

International Taskforce on Child Protection

Expectations for School Communities

December 2021

Statement of Commitment to Child Protection

The International Taskforce on Child Protection (**ITFCP**) Expectations for schools have been strengthened to highlight leading safeguarding and child protection practices. Working in consultation with school evaluation, accreditation and inspection agencies operating within national and international contexts, the ITFCP Accountability Committee achieved broad agreement for the adoption of updated recommendations to be included within each agency's framework for school evaluation.

Source Reference Document: ITFCP Essential Questions and Expectations to ensure the safeguarding and protection of children in schools; International Taskforce on Child Protection; November 2015.

The 2021 Expectations are based on the following principles and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- All schools have a responsibility to build a community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for each child.
- All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.
- All actions on child protection are taken with the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

EXPECTATIONS

Policies

1. The school complies with legal and ethical requirements for the treatment of children within the country where it is based while adhering to international expectations for the rights of children as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and published at the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children Education Portal (ICMEC.org).
2. A values statement on child rights, aligned with the responsibilities set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), has been developed and formally adopted by the school.
3. The school has a policy, approved by the owners/governors, that describes the school's commitment to a culture of student safety and well-being, thereby preventing harm to children and to responding appropriately if children are harmed or if allegations of harm to children are made. The school regularly reviews and refines the policy and seeks ongoing community consultation which includes student input (voice) and empowers student self-advocacy (agency).

4. The school has developed and adopted an appropriate definition of child abuse--including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect, commercial exploitation, and inappropriate behavior of children towards other children which is informed by international standards as agreed by the International Taskforce on Child Protection (Education Portal - International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC.org)) and is cognizant of the legal context of the country where the school is based.
5. School safeguarding and child protection policies are supported by operational procedures, which are revised as needed, widely shared with the school community and systematically embedded in all aspects of school life, including strategic planning, budgeting, recruitment, program management, performance management, resource procurement, partner agreements, risk management, technology and management systems.
6. The school's policies forbid the use of non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements which prevent transparent sharing of information about child safeguarding concerns, complaints, inquiries and investigations.
Personnel Responsibilities
1. The school has clearly defined leadership responsibilities at the governance, leadership and operation/execution levels for child safeguarding and welfare; designated leads at each level undertake formal training on child safeguarding and duty of care.
2. Based on its policy, the school has developed and adopted written guidelines (code of conduct) for appropriate and inappropriate behavior of adults towards children, children towards adults, and children towards other children. All faculty, staff, volunteers, governing board members and owners, outside contractors, parents, and students annually review and affirm that they have read, understood, and will abide by the code of conduct. The code of conduct includes reference to behavior on and off school premises.
3. The school has recruitment policies and rigorous operational procedures to ensure all adults who interact with children (including employees, volunteers and governing board members/owners) are suitable to work safely with and protect the students in their care (including reference verification with previous employers and criminal police checks, as appropriate).
Curriculum, Programmes and Training
1. The school has formal age-appropriate safeguarding learning programmes for students, which are referred to in the school's teaching and learning policies, informed by student feedback, connected to the school's social-emotional curriculum and delivered by trained personnel. Topics include personal safety, online safety, healthy relationships, comprehensive sexuality education, all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (including bullying) and grooming.
2. The school offers peer mentoring and/or buddy systems and provides appropriate counseling support for students.
3. The school regularly consults with and empowers students to have agency and voice in a range of areas related to school life, including the school's safeguarding curriculum and programmes.
4. School volunteers, contractors, faculty and staff undergo regular, systematic professional training on student safeguarding in all educational environments for which they are responsible, including boarding facilities, homestay, residential arrangements, excursions, trips, and student exchanges. Topics include child abuse prevention, recognition, intervention, and reporting.

Systems and Environment

1. The school provides students with multiple avenues to report concerns. It has procedures in place for centralized reporting of suspected or disclosed maltreatment or abuse, including historical abuse, by volunteers, contractors, faculty and staff. The procedures identify actions to be taken, which include informing appropriate school and local authorities, i.e., law enforcement as appropriate, and are widely shared with the school community.
2. Reports of suspected or disclosed abuse and resulting actions taken by the school are securely archived in keeping with applicable law, regardless of the conclusions reached, and reviewed periodically for identification of possible patterns of inappropriate behavior.
3. The school develops and maintains meaningful and effective relationships with external organizations and agencies that are able to provide contextually appropriate support and advice on matters related to child protection and welfare.
4. The school has established regular and meaningful partnership opportunities with families and guardians to learn from them about children's experiences and to help them to protect their own children and support the school's child protection efforts.
5. Building and facility design, layout, designation, access, use, security and supervision enable and support effective child safety and protection.
6. The school has management and technology systems and appropriate accountability to monitor, identify and share issues related to child safeguarding allegations and complaints.