



PODAR-ORT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Dear Podar-ORT,

In keeping with our Mission, Core Values, and best practices in governance policies in international schools, the Podar-ORT International Board of Directors has adopted a Child Protection Policy. This policy will help guide our school towards a safer, more effective, and clearer practices to safeguard the health and welfare of our students.

This important set of guidelines will help us work more uniformly and systematically to assure the appropriate protection of our students. As a school, we are committed to training staff appropriately and to keeping parents and students well-informed about the practices.

As we integrate guidelines like these into the “life” of the community, it is important to note that Podar-ORT’s Child Protection Policy is also based with the international law and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which India is a signatory.

I believe that as a community committed to seeing our students and children flourish, we all need to work in partnership and abide by the policies and procedures engaged by the school and the school’s Board of Directors. Our policy and this manual represent a significant collective understanding that all Podar-ORT students should be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

I thank you for your support of our efforts and invite you to contact your school counselor or principal regarding any specific questions you may have in this regard.

Sincerely,

Head of School

Child Protection Manual 2017 - 2018

Child abuse and neglect are of growing concern in schools throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. Podar-ORT International School, Worli, Mumbai endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which the host country, India, is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. The Podar-ORT International School, Worli, Mumbai will maintain an updated manual to assure correct procedures and processes remain in place to protect all students. Podar-ORT will distribute our manual annually to all parents and applicants, will communicate our manual annually to students, will provide training for all staff, and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children.

This Policy is endorsed by the Podar Board of Directors

RESPONSIBILITY TO ACCREDITATION AGENCIES

Child abuse and neglect – particularly sexual abuse – are among the world's most serious concerns, with millions of cases reported to children's protective service organizations each year. It is estimated globally that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact (International Center for Assault Prevention: www.internationalcap.org/abuse_statistics.html).

Yet, it is also estimated that much abuse is underreported either because the victims are afraid to tell anyone what has happened, or the adults who observe or suspect the abuse are unsure of what to do. International schools have a moral as well as legal duty to safeguard the welfare of our students, as well as those children using our facilities or involved with our programs and activities.

The Podar-ORT Child Protection Manual sets forth the steps our faculty, staff, students, volunteers, contractors, and consultants are required to take to minimize the threat of child abuse in our schools and to respond promptly and effectively should abuse be observed, suspected, or disclosed. International schools are responsible to meet the program and best practice standards of various accrediting agencies around the world; in some places international schools must also meet accreditation standards of the host country as well. It is important for international schools to be knowledgeable about and respond to recent changes in standards of accreditation.

The Council of International Schools (CIS) and the Middle States Association (MSA) have added specific standards related to Child Protection Programs in their most recent edition of accreditation standards. International schools can reasonably anticipate that, following the leadership of The Council of International Schools and the Middle States Association, other accreditation agencies will similarly include Child Protection Standards in the next revision of their standards. All international schools will be well served by these standards in developing the Child Protection Program for their community.

Below is the statement from the Council of International Schools and Middle States.

To reflect evolving programs and practices in the areas of Child Protection and related issues as well as the continuity of learning programs in exceptional circumstances, CIS and MSA are introducing a specific number of amendments to the Accreditation Standards and Indicators contained in the 8th Edition of the “Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation”. These amendments will apply to all schools, whatever their position in the accreditation cycle, from 1st

January 2013 onwards.

Standard D1

The school shall have faculty and support staff that are sufficient in numbers and with the qualifications, competencies and sound moral character necessary to carry out the school’s programmes, services, and activities, to support fulfillment of the mission and objectives, and to ensure student protection and well-being.

Indicator D1a

Recruitment and screening processes are in place to ensure that employees in all categories are appropriately qualified and of sound moral character.

Indicator E4b

A culture of shared responsibility for the social and emotional well-being and protection of students is promoted by the school leadership and teachers through programmes to address awareness, prevention and responsiveness to issues such as sexual harassment, substance abuse, hazing and bullying, and discrimination in any form.

Indicator G4b

Appropriate and regularly reviewed arrangements exist to cover threats to the security of people and premises as well as to support – to the extent possible - programme continuity under exceptional circumstances.

Definition of Terms

Child Protection is a broad term used to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In this document the term “child protection” applies to protection of children at Podar-ORT International School, Worli, Mumbai. Please note that this definition also includes harm to self.

Child Protection Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to protecting students from harm (to self and from others) and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of students. It serves to create a safe and positive environment for children and to demonstrate that the school is taking its duty and responsibility seriously.

Child protection concerns include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school which must be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

Child Abuse - According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting; children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects or trusts. International school communities have unique characteristics of which school personnel must be aware in terms of the individuals who are around our children. School personnel should be knowledgeable of the potential reasons why children may not be able to talk about any victimization they might have experienced.

To increase the Podar community awareness, this policy focuses on four main categories of abuse and provides basic information about the physical and behavioral signs associated with each type.

I. Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. (These symptoms could also indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation).

Possible Signs of physical abuse:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
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- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronic running away

II. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

Possible Signs of emotional abuse:

- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Persistent tiredness

- Lying

III. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging

children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

Possible Signs of sexual abuse:

- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Infection, bleeding
- Fear of people or places
- Aggression
- Regressive behaviors, bedwetting or stranger anxiety
- Excessive masturbation
- Sexually provocative
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically
- Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult
- or young person
- Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities
- Age inappropriate sexualized behavior or language

IV. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Possible indicators of neglect:

- Medical needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Poor hygiene
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Self-destructive

- Extreme loneliness
- Extreme need for affection
- Failure to grow
- Poor personal hygiene
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse

Long term impact of unmitigated child abuse The impact of child abuse can persist for a lifetime after the abuse has been committed. Some victims of abuse are resilient and thus manage to function and survive. Much research has established the relationship between long-term child abuse and life-time health and well-being, especially if the children do not get appropriate support to help them cope with the trauma. The most important point to consider is that children often are exposed to multiple forms of abuse and suffer a myriad of symptoms. Furthermore, all forms of abuse have the potential for long-term impact on the victims, and can affect the victim's ability to function as a human being. Abuse challenges the self-value, self-esteem, and sense of worth of its victims, rendering them hopeless, helpless and unable to live a complete life.

ong term impact of child abuse

- Poor educational achievement
 - Inability to complete responsibilities
 - Inability to live according to plan/ability
 - Inability to care for self
 - Inability to coexist, cooperate or work with others
 - Lack of self-confidence, prone to addiction
 - Inability to express love / or accept love
 - Inability to lead fairly, constant health problem
 - Prone to mental health problems
 - Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Attachment difficulties
 - Eating disorders
 - Poor peer relations, self-injurious behavior (e.g., suicide attempts)
- In addition to knowing the signs of victimization, below are some early warning signs to look out for in potential offenders:

Signs of offenders (students)

- Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects and activities
- Does not stop sexual misbehavior when told to stop
- Uses force and coercion in social situations
- Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality
- Socializes with children much younger

- Gives gifts, requires secrecy in relationships

Signs of offenders (adults)

- Has “favorite” student or child
- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
- Inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about students/children
- Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on Facebook/internet.

What happens when a teacher has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused?

These indicators of abuse and neglect will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting to the team, 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.

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 their suspicions to a member of the team and the Head of School. All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect. All Podar -ORT International School, Worli employees are also required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the counsellor within 48 hours for immediate response.

Procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or 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 counsellor within 48 hours. The counsellor will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and in cases of serious physical or sexual abuse or neglect, will immediately inform the Head of School and together they will set up a school-based response team to address the allegation. The response team will include the school nurse, counsellor, principal and other individuals as the Head of School 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). Determine the course of follow-up actions.

Step 2

a) Minor Cases

Most minor cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by school counselors, such as those involving:

- Student relationships 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, suicidal thoughts.

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Appropriate actions would include:

- Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information.
Depending upon the age of the child, these discussions may include drawing pictures and playing with dolls to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor, or administrator.
- Meetings with the family to present the School's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.

b) Serious Allegations

More serious allegations will involve reporting to outside resources:

- Severe depression
- Severe and/or ongoing physical abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and/or incest.

The following actions will be taken:

- Reporting to the social services where the law requires it.
- Reporting to the police authorities where the law requires it.
- Potential consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family (where applicable).
- Consultation with the school's attorney or another attorney

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

- The counselor will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The counselor will provide the child's teachers and the Head of School with ongoing support.
- The counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- The counselor will maintain contact with outside the rapists to monitor the child's progress. All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's school confidential records file