



## **(AAS-CPP)**

### **ANGLO-AMERICAN SCHOOL of SOFIA - CHILD PROTECTION POLICY: Safeguarding Children**

*Developed December 2012 - Approved March 2013 – Updated March 2016, August 2016, December 2018, September 2019, August 2021, August 2023, March 2024*

#### **Introduction**

The Anglo-American School of Sofia (AAS) clearly recognises its “duty of care” to protect its students from harm. People serving in schools, because of their regular contact with children, are particularly well-placed to detect outward signs of abuse, behaviour and other changes in social-emotional and academic conduct.

All staff should note that reporting the suspicion of child protection issues, “in good faith,” exempts them from disciplinary action in relation to the AAS Code of Professional Conduct.

\*In addition to the above, the AAS Child Protection Policy (AAS\_CPP) is to support an environment that is commensurate with the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child;

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - English](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Bulgarian](#)

\*This policy applies to the whole school including Preschool to Grade 12, AAS Staff and the AAS School Board.

\*This policy works in accordance with all school policies, procedures and handbooks, in particular the AAS Code of Professional Conduct.

\*For the purposes of this Policy, references to “staff” include: employees, faculty, volunteers, invited instructors or consultants, coaches, sponsors, contracted employees, including third party contractors.

#### **Aims**

- To provide an environment in which children feel secure, valued, respected and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to
- To educate our students through the schools’ Personal, Health, Social Education (PSHE) curriculum to understand the appropriate behaviour that relatives, friends and strangers may demonstrate towards children
- To educate and guide our students so that they know how they can deal with the behaviour of others that gives them cause for concern
- To ensure that all staff are aware of their duty of care, and provide ongoing training in good practice for recognising and dealing with child protection issues
- To promote a home-school partnership where there is accessible support and advice in matters relating to Child Protection

#### **Objectives**

- To follow procedures and good practice in the name of safeguarding children and maintaining the best environment possible for student growth and development
- To disseminate the procedures to all staff; as well as students and volunteers working in school
- For the School Board to regularly monitor and review procedures and policy
- To provide support and counseling for staff whenever the need arises.

### **School Commitment**

AAS expects all staff to share its commitment to protecting, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. As such, all staff are required to sign the 'AAS Code of Professional Conduct' which declares that: they possess the qualifications they claim; they are not disqualified from working with children; they have no convictions, cautions or bind-overs, or are subject to any sanctions imposed by any regulatory bodies. The school requires all staff to produce evidence of qualifications and references are sought from previous employers. Finally, police checks are carried out on all employees. The police checks may be from country of origin and / or from the country of their most recent posting.

**The Council of International Schools and the Association of International School Heads will be informed in cases where a member of staff's employment is terminated because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. The school will seek further guidance in the event of the above as to how to properly inform the home country of the staff member in question.**

We recognize that for children, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult all help to protect. AAS will therefore establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to, with staff making time to support children whenever the need arises. We will ensure that children know that there are adults in school who they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty. This will be achieved through the PSHE curriculum and the work of the school leadership team. The PSHE curriculum features regular opportunities to equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse. AAS will make every effort to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from other agencies.

### **Framework**

Schools do not operate in isolation. Child Protection is the responsibility of all adults and especially those working with children. The development of appropriate procedures and the monitoring of good practice are the responsibilities of the School Board and local Social Services, as well as diplomatic support in extreme cases if needed.

The designated members of staff for Child Protection at AAS are the Elementary School (ES) Principal and Counselor, Middle School/ High School (MS/HS) Principal and Counselors, and Director.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect children. To ensure clarity and prudence there are people with specific roles with respect to child protection.

<b>Role in School</b>	<b>Role Related to Child Protection</b>
Director	Designated Child Protection Officer
Director's Executive Assistant	Designated Child Protection Officer - Bilingual
Director of Student Support Services	Designated Child Protection Officer
ES Principal	Designated Child Protection Officer - Preschool to Grade 5
MS/HS Principal	Designated Child Protection Officer - Grade 6 to Grade 12
ES Counselor	Designated Child Protection Officer - Preschool to Grade 5
ES Principal's Assistant	Designated Child Protection Officer - Bilingual
MS Counselor	Designated Child Protection Officer - Grade 6 to Grade 8
HS Counselors	Designated Child Protection Officer - Grade 9 to Grade 12
Learning & Curriculum Director	Supervisor reporting to Designated Child Protection Officer
Marketing/Communications Manager	Supervisor reporting to Designated Child Protection Officer
Finance Manager	Supervisor reporting to Designated Child Protection Officer
ICT Director	Supervisor reporting to Designated Child Protection Officer

The Designated Child Protection Officers (CPO) will disseminate policy. Staff should discuss any concerns regarding Child Protection with the designated CPOs who will advise on the monitoring of children and possible referral to local authorities/agencies.

- ES staff shall report child protection concerns to the ES principal or counselor.
- MS/HS staff shall report child protection concerns to the MS/HS principal or counselors.
- Non-instructional staff shall report to their department supervisor (member of leadership team) who will then take the matter to one of the Designated Child Protection Officers listed.

What if the staff member feels the child protection concern is not adequately addressed by their first stage contact:

- If the staff member feels that their child protection concern is not adequately addressed, they will then report their concern to the Director.
- If the staff member still feels that their child protection concern is not adequately addressed after reporting to the Director, they will then report their concern to the Board Chair.

To further support children, nurses and other support staff should also be trained in CPR/first aid.

One of the roles of the School Director is to report to the Board (through the Governance Committee) on issues arising relating to Child Protection Policy. Board **members will not be given specific details relating to child protection situations.**

### Procedures

The schools' induction procedures include guidelines as to what adults working in school should do in the event that they become aware of child protection concerns. Staff will be informed of changes to policy and procedures and updated in good child protection practice through regular staff meetings.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Where staff observe signs, which give cause for concern, they should make this known to the designated officer without delay. This must be carried out with tact, confidentiality and sympathy. Over-questioning should be avoided. Notes should be taken, including date and time of any conversations held with the child as soon as possible after the interview.
2. Both the designated CPO and the person raising the concern should log details of the concern in writing.
3. Other staff should be informed of concerns on a **need to know basis** only and any suspicions or additional information added to the concern notes.
4. Following initial discussions, it may be decided that other reasons are responsible for the concern and the possibility of child abuse can be ruled out. If this is so, then the matter can be dropped, but notes will be held in a secure area.
5. Following initial discussions, it may be decided to monitor the situation. In this case, the class teacher is responsible for keeping confidential notes in a secure area recording daily observations. All notes must be dated and times noted where appropriate.
6. If a child talks openly and makes direct references to being abused, a referral should be made to the appropriate CPO at AAS.
7. The class teacher, teacher assistant or supervisory personnel cannot be absolved from the ultimate responsibility for reporting his/her suspicions if the suspicions persist, even though the designated CPO may not be in agreement.
8. If a staff member reports a suspicion and they feel that the CPO to whom they reported did not adequately follow up on the suspicion, they are obligated to report the suspicion to the CPO's supervisor.
9. The designated Child Protection Officer will represent the school in a case. A member of staff with detailed knowledge of the child and case may be asked to accompany the CPO. Staff will be offered support and counseling to assist them deal with any stress that results from dealing with a case.

### **Referrals to Local Authorities/Agencies**

One of the Designated CPOs must be bilingual (English and Bulgarian). This 'Bilingual CPO' (ES Principal's Assistant) will liaise with local authorities/agencies (in conjunction with one other CPO). Referral forms will be prepared as per specifications of Bulgarian authorities, and translated into English.

All paperwork must be treated as confidential. Careful notes should be made of dates, times, personnel involved, details of telephone conversations and copies of letters sent.

### **Training and Support**

Our school will ensure that the Director and Principals, all Designated CPOs attend the training relevant to their role. Staff working with children will receive regular updates and training 'in house' and be informed of opportunities to attend specified courses. Staff will receive training through the schools' induction procedures, which includes advice on Care, Control and Physical Intervention and allegations against professionals. The school's nurse and counselors are available to discuss issues with any parents, child or member of staff.

### **Records and Monitoring**

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. AAS is clear about the need to record any concerns held about a child or children within our school, the status of such records and when these records should be passed to other agencies.

Child Protection concerns are recorded and kept in a secure area separate from other school records.

Child Protection concerns are monitored closely and regular reviews organised by the Designated CPO(s). The designated CPO(s) will decide when further advice or a referral is necessary.

The school will pass on to transfer school's information related to neglect and abuse that have occurred within two years prior to the date of transfer. Documents relating to concerns that were raised more than two years prior to transfer will be destroyed.

### **Supporting Students at Risk**

AAS recognises that those children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. The school realises that it may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. It is also recognized that some children who have experiences of abuse may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered, sensitive approach in order that the child can receive appropriate help and support.

This school will endeavour to support students through:

- A curriculum that encourages high levels of self-motivation
- An ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all students and adults a sense of being respected and valued
- The implementation of school behaviour management policies
- A consistent approach, which recognises and separates the cause of behaviour from that which the child displays
- Regular liaison with other professionals and agencies that support the students and their families
- A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents, whenever it is in the interests of the child to do so
- The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff trained to respond appropriately in child protection situations.

The Child Protection Policy will be carefully considered alongside other related policies in school. AAS recognizes that statistically, children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities are most vulnerable to abuse. School staff who work, in any capacity, with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and/or emotional and behaviour

problems will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse. Where children are exposed to domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, children may be vulnerable and in need of support or protection.

### **Allegations Against Staff**

All complaints must be directed to the staff member's supervisor. The AAS Speaking Up Policy outlines procedures to be followed in the case of an allegation of abuse by a member of staff. In addition, on receipt of an allegation or complaint, the member of staff or volunteer will be suspended with immediate effect whilst the allegation is investigated. If an allegation is made against a designated Child Protection Officer or a member of the School Board, the Director must be informed immediately, and in the absence of the Director, the Principals. The Child Protection Team, minus the Director, will address the allegations if the allegations are against the Director.

### **Safe School, Safe Staff**

- The School gives the monitoring of children in terms of their health and welfare the highest priority
- Only staff who have been police checked are permitted to work on a 'one to one' basis in school, or on authorised school visits
- The school participates readily and ethically when sharing perspectives and experiences with practitioners from other agencies
- The performance of all staff, including the building of successful and appropriate relationships with children, is monitored closely by the School Leadership Team
- The School requires that security checks are in place before any person is employed, or deployed, to work with children in the school setting
- School monitors all staff, including volunteers, who work with children
- Staff must never place themselves in a position where their behaviour or actions place students or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a student
- The School has introduced and emphasized expectations to ensure that staff is not exposed to the risk of abuse within the school setting
- Procedures for protecting staff from abuse will be regularly reviewed and revised when necessary ● The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually by the Board Governance Committee.

### **Mission Driven**

Our Child Protection Policy helps us live our mission and our core values and be global citizens: *We engage, support and prepare each student for today and tomorrow. Our Core Values are Commitment, Respect and Excellence. At AAS, we recognize global citizenship transcends school approach, beliefs and actions.*