counseling services from the School Counselor and his/her school adjustment is monitored by the Child Protection Team.
- f. Record keeping is crucial throughout the entire process in a confidential manner.

The student who has been the victim can refer the case directly, or by the help of a student, to the School Counselor.

4. Alleged abuse of a minor by a teacher or support staff member:

- a. If a student reports to any teaching or support staff that he/she has been abused by one of his/her teachers, this staff personnel should only resort to asking the child open-ended questions and then reporting the findings/observations to the School Counselor.
- b. The School Counselor, in consultation with the Child Protection Team, will investigate the situation (talk to both child and teacher) and determine whether or not the allegations hold any merit.
- c. If the allegations do not fall under “abuse”, the teacher is advised by his/her Supervisor and Head of Section on how to appropriately address and interact with his/her students. A memo is issued to the concerned teacher by the Supervisor or Head of Section and the incident is communicated to the parent.
- d. If the allegations seem to fall under verbal, emotional or sexual abuse, the School Counselor reports to the supervisor and Head of Section responsible of the teacher in question and the contract with the teacher is terminated and the Child Protection Team initiates contact with the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC with the knowledge of the parents.
- e. The affected student receives counseling services from the School Counselor and his/her school adjustment is monitored by the Child Protection Team.
- f. Record keeping is crucial throughout the entire process in a confidential manner.

The student who has been the victim can refer the case directly, or by the help of a student, to the School Counselor.

5. Alleged abuse of a minor by an outsider (ex: during field trips) or worker (ex: outsourced company)

- a. If a student reports to any teaching or support staff that he/she has been abused by an outsider or worker, this staff personnel should only resort to asking the child open-ended questions and then reporting the findings/observations to the School Counselor.
- b. The School Counselor, in consultation with the Child Protection Team, will investigate the situation (talk to the child) and determine whether or not the allegations hold any merit.

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- c. If the allegations do not fall under “abuse”, a record is kept of the incident and communicated to the outsourced company and the parents of the child. The student is distanced from the alleged abuser.
- d. If the allegations seem to fall under verbal, emotional or sexual abuse, the School Counselor reports to the Child Protection Team which initiates contact with the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC with the knowledge of the parents and the worker is banned from being present on school premises and his company is informed.
- e. The affected student receives counseling services from the School Counselor and his/her school adjustment is monitored by the Child Protection Team.
- f. Record keeping is crucial throughout the entire process in a confidential manner.

The student who has been the victim can refer the case directly, or by the help of a student, to the School Counselor.

Roles and Responsibilities

1	Class Teacher/School Counselor	Class teachers or the School Counselor will, in most cases, be the first person that a concern is raised by. They will collate detailed/accurate/secure written records of concerns and liaise with the designated Child Protection Team.
2	The School Doctor and Nurses	Their role is to ensure that relevant information obtained in the course of their duties is communicated to the Child Protection Team. Types of injuries, clinic visits and frequency of occurrence are recorded.
3	All School Staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) All school staff have a responsibility to identify and report suspected abuse and to ensure the safety and well-being of the students in their school. In doing so, they should seek advice and support as necessary from the Child Protection Team. b) Are expected to 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 acceptable behavior. c) All school staff are expected to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be aware of signs and symptoms of abuse. 2. Report concerns to the Child Protection Team. 3. Keep clear, dated, factual and confidential records of child protection concerns raised to the Child Protection Team.
4	Child Protection Team	<p>The Child Protection Team’s responsibilities are many and include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigating claims of abuse and taking actions to stop them and prevent their reoccurrence. 2. Documenting and reporting cases of abuse to the concerned parties (Child Protection Unit at CDA or the DFWAC as well as KHDA). 3. Organizing routine meetings to monitor the progress of all students and their well-being at the school. 4. Providing adequate support to students, teaching and support staff as well as parents.

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Staff should be concerned if a student:

1. Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with children's activities.
2. Regularly has unexplained injuries.
3. Frequently has injuries, even when apparently reasonable explanations are given.
4. Offers confused or conflicting explanations about on how injuries were sustained.
5. Exhibits significant changes in behavior, performance or attitude.
6. Indulges in sexual behavior which is unusually explicit and/or inappropriate to his or her age.
7. Discloses an experience in which he or she may have been significantly harmed.

Dealing with a disclosure

If a student discloses that he/she has been abused in some way, the member of staff should:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Allow the child to talk freely; listen, rather than ask direct questions.
- Accept what is being said and ask open-ended questions rather than leading questions.
- Reassure the child that what happened was not their fault and stress that telling was the right thing to do. But not make promises which might not be possible to keep such as promising absolute confidentiality without referring the case to the concerned personnel.
- Do not criticize the perpetrator.
- Explain what must be done next and who has to be told.

Recording disclosure

When a student has made a disclosure, the member of staff should.

- Make some brief notes as soon as possible after the conversation.
- Not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court.
- Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behavior and/or words used by the child.
- Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any bruising or other injury.
- Record statements and observations, rather than interpretations or assumptions.
- Provide the record to the School Counselor.

Confidentiality

Certain members of staff gain access to confidential information about students, only in a limited capacity (need-to-know basis), in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. Staff are expected:

- To treat information they receive about students discreetly and in a confidential manner.
- To, if they are in any doubt about sharing information they hold, or which has been requested of them, seek advice from the Child Protection Team.
- To be cautious when passing information to others about a student.

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Record and Monitoring

- Well-kept records are essential to good Child Protection practice. Concerns and disclosures should be recorded in writing by the member of staff who receives them and passed to the School Counselor without delay.
- The School Counselor in consultation with the Child Protection Team will then decide on further action and any appropriate monitoring program for the student.
- Records are stored in a dedicated filing system maintained in the School Counselor's office and the School Clinic (if the abuse is physical, sexual or neglect related).

Reporting Procedure

What happens after suspected abuse or neglect is reported?

Where there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report his or her suspicions to the School Counselor. In all cases, the Child Protection Team will be notified. It is the responsibility of Child Protection Team to keep track of abuse cases. All staff, faculty, and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the School Counselor within 48 hours for immediate response.

Step 1: Information Gathering and Data Analysis

When a child reports abuse or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher will seek advice from the School Counselor within 48 hours. The School Counselor will notify the school-based Child Protection team, and then take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident. In all cases, follow-up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually, and that strict confidentiality is maintained. The following procedure will be used:

1. Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.
2. Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school.
3. a) If warranted, the School Counselor will forward the report to the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC.
b) If report is not substantiated, enter case into Supervisor Log on GIS SMS and report update to the original reporter.
4. Relevant data is analyzed by the Child Protection Team and cases with percentages are reported to KHDA.

Step 2: Devising an action plan

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Actions that shall take place are:

1. Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling with release of information to the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC and KHDA.
2. Coordination between outside counseling services and in-house counseling services in terms of strategies that should be used by the teachers of the said student, or School Counselor interventions etc.
3. On-going observations of the child by the school's Child Protection Team to be reported to the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC and KHDA.

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4. Frequent meetings of the members of the Child Protection Team (once a week on average for serious cases of abuse) to monitor, adjust and modify the action plan based on their observations and the recommendations of the Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC and KHDA.

Step 3: Follow-up Procedures

Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The Child Protection Team will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The School Counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teachers.
- The School Counselor will maintain contact with outside therapists/specialists to update them on the progress of the child in school.
- Follow-up meeting with the Child Protection Team to evaluate progress and debriefing.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's confidential file. Confidential records may only be released with parental consent. One exception to this is if the school believes the child continues to be at risk. In these cases, GIS has the responsibility to relay potential safety concerns to Child Protection Unit at the CDA or the DFWAC and KHDA.

SYNOPSIS – CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- STOP AND LISTEN WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.
- ASK QUESTIONS AND TAKE NOTES IN A VERBATIM FASHION.
- DO NOT BE JUDGEMENTAL, AVOID LEADING QUESTIONS/COAXING OR PRESSURING
- DO NOT PROMISE ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY - STAFF MUST NOT WORK IN ISOLATION, BUT OFFER DISCRETION

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