



## Child Protection Policy

The Biblical model for the home and corresponding commands of Scripture for educating children are both a blessing and a challenge. The world remains a fallen place. In order to follow our mandate for educating students, our operations must include a child protection policy and corresponding practices. The Child Protection Policy (CPP) applies to all Grace Academy employees, volunteers, and substitute teachers who are serving in any position involving the custody or supervision of students and other minor children at school, on field trips, retreats, or school related activities and events.

All qualified individuals in custody of or supervision of students must submit to a criminal background and driving history check. Any qualified individual in custody of or supervision that poses a risk to children or others at school or school events will be automatically disqualified for service or supervision.

Students, minors, or individuals under 18 years of age may be used in positions that involve supervision or custody of other students and children only with adequate adult supervision. Adult supervisors of minor age students and volunteers must qualify to the same standards as all other adult supervisors, employees, volunteers, and substitutes.

All employees must participate in formal child protection education and training. It is highly recommended that all volunteers and substitutes also receive the training. As a minimum, all employees, volunteers, and substitutes will read the policy and sign a statement indicating they have read and understand the CPP.

Specific guidelines are as follows:

1. Always work in an open environment avoiding private or one-on-one situations which are unobservable. Doors should be open and unlocked, and windows should not be blocked, such that visual supervision by other adults and students is allowable. Visual access must be available. Avoid private or secluded situations or opportunities.
2. Avoid situations which involve unsupervised access to children. If students are left alone, the adult most responsible for custody or supervision should contact the teacher next door, the office, or another approved adult in close proximity. Avoid leaving any group of students unsupervised.
3. All adults, workers, volunteers, substitutes, and student volunteers who have custody of or supervise students must monitor each other to protect the students and children under their collective safekeeping. Supervision and custody of students and children includes and implies the protection of all by all. If someone were to observe another in an unsafe or compromised situation, it is the duty of both individuals to communicate and eliminate exposure risk or danger. If a situation cannot be resolved by mutual agreement and cooperation, both parties should report to the adult, teacher, or administrator in charge for a better or best solution. Safety of students in all settings is the priority in all situations.
4. All overnight activities must include a pre-plan of the administrator or Head of School. The plan must take into consideration the spirit and role of the CPP. All overnight activities must be parent approved with proper Medical Release and Consent to Treatment forms.
5. Be aware of your physical contact or proximity to children. Physical expressions of affection must not be excessive or imposed upon another adult or student. The less known or familiar the adults or students are with other students and adults, the less familiar and physically "friendly" they should be. A spoken word and a friendly smile are superior ice-breakers for strangers.

6. Adults are always responsible for maintaining proper relationships and proper actions even if a student or child acts inappropriately. Adults should never place themselves in a vulnerable or compromising situation, position, or conversation.
7. These guidelines serve as a template for the godly responsibility we have to protect children. The template also includes email, text, or any technology applications. It is highly recommended to avoid all forms of Facebook, Twitter, and other similar social networking relationships with a minor child or student for any social purposes not in the proper context of family.
8. Be mindful of the safety of the students and children at all times and in all circumstances.

Reporting Procedure:

1. All staff are mandated reporters as defined by Texas law. This means that if a staff member has cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred, they must report to Child Protective Services. However, prior to reporting to CPS, the adult who has cause to believe that any form of abuse toward a student or child must report the facts to the head of school first. It is not the duty of the worker, employee, or volunteer to investigate allegations. Immediately after you have reported to the Head of School, sit down and write out the conversation with the child in as much detail as possible. Sign, date, and provide the Head of School a copy; you keep the original.
2. Do not report to anyone outside the scope of administration, until you have reported to the Head of School. If the allegation involves the Head of School, the report goes to the Head of the Grammar School for her investigation and response. The meeting with the Head of School will be to review the facts, determine what, if any, additional information can be appropriately gleaned, and to consult the staff member as to the law and the appropriateness of the report. However, if at the conclusion of the meeting with the Head of School, the staff member continues to have cause to believe child abuse has occurred, he must file a report with CPS, regardless of whether the Head of School (or other administrator) states that he will file the report or that a report should not be filed.
3. All involved with the report or investigation must keep all information in strict confidence.
4. All allegations will be taken seriously, and school staff will take appropriate actions to protect all children/students in accordance with the laws of the state of Texas and/or based upon the advice of legal counsel and/or insurance policy requirements. If abuse is suspected, per Texas law, as the outcry witness, you are required to report within 48 hours of initial findings to the Texas Department of State Health Services – Child Protection Services. The Head of School also will report to the State.
5. For any questions or clarification of this policy or practice of policy, please contact the Head of School.

Please note Texas State Law on Corporal Punishment: a) The use of force, but not deadly force, against a child younger than 18 years is justified:

- (1) if the actor is the child's parent or stepparent or is acting in loco parentis to the child; and
  - (2) when and to the degree the actor reasonably believes the force is necessary to discipline the child or to safeguard or promote his welfare.
- (b) For purposes of this section, “in loco parentis” includes grandparent and guardian, any person acting by, through, or under the direction of a court with jurisdiction over the child, and anyone who has express or implied consent of the parent or parents.

As an employee/volunteer of Grace Academy, I have read and agree to adhere to the Child Protection Policy.

Employee/Volunteer printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee/Volunteer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_