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**The American
School Foundation®**

Child Protection Policy
Safeguarding & Promoting Welfare of Children

ASF Mission Statement

The American School Foundation, A.C. is an academically rigorous, international, university-preparatory school, which offers students from diverse backgrounds the best of American independent education. In all aspects of school life, students are encouraged to love learning, live purposefully and to become responsible, contributing citizens of the world.

Policy Statement

The American School Foundation, A.C. is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its students. Our faculty, staff and volunteers share this commitment by demonstrating their understanding of how each adult working on behalf of the school plays an active role in the protection of children from harm and to promote their well-being. All ASF staff are caretakers of students on school grounds and to promote a climate where everyone feels comfortable in belonging to the ASF community and be able to have conversations about children safety. When concerned about the welfare of a child, faculty and staff members should always act in the interest of the child's well-being.

Introduction

The American School Foundation, A.C. aims at providing an environment where all children are safe, secure, valued, respected, and listened to. Safeguarding means to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risk of harm to children's welfare is minimized. It is important to state that whenever we have concerns about a child's welfare, we may also reach out to external agencies/services (i.e. Secretaria de Educación Pública, Departamento de Integración Familiar, etc.) for counsel but not after working in full partnership with our employees and families. All members of the ASF community have a professional and ethical obligation to identify students who are at risk of abuse, neglect or bullying and are in need of support and protection. They will make this aware to the appropriate pedagogical leadership team member and when necessary to a child protection team member in the division. Therefore, members of the ASF faculty, staff, and student body acknowledge, sign and adhere to the school's Code of Conduct where Student Protection Policy is included.

Our work in safeguarding and protecting children must always have regard for the relevant guidance issued by the Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP) and should be in line with the Local Authorities. Our procedures will be followed by all adults, including volunteers, working with or on behalf of The American School Foundation, A.C. See Appendix 1

Keeping children safe

The American School Foundation S.A. has a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. We do this by:

- promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within ASF, which is an expectation when we develop and practice the IB Learner Profile.
- ensuring that faculty, staff, bus monitors, extended learning teachers and monitors, volunteers, and service contractors are appropriately trained in safeguarding and child protection according to their role and responsibilities
- encouraging the self-esteem and self-assertiveness of all students through the curriculum so that the children themselves become aware of danger and risk and what is acceptable behaviour and what is not
- Practicing openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in ensuring the protection of their children
- working closely with the school's Safety and Security Department, including secure management of the building entrances
- As part of professional development and family education, detail who adults and students can seek out to report their concerns and whom they can count on for support
- practicing safe recruitment procedures when appointing staff or volunteers to work in our school to the best of the leadership team's ability, which includes thorough reference checks
- taking all practical steps to ensure that school premises are as secure as possible, and welcoming visitors in a safe and secure manner
- operating robust and sensible health and safety procedures and undertaking the required risk assessments when planning out of school activities, field trips and camps.
- ensuring that any community groups which use our premises for the provision of services to children operate appropriate child protection procedures
- fully respecting confidentiality requirements when managing a child protection matter
- working in partnership with all other services and agencies involved in the safeguarding of children

Managing safeguarding

All staff must be clear about their own role and that of others in providing a caring and safe environment for all students. All staff must know how they should respond to any concerns about an individual child that may arise. All faculty and staff are mandatory reporters thus they are legally obligated to report when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child under the age of 18, has been abused (physically, emotionally, or sexually) or neglected or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Once they learn about a situation, this must be reported within twenty four hours to a school counselor, a member of the leadership team, or a member of the Child Safety Committee.

Staff training

All staff are made aware of ASFs systems and protocols which support safeguarding during their induction period and regularly thereafter. These include:

- ASF Child Protection Policy
- ASF staff code of conduct

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Step-by-step protocols if you are concerned a student is being abused
- Policy on digital platforms
- Peer abuse policy

All staff receive Child Protection Training on a yearly basis. The primary goal is to equip them with the skills needed to uphold an environment that is safe for children. New staff are trained as part of their induction process and before students arrive for classes.

The Designated Child Protection Response Team, Deputy Designated Child Protection Lead, the Director of Academic Affairs and Executive Director have higher-level child protection training.

Recognition of abuse

All staff must be alert to identify if a child is exposed to harm and report any concerns to a counselor or the designated Child Protection Response Team member.

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 can cause abuse to a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting; children may be abused by an individual known to them, or more rarely by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

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 victimization they might have experienced.

Types of abuse include:

- Physical abuse: intentional (non-accidental) physical injury of a student by another student, a parent, a person responsible for the care of the child, or any member of the ASF community. Physical abuse includes: skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, extreme discipline demonstrating disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering.
- Emotional abuse: an act of commission or omission by a student, a parent, a person responsible for the care of a child, or any member of the ASF community that significantly impairs the emotional well-being of the affected student. Such behaviors include: humiliation; threats to injure or withdraw emotional or physical support;

isolation from social contacts; and withholding things necessary for mental health such as respect, security, limits, attention, affection and love.

- Sexual abuse:
 - A) Any unwanted /non consensual sexual activity or situation between students is not accepted and considered sexual abuse.
 - B) Any sexual activity/advancement/verbal interaction or suggestion or situation involving any adult community member or a person responsible for the care of the child is considered sexual abuse.
- Physical neglect: Withholding (by a parent, a person responsible for the care of the child, or any member of the ASF community) of those things necessary for the student's health and normal development. This includes adequate food, clothing, shelter, sleep, supervision, medical treatment and/or education.
- Cyber abuse: online behavior which is reasonably likely to have a seriously threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating effect on a person. It is behaviour that threatens to hurt a person socially, psychologically or even physically. Includes: trolling, flaming, sexting, cyberbullying, cyber hate, sextortion, image-based abuse.
- Bullying/Harassment: is a specific type of behavior (physical, verbal, social/emotional and cyber aggression) that is repetitive and intended to harm, disturb, intimidate or humiliate and is often characterized by an imbalance of power between individuals or groups.”

– Adopted by the Board of Trustees, May 2008

Based on the definition by Mexican educational authorities, bullying is:

- A violent or aggressive behavior that is repeated and takes place constantly.
- The aggression takes place over a period of time.
- Intentional. The aggressor's intent is to cause harm.
- In cases of school bullying there are three basic players: the victim(s), the aggressor(s) and the bystander(s) (students or faculty of the school who observe the aggression).

-Family Handbook 6.13

Signs of abuse include (but are not limited to):

- the student says he/she has been abused or asks a question which gives rise to that inference
- there is no reasonable or consistent explanation for a student's injury; the injury is unusual in kind or location; there have been a number of injuries; there is a pattern to the injuries
- the student's behaviour is atypical or stands out from the group
- there is a sudden negative change in the student's behaviour
- the student asks to drop subjects with a particular teacher and seems reluctant to discuss the reasons
- the student has shown non-adaptive age appropriate behaviors

- The student is highly anxious
- the student loses or gains weight
- the student appears neglected, e.g.: dirty, hungry, inadequately clothed
- the student is reluctant to go home, or has been openly rejected by his/her parents or caregivers
- attendance and attitudes to learning deteriorate.
- Sexual knowledge, behavior, games or use of language not appropriate to age level

ASF recognizes that students with special educational needs can face additional safeguarding challenges and that they may face communication barriers and difficulties. Staff are reminded never to make an assumption about possible indicators of abuse nor to dismiss an indicator without further exploration.

Children missing from education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and such children are at risk of being victims of harm or exploitation. ASF has procedures for unauthorized absences and for managing children that go missing from their education, particularly on repeated occasions. All faculty and staff are alert to signs and to identify individual triggers that exemplify risks of potential safeguarding concerns.

Teaching safeguarding

ASF students are taught about safeguarding issues as part of our curriculum. Students are taught to identify the meaning of appropriate boundaries; how to raise/express concerns; and how to understand levels of confidentiality. We also teach what specific forms of harm and abuse are such as peer-on-peer abuse, cyber bullying, grooming, sexting, healthy relationships.

Responding to concerns about a student

All children must be able to place their trust and confidence in any adult working in the school in a paid, voluntary, or peripatetic capacity. They must feel sure that they can speak about any worries or concerns they may have and that they will be listened to, taken seriously and responded to appropriately. All faculty and staff must, therefore, know what actions to take if a child chooses to talk to them about any matter that raises child protection concerns. If at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral to the Child Protection Response Team should be made immediately so that an investigation can be launched by the contact person; anybody can make a referral.

All staff must:

- listen to what the child is saying without interruption and without asking leading questions
- respect the child's right to privacy but not promise confidentiality

- reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing in telling. Explain to the child that in order to keep him/her safe from harm the information that has been shared must be passed on to the appropriate person
- report what has been disclosed to the designated Child Protection Team Member in the school as soon as possible
- record, as soon as is practicable, what was said using the child's actual words, including the time, and place of the conversation, what was done by whom and in whose presence
- sign and date the record and keep it secure, handing it to the designated Child Protection Team member as soon as possible.

The Designated Child Protection Team will review, organize and document all data points and:

- respond to any urgent medical needs of the child
- consider whether the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm
- check whether the child is currently subject to a Child Protection Plan or has been previously subject to a Plan
- confirm whether any previous concerns have been raised by staff.
- Determine which scenario applies to each case:
 - a) "no Grounds "case;
 - b) "suspicion remains" case; and
 - c) "abuse likely of confirmed" case
- Inform the Head of Division and the Executive Director
- File all gathered information in writing and deliver to the Child Protection Team Chair

When faculty or staff have concerns about a child and their safety, they should immediately contact the designated Child Protection Team Member. These reports will be handled with utmost confidentiality and investigated with the appropriate parties in a neutral way to determine the outcome of the report. If the investigation requires more in-depth inquiries, the entire Child Protection Team will meet to continue and conclude. In the rare case that the Executive Director decides that this needs to be reported to the local authorities, ASF will act accordingly.

The role of parents and carers

ASF will inform parents if the school intends to inform the Local Authority of its concerns about a student's welfare. Any information provided by parents at this stage will form part of the school's evidence base that will be passed on to the Local Authority. However, the parents' evidence will not influence ASF's decision to contact the Local Authority, which is the final arbiter in the matter.

Concerns and allegations against staff, volunteers and students

ASF has procedures for addressing concerns and allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children. School leadership will respond to an allegation disregarding that person's performance, stance or seniority. The objective is to strike a balance between the need to protect children from abuse and the need to protect staff and volunteers from false or unfounded allegations. These procedures follow the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (Part 4. Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff, September 2016) and should be used where the member of staff or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.

Where an allegation is made against any member of staff (including the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) or a volunteer, the matter should be reported immediately to the Child Protection Team Lead who will inform the Executive Director. Evidence will be collected and will also become part of the person's Human Capital file.

Allegations against the Executive Director

The person receiving the allegation should immediately inform the Chair of the Board of Trustees/Board Child Protection Team Member), without first notifying the Executive Director. Any such allegation will be discussed with the Child Protection Team Chair before further action is taken.

Allegations against the Child Protection Team Lead

Will be dealt with by the Executive Director and Board Child Protection Team Member following the normal procedures.

Allegations against a member of the Board

The person receiving the allegation should immediately inform the Child Protection Team Lead/Executive Director. Any such allegation will be discussed with the Child Protection Team Chair before further action is taken.

Whistleblowing:

All staff are required to report any concern or allegations about the behaviour of colleagues that are likely to put students at risk of abuse or other serious harm. There will be no retribution or disciplinary action taken against a member of staff for making such a report provided that it is done in good faith and with proper information. In a situation wherein the School considers that the behaviour of a staff member could possibly place a child at risk of harm, they reserve the right to suspend that member of staff pending an investigation.

Reporting to the Disclosure and Barring Service

If ASF disciplines, dismisses, or has someone currently under investigation (or has someone who leaves prior to the end of an investigation) for causing emotional, psychological, physical or sexual harm, neglect or risk of harm to children, the Disclosure and Barring Service will be informed as early as possible through the Office of Human Capital. This will normally be in tandem with the disclosure made by ASF to the Local Authority.

Allegations against students

Allegations against students by other students should be reported immediately to the Child Protection Team. ASF will inform parents before the report is made and will continue a thorough investigation internally and define the consequences based on the Family Handbook guidelines. Each family is at liberty to decide how they manage this allegation with the other student's family if they are both underage. Any student accused over the age of 18 will be subject to Mexican Law and ASF may be required to report it to the local authorities.

Records

No one person within a school can be expected to have the full picture of a child's circumstances. To overcome this, ASF has a single, comprehensive, detailed, accurate and secure system of reported matters, which is maintained and monitored by the Child Protection Team Lead and the Board Designated Child Protection Lead to enable patterns to be spotted.

Student information records

ASF recognises the importance of keeping up-to-date and accurate information about students and so will regularly ask all parents and carers to provide the following information and to notify the school of any changes that occur. This information is treated as confidential, although shared (as appropriate) with relevant staff:

- names and contact details of persons with whom the student normally lives
- names and contact details of all persons with parental responsibility
- emergency contact details
- details of those persons authorised to collect the child from school (if different from above)
- any relevant court orders in place including those that affect any person's access to the child (eg: Residence Order, Contact Order, Care Order, Injunctions, etc.)
- name and contact details of the student's GP
- medical and other needs
- any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the student.

Adults working with children: Safe Recruitment

ASF practices safe recruitment procedures by checking the suitability of staff and volunteers (including staff employed by another organisation) to work with children and young people in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 and the latest statutory guidance including the Section 128 directive and the requirement for

EEA regulatory body checks through NCTL Teacher Services. Key points of ASF's recruitment policy are summarised below, please see ASF's Recruitment Policy and Procedures for full details. Where staff from another organisation are working with ASF students on another site, written assurances that the required child protection checks have been undertaken are required by ASF in advance. Any volunteer teachers, will be engaged by bonafide agencies, who themselves undergo statutory requirements for vetting staff, and documents will be verified by ASF. Supply teachers and teachers offering after-school activities will undergo ASF's statutory requirements for vetting staff.

The checks include:

- name, address and date of birth, all evidenced and checked and dated
- qualifications, evidenced, checked and dated with the previous institution
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS and/or CRD) disclosure with a barred list check; checked and Dated
- evidence of eligibility to work in Mexico; checked and dated for faculty and staff members who have lived abroad in the past 5 years, an FBI background check
- medical fitness report
- two written references and a CV; checked and dated. Referees are asked specifically whether the applicant has been the subject of any safeguarding concerns.

A record of the reference checks is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act and contained securely in ASF's Human Capital Office. All faculty and staff are interviewed to identify a good fit and reference checks are the responsibility of the Head of School or area Director. The interview process includes specific safeguarding questions exploring applicants' attitudes towards safeguarding and their understanding of current statutory requirements and best practice.

All adults who may occasionally work at, or visit the school are to be supervised at all times by an employee while on the premises and wear a volunteer badge.

Monitoring and review

The Child Protection Team Lead continually monitors ASF's child protection and safeguarding practices and brings to the notice of the Executive Director any weaknesses or deficiencies. The Executive Director, through the leadership team and when necessary, the Board of Trustees, has a duty to remedy any weaknesses that are identified without delay. An annual report is submitted to the Board of Trustees at the first meeting of the new academic year that outlines the child protection and safeguarding work that has been undertaken during the previous academic year. Included in the report are details of:

- the names of staff with designated child protection responsibilities
- confirmation that all new staff and volunteers have been recruited safely and that a record of all staff vetting checks is up-to-date and complete the training that has been undertaken by the designated staff. This is done through Human Capital.

- the training that has been undertaken by all other staff and volunteers and details of information and guidance that has been given to staff
- details of any significant incidents when physical restraint of students has been used
- an outline of the filters and monitoring systems in place to ensure online safety, including evidence that over-blocking is not taking place
- confirmation that all child protection records are stored securely and where appropriate have been transferred to another school
- details of safeguarding and child protection information given to parents
- details of the safety of the school site and the access given to visitors
- numbers of child protection referrals made to Children's Services (DIF)
- details of child protection conferences or meetings attended regarding children (names of children are not shared)
- numbers of children who are, or have been, subject to a Child Protection Plan.

Following review of this report, the Board of Trustees, Executive Director / Child Protection Team Lead, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, and the Child Protection Team will work together on, and urgently prioritize, any aspect of safeguarding and child protection that is identified as an area for development.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly in light of any significant changes in statutory requirements and legislation

Appendixes

[Orientación para la Prevención, Detección y Actuación en caso de Abuso Sexual Infantil, Este es documento Acoso Escolar y Maltrato en las Escuelas de Educación Básica \(Noviembre 2015\)](#)

<https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ICMEC-Mexico-National-Legislation.pdf>

Reporting Procedures

Building Culture of Awareness: students, faculty and staff, parents

[Child Protection Code of Conduct](#)

[ASF Child Protection Reporting Form](#)

References

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child

Mexican Law: Ley General de los Derechos de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes (Noviembre 2015);

Orientación para la Prevención, Detección y Actuación en caso de Abuso Sexual Infantil,

Acoso Escolar y Maltrato en las Escuelas de Educación Básica (Noviembre 2015)

International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP).

This policy should be considered alongside and in conjunction with the suite of policies concerning the safety and welfare of students: ASF Family Handbook, ASF Faculty Handbook Anti-Bullying Policy, E-Safety; Educational Trips; First Aid; Supervision; Safeguarding & Promoting Welfare of Children; and ASF's Mission statement.