



GHANA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Ghana International School Board fully recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection; our policy is based on Ghanaian Law and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Ghana is a signatory. Our policy applies to the staff, (teaching and non-teaching), volunteers, visitors and directors.

The school has a duty under The Children's Act 1989 and the Protection of Children Act 1999, through staff, volunteers, partner agencies and Committee members, to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

In addition, Ghana International School Board (LBG)'s fourth educational goal states that we will, "Provide a nurturing, secure, clean and friendly learning environment where students can grow intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically."

Our fifth educational goal states that the School, "Fosters a fundamental understanding of and respect for the rights and freedom of each individual in our community, and the wider world in the spirit of the UN Declaration of Human Rights."

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

Article 19 - Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 34 - Sexual Exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

We will ensure that:

1. We practise safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and any volunteers to work with children.
2. We raise awareness of Child Protection issues.
3. We equip children with the necessary skills to keep them safe.
4. We implement procedures to identify and report cases or suspected cases of abuse.

5. We support pupils who have been abused.
6. We establish a safe environment in which pupils can learn.
7. We liaise with a multidisciplinary team to investigate cases of child abuse .

The School will:

- Ensure that a senior staff member is the designated Safeguarding Lead for each academic section and for non-teaching staff.
- Ensure that each member of staff (including volunteers and supply teachers) knows the name of the designated person and their role.
- Ensure that adults understand their responsibilities in being alert to the sign of abuse and responsibility for referring all concerns to the designated person for Child Protection.
- To ensure that there are effective links with outside agencies
- Keep written records of concerns about pupils, even when there is no need to take the matter further.
- Ensure that all Child Protection records are kept securely away from the main files.
- Ensure that procedures are followed where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer in the School.

In Cases of suspected Child Abuse the following applies:

1. A pupil will approach a member of staff and self-refer and/or make an allegation.
2. The Vice Principal will be informed and will contact the Guidance Counsellor or the designated Child Protection person in their section.
3. The Child Protection Team will inform the Principal and initiate an investigation, this may or may not involve DOVVSU (Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit).

Parents will be informed as soon as a Child Protection issue has been raised except when it is judged that this could increase the possibility of harm to the child.

In the case of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff, the staff member will be informed that an investigation is taking place. In such a case, the Principal reserves the right to suspend the staff member during the period of investigation.

Confidentiality

All members of staff, supply teachers and volunteers are bound by the School's Confidentiality Policy as applied to Child Protection issues.

The Categories and Indicators of Abuse/Neglect

Definitions of abuse are complex and based in various cultures of child-rearing behaviours, gender and role responsibilities and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the needs of the more powerful person; either a member of the family, a teacher, or a friend.

Through their day to day contact with young people and direct work with families, educational staff have a crucial role to play in noticing indicators of possible abuse or neglect and referring those concerns to the appropriate investigative agencies through the school's procedures.

Physical Abuse is:

1. Inflicting physical injury on a child other than by accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss of impairment of any bodily function, death; It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding etc., or otherwise causing physical harm or failing to prevent physical injury. May also be caused when a parent/carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after (1989 Children's Act).
2. Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning;
3. Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering;
4. Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy;
5. Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child;
6. Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
- Bruises of different ages (various colours)
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, table tennis bat)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns especially to soles, palms, back or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line
- Unexplained laceration, abrasions or fractures

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing. Failing to protect a

child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect may be:

Physical (e.g. failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision – this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship, such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time. Should parents/guardians leave the country for any reason the responsibility for informing the school of all appropriate contact details lies with the parent or guardian. GIS to be informed prior to parents/guardians leaving the country).

Medical (e.g. failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment).

Emotional (e.g. a pattern of actions, such as: inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs, specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge presence of child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc).

Possible Indicators of neglect

1. Child is unwashed or hungry
2. Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance
3. Parents do not respond to repeated communication from the school
4. Child does not want to go home
5. Both parents or legal guardian are absent from Accra for any period of 24 hours or greater
6. Parents cannot be reached in the case of an emergency

Sexual Abuse is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offence against a child as defined in either the Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29) of the host country or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes. They may include non contact activities, such as exposing a child to pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious.

The planning, referred to as grooming, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt and shame for the sexual behaviour of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so is more difficult to report.

Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that the sex is a form of love, so tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counsellors.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse

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

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection 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, unloved or inadequate. It may involve children frequently feeling frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Historical Abuse

There may be occasions when an adult will disclose abuse (either sexual or physical) which occurred in the past, during their childhood, giving details of their abuser. This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as a disclosure or suspicion of current child abuse. The reason for this is that the abuser may still represent a risk to children.

What happens when a teacher has reasonable cause for concern?

These possible indicators of abuse and neglect (this page and previous page) will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting to the Counsellor, who will determine if the case needs further attention.

A report must be made when a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All reports are confidential.

Behavioural indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect. Together with other indicators, such as family dynamics, they may warrant a referral.

When suspected abuse or neglect is reported

When there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report their suspicions to their supervisor or the Vice Principal. In all cases, the Principal will be notified. It is the responsibility of the Vice Principal to inform the Principal and the Guidance Counsellor.

All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect. All Employees are also required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect. All reports of abuse and

neglect must be made to the Guidance Counsellor within 48 hours for immediate response.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CASES OF ABUSE / NEGLECT

Step 1

When a child reports abuse or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher will seek advice from the Vice Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within 48 hours. The DSL will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and will form a school-based response team as needed to address the report. The response team will include the school nurse, counsellor, psychologist, and other individuals as the principal sees fit.

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) Report status of case to Principal
- 4) Determine the course of follow-up actions

Step 2

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed by the School-Based Response Team to assist the child and family. Actions that may take place are:

Discussions between the child and counsellor in order to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child, these discussions may include drawing picture and playing with dolls to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.

In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counsellor, or administrator

Meetings with the family to present the School's concerns

Referral of the student and family to external professional counselling

In cases of severe abuse where outside authority is deemed necessary, a request made to external authorities may result in further investigation and possible actions:

1. Notification of the management of the sponsoring employer of the concern with the child/family, or to the welfare office at the home-of-record
2. Consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family
3. Consultation with the school or another attorney
4. Informal consultation with local authorities

In the event that the abuse or neglect allegation involves a staff or faculty member of GIS, the Principal will follow board policy pursuant to ethical professional behaviour.

Step 3:

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

1. The Counsellor will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
2. The Counsellor will provide the child's teachers and the Vice Principal with ongoing support.
3. The Counsellor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
4. The Counsellor will maintain contact with outside therapists and multidisciplinary team to update the progress of the child in school.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's confidential records file. Records sent to schools to which their student may transfer will be flagged to let the receiving school know there is a confidential file for the child. GIS will make every attempt to share this information to protect the child.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by the Counsellors and Vice Principals, such as those involving:

- Student relationship with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Mental health issues such as depression, low self-esteem, grieving

Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example:

- Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicide ideation.

In extreme cases when families do not stop the abuse or when concerns remain about the safety of the child, reports could be made to local authorities or the consulate.

Awareness

Partner agencies, committee members, paid staff or volunteers have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a child or young person. Not all concerns about children or young people relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what you know about the child and its circumstances.

Boarding Students

Every setting in which children live away from home, must provide the same basic safeguards against abuse. Thus, the above applies to our boarding facility as well.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Safeguarding leads are responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the child protection procedure, this includes ensuring that relevant staff have appropriate training.

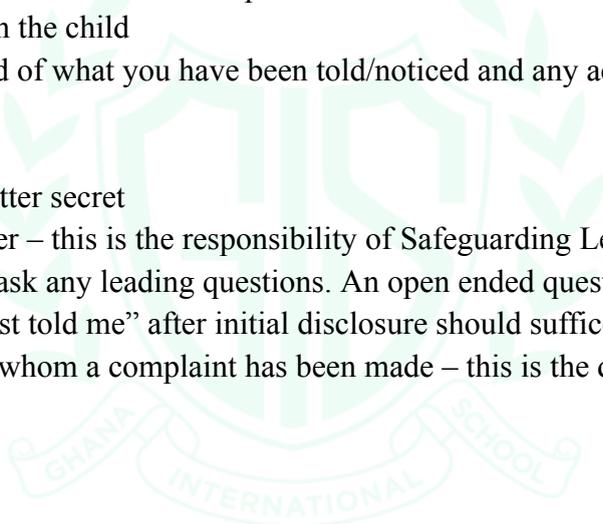
If any member of staff/volunteer has concerns that a child is being mistreated or abused in any way they must bring this matter to the attention of their supervisor, who in turn will notify the Vice Principal and Safeguarding Lead.

If you receive a report or allegation of abuse/mistreatment from a child you must: -

- Treat the matter seriously and reassure the child if necessary
- React to what you are being told with belief
- Make it clear that you must inform others – only telling those that need to know
- Seek advice if in doubt
- Provide support throughout the disclosure process to the child
- Keep a careful watch on the child
- Keep an accurate record of what you have been told/noticed and any action that you have taken

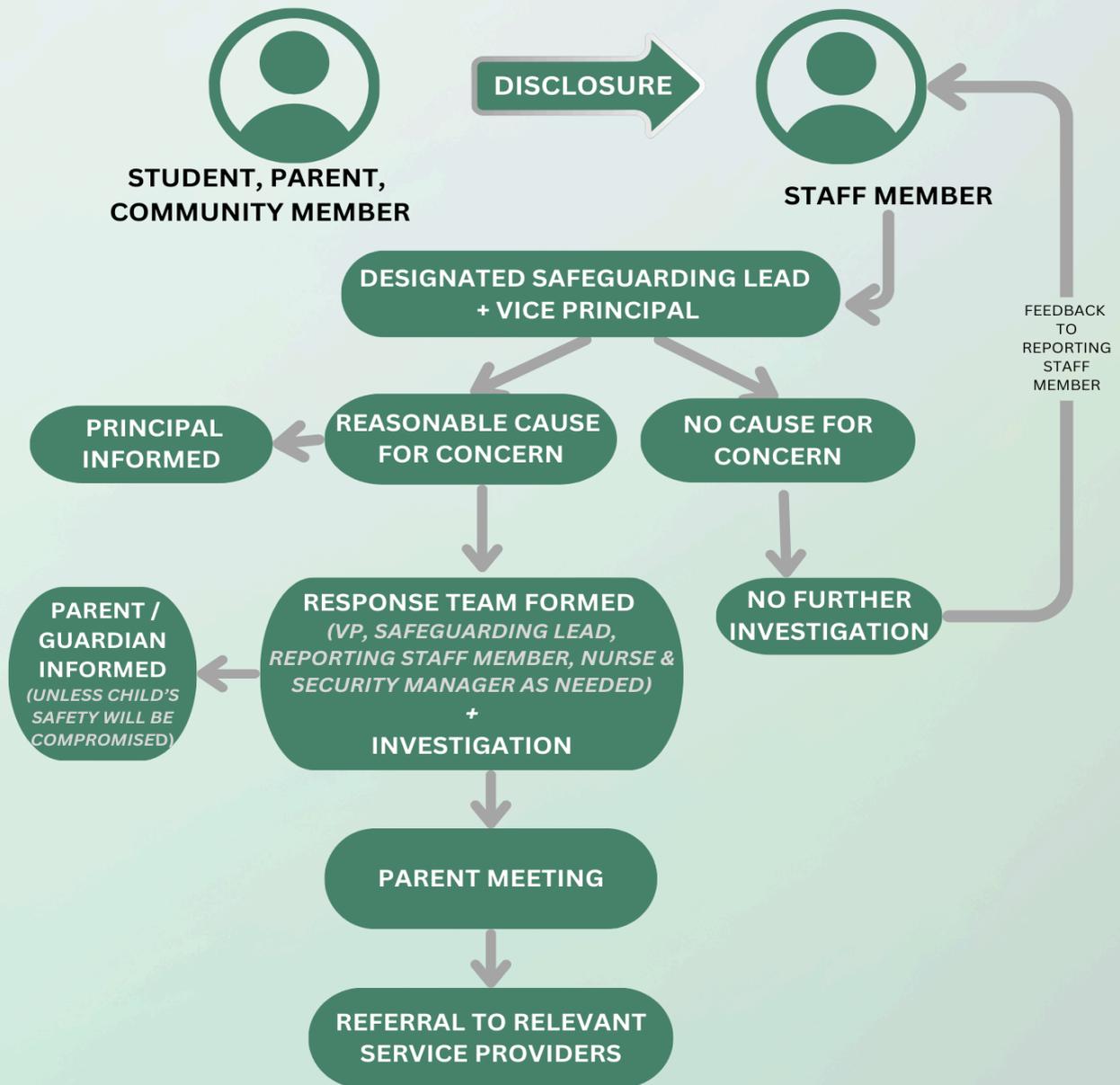
DO NOT:

- Promise to keep the matter secret
- Contact the parents/carer – this is the responsibility of Safeguarding Lead and VP
- Interrogate children or ask any leading questions. An open ended question of “help me understand what you just told me” after initial disclosure should suffice.
- Speak to anyone about whom a complaint has been made – this is the duty of the Safeguarding Lead.





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ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2023