



SISHYA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Statement:

Sishya is actively committed to ensuring that our students are educated in a healthy environment free of harmful experiences, both physical and mental.

Our Child Protection Policy is guided by:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- International Task Force on Child Protection Report & Recommendations (2015)
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO, 2012)

Our goals are:

“To 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.”
(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)

We strongly believe that *“Every child has the right to life and survival and to be shielded from any form of hardship, abuse or neglect including physical, psychological, mental and emotional abuse and neglect”*
(Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012)

Our Child Protection Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguard children from harm. It makes clear that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to Sishya.

Aims:

- Safeguard children from abuse.
- Promote a culture of safety and trust within Sishya so that students and parents feel confident to seek
- appropriate help.
- Bring about clarity, for all stakeholders of Sishya, of what constitutes child protection.
- Provide staff with clear procedural guidelines on how to respond suitably to concerns regarding the welfare of a child.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed.

Rationale

- Sishya recognises its responsibilities for child protection.
- The welfare of every child at Sishya is paramount - irrespective of gender, age, religion, nationality, language, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation or identity. All students are equally entitled to protection.
- The policy applies to all staff and students at the school.
- This applies both within campus and in external settings involving events involving the school

A **child** is defined as any person below the age of 18 years, currently enrolled at Sishya.

Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be the failure to act to prevent harm. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, child sexual abuse & peer on peer abuse.

Scope:

The Child Protection Policy applies to all members of the Sishya community - all part time or full time employees are bound to this Child Protection Policy as per their contractual agreement with Sishya.



Reporting:

Children are encouraged to report abuse via one of the Safety Boxes at school or verbally to a trusted individual. The confidant will seek advice from the School Counsellor within 24 hours. The Principal once notified starts the confidential school-based Child Protection Response Team to address the allegation. For serious matters like penetrative assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment or pornography the school will assist the victim to approach the Special Juvenile Police Unit or local police and will be taken to safety if the danger is continuing and immediate.

Safety Measures at School:

- Regular developmentally appropriate discussions and counselling with the student(s).
- Communication with the full Child Protection Response Team to share information and next steps
- Meetings with the family to present the School's concerns.

More serious allegations will involve reporting to outside resources:

- Reporting to the police authorities where the law requires it.
- Consultation with the school's attorney or another attorney.
- Referral to external professional counsellor/psychologist if required

Security on Campus:

- All buildings on campus are monitored by CCTV.
- The gates are always manned by a security guard.
- All student ID cards are trackable while the student is on campus.
- Students are not allowed to leave campus, during class hours without a gate pass.
- Safety Boxes are placed at different locations on campus, by which children can report abuse/harm.

School Staff Signatories to Code of Conduct:

- Employee Self-Declaration of any prior circumstances regarding interactions with children.
- Code of Conduct highlights the need to
 - Treat everyone with courtesy, respect, patience and consideration.
 - Maintain physical, emotional and sexual boundaries in all interactions
 - Maintain professional standards
 - Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse

Composition of current Child Protection Committee (2023-24):

- Principal – Mrs. Omana Thomas
- Management Representative – Ms. Sandhya Thomas
- Junior School Representative – Mrs. Anuradha Lakshman
- Senior School Representative - Mrs. Anjana Makil
- Counsellor – Mrs. Sharada Nair
- PTA President – Mrs. Sumangala Verma
- PTA Vice President – Ms. Kavitha
- External Member: Mrs. Shaan Katari Libby, Advocate
- Student Representative (Head Girl): Tia Thadani
- Student Representative (Head Boy) : Adi Ramanla