(11) - CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Beehive Montessori School Inc. is committed to the protection of children from all forms of abuse-neglect, sexual, emotional, psychological and physical abuse. This commitment includes prevention, early detection, intervention and promoting protective behaviours for all students.

Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect
Students frequently show indicators from more than one category of abuse; and the examples listed below are not necessarily exclusive to a single category of abuse. Any of these indicators may suggest that a student is being abused, neglected or at risk of harm; however, indicators should be considered in the context of the student’s age, medical and developmental history, and capabilities. In addition, mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence within families must also be considered.

Physical abuse
- broken bones or unexplained bruises, burns, or welts in various stages of healing
- the child or young person is unable to explain an injury, or explanations given are inconsistent, vague or bizarre
- direct admissions from the parents that they are concerned that they might harm their child
- family history of violence
- marked delay between injury and obtaining medical assistance
- parent who shows little concern about the welfare of their child or the treatment and care of the injury
- repeated presentations of the child to health services with injuries, ingestions or minor complaints (this could also be an indicator of Factitious Disorder by proxy, a rare expression of physical and emotional abuse)
- the child or young person is unusually frightened of a parent or carer, or is afraid to go home
- the child or young person reports intentional injury by their parent or carer
- arms and legs are kept covered by inappropriate clothing in warm conditions
- ingestion of poisonous substances including alcohol or drugs
- avoidance of physical contact by the child (particularly with a parent or carer)
Sexual abuse

- sexualised behaviours inappropriate to their age (including sexually touching other children and themselves)
- knowledge of sexual behaviour inappropriate to their years
- disclosure of abuse either directly or indirectly through drawings, play or writing that describes abuse
- pain or bleeding in the anal or genital area with redness or swelling
- fear of being alone with a particular person
- child or young person implies that he/she is required to keep secrets
- presence of sexually transmitted disease
- sudden unexplained fears
- enuresis and/or encopresis (bed-wetting and bed soiling)

Emotional or Psychological abuse

- the parent or carer constantly criticises, threatens, belittles, insults, or rejects the child or young person with no evidence of love, support, or guidance
- the child or young person exhibits extremes in behaviour from overly aggressive to overly passive
- delayed physical, emotional, or intellectual development
- compulsive lying and stealing
- high levels of anxiety
- lack of trust in people
- feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- eating hungrily or hardly at all
- uncharacteristic seeking of attention or affection
- reluctance to go home
- rocking, sucking thumbs or self-harming behaviour
- fearfulness when approached by a person known to them

Neglect

- signs of malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- poor hygiene: matted hair, dirty skin or severe body odour
- unattended physical or medical problems
- the child or young person states that no one is home to provide care (inadequate supervision, failure to ensure safety)
- child or young person appears constantly tired
- frequent lateness to school or absence from school
- inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- alcohol and/or drug abuse present in the household
- frequent illness, low grade infections or sores
- hunger

**Grooming**
A child abuser usually spends time grooming the child with the child being made to feel that they are in some way complicit. Grooming is the process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child. Recognising the grooming process is one of the best ways of preventing child abuse.

Grooming behavior may involve nurturance (care-giving) and attachment (care-seeking) motivations, as well as sexual motivations. The abuser may be drawn to a particular child because of perceived vulnerabilities in the child (e.g. loneliness, emotional neediness, problems at home, peer isolation, low confidence, low self-esteem), or to meet the abuser’s own emotional needs. Particularly in the early stages, these behaviours may appear ambiguous to both the victim and observers, however behaviours such as developing 'special' relationships, giving gifts or privileges, being overly familiar or affectionate, seeking to spend time with children outside the work role, or arranging to spend time alone with children, is should be seen as a violation of professional boundaries and cause for concern.

**Rationale**

- Children may be exposed to risk of emotional or physical harm in many environments while in the School’s care, including classroom and grounds, on excursion or other School related activities.
- The School has a duty of care to prevent and detect abuse of children while in the care of the School.
- The School has a mandatory duty to report suspected cases of child abuse.
- 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. This is supported by the National Safe Schools Framework which acknowledges the interconnections between student safety, student well-being and learning.

**Objectives**

The School will:
- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- provide an environment to help prevent all forms of child abuse.
- minimise 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.

**Levels of Responsibility**

The School Board is responsible for:
- developing and adopting the policy.
- ensuring that all measures have been adopted by the Principal and staff, that the policy is in place.

The Principal is responsible for:
- duty of care.
- school community awareness of zero tolerance towards:
  - all forms abuse-neglect, sexual, emotional, psychological and physical abuse
  - bullying, both verbal and physical; and
  - drug use.
- ensuring that all staff are fully briefed and vigilant and are trained on, and aware of their responsibilities under the requirements of the Mandatory Reporting legislation.
- ensuring that classroom teachers deliver a Protective Behaviours programme as part of the school curriculum
- vigilance in access to students (including Family Court Orders).
- vigilance recruitment and screening procedures.
- ensuring that Working with Children Checks 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 allegations 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 those in need via The Department for Child Protection and Family Services.

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.

The Staff are 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 Mandatory Reporting legislation.
  - In Western Australia, teachers who are registered with the Teacher Registration Board of WA (as well as doctors, nurses, midwives and police officers) are mandatory reporters of suspected child sexual abuse. As such, they are required to report directly to the Department for Child Protection.
  - Non-mandatory reporters of suspected child sexual abuse must report to the Principal, who becomes the mandatory reporter.
- incorporating a Protective Behaviours programme as part of the school curriculum.
Further information for staff regarding child abuse, indicators, and reporting procedures is available in the Staff Handbook.

The following flow charts summarise the process:

**Reporting Flow Chart for Reporting of Abuse and Neglect (not Sexual Abuse)**

*(Non-Mandatory Report)*
Please note that once a teacher has formed a belief based on reasonable grounds, they are required to make the report to DCP, not the Principal. Prior to forming a belief, the teacher may, if they wish, consult with colleagues with specialist knowledge, for example the Principal.
Reporting Flow Chart for Reporting of Sexual Abuse

(Non-Mandatory Reporters)

INDICATORS OR OTHER INFORMATION

STUDENT

DISCLOSES

SCHOOL STAFF MEMBER
Forms belief based on reasonable grounds

CONSULT PRINCIPAL
Forms belief based on reasonable grounds

FEEDBACK
Including receipt no.

MANDATORY REPORTING SERVICE
(DEPARTMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION)

Documentation

X:\Policies & Procedures\Current Policies\11 Policy-Child Protection.doc. Approved 31/08/15 by the Board. Approved 26.10.15 by the Re-Registration Committee, office of Non-Government. 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. Next review due July 2016.
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 as well as Procedures on how to recognize and raise issues of concern and support the victim are documented in the Staff Handbook.

**Performance Review and Measurement**

There will be no incidents of child sexual, physical, psychological 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.
- Staff and Parent Handbooks will be updated in accordance with the Policy.

**Related Documents**


Department for Child Protection. Website: [www.community.wa.gov.au](http://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