(11) CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Beehive Montessori School Inc. is committed to the protection of children from neglect, sexual, emotional and physical abuse, bullying and drugs.

This commitment includes prevention, early detection, intervention and promoting protective behaviours for all students.

Rationale

- Children are exposed to risk of emotional or physical harm in many environments, including the School classroom and grounds, on excursion or other School related activities, or outside School, such as use of the internet, social outings and when using public transport.
- The School has a duty of care to prevent and detect abuse at School or from other sources.
- The Montessori Philosophy includes promoting the development of the whole person and promotes the education of children to recognize and respond to potential physical and emotional abuse.

Objectives

The School will:
- provide an environment to help prevent all forms of child abuse.
- minimize any harm to a victim, or the School community, as a result of abuse.
- Empower children to be capable of detecting and avoiding or responding to potential abuse.

Links to School and Constitution

The constitution states that the School may make, vary or repeal rules for its regulation, administration, control and management.

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Amended: 22/11/12.
There is no guarantee that a printed copy is the latest version of this document. Refer to electronic version maintained by School Administration to ensure accuracy.
Applicable Issues

Relevant sections of the following Acts can be viewed on this website www.slp.wa.gov.au:

- School Education Act (1999), sections 63-64
- Children and Community Services Act (2004)
- Criminal Code Act (1913), section 322
- Public Sector Management Act (1994), sections 80-92

The State of Western Australia has recently introduced the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse cases and the School will be required to meet its obligations under this legislation. Cases in the High Court have considered the issue of a School’s liability for civil damages should a School be found to have been negligent by failing to have a system in place to minimize the risk to students being abused by an employee. The School may be ‘vicariously liable’ for abuse committed by an employee unless the School is able to show that it took steps to reduce the foreseeable risks of abuse.

The Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit is listed under Police – Crime Investigation Support in the white pages Telephone directory.

The Police Child Abuse Protection Unit offers courses to staff to raise awareness and methods of dealing with abuse.

The Department for Child Protection may assist by working with the School to ensure families are supported during the process of allegation investigation. It has a Crisis Care service 24 hours, 7 days a week as well as the Mandatory Report Service on 1800 708 704 or email mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au.

Levels of Responsibility

The School Board is responsible for:

- developing and adopting the policy.
- ultimately responsible to the School community for ensuring that all measures have been adopted by the Principal and staff, that the policy is in place.
Levels of Responsibility (cont’d)

The Principal is responsible for:

- duty of care.
- School community awareness of zero tolerance towards:
  - all forms of sexual, physical or emotional abuse and neglect;
  - bullying, both verbal and physical; and
  - drug use.
- ensuring that all staff and volunteers are fully briefed and vigilant and are trained on, and aware of their responsibilities under the requirements of the Mandatory Reporting legislation.
- vigilance in access to students (including Family Court Orders).
- care in employing staff and volunteers.
- ensuring that Working with Children Cards and police clearances are maintained in administration/staff files.
- ensuring volunteer declarations of police clearance are maintained in administration files.
- continual monitoring of computer and internet use.
- ensuring one-on-one activities are conducted in an open public space.
- empowering students to deal with and report abuse effectively.
- ensuring that thorough investigation of allegation is initiated, informing Police and other specified Agencies.
- ensuring that processes are in place to respect the privacy of the individual and to ensure that all information is handled professionally and in strict confidence, and that times and content be thoroughly documented.
- ensuring School Board is briefed appropriately in the event of an abuse allegation.
- offering support and counselling to the victim via The Department for Child Protection.

The Assistant Principals are responsible for:

- duty of care.
- those duties as delegated by the Principal.
- vigilance in access to students (including Family Court Orders).
- vigilance and assisting the Principal to promote awareness of zero tolerance towards abuse, bullying and drug use.
Levels of Responsibility (cont’d)

The Staff is responsible for:
- providing a protective environment where the risk of any form of abuse occurring is minimised.
- vigilance in access to students (including Family Court Orders).
- empowering students to deal with and report abuse effectively.
- enacting their ‘duty of care’ responsibilities in dealing with all forms of abuse, bullying and drug use and reporting as necessary.
- Ensuring that they understand their responsibilities under the requirements of the new Mandatory Reporting legislation.

Documentation

- The Policy as well as Procedures on how to recognize and raise issues of concern and support the victim are documented in the Parent Handbook.
- The Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for staff are documented in the Staff Handbook.

Performance Review and Measurement

There will be no incidents of child sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect on the School grounds or outside the School, whilst under staff or volunteer ‘duty of care’.

Activity

- Annual review of the Policy is required by the School Board.
- Procedures and Guidelines will be updated in accordance with the Policy.

Related Documents

Department of Education of Western Australia Child Protection Policy.
Website: www.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/Documents/DO01185848.pdf

Department for Child Protection.
Website: www.community.wa.gov.au
Related Documents (cont’d)

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) Policies and Procedures Guidelines for Schools – Chapter 11: Child Protection

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Health and Safety Policy
- Child Safety Policy
- Crisis Management Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy
- Family Court Policy
- Occupational Safety and Health Policy
- Privacy Policy