

# SCHOOL YEAR 2024-25

**mission** *CAISL is a student-centered educational community in which we challenge ourselves and each other to do our best and to make positive contributions to our diverse and ever-changing world.*

# CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK

Child protection at CAISL is of paramount importance, given the diverse and often transient nature of these educational environments. Students in international schools may be especially vulnerable. Effective child protection policies ensure a safe and nurturing environment while fostering trust among students, parents, and educators. These policies also play a crucial role in promoting students' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, which is essential for effective learning and personal growth. By prioritizing child protection, international schools can help bridge cultural gaps, ensure compliance with international child welfare standards, and create a supportive community where every child can thrive and reach their full potential.

# CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

## A. OVERVIEW

“Child Protection is the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and violence against children. It is embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. Child Protection is universal: it is for all children everywhere, from low- to high-income countries.” (UNICEF)

CAISL follows recommendations from the International Task force on Child Protection and is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. CAISL complies with Portuguese laws and regulations. Portuguese law includes specific provisions for protecting children ([Lei nº147/99](#), 01 de Setembro – Lei de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens em Perigo; [Lei n.º 23/2017, de 23 de Maio \(pgdlisboa.pt\)](#)).

CAISL’s Child Protection Handbook outlines the procedures and regulations that are necessary to prevent child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harassment, while protecting those who may be involved or at risk. Additionally, this handbook outlines the steps which are taken should an allegation arise.

CAISL expectations are based on the following principles and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- All schools have a responsibility to build a community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for each child.
- All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.
- All actions on child protection are taken with the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

## B. Terminology

- **Safeguarding:** Policies and practices designed to protect children from harm and create a safe environment; protecting children from abuse and maltreatment; preventing harm to children’s health or development; ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care; taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.
- **Contextual Safeguarding:** term developed by Dr. Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire’s [Contextual Safeguarding Network](#), recognizes that as young people grow and develop they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family.
- **Abuse** - Any action or lack of action that results in harm or potential harm to a child. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, or a form of neglect as well as physical, sexual, emotional violence and/or neglect exercised against others. Abuse also constitutes physical or

## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

psychological abuse, including corporal punishment and sexual offenses committed against defenseless people.

- **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.”
- **Child Protection Officer (CPO)** - The designated person in a school responsible for overseeing child protection policies and procedures, and for handling reports of abuse or neglect. Depending on the school, other terms may be used. “Safeguarding Lead” is commonly used among schools which follow the British education model.
- **Confidentiality** - The obligation to keep certain information private, particularly in matters related to child protection, except when sharing is required by law or policy.
- **Consent** - Permission or agreement for something to happen. In the context of child protection, children under a certain age cannot legally give consent for certain activities, particularly sexual activities.
- **Disclosure**: When a child or someone else reports or reveals information about abuse or neglect.
- **Reporting**: communication of a concern or suspect of child abuse.
- **Risk Assessment**: The process of identifying and evaluating risks to children's safety and well-being in each environment.
- **Allegation**: a claim or assertion that someone has done something illegal or wrong.
- **Victim**: Person who is abused/mistreated by another.
- **Aggressor/Abuser**: Person who is violent towards another.
  
- **Physical Abuse: Physical Abuse** - The intentional use of physical force against a child that results in bodily injury or harm. Any intentional, unwanted contact with one’s body resulting in actual or potential harm. Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child.
- **Emotional Abuse**: Emotional abuse is a non-physical behavior, is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child to cause severe and adverse effects on a child’s emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is often involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child.

## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

- **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual act or behavior with a child for the gratification of an adult or older youth, including exploitation or grooming. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e., rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.
- **Grooming:** a calculated behavior that involves a gradual process, building trust and connection with another person, aiming to manipulate, exploit and abuse the other.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** “Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting.” (WHO)
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature.
- **Neglect:** “The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health and development” (DfE 2015) It may present itself as physical, medical, educational and/or emotional neglect.
- **Digital/Electronic Abuse:** use of technology to bully, harass, stalk, or intimidate another person.
- **Peer-on-Peer Abuse:** Any form of physical, sexual, emotional, or financial mistreatment or coercive influence enacted between young people.
- **Bullying** (including online bullying): Unwanted aggressive behavior by another child or group of children who are neither siblings nor in a romantic relationship with the victim. It involves repeated physical, psychological or social harm, and often takes place in schools and other settings where children gather, and online. (WHO)

### **C. CAISL Policies and Portuguese Law:**

The CAISL Child Protection Handbook is based on international law and on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of which Portugal is also a signatory.

Child Protection in Portugal is overseen by the Comissões de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens (CPCJ). Their objective is to advocate for the rights of children and young people, intervening to prevent or address situations that may jeopardize their safety, health, education, or overall development.

Usually, school interventions require agreement from the student's parents/guardians and must be handled with utmost respect for the privacy rights of both the student and the family. However, the school is mandated to intervene in specific circumstances:

- When parental opposition to school intervention is encountered, the Division Principal or the Child Protection Officer must notify the CPCJ in the student's residential area or, if unavailable, inform the Public Prosecutor at the Minors and Family Court.

## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

- If the situation indicates potential danger to the student and constitutes a criminal offense, it must be reported to the Public Prosecutor or the Police.
- In cases of immediate or imminent threat to the student's life or physical well-being, despite parental objection, the school is obligated to take immediate protective measures and seek intervention from the Court or Police.
- When a student aged 12 to 16 commits a crime, the Public Prosecutor must be informed; for students under 12, the CPCJ should be notified.
- Excessive absences from class, coupled with failure to comply with compensatory measures, require communication to the Child Protection Committee or, if unavailable, to the Public Prosecutor at the Minors and Family Court, with the goal of finding a solution which meets the student's needs.
- In disciplinary proceedings resulting in suspension, the Division Principal may deem it necessary to inform the Child Protection Committee or the Public Prosecutor at the Minors and Family Court, considering the circumstances.

CAISL has adopted the following Board Policies which are found in the **Board of Trustees Policy Manual**:

- Series III: General Administration
  - 3.302 Security
- Series V: Personnel
  - 5.211 Professional conduct
  - 5.303 Educational staff recruitment and selection
  - 5.409 Workplace harassment
- Series VI: Confidentiality and data protection
  - 6.50 Child protection procedures and communication
  - 6.60 Use of digital media
  - 6.70 Data protection technical security
- Series VIII: Students
  - 8.402 Standards of conduct
  - 8.403 Transgender students
    - Refers to 8.401 (students right and responsibilities) and 8.402 (standards of conduct)
  - 8.505 Bullying
  - 8.90-R Student records
    - Release of records or information (4)
- Series IX: School-community relations
  - 9.60 Reporting irregularities
    - Guiding principles
      - Principle of confidentiality and data protection
    - Covered irregularities
      - Transport security
      - Other situations...

# CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

## Relevant Information included in the Student and Parent Handbooks:

<i>Middle School</i>	<i>High School</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• P.12 - Essentials of student conduct</li><li>• P.16 - Bullying / Racism</li><li>• P.17 - Conduct on the buses</li><li>• P.25 - Confidentiality of communication / Confidentiality of Records</li><li>• P.32 - Social media &amp; Messaging Apps Guidelines for Students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• P.20 - Essentials of student conduct</li><li>• P.25 - Bullying</li><li>• P.26 - Racism</li><li>• P.27 - Conduct on buses</li><li>• P.36 - Confidentiality of communication / Confidentiality of Records</li><li>• P.43 - Social Media guidelines for students</li></ul>

### **D. CHILD PROTECTION: PREVENTION AND RESPONDING**

Abuse and neglect can cause significant harm to a child's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. It is crucial for everyone in the school community to be aware of the signs that may indicate a child is experiencing harm or is at risk. This section outlines key indicators to watch for which may help identify when a child may need protection or support. By learning to recognize these signs, the entire school community can play an active role in keeping children safe while contributing to a secure and nurturing environment.

Below are possible Indicators of:

Physical Abuse:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronic running away

Emotional Abuse:

- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed
- Highly anxious

## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Fear of new situations
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Persistent tiredness
- Lying

### Sexual Abuse:

- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Vaginal or penile discharge
- Difficulty with urination
- Infection, bleeding
- STDs
- Fear of people or places
- Aggression
- Regressive behaviors, bed wetting or stranger anxiety
- Excessive masturbation/Sexually provocative
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Suffering from what seem physical ailments that can't be explained medically
- Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult
- Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult or young person
- Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities
- Age-inappropriate sexualized behavior or language

### Neglect:

- Medical needs unattended
- Lack of supervision
- Consistent hunger
- Inappropriate dress
- Poor hygiene
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Self-destructive
- Extreme loneliness
- Extreme need for affection
- Failure to grow
- Poor personal hygiene



## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol abuse

### Digital/Electronic Abuse:

- Sending hostile or intimidating emails, texts, or other digital messages
- Monitoring someone's activities or whereabouts via social media
- Sending or soliciting explicit photos or messages
- Pressuring or demanding access to someone else's passwords
- Tagging someone in unflattering photos on social media or leaving derogatory comments

### **E. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO REPORTS**

Guidelines on how to respond to a situation of abuse or any situations endangering a student:

- If a child asks to speak to you, try to find a neutral setting where you can have quiet and no interruptions.
- Maintain a composed and professional demeanor, actively listening to the student.
- Show the student that you take their disclosure seriously, acknowledging their courage and potential fears.
- Offer reassurance that sharing was the right decision and that they are not at fault.
- Avoid making judgments or expressing personal opinions; instead, reflect back what the student has shared.
- Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story that the child tells you is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm.
- Do not make promises to the child that things will get better and explain that you must tell someone else to get help
- Never promise confidentiality; explain that you'll offer support and involve the safeguarding team.
- Clearly communicate your intent to discuss the matter with the safeguarding team, possibly including the student in the process if appropriate.
- Document the disclosure thoroughly, noting details like time, location, and circumstances.
- Leave investigation to the safeguarding team; promptly report the concern to them.
- Refrain from any form of physical examination that involves removing clothing. The nurses will get involved and will assess the situation according to school protocols.
- Keep discussions confined to the safeguarding team to prevent further risk to the student and potential interference in legal proceedings.
- Adhere to reporting procedures by informing a member of the safeguarding team or, if unavailable, the School Principal.

As soon as an allegation is made, either from an adult or a student, it is crucial that it is reported immediately to CAISL's Child Protection Officer (CPO) or, if unavailable, the Division Principal. After they have been informed, the CPO will further investigate. Information will be gathered to make a



## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

decision if this allegation requires further action. If there is enough evidence to pursue the allegation, the CPO will prepare the information and written documentation including the date, person or persons involved, and any additional relevant information and share the allegation with the School Director. The resulting actions will include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Conference with students involved
- Parent notification
- Meeting with parents
- Meeting with others pertinent to the case, including the alleged perpetrator(s)
- Contacting school nurse
- School contract, which can include psychological assessment or mandatory counseling sessions
- Reporting to local child protection services and other authorities, such as Escola Segura ([CPCJ](#), [Escola Segura](#), Embassy)
  - When reporting to an external entity, all data will be provided and further requested information will be given.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Allegations can be made without CAISL's awareness and/or involvement. There may be requests from the local authorities about a student. CAISL is legally obliged to relay the information requested.**

It is the responsibility of all adults to keep children safe, therefore we should be aware of some barriers to Reporting and how those can impact a child's safety. Some of the barriers include:

- Direct interaction with the at-risk child and the potential perpetrator
- Insufficient training in child protection
- Intense public scrutiny of results
- Numerous factors to consider in decision-making
- Cultural disparities
- Fear of making a mistake
- Worry that no action will be taken.

## **F. PREVENTION**

The safety and well-being of every child within our educational community are of paramount importance. This handbook serves as a comprehensive guide outlining the protocols, procedures, and strategies employed by our institution to prevent and respond to instances of child abuse and neglect. Through a proactive approach and rigorous staff training, we aim to create a safe and nurturing environment where all children can thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

### **Staff Programs & Training:**

Importance of Staff Programs and Training:

- ✓ Understanding Signs and Symptoms of Abuse and Neglect
- ✓ Legal and Ethical Responsibilities
- ✓ Effective Communication and Documentation Skills

## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

- ✓ Trauma-Informed Practices
- ✓ Regular Updates and Refresher Training

By continuously investing in staff training on the topics of Safety & Compliance, Inclusive Instruction & Interventions, Diversity & Inclusion, Cybersecurity Awareness and, on an annual basis, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, we reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding the welfare of every child entrusted to our care. At CAISL, we strive to create a culture of vigilance, empathy, and accountability, ensuring that our educational institution remains a haven where children can flourish and reach their full potential.

### **SEL and PSHE Program for Students:**

A Multi-tiered approach, addressing academic and behavioral challenges, provides a structured support system within the school, ensuring that students receive the necessary resources and assistance tailored to their needs. This consistent support can act as a protective factor against various forms of harm.

The SEL and PSHE programs help children develop skills such as self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. By teaching children to recognize and express their emotions, SEL can help them communicate issues they may be facing at home or elsewhere.

Children who can cope with stress and adversity are better equipped to handle and report difficult situations. The SEL program promotes a positive school climate by fostering respectful and caring relationships among students and staff. A nurturing environment can encourage children to speak up about their problems, knowing they will be heard and supported.

The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) program encompasses a diverse spectrum of subjects, spanning physical health and nutrition, mental and emotional well-being, social health and relationships, and media literacy. Delivered across all grade levels, PSHE lessons are facilitated by trained counselors or healthcare professionals, typically nurses.

PSHE lessons are structured to introduce age-appropriate themes and competencies essential for students to understand and navigate their rights, boundaries, and mutual respect for others. Below are examples of how these themes are taught:

- ✓ **Respect, Responsibility & Safety:** students are taught about their basic rights, such as the right to safety, respect, and autonomy over their bodies.
- ✓ **Assertiveness Skills:** Through role-playing, storytelling, and discussions, students learn how to assert their needs, express their feelings, and communicate boundaries in various situations.
- ✓ **Problem-Solving Strategies:** Students are encouraged to identify and articulate their needs and preferences, and to seek help or support when necessary.
- ✓ **Understanding Boundaries:** Students learn about the concept of personal space and boundaries, both physical and emotional, and why it's important to respect them.
- ✓ **Recognizing Consent:** Through interactive activities and scenarios, students are taught to recognize verbal and non-verbal cues indicating consent (“permission”) or discomfort.

## CAISL CHILD PROTECTION HANDBOOK 2024-25

- ✓ **Respecting Others' Boundaries:** Students learn the importance of asking for permission before touching someone or entering their personal space, and to respect others' decisions even if they differ from their own preferences.

### G. RESOURCES:

[Health and education | UNESCO](#)

Association of International Schools in Africa's Child Protection [Who We Are | AISA | Association of International Schools in Africa](#)

[International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children \(icmec.org\)](#)

[Safeguarding children and child protection | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Child Protection Resources and Information | CIS \(cois.org\)](#)

[Australian model The Blue Card System](#)

[U.S. State Department's information page outlining the International Task Force on Child Protection](#)

[Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género](#)

[Ministério Público em Defesa da Legalidade Democrática](#)