

ISB CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

International School of Bucharest (ISB) Child Protection Policy supports Article 3.1 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child which states that, ‘ in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. We are committed to prevent child abuse and protect children within our community.’

The policy sets out to outline the actions that will be taken to ensure that all students are protected from all forms of abuse.

We believe that all children have the right to:

- Grow up in a safe secure and caring environment
- Be protected from harm – including neglect, abuse and exploitation
- Be listened to, and heard
- Be valued in terms of their language, culture, religion, sex and race
- Be treated as an individual
- This is a collective responsibility of all adults in our community

Recruitment of staff

ISB recruits staff from all over the world and therefore has limited access to up-to-date Criminal Records Checks (CRB). In most western country’s CRB checks are possible and are made at the point of issuing a contract to new staff. No system will guarantee that unsuitable staff will not be recruited to our school, nor will any system of checks prevent the first offender. However there are procedures which will ensure that all precautions have been taken to ensure that all staff can safely work with children:

Degree/post grad certificates are confirmed through the Romanian authorities by the HR department. Original copies are to be given to the HR department on arrival.

A **medical certificate** is sought – either from the country of departure or on arrival in Romania.

References from the present employer (head/principal) and any previous recent employer are sought. Gaps in the employment history should be investigated.

If the staff member applies from Romania – a police check can be obtained from the police. At the point of contract the teacher must provide such a form.

If the staff member applied from the UK, the school will be able to confirm whether a police check has been obtained. This is part of the reference. If the teacher’s CRB check is more than a year old a current one should be sought. The present school head/principal should be contacted directly as one of the referees.

If the staff member applies from some other country in the world, an up-to-date police clearance form should be obtained at the candidate’s own expense from that country. Discretion should be used when confirming the appointment to see that the staff member has not been seen to be moving too often.

Interviewing new staff

Opportunities should be offered to candidates to explain whether there is any reason why they should not work with children that they feel the school should know about. Gaps in employment should be questioned.

Verification from previous employers should be sought either in written form or by telephone – ‘is there any reason that you are aware of that X should not work with children?’

The present head/principal should always be asked for a reference – either verbally or in writing and the above question should be always asked.

1. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

- Infliction of physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing death, disfigurement, skin bruising, impairment of physical or emotional health or loss or impairment of any bodily function;
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child’s bodily functioning;
- Committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offence against a child as defined in the criminal code, or intentionally touching, either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes;
- 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;
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by the criminal code;
- 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;
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of all above.

Physical Abuse:

“Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child under the age of 18 by a parent or caregiver.”

Ref: Lois J. Engelbrecht (2002)

These injuries may include beatings, shaking, burns, human bites, strangulation, or immersion in scalding water, with resulting bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, burns, retinal haemorrhage, or internal injuries.

Sexual Abuse:

“Sexual exploitation involving physical contact between a child and another person.”

Ref: Lois J. Engelbrecht (2002)

Exploitation implies an inequality of power between the child and the abuser on the basis of

- Age
- Physical Size
- Nature of the emotional relationship
- Media (photographic, pornographic, paedophile clips)

Physical contact includes:

- Anal
- Genital
- Oral
- Breast contact
- Inappropriate touching of other parts of the body that cause discomfort

Physical Neglect:

“Neglect is the chronic failure of a parent or caregiver to provide a child under 18 with the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunity, protection and supervision.”

Ref: Lois J. Engelbrecht (2002)

Emotional Maltreatment:

“The consistent failure of a parent or caregiver to provide a child with appropriate support, attention and affection” or “A chronic pattern of behaviours such as belittling, ridiculing and humiliating a child”.

Ref.: Louis J. Engelbrecht (2002)

The following outlines indicators of abuse and neglect and should be used by the educator as a guideline for reporting. It is not necessary to know the details of the possible abuse or be certain whether or not an indicator means abuse has taken place in order to report. The reporting law specifies reporting when you have “reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience, to suspect child abuse.

The severity of an indicator or statements by the child as to the non-accidental nature of the injury may indicate possible abuse.

For signs and symptoms of abuse see Appendix 2.

2. PROCEDURES

Initial reporting guidelines for the teacher

Notification of abuse or neglect is required when “a person suspects on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected”.

Ref: Child Protection Act (1993)

How to respond to a child’s disclosure of abuse

ISB recognises that the class teacher/tutor is the first stage in the pastoral care of the child in the school. Teachers and resident staff are well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, changes of behaviour or failure to develop or thrive.

In the UK all state schools are linked into the social services and the child protection procedures. There is inter agency training to facilitate communication. In Romania there are minimal services to communicate with. Whilst there are clear guidelines as to what course of action to take on suspicion of child abuse in the UK and other western countries there are minimal support services in Romania.

If a teacher becomes aware of the above and is concerned for the child, the Director of School or his/her deputy who is the School’s Child Protection Officer (CPO) shall be informed immediately. The Director will investigate as far as is possible and involve the relevant ‘in-school’ services, counselling, parents, foster parents etc. The outcome of this will depend upon the individual case but it could result in the child’s name being entered onto the Child Protection register in the school.

The Director of School will keep the class teacher, Head of Key Stage, SENCO up to date with developments.

Every attempt will be made to offer support for the child whilst at school and it is hoped that the school will provide an environment in which he/she can relax and spend the school day in complete confidence and safety.

The educator's role is not to investigate or verify the situation, but rather to make the report and set in motion the process of getting help for the child.

A child may tell you directly and specifically what is going on, or s/he may hint indirectly at a situation. Sometimes, the child will use "strings attached," such as asking the teacher to promise not to tell anyone (a promise the teacher cannot keep) or, a child may claim the problem belongs to someone else, that s/he is only there about a friend. Judgment should be used in deciding how much to discuss about the situation with the child. Often a child is willing to reveal the details of an incident only once. As far as possible, the child should be encouraged to speak to a school counsellor who is trained to deal with these situations.

Support of the child is important. In order to do this, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Reassure the child that it is okay to tell what happened.
- Ask the child if it is okay for a school counsellor/head to be present.
- Limit any questioning to the minimum necessary to seek clarification only, strictly avoiding 'leading' the student or adult who has approached them by making suggestions or asking questions that introduce their own ideas about what may have happened. (Do not ask questions like 'Did he do X to you?', asking a minimum number of questions such as 'Tell me what has happened?')
- Stop asking questions as soon as the adult/student has disclosed that he or she believes that something abusive has happened to him or her or to someone else.
- Tell the child what to expect. If you don't know, say so, but let the child know s/he can be supported by you.
- Project a calm, understanding and supportive attitude to the child.
- Avoid having the child repeat her/his explanation to different staff.
- Let the child know that you must tell authorities to get help. Explain that you will have to tell another person because s/he is at risk. Use a script such as "If you tell me something that makes me feel that you are unsafe or at risk in any way, then I will need to tell someone else".
- Reassure the child that it is not her/his fault.
- Make clear, detailed notes of the conversation.
- Respect the child's privacy by not discussing the situation out of school.
- If the head/Counsellor has not been present for disclosure, meet a counsellor as soon as possible to disclose the information you have been given. Either take the child with you, or ensure s/he is left in a secure location. The Head/counsellor will complete the Document of Suspected Child Abuse (Appendix 2).
- The counsellor will then follow the Child Protection Procedures.
- After reporting, it is important to maintain a supportive presence for the child.

In addition:-

- It is important to understand the importance of early reporting.
- An educator who reports in good faith is protected from civil liability.
- Reporting a child disclosure is a request for an investigation.

3. RECORDING PROCEDURE FOR THE EDUCATOR:

- Be specific about the context in which the child disclosed.
- Record notes using the child's own words – try not to add your own interpretation and judgments (or make separate notes about these).
- Describe any injuries you see. Take the child to the school nurse who should take photos of the injuries, bruises, cuts and or bleeding, and write a report.
- Sign all notes with the date and time as well as name of the signatory.

- Make sure that notes are given to a school counsellor and that they are stored under lock and key (NOT in the child's regular school files).

4. REPORTING: COUNSELLOR'S PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED

ABUSE

1. The child is referred by a member of staff or self-refers to the CPO officer/Counsellor.
2. The CPO/counsellor meets with the child, and completes the Document of Suspected Child Abuse (Appendix 3) and notifies the DH, Headmaster, of suspected abuse in person or by email, if personal means is not possible.
3. The school nurse examines the child, documents and takes photographic evidence, where applicable, if it has not already been done.
4. The counsellor informs the DH/Head verbally, within same school day, of the meeting with the child.
5. The counsellor completes the documentation and collects the evidence (photographs by nurse, etc).
6. The Director and the Principal, where appropriate, each personally receive a written hard copy and an electronic copy of the report (labelled CONFIDENTIAL and URGENT) from the counsellor within 24 hours.
7. A decision, based on the counsellor's recommendation and school procedure, will be made by Deputy Principal or Principal, where appropriate, within 24 hours of the receipt of the counselling report.
8. The procedure to be followed for child abuse cases:-
 - a) Ensure the physical and emotional safety of the child – if the child faces danger by returning to the family, (family abuse) an alternative living arrangement must be made.
 - b) Assess and provide appropriate medical care.
 - c) Arrange a meeting with parents, including the Director, Principal, if appropriate, and counsellor, **as soon as possible** but no later than **96** hours of the abuse being disclosed to the counsellor.
 - d) At the time of the meeting, the School to arrange counselling and support, via a school-approved psychologist for family therapy.
 - e) If this recommendation is not followed to the satisfaction of the psychologist, the school and the family, the case will be reviewed to see whether the child is fit to return to an academic environment and whether governmental authorities should be notified.
9. The Counsellor will meet with the child and continue to provide support, as deemed appropriate, by the psychologist/psychiatrist.

All reports or other actions must be kept confidential.

Each incident of possible abuse should constitute a separate referral.

Immunity:

The school shall not hold responsible or fault any school employee making a report of abuse that is later judged to be false, unless it can be demonstrated that the person wilfully and intentionally falsified a report.

Suspected or confirmed cases of physical and sexual abuse, physical neglect and emotional maltreatment must be reported. The reporter should have reasonable cause or reasonable suspicion to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred. The reporter is not required to have proof. Abuse that took place in the past must be reported as long as the child remains in the home of the abuser or, as long as the child is at risk of further victimisation from the abuser.

5. COUNSELLOR'S CHECKLIST FOR FOLLOW-UP AFTER DISCLOSURE

After disclosure, the counsellor must determine the risk for re-offence by considering the questions:- What? / Who? / When? / Where?

If the offence is ongoing and the child lives with the offender, decisions must be made as to whether:-

1. The counsellor will report it to the authorities (p.6, Reporting Procedure)
2. Someone will be brought in to protect the child, such as a non-offending parent.
3. There are immediate actions the child could take, apart from reporting.

6. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:

School

Doors should have clear glass windows – staff must be visible from outside the room.

The school must be a safe place for all children.

7. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING DISCLOSURES OF TEACHER/ EMPLOYEE OFFENDERS

When a child discloses about inappropriate behaviour of school personnel, the school must respond no differently than if the alleged offender is a parent, relative or other. Teachers have daily access to children and the emotional and physical safety of a child is determined by the access of the offender to the child, thus disclosure of teacher offences must be handled immediately and with seriousness.

The integrity of a school and a system is NOT dependent on whether or not an offender exists; instead, the integrity of the school or system IS dependent on whether and how that school responds when an alleged offender within the school is reported. It is the duty of the Headmaster to prevent and deter sexual harassment, as well as to provide procedures for the resolution or prosecution of sexual harassment between teacher/employee and child.

Stage 1

1. The counsellor reports the suspected abuse to the DH, Principal or Director
2. The child's parents are informed immediately.
3. Restrictions are placed on the teacher's access to the child, and possibly to all children.

Stage 2

1. The Director sees the teacher concerned, with a witness.
2. The teacher is isolated from the school, with no access allowed to the school, pending investigation.
3. The Director meets with the teacher, outside the school, if necessary, for further discussion.
4. In light of evidence, the Director decides the appropriate course of action.
5. The Director takes appropriate action. This could include a verbal warning/a formal warning/dismissal/re-instatement.

Stage 3 (External to the School)

1. The Director reports the suspected abuse to the police for investigation.
2. The alleged offender is reported to the Ministry of Education for possible administrative action.
3. Where a case has been concluded, a report should be sent to the offender's embassy and the Ministry of Education.

8. STAFF TRAINING AND SUPERVISION:

Every year, all staff:-

- Should be made aware of the school's policy and procedures regarding child protection.
- Have regular, mandatory child protection training.

The School Nurse should be part of the Child Protection team.

9. USEFUL WEBSITES and other documentation

- 'Working together: a guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from abuse' (DfES – 1999)
- 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (DfES 2004)
- 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (DfES 2003)

All the above are available from:

www.dh.gov.uk

www.dfes.gov.uk

The Independent School Standards Inspectorate (ISI) is also a useful source of relevant information:

<http://www.isi.net/documentsandresources/>

Appendix 1

CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS ACCORDING TO

ARTICLE 19 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND ACCORDING TO ROMANIAN LAW

A Child Protection Policy is important for schools for prevention, intervention and healing. This includes educating parents and teachers, providing information and resources. It is also our obligation, in loco parentis, to protect children as Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states and current Romanian Laws states:

Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect:

No one should hurt the child in any way. Even the parents have no right to hurt the child. Adults should make sure that the child is protected from abuse, violence and neglect.

Article 34: Sexual Abuse:

Every child has the right to be protected from sexual abuse. This means that nobody can do anything to the child's body that s/he does not want them to do, such as touching, taking pictures and making the child say things that s/he does not want to say.

Further training is available on developing intervention in the region.

Ref: Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 25:

5. Parents or guardians are forbidden to treat a child in ways or manners which constitute unlawful caring.

Article 26:

A person is forbidden to:

1. Commit or omit acts which result in torturing a child's body or mind.

Ref: Child Protection Act 2003

Appendix 2

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Indicators of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body.
- Bruises of different ages (various colours).
- Injuries reflecting the shape of the article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, table tennis bat).
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or holidays.
- 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.
- Extreme fluctuations in weight.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse:

- Venereal disease in a child of any age.
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital or anal areas.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Refusing to change into gym clothes.
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint.
- Pregnancy at 11 or 12 with no history of peer socialization.
- Sexual knowledge, behaviour, or use of language not appropriate to age level.

Indicators of Neglect:

- Child is left unattended at home for long periods of time.
- Child consistently comes to school dirty and wearing clothes that have not been cleaned.
- Child consistently comes to school without snacks, lunch, or money to purchase lunch.
- No one accounts for the child before or after school.
- Demonstrating disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering.
- Lack of necessary dental or medical care.
- Untreated illness or injury.
- Child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision.
- Weight fluctuations (loss/gain).

Indicators of Emotional Maltreatment:

- Lack of attachment between child and parent.
- Lack of responsiveness to the environment.
- Failure to thrive.
- Parent is highly critical and negative towards the child.
- Parent has a highly unrealistic expectation of the child.

Behavioural indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse. Together with other indicators they may warrant a referral.

Appendix 3

DIRECTOR/COUNSELLOR'S DOCUMENTATION OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Child's Name:

Parent(s) Name(s):

D.O. B. / Tutor Group

Contact number:

Passport/Country:

Person who registers concern:

Statement of concern/suspicion:

How concern came about (e.g. child verbal report, physical observation, diary writing):

Nature, frequency & dates of suspected abuse:

Information on previous injuries or background data

Child's current whereabouts:

Considered to be in immediate danger:

Yes

No

If Yes – why?

Examined by a health professional?

Yes

No

(Report attached; if yes.)

Urgency for medical attention:

Names of family members involved:

Any other agencies or persons involved:

Recommended action:

Report submitted by:

Date:

Director's agreed action:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 4

INDICATORS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT WHICH CAN BE USED AS A GUIDELINE FOR REPORTING

The following outlines indicators of abuse and neglect and should be used by the educator as a guideline for reporting. You do not need to know the details of the possible abuse or to be certain whether or not an indicator means abuse has taken place in order to report. The reporting law specifies reporting when you have “reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect.”

Reasonable cause/suspicion exists when it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain, based upon facts, that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing, when appropriate, on his or her training and experience, to suspect child abuse.

The severity of an indicator or statements by the child as to the non-accidental nature of the injury may indicate possible abuse.

Listen to as much as the child wants to tell you without pushing the child for details. Try to keep limits, giving the child alternatives to talk to others in the support system, if more time is needed.

Listen to as much as the child wants to tell you without pushing the child for details. Try to keep limits, giving the child alternatives to talk to others in the support system, if more time is needed.

Explore the feelings and concerns the child has about the experience. These can include:-

- Guilt
- Fear
- Shame
- Anger

Affirm that the experience actually was “assault” and, thus, s/he is never to blame for someone else’s action. Affirm each of the feelings, while also determining if those feelings are overwhelming to the child, then work on helping the child put those feelings within a healthy limit.

Explore the support system so the child can have someone to talk with:-

- Parents or other adult relative?
- Friend?
- Trusted adult such as a teacher, friend’s parent, minister?

Explore the activities/hobbies the child enjoys and help her/him continue to do these things:-

- Movies with friends
- Shopping with friends
- Parties that are safe
- Arts, writing

End the session by making sure the child knows what to do, if attempted or actual abuse happens again:-

- Say NO, or run away to somewhere safe – ask the child to specify to whom.
- Tell someone – ask the child to specify to whom.

Appendix 5

FEARS OF DISCLOSURE

A child may be frightened of disclosing what has happened because of fears of:-

Remembering: Sexually abused children often cope by pushing the experience as far back in their minds as they can, to “forget” and avoid feeling hurt again.

Losing love: Abuse makes most victims feel “dirty.” Child victims also often feel responsible for what happened to them. Because of these, they worry that their parents and friends will stop loving them, once they learn about the abuse. They fear the separation from loved ones that could result from their telling.

Shame & guilt: Children either know or can sense that their sexual experiences with adults are wrong. This makes telling someone and acknowledging it occurred, shameful. Older children have also been known to suffer more from a sense of guilt than younger ones.

Being blamed: Children fear that they will be blamed for the sexual touches and that they somehow wanted it. People tend to believe adults more than they would believe children. Offenders also often make the excuse that their victims “asked” to be touched sexually. Children ask for affection and attention, which is their right, and not for sex about which they do not, as yet, have appropriate context for consent.

Further harm: Offenders often threaten their victims and their families as a means of maintaining control. Victims then carry the burden of keeping their families safe by not telling.

Appendix 6

CURRICULUM: AN INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL SAFETY

Empowering schools and children in the prevention of child abuse can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Lessons are available from Primary Learning Support to cover the nine major concepts in the Primary and Secondary Schools. It is only one methodology and based on experiences with children and professionals working with children. At least one-third of our children, boys and girls, are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18. In order to help protect children, the lessons focus on the information and skill deficits found in many children and their families that make them most vulnerable to be exploited:-

- Adults who are afraid to talk about sex with their children and thus children are left without even a vocabulary to talk about what may have happened.
- Children who are told to obey parents and respect all adults unconditionally, thus not building any skills in assertiveness or decision making.
- Children who are not allowed their own feelings; instead adults tell children, “Don’t cry,” “Don’t be afraid,” “It’s bad to be angry,” “Don’t laugh at that,” thus often removing the inner signals children need to protect themselves and understand what is happening.
- When forgiveness is forced upon victims of abuse, adding further responsibility for an assault they are not to blame for in any way.
- When family sanctity, respect and shame are all used incorrectly to keep silent about the sexual abuse of our children.

The nine major concepts that can be taught through these lessons are:-

- Body access and the right to be safe
- A continuum of touch from safe to unsafe
- Intuition and using feelings for safety
- The right to say “NO”
- Safety rules
- Support systems
- Private body parts
- Sexual contact with an adult is never the child’s fault
- Secrets about touching are not okay

The nine major concepts are taught within three major components of Personal Safety lessons for children:

1. Information Some information needed by children (depending on age):

- Touching rules (boundaries)
- Body parts vocabulary
- Sexuality / gender differences and issues
- Support systems
- Laws
- Telling / reporting for early intervention

2. Skills

- Assertiveness
- How to tell (using support systems)
- Decision making

3. Building Self-esteem - To practise the skills of:-

- *Understanding feelings/emotions*
- Affirmation of worth and rights
- Building / teaching empathy