



**AMERICAN
SCHOOL OF
BAHRAIN**



**CHILD
SAFEGUARDING
HANDBOOK**



Directors Message to Community

An Important Note for Parents

Dear Parents,

Child Safeguarding is extremely important, and we are committed to ensuring the safeguarding of all our students. In August 2022, the school adopted a Child Safeguarding Policy, which sets definitions for child abuse as well and outlines preventative measures and guidelines for the school's response in case of a suspected case.

By enrolling your child at ASB, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by our policies. All of us at ASB want you to know that we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children.

Following this policy, ASB is committed to setting up procedures to verify the previous employment for any new job applicants as well as to ensure that all members of the ASB community are informed and educated regarding symptoms of child abuse.

We look forward to working closely with you to ensure that our children are safe and knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and to each other. Together we can ensure that our children grow and learn, free of fear, in a safe and supportive environment. Your support of our efforts is important. If you have any specific questions, please contact the designated Safeguarding Lead, School Counsellors or Principals.

Thank you in advance for working with us on this important initiative.

Dave McMaster
Director





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ASB Child Safeguarding Statement

Child abuse and neglect are concerns throughout the world. The American School of Bahrain (ASB) takes the safeguarding of children with utmost seriousness. We aim to remedy child welfare concerns before they become Child Safeguarding issues. As child abuse is a violation of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development, ASB always abide by the laws and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Research supports the effectiveness of prevention as a primary means of ensuring the safety and security of children, and ASB is committed to prevention through a variety of means. However, there are circumstances where means of prevention are not sufficient, and the commission of abuse and neglect takes place. In these circumstances, ASB and families will collaborate with local agencies and local authorities for the best solution.

Schools fill a special institutional role in society as protectors of children. Schools need to ensure that all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop, both at school and away. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who need help and safeguarding. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who need help and safeguarding and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff (both teaching and non-teaching) employed at ASB must report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate employer, to the respective consulate in Bahrain, to the appropriate Child Safeguarding agency in the home country, and/or to local authorities.

ASB seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. As such, ASB will share this policy to all prospective students and families, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide annual training for all staff, will make every effort to implement hiring practices to insure the safety of children, and will review this policy annually for compliance and effectiveness. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, ASB will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process and in compliance with the laws in Bahrain, keeping the safety of the child as its highest priority.

American School Bahrain Child Safeguarding Policy

The American School of Bahrain Child Safeguarding Policy is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of which Bahrain is a signatory. (The Kingdom of Bahrain has acceded to Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) pursuant to the Decree - Law No. 16 of 1991 on February 13th, 1992. ASB policy

follows Bahrain Law No. (4) of 2021 and Child Law No. (37) of 2012.). The Bahrain Children's law and policy are of particular importance to our school's policy, and we wish to draw your attention to them:

These following actions are strictly prohibited:

- Deprivation of children's right to live.
- Child abandonment, neglect, trafficking, kidnap, fraudulent exchange, or capture. Sexual abuse, violence, abuse, or child exploitation.
- Preventing children from exercising their rights and obligations.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Safeguarding 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.

Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

By enrolling your child at American International School of Bahrain, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the laws and the policies adopted by the ASB Board of Trustees. All of us at ASB want you to know that, because we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children, the school has endorsed a Child Safeguarding Policy that defines the standards by which all ASB students should be treated with respect and always accorded dignity.

As part of our overall educational program and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children and to ensure a safe environment in which all children can learn and grow, American School of Bahrain will ensure the following:

1. We will provide age-appropriate lessons for students at all grade levels to help them understand personal safety, needs and rights.
2. We will provide parent materials and information sessions to help you better understand our programs and policy.
3. We will annually train faculty and staff to recognize and report issues of abuse and neglect.

Structure of Child Safeguarding Program at ASB

The Child Safeguarding Program at ASB consists of four important components.

1. Preventative Program - Our preventative program will consist of two aspects. The Curriculum which will be delivered to all students at ASB from K to Grade 12. This curriculum enables students to learn how to protect themselves, identify and safely report cases of abuse and neglect. ASB has enacted a Child Safeguarding curriculum for all grade levels, key teaching points are as follows:

Grades K-2

- Safe and Unsafe touch
- Safe and Unsafe situations
- Telling a trusted adult

Grades 3-5

- Touching rules revisited
- Telling a trusted adult revisited
- Identifying abuse and neglect

Grades 6-8

- Safe and Unsafe situations
- Identifying abuse and neglect revisited
- Internet safety
- Who and how to tell the issue
- Conflict resolution

Grades 9-12

- Healthy and Unhealthy relationships
- Internet safety revisited
- Refusal skills and assertiveness
- Identifying risk
- Safety plans

The training for all staff and parents at ASB in recognition and response to abuse and neglect.

▪ Staff Training

ASB provides Child Safeguarding training each year to all members of staff, inclusive of intake training for new staff, maintenance training for returning staff, and supplemental training for all staff throughout the year. Training is appropriately differentiated to maximise relevance and effectiveness between staff groupings.

▪ Parent Training

ASB provides several Parent Training sessions each year to keep our parents well-informed on effective means of keeping children safe, useful parenting and behavioural techniques, and our school's Child Safeguarding policy.

2. Child Safeguarding Management Team – The CPMT at ASB will oversee the school's Child safeguarding

Policy and ensure its components are implemented and followed throughout the school. The CPMT will work with all staff and departments to ensure the safety of all students at ASB. The CPMT will always be informed of all investigations and action plans happening at ASB.

3. Core Response Team - The Core Response Team consists of the first responder (School personnel to whom a disclosure is made), the school's safeguarding officer and

the principal. The CRT will investigate all cases, make a report which will be kept in a confidential system and decide on an action plan.

4. Multi-Disciplinary Team – The MDT will deal with our most serious cases which involve outside authorities. The MDT will consist of a Social Worker and possibly the local police, medical and social support departments. All cases will be documented and kept on file in a confidential system. The school's CPMT and Senior Leadership Team will be kept informed of all proceedings.

Definition and Indicators of Abuse

Definitions of abuse are complex and must be sensitive to cultural perspectives toward child-rearing behaviours, gender and role responsibilities and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the needs of the more powerful person, whether a member of the family, a teacher, or a friend. Research informs the defining features that are based on an understanding of the impact of certain behaviours on children.

Physical abuse is:

Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function, death; and/or

Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or

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; and/or

Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy; and/or

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; and/or

Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Possible indicators of physical abuse Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body

- Bruises of different ages (various colours).
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- 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
- Presentation of emotional abuse may be an indicator of physical abuse

Emotional Abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment or emotional neglect of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development. Emotional abuse is maltreatment that results in impaired psychological growth and development. It involves words, actions, and indifference. Abusers constantly reject, ignore, belittle, dominate, and criticise the victims. This form of abuse may occur with or without physical abuse, but there is often overlap. The child will be publicly humiliated or physically threatened. Family members will have unrealistic expectations of the child.

Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them.

Children who are emotionally abused are usually suffering another type of abuse or usually suffering another type of abuse or neglect at the same time - but this isn't always the case

Possible indicators of emotional abuse

- Bed-wetting or bed soiling that has no medical cause
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g. Headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- Prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea
- Has not attained significant development milestones
- Dressed differently from other children in the family
- Has deprived physical living conditions compared with other children in the family
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression
- Displays attention seeking behaviour or destructive behaviour (self-harming, suicide attempts)

Sexual Abuse is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the host country or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or childcare purposes.

Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious.

The planning, referred to as grooming, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt, and shame for the sexual behaviour of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so it is more difficult to report.

Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that the sex is a form of love, so they tend to love their offenders and often present themselves as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being

loved. When at play, behaviour may model or copy negative behaviour and language used at home.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behaviour, or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns or interpretation of appropriate physical boundaries
- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anus areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Reluctance to change into physical education (PE) clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaints
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting
- Presentation of emotional abuse may be an indicator of sexual abuse
- Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counselors.

Definition and Indicators of Neglect

Neglect may be:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision - this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship, such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period); and/or
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment); and/or
- Emotional (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs, specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge presence of child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.)

Possible indicators of neglect

- Child is unwashed or hungry
- Parents are uninterested in child's emotional, social, or academic development
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school
- Child does not want to go home
- Parent is not present or available to child for a sustained period
- Parents cannot be reached in the case of an emergency
- Presentation of emotional abuse may be an indicator of neglect
- Lack of adequate adult supervision
- Child's medical needs not being met over time

Behavioural indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect. Together with other indicators, such as family dynamics, they may warrant a referral.

What Happens When a Teacher/Staff Has a Reasonable Cause to Believe Some Forms of Abuse/Neglect are Taking Place?

These possible indicators of abuse and neglect will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, who will determine if the case needs further attention.

A staff member is obligated to report any case where s/he has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All cases will be monitored, investigated, documented, and kept confidential. All suspected cases will be investigated to ensure the safety of the child which is our primary concern at ASB.

In all cases where Threshold B and/or C (see below) are met, the Child Safeguarding Management Team, Principal and Head of school will be notified.

Thresholds A Cases:

Threshold A cases represent evidence that could indicate abuse or neglect, common examples are:

- Cases of apparent neglect of basic needs such as medical, food, hygiene, sleep, and supervision
- Cases of students' mental and emotional well-being
- Cases of inadequate supervision at home
- Cases of persistent unhealthy/anti-social peer interaction or behaviour
- Cases of persistent low self-esteem, grief, listlessness, etc.

Thresholds B Cases:

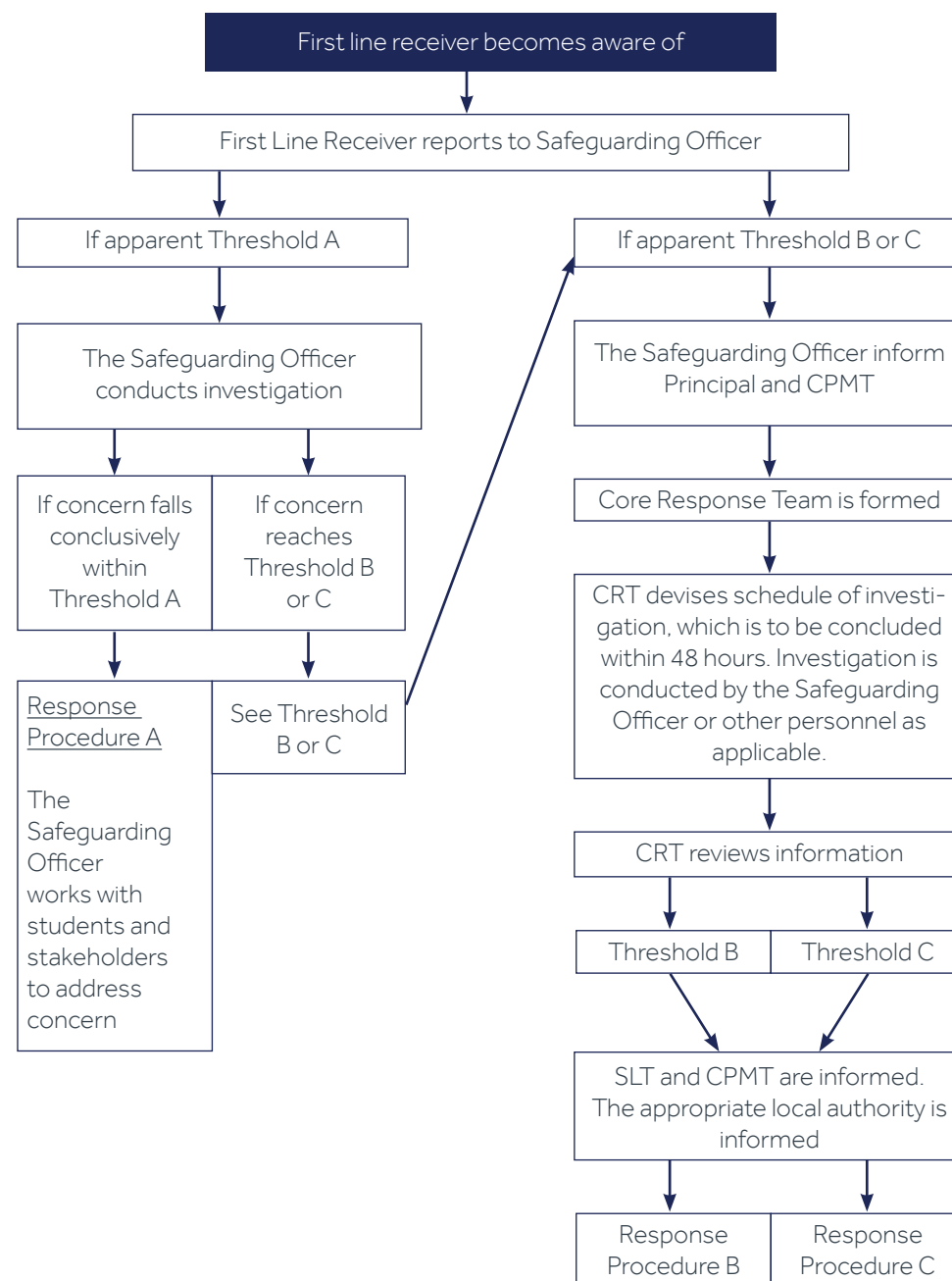
Threshold B cases represent evidence that indicates bona-fide abuse or neglect that can be resolved via in-school resources, common examples are:

- Cases of physical abuse where there are clear marks or bruising
- Cases of severe emotional distress leading to depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, substance abuse, risk-taking behaviour
- Cases of suspected or reported sexual abuse
- Severe ongoing cases around neglect of basic need
- Cases of distinct assertion from the student that he or she is being abused or neglected

Thresholds C Cases:

Threshold C cases represent Threshold B concerns that have not been resolvable with in-school resources, and thus require intervention of a multi-disciplinary team.

Disclosure Flow Chart (sample)



Who will Investigate Suspected Cases of Abuse and Neglect?

The following procedure will be followed once a case is disclosed and reported to the designated safeguarding officer:

Response Procedure A

1. Staff reports to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
2. Designated Safeguarding Officer investigates and informs the Core Response Team of findings. All findings will be recorded and kept private within our confidential Child Safeguarding System.
3. Designated Safeguarding Officer creates and implements a plan of action within the school and/or family.

Response Procedure B

1. After a case is reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, the Designated Safeguarding Officer will investigate and record findings which will be kept in our confidential Child Safeguarding System. The CMPT will be informed and kept abreast of developments.
2. Core Response Team formulates a plan of action to best meet the child's needs.
3. Senior Leadership Team and Child Safeguarding Management Team are informed of Plan of Action
4. Plan of action is implemented by appropriate members of the Core Response Team and reviewed as necessary. The Core Response Team consists of the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Principal and the first responder (person the abuse was disclosed to) and any other member of staff deemed necessary to be part of the process. The first responder will only be called upon when necessary for further information and follow up. The first responder may not be informed of the outcome of the investigation or follow up.
- 5A. If Core Response Team determines that circumstances have resolved acceptably, Child Safeguarding Management Team and Senior Leadership Team are informed, and a schedule of follow-up and support is developed and implemented by Core Response Team.
- 5B. If Core Response Team determines that circumstances have not been resolved acceptably, Child Safeguarding Management Team and Senior Leadership Team are informed, and Child safeguarding Response Procedure C commences.

Response Procedure C

1. Core Response Team refers the case to the Multi-Disciplinary Team which will involve outside authorities and organizations - Addition of multidisciplinary resources to Core Response Team.
2. The Multidisciplinary Team formulates a plan of action to best meet the child's needs.
3. The Senior Leadership Team and Child Safeguarding Management Team are informed of the Plan of Action.
4. Plan of action is implemented by appropriate members of the Multidisciplinary Team and reviewed as necessary.
5. If the Multi-Disciplinary Team determines that circumstances have resolved acceptably, Senior Leadership Team and Child Safeguarding Management Team are informed, and a schedule of follow up and support is developed and implemented by the Multidisciplinary Team.

In cases that require ASB to report to local authorities, the reporting will always take place by the School's Designated Safeguarding Officer to the appropriate authorities.

If the abuse or neglect allegation involves an ASB staff member, the school will follow board policy pursuant to ethical professional behaviour.

* Both the terms "Child Safeguarding" and "Child Welfare" appear in ASB Child Safeguarding materials. Please note that these terms are distinct from one-another.

Child Safeguarding refers to both the prevention and resolution of harmful situations that involve the inherent power-differential between an adult and a child, most typically this adult is a parent or caregiver of the child.

Child Welfare refers to the prevention and resolution of harmful situations that do not involve a power differential, for example situations that occur between children of a similar age, as well as the efforts to ensure general well-being of children.

Some cases of Child Welfare will be referred to outside resources. For example, extreme bullying and/or cyber bullying and mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicide ideation.

Child Safeguarding Key Contacts at ASB

Designated Safeguarding Officer - Michael Balo

Director - Dave McMaster

Middle/High School Principal - Juan Saavedra

Elementary Principal - Steve Bodnar

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