

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



INTRODUCTION



Children who join the Country Kids family are extremely important members of our community who come from closely related families where participation of the extended family members are permitted in ensuring the proper upbringing of the child. To this end, we at the Country Kids International School have a duty of care and responsibility for the pastoral care, welfare, and safety of the children in our care. By this charge, we do not relent in our efforts to carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities. And in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. However, issues such as corporal punishment, violence, abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation among others are sometimes prevalent in the education industry and schools. To demonstrate our strong position on these subjects, it is imperative that there exist a relatively comprehensive policy framework and guidelines for child protection guided by the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the National Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) and the Child and Family Welfare Policy (2014) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2005)

The school leadership, all staff, teaching, and ancillary are fully aware of issues concerning the welfare of our learners, alert to the signs of possible abuse and must know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.



GOAL OF THE POLICY

The overall goal of this policy is to help express activities and programmes to prevent, protect children and enforce the provisions of the constitution and other guidelines which aligns with international principles and beliefs. Country Kids International School's Child Protection Policy is also based on international laws such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of which Ghana is a signatory and has ratified most major international instruments relating to child protection.

RATIONAL OF THIS POLICY

The rational is to provide guidelines to protect children growing up in the four-corners of the Country Kids International School and ensure an established consistent system. Similarly, we hope to empower children and families to better understand that the school takes welfare issues seriously and demonstrate how we respond to situations of risk.

PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:

- a.** It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- b.** We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- c.** In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount; this overrides all other considerations.
- d.** A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

These two key articles from the UN Conventional on the Rights of the Child are important, and we wish to draw your attention to them:

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.

When your ward gains admission at Country Kids International School (CKIS), we assume you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted. The school has endorsed this Child Protection Policy that outlines the values by which all children in CKIS must be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

As part of our overall educational programs and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children and to ensure a safe environment in which all children can learn and grow, CKIS will:

- a.** Provide age-appropriate lessons for all grade levels to help learners understand personal safety, needs and rights.
- b.** Provide parents with materials and information sessions to help you better understand our programs and policy.

- c. Annually train teaching and non-teaching staff to appreciate and report issues of abuse and neglect.

By enrolling your child at CKIS, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by our governing Board. We want you to know that we sincerely value our partnership with you in providing safety and care of your children. It is for this reason that CKIS has permitted this Child Protection Policy that defines the standards by which our learners should be always treated; with respect and dignity.



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DEFINITION OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT



Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed, or not provided with proper care.

Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse, and a child may suffer more than one of them.

The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, caregiver or other with a duty of care towards a child.



EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting, or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes the seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the willful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or caregiver failing to provide adequate food, shelter, and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a child or young person is exploited, coerced and/or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something they need or desire and / or for the gain of a third person.

When we become aware of young people below the age of consent engaging in sexual activity or, where we have concerns about a 16/17-year-old in a sexual relationship the Designated Teacher has a duty to share this information with Governors and the Social Welfare Services.



POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR PHYSICAL ABUSE



Physical Indicators

Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday

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Possible Indicators for Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators

Well below average in height and weight; “failing to thrive”; poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self-mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).

Physical Indicators

Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR NEGLECT

Physical Indicators

Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; repeated accidents, especially burns.

Physical Indicators

Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that no carer is at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; exposure to violence including unsuitable videos

POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR SEXUAL ABUSE

Physical Indicators

Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen, or thighs; bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes.

chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections.

Avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers; unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.

Physical Indicators

What the child tells you; withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self-esteem; self-devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play; repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING WHEN A CHILD TELLS OF HIS OR HER ABUSE



It is important that you as the adult remain calm and confident when a child tells you what has been happening to him or her. Every child is different in how, when and where they will tell an adult about abusive experiences so it will most likely happen when you are least expecting it! Your facial expressions and your tone of voice are as important as what you say to the child.

Stay calm, listen, reassure the child and at times you may need to clarify what the child has said so that you can take the appropriate action. If a child, sees that you are upset or not able to cope with what he or she is telling you, he or she may not continue to tell you what has been happening or take back (i.e. retract) the original statements they have made.

DOs

- Listen, allow the child to tell as much as they want without interrupting (remember listening is not questioning)
- Respond reassuringly to the child
- If you do ask a question to avoid asking leading questions, ask only open questions that seek clarification so that you can decide what action you need to take
- Most importantly “BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAY”
- Document what the child said and the responses that you made and any clarifying questions asked (word for word and remember to put the date, time, place and who was present)

DON'Ts

- Question in a way that introduces words, phrases, people's names or concepts
- Indicate that you disbelieve the child
- Try to correct, confront, change, challenge or influence what they say
- Respond by saying “You should have told me sooner” or “Why did you let him/her do that?”

DISCLOSURES THAT INDICATE AN ABUSIVE EXPERIENCE



Those working with children know not to “question the child” if a disclosure of abuse is made. This is, correct in questions should not be asked if the child makes what could be considered a “clear disclosure” of abuse e.g. “Mum punched me in the head and made my nose bleed”, or “Uncle got into my bed and put his hand in my bum”.

These types of disclosures require (1) a reassuring response by an adult and (2) the adult to take immediate action by contacting the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher or Designated Teacher to kick start the procedure.

How a Parent can make a Complaint

If a parent has a concern, they can talk to the class teacher or any member of School Leadership Team (SLT) or the Headteacher. If they are still concerned, they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time, a parent may talk to a social welfare worker.

Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse

Where staff becomes aware of concerns or are approached by a child they should not investigate as this is the responsibility of Social Welfare or a counsellor, nurse, psychologist and other individuals as the Headteacher see fit. Staff should report these concerns immediately and full notes should be made. These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the EHT or Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The EHT or Designated Teacher will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to Social Welfare Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately. The Designated Teacher may consult with members of the SLT before a referral is made. During consultation with the Headteacher & SLT the child's details will be shared. No decision to refer a case to Social Welfare Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority.

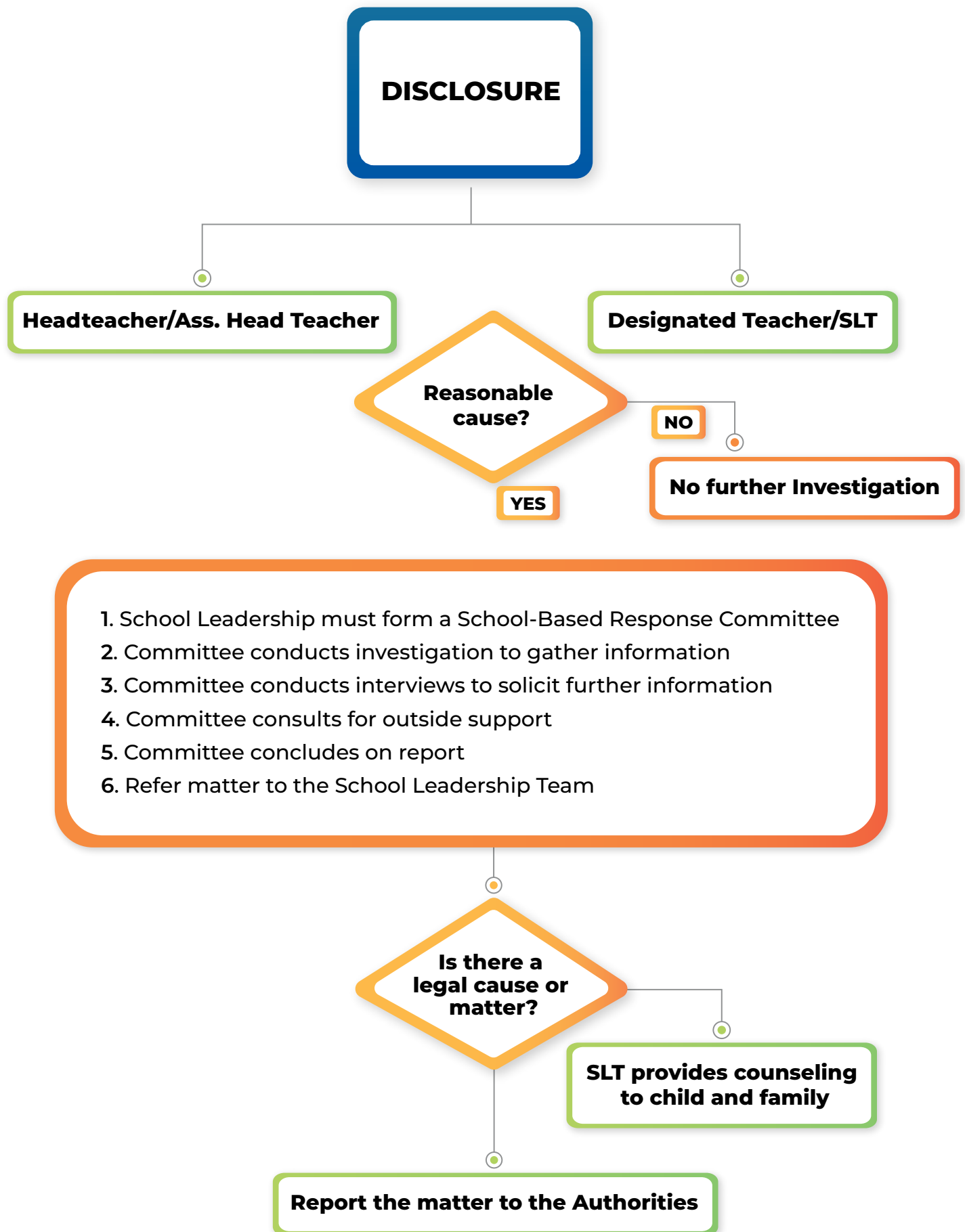
Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the headteacher or Designated Teacher (if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately.

Where the matter is referred to Social Welfare Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils or may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities. The Chair of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately. Child protection procedures will be followed.

All staff are mandated to report incidence of abuse and neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the Head teacher within 24 hours for immediate response. The following Disclosure procedure must be followed:





CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING



Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held “in confidence”. In the interests of the child, staffs have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. Where abuse is suspected schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies.

In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a need to know basis. Should a child transfer to another school whilst there is current child protection concerns the school will share these concerns with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

RECORD KEEPING



All child protection records, information and confidential notes must be kept in separate files in a locked drawer with only the headteacher and Designated teacher having access. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person and are only accessible by members of the safeguarding team.

