Code of Conduct Policy

SSIS
SAIGON SOUTH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Scope	**All employees of SSIS Teaching and non-teaching Academic and Operational**	**Revised**	
Approved		**Approved by**	**SSIS Board of Directors Gayle Tsien, Chair**
Date			
Next Review Date	**May 2025**	**Responsible Person**	**Dr. Catriona Moran**

The Code of Conduct for all adults working with our students

INTRODUCTION

At SSIS, we are a school where every student thrives both intellectually and personally; we prepare our students to lead "a purposeful life as a global citizen." Our core values are at the heart of everything we do. We recognize that children who feel safe and happy will flourish and we are committed to safeguarding, child protection and the wellbeing of our students in a secure, supportive, and caring environment. This defines our school's **Culture of Care.**

Our Culture of Care underpins an environment which proactively supports our students, staff and the SSIS community on a day to day basis. SSIS has adopted a strong Safeguarding and Child Protection Protocol to guide staff and families in matters related to the health, safety, welfare, wellbeing, and care of children in attendance at the school. In addition, a clear Code of Conduct is an essential element of SSIS's Culture of Care as it aligns our behaviors, actions and responses.

A. The purpose of the Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct demonstrates and shares our values and our Safeguarding commitment with all adults who work with our students. It provides guidance on minimum standards and clarity on professional conduct, expectations, and boundaries. It allows staff to understand and model protective behaviors which keep both children and adults safe.

B. Safeguarding Standards and Expectations

Saigon South International School is committed to providing a learning environment in which adults and children are valued, respected and able to flourish. Adults play a key role in shaping our adults of the future. We embrace a strong Code of Conduct built upon a set of guiding principles and expectations, which strengthens our foundation of professional behavior and daily practice. All adults, regardless of role, support the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students and reinforce the teaching standards and principles of this Code of Conduct policy.

Child-centered decision making means decisions are made in the best interest of the child and individuals use professional judgment in doing so. Advice and guidance are available from your line manager, department manager, department head, team lead, counselor, principal, or Designated Safeguarding Lead in situations of ambiguity. Responsibility to take action (eg. reporting) related to Code of Conduct concerns rests with the individual. The report systems outlined are proactively used in the spirit of our culture of care. It is always advised to consider how decisions, actions and behavior might be viewed by an independent observer.

C. Directive Guidance for standards

Our Code of Conduct is aligned with the directive guidance shared with local schools by the Vietnamese Government. These directives include:

- The Children Law No.: **102/2016/QH13** issued in April 5th 2016
- Decree No. **56/2017/ND-CP** detailing a number of articles of the Law on Children issued in May 9th 2017

Should these directives be revised, changed, or additional directives issued by the Vietnamese Government, SSIS will review the Code of Conduct in light of those revisions, changes, and/or adjustments.

D. Role

In our role as members of SSIS, the importance of providing positive role models and staying in our professional role cannot be overemphasized. Our Duty of Care means that all adults within the school community have a responsibility to safeguard, protect, and look after the wellbeing of all students. As a positive role model and in fulfillment of professional standards, for instance, we undertake to:

1. Actively demonstrate our duty of care to students and our commitment to safeguarding;
2. Support and reflect the school's mission and vision statements;
3. Be diligent and consistent in upholding and implementing all policies of the school;
4. Render professional services to Saigon South International School to the best of our ability;
5. Seek opportunities to improve professionally and to promote school improvement;
6. Behave in such a manner that supports the positive reputation and image of the school;
7. Demonstrate respect and respectful behaviors in the school role and within the community;
8. Avoid behavior that would embarrass ourselves or the school;
9. Speak with and seek support from leadership if personal issues are impacting work;
10. Refrain from false or malicious statements, libel, slander, or defame another member of the SSIS community;
11. Refrain from commentary on another staff/faculty member's professional performance (unless to a supervisor) or with regards to their private life in any way including with staff, faculty, parents, and students;
12. Refrain from disclosing information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose where the conduct of the colleague is injurious to the student or profession or is required by law;
13. Refrain from making false statements or failure to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications when applying for a position;
14. Refrain from misrepresenting our professional qualifications;
15. Decline any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions (see *All Employee Handbook* for more details on gratuity and gifts);
16. Alcohol consumption at designated school events should demonstrate moderation and smoking is prohibited on campus;
17. Seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or supervisor when safeguarding issues or questions arise;
18. Be diligent and consistent in self-reporting and raising low-level concerns, where necessary;
19. Maintain a Duty of Care even when a student leaves the school.

E. Respect and Boundaries:

As Adults we:

1. Demonstrate respect in our decisions, actions, language use, and behaviors at all times;
2. Encourage community cohesion and endeavor to understand and respect the varied cultures and diverse backgrounds of our families;
3. Refrain from expressing any discriminatory views against anyone including on the basis of gender, marital status, religious belief, ethical belief, color, race, ethnic or national origins, disability, age, political opinion, employment status, family status, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or any other bias;
4. Respect student's privacy, actively protect student data, and adhere to all data protection laws and guidance;
5. Set and maintain appropriate boundaries regarding the student-teacher relationship;
6. Follow the guidance outlined on appropriate touch and minimize ambiguous physical contact that could be misinterpreted;

7. Adhere to the *Acceptable Use of Technology Policy*. (Digital communication takes place within clear and explicit boundaries);
8. Use staff bathrooms when possible. If using a student-designated bathroom adults will use an individual stall.

F. Relationships and Power:

Relationships between staff and students are supportive, friendly, and mutually respectful. The code acknowledges the following:

As Adults, we:

1. Strive to build positive professional relationships, ensuring that student contact is reasonable, appropriate, and in line with our job role;
2. Stay alert to the inherent dependency of students on their teachers and understand both the real and perceived power exercised by teachers over students;
3. Acknowledge the potential for a power imbalance in our school-based relationships with students and therefore actively promote positive developmental growth and wellbeing in all students;
4. Abstain from personal friendships with leaving students, limiting all communication through formal school's channels;
5. Refrain from developing or grooming any 'special' relationships with students that could be construed as favoritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students);
6. Do not engage in any form of sexual or intimate relationship with a student or recent former student (up to 5 years after graduation age is considered recent) or encourage such relationship or contact;
7. Value and encourage communication and input from parents, communicating through official school channels only.

G. Responsibility and Accountability:

At SSIS we act transparently, unambiguously, and consistently with the expectations of the school, always putting the interests of the students first.

As Adults we:

1. Exercise professional judgment and common sense;
2. Put the interests of the student first, showing commitment to child-centered decision making;
3. Follow the clear guidance on lone working, acknowledging the need for transparency, (e.g., keep the door to room open);
4. Help each student realize their potential as a worthy and effective member of society;
5. Refrain from using sexual or sexualized language, seductive speech, innuendo, or gestures. All incidents should be reported by raising a low-level concern referral.

H. Curriculum and Parents:

As Adults we:

1. Ensure that teaching material of a sensitive, or explicit nature, particularly in relation to language, culture, or sexual behavior, is selected with care and consideration, in line with school policy, is listed in departmental Year-at-a-Glance (YAAG), and approved by the Divisional Principal;
2. Make all reasonable efforts to communicate with parents any information which should be revealed in the interest of their child (child protection information should be shared with the DSL or Head of School);
3. Refrain from disclosing information about colleagues or other students to parents of a child, in the course of their work;
4. Assure parents that concerns or complaints regarding the classroom can be made without in any way compromising the teaching or evaluation of their child.

I. Illegal Activities in Vietnam

The following activities are illegal in Vietnam and could lead to immediate termination of employment:

1. Downloading or watching pornography on school equipment or on school premises;
2. Possess an illegal firearm or be seen to glorify the use of weapons in any communication context;
3. Possessing or being under the influence of illegal drugs at any time while in Vietnam.

J. Physical Contact

The guidance with regards to appropriate touch is complex and relies on good, sound professional judgments. However, as a school, SSIS does not advocate a no-touch policy but completely supports appropriate touch. Any touching must maintain appropriate boundaries. Appropriate touch should consist only of public and nonsexual touches that are appropriate and role relevant, given the child's age and relationship to the adult. Adults are aware that all incidences of physical touch are potentially open to scrutiny. Inappropriate physical behavior includes any contact that abuses, exploits, or harasses a child or makes them feel uncomfortable.

Physical Touch is:

1. Appropriate
2. Within acceptable boundaries;
3. Non-threatening, intrusive, or subject to misinterpretation;
4. Reported as a self-report if you feel that your actions could be misinterpreted by others.

Examples of appropriate touch:

1. Pats on the central back or upper arm;
2. Student-initiated hugs;
3. Holding hands to safely cross the street or deal with other potentially dangerous circumstances;
4. Supporting very young students with toileting or changing of clothes; (role dependent and with intimate care training)
5. Putting on seat belts or safety harnesses during bus travel;
6. Demonstrating a physical skill on a student volunteer during a sports activity;
7. Administering first aid;
8. The **"safe handling"** of a distressed student, in line with guidance, to prevent them hurting themselves, someone else, committing a crime, or seriously disrupting the learning or safety of others, is acceptable.

Examples of inappropriate touch:

1. Any adult initiated physical contact, without seeking permission;
2. Stroking any part of the body;
3. Slapping, shaking, pinching, hitting, punching, pushing, grabbing, kicking;
4. Patting the buttocks;
5. Touching private body parts;
6. Kissing a student, regardless of age;
7. Any contact that is intended to be intimate, romantic or sexual, with a current or past student;
8. Any contact that is unwanted by the student;
9. Any touch in combination with exposure to pornographic or sexually suggestive material.

Exceptions

Occasionally there is no alternative to picking a child up for Health & Safety reasons. This should always be a **"last resort"**. Early Childhood providers should establish clear guidelines for student contact, in line with acceptable practice. This guidance should always take due regard for the safeguarding of children and of staff. Every attempt should be made to ensure that the safety and security needs of both staff and students are met.

K. Isolation and One-to-One Working

At SSIS we realize that working in one-to-one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. We recognize this possibility and plan and conduct classes and meetings accordingly.

While some staff may undertake private tutoring of students, outside of their working day, they always adhere to the Tutoring Policy. It is important to emphasize that the standards of professional conduct and behavior expected of staff outside and after school is no different from those which apply within the school.

As Adults, we:

1. Conduct one-to-one meetings or lessons in public, or semi-public, places such as classrooms or offices. If in classrooms, we ensure that we are seated in such a way that we and the student can be seen through the window in the door;
2. Ensure that the door to the room has a glass panel or, at the very least, is left open if we are alone with a student for a meeting or lesson. A supervisor is made aware of any lone working arrangement if a one-on-one meeting is taking place outside of our general work environment;
3. Ensure that furniture is positioned to allow easy access into or out of the room and that the window in the door is not obscured when in a private meeting or lesson with a student. Meeting notes should be made available, on request of the Head of School;
4. Ensure exit from a room is always possible for the student (exception: early childhood classrooms may need to be secure);
5. Are never behind a locked door with a student.

L. Transporting Students

1. Students are transported in school-approved buses where both Health and Safety and Safeguarding guidance is adhered to;
2. Staff do not transport students in their own vehicles or in a taxi alone unless this is unavoidable, in which case specific prior approval from a supervisor is obtained where possible. In cases where the transporting of a child by a staff member is in the best interests of the child's safety, the staff member must raise a self-report to their supervisor as soon as reasonably possible.
3. Students must only be transported in a vehicle. The vehicle should have seatbelts and age-appropriate safety harnesses.

M. Adult Use of Technology

At SSIS we recognize that technology and social media are incredibly powerful and effective tools both in and out of the classroom. The use of technology can have a massive impact on student and teacher learning when used purposefully. To be true digital citizens, our students need teachers and staff who model pro-social, creative, and responsible social media use.

We strive to have separate personal and professional digital accounts, review privacy settings regularly and adhere to the SSIS's *Acceptable Use Policy* and *Social Media Guidelines.*

To protect, we:

1. Make an effort to take photos on school devices. Photos taken on a device not owned by SSIS are uploaded and stored in a secure location or system. Any images that do not include the staff member's own children are deleted from personal devices within three months, or no later than the end of the academic year;
2. Write in a professional manner, in any/all one-to-one electronic communications with students, and we protect private and sensitive information on electronic devices that may be accessed by students;
3. Communicate with employees and parents through approved school channels;
4. Communicate with students only through school-based electronic platforms, rather than on social media (e.g.,WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter). We refrain from accepting or requesting students as 'friends' on social media. Personal social media profiles are not linked to students' online profiles;

5. Personal social media accounts should not be used for school business purposes. (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter). An exception may be considered for sporting or other activity, in which case the use of WhatsApp is approved and monitored by an administrator for the duration of the activity. WhatsApp group must be deleted at end of activity or event
6. Refrain from sending, sharing, or posting pictures, text messages, emails, or other material that individually identifies students by last name, class, advisory, or grade level;
7. Refrain from placing any personal identifying information regarding any student on any personal electronic device or on personal social media;
8. Refrain from responding to requests from the media for comment on matters relating to SSIS. Only authorized staff members respond to media requests for comment;
9. Only post photos of students on professional social media accounts (Twitter, LinkedIn, and Professional Blogs), not on personal social media. When using photos of students we ensure that students are not identifiable.

N. Reporting

In support of our **Culture of Care** and our transparent, open, and safe community, we see reporting as a **positive** action to safeguard and support children and adults and allows key Safeguarding and Leadership staff to map the bigger picture. The reporting of a low-level incident will not necessarily trigger a safeguarding inquiry and many incidents are found to have reasonable and plausible explanations.

In Appendix 1, the various ways for reporting are detailed. Appendix 2 details the reporting process flow. Appendix 3 contains a copy of the standard "Adult Self-Report" form, while Appendix 4 contains a copy of the "Adult Low-Level Concern/Allegation" form.

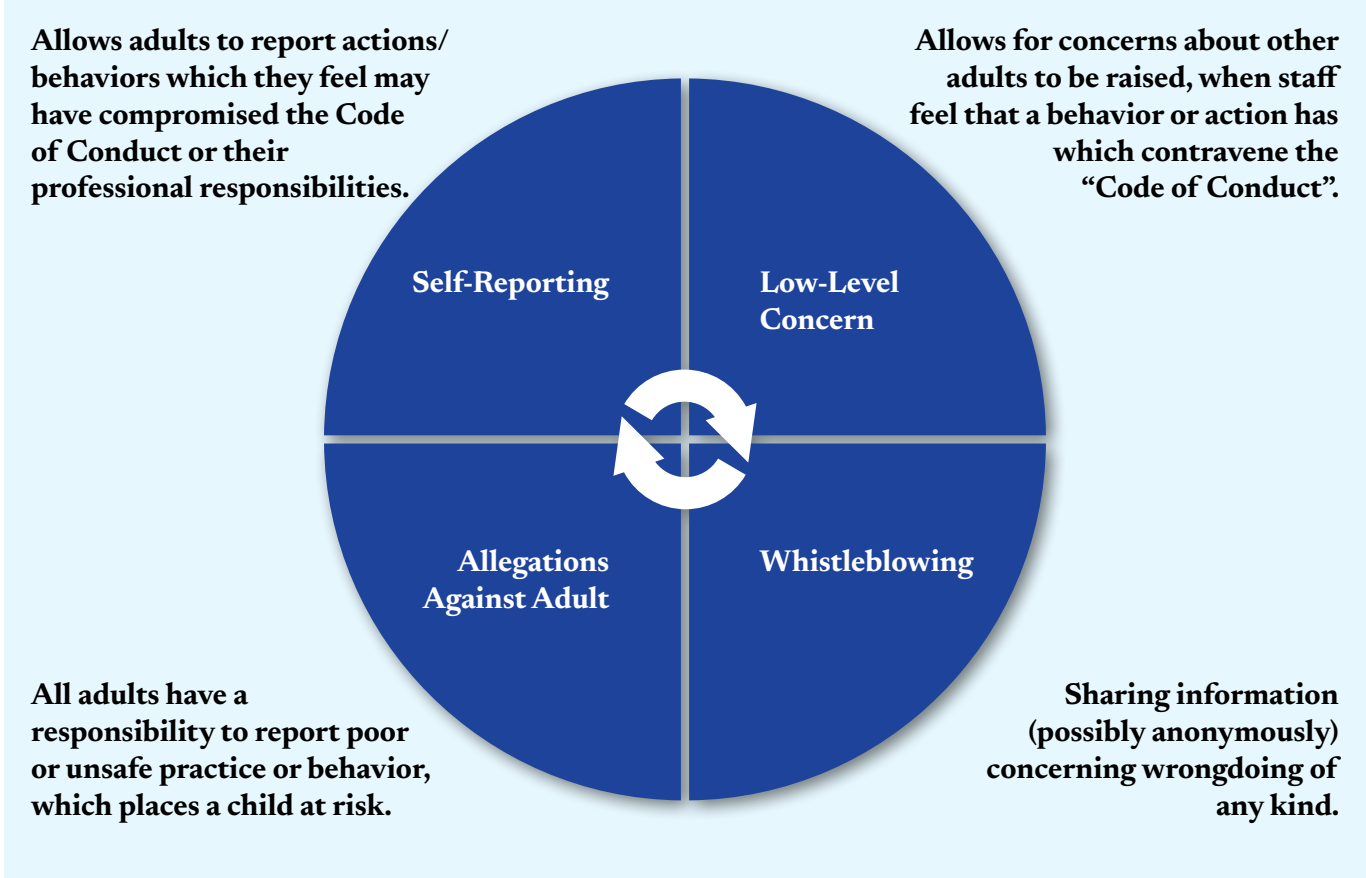
The reporting of behavior/actions which do not support the wellbeing of a child or children, in line with our SSIS values, or are seen to be abusive in nature, is an integral part of the SSIS Culture of Care. An essential part of all adult's Duty of Care to children is to hold ourselves and others accountable for behavior, actions, and professional judgment. Reporting of concerns is a professional responsibility and protects ourselves, our students, and the school's reputation.

"When in doubt, report it out."

O. Adhering to the Code of Conduct

At SSIS, regardless of our role, we work to support the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of students and to reinforce the teaching standards and principles of this Code of Conduct policy. Failure to adhere to or a blatant disregard for our standards and expectations will result in follow-up by supervisors and school administration and may result in school disciplinary actions.

Appendix 1
Reporting considerations are made in four ways:



1. **Self-reporting** – is supportive of human error, mistakes, poor judgments. It allows staff to take ownership of their professional behavior and to recognize when they may have found themselves in an unexpected position.
2. **Low-Level Concerns** – are embedded in a supportive culture that protects children and adults. A low-level concern should be raised when staff feels that a behavior or action has contravened the Code of Conduct or when any actions of an adult make you feel uncomfortable or give a nagging doubt.
3. **Allegations** - An allegation should always be raised when any adult witnesses or is a party to any serious action that contravenes the Code of Conduct which they believe to be harmful, potentially harmful, intentional, and put children at risk.

The responsibility to determine the level of seriousness does not sit with a staff member, who is encouraged only to report facts to the Head of School.

An allegation includes concerns that an adult(s) who works with children may have:

1. Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or children or **may** have harmed a child or children;
2. **Possibly** committed a criminal offense against or related to a child or children; or
3. Behaved in a way that indicates that they would or could pose **a risk** of harm to a child or children.

4. Whistleblowing/ Anonymous Reporting

No employee will suffer a detriment, or be disciplined, for raising a genuine concern about the unsafe practice, provided they do so in good faith. The raising of an allegation is not a legal act and SSIS will follow the allegations process to support the fact-finding required in all cases. HR will play a significant role in cases and have the right to invite the involvement of trade union representation when deemed necessary. Local statutory authorities may be involved if the actions are criminal in nature, breach Vietnamese law, or require statutory reporting, such as sexual abuse.

The Whistleblower Protection Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the School rather than seeking resolution outside the School.

The SSIS Code of Conduct Policy requires the Head of School, senior administrators, and all employees of the School to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As employees and representatives of the School, all must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

It is the responsibility of the Head of School, senior administrators, officers, and all employees to comply with the Code of Conduct Policy and to report violations or suspected violations in accordance with this Whistleblower Protection Policy.

Any unlawful conduct or a violation of the Code of Conduct Policy should be reported in accordance with this policy. No employee who in good faith raises concerns shall suffer harassment, retaliation, or adverse employment consequences. An employee that retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

The School expects that employees will report what they know, particularly if it falls into any of the following categories:

- A criminal offense, eg fraud
- Someone's health and safety is in danger
- Unauthorized use of School funds
- Individuals are being sexually or physically abused
- There is a risk of or actual damage to the environment
- Someone is being blamed or made responsible for something they did not do
- You believe someone is covering up wrongdoing
- You believe someone is engaged in other serious unethical conduct

This Handbook addresses the School's open-door policy and provides that employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints with someone who can address them properly. In most cases, an employee's supervisor is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if they are not comfortable speaking with their supervisor or are not satisfied with their supervisor's response, the employee is encouraged to speak with the Head of School or anyone in administration whom they are comfortable in approaching. Supervisors and managers are required to report suspected violations of the code of ethics to the Head of School who has specific and exclusive responsibility to investigate all reported violations.

To report violations, or when employees are not satisfied or uncomfortable with following the School's open-door policy, individuals should contact the Head of School Office directly. If an employee is not comfortable speaking with the Head of School, or he or she is unavailable and the matter is urgent, the employee should contact the Associate Head of School for Operations and Finance or the Human Resource Manager. The Head of School, or their designee, is responsible for assessing and, where appropriate, investigating all reported complaints and allegations concerning violations of the Code of Conduct Policy that appear to be facially credible.

Anyone raising concerns through this policy must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for concern. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made frivolously, maliciously, for personal gain, or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant but anonymous submissions will not be entertained. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

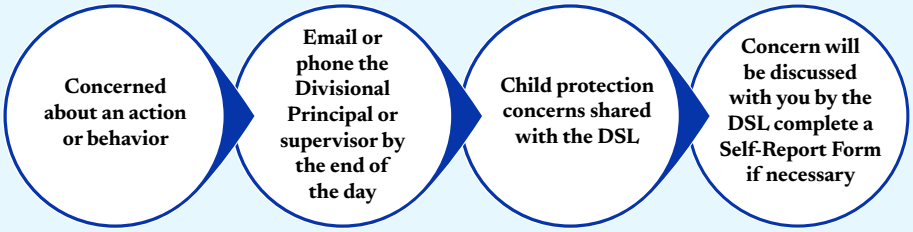
Personal grievances related to employment (for example, bullying or harassment) are not covered by this policy. If you are worried about these, please refer to the Grievance Policy.

The Head of School will notify the sender and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation within five (5) business days. The school will respond to concerns raised. This response can take many forms. For example, the issue may:

- Be investigated by School management, internal audit or through the disciplinary process;
- Be referred to the police;
- Be referred to an external auditor; or
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry.

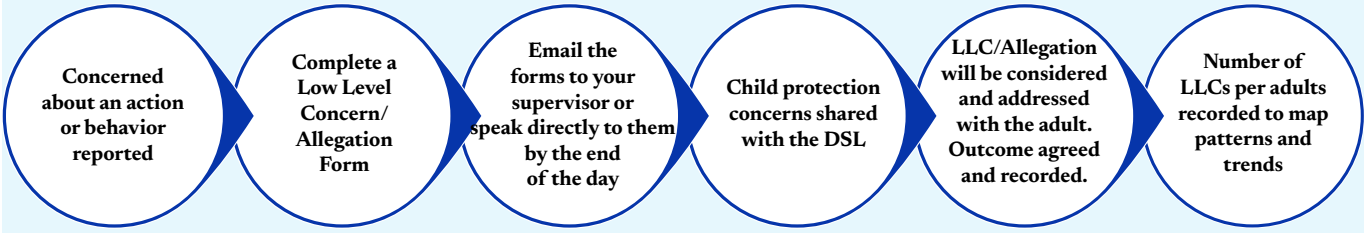
Appendix 2
Reporting Process Flow Chart

Self-Report



- The Code of Conduct outlines some circumstances when staff must make a self-report referral: when actions or behavior breach the Code of Conduct policy;
- When actions or behaviors towards a student may have been misinterpreted or may have given rise to a risk of misinterpretation;
- When you breach appropriate touch guidance in an emergency, in order to prevent hurt or harm to a student (e.g. student aggression or fighting);
- Physical contact with a student when no one else is present, including when a teacher must administer first aid or medical treatment (health office staff excluded) and including physical demonstrations in one-to-one sports coaching, music lessons etc.; and
- When you have needed to use reasonable force to restore the orderly running of the school.

Low-Level Concern and/or Allegation



The **Code of Conduct** outlines some circumstances when staff must raise a **Low-Level Concern** referral: When you witness or become aware of:

- An adult's actions or behavior towards a student which may be misinterpreted or give rise to a risk of misinterpretation;
- The use of sexually inappropriate language, references, or jokes to a student; you have knowledge of the use of email, messaging, use of chat forums, social media sites, or other communication between adults and students outside agreed protocols;
- Unsupervised access to a student other than in the context of planned one-to-one lessons or counseling sessions (this would include all one-to-one meetings or discussions, whether related to schoolwork, pastoral issues or other matters);
- Physical contact with a student when no one else is present, including when a teacher must administer first aid or medical treatment (health office staff excluded) and including physical demonstrations in one-to-one sports coaching, music lessons, etc.;
- Any incident where a member of staff has been alone with a student or students in a vehicle where this has not been authorized in advance;
- Adult contact with students outside school (other than trivial incidents, e.g., passing a student in the street or the supermarket or noticing that they are sitting, separately, in the same restaurant or cinema);
- A student use of a staff member's home address, mobile or home phone number, or non-school email address;
- A staff member becomes involved in a close or sexual relationship with a former student, regardless of the age of the student, within five years of the student's departure from the school;
- An adult seeking unsupervised access to a student on a school trip;
- Non-trivial illnesses or accidents of students on school trips; and
- Any incident where, for whatever reason, a member of staff appears to lack regard or breach this Code of Conduct.

Appendix 3
Adult Self-Report

School Division		
Name of adult making the report		**Role in school**
Signature		**Date**
• *The raising of a self-report is seen as a neutral act.* • *Use this form to record any concerns or nagging doubts.* • *The form should be emailed or handed directly to the Divisional Principal. Information may be shared with the DSL and Head of School.* • *Be as precise and accurate as possible.* • *Continue a separate A4 sheet if necessary. Each page should be numbered (page x of x), dated and signed.* • *Attach any relevant documents, do not share or send pictures of children, without permission.*		
Nature of self-report *Possible self-report examples:* *Breach of Code of Conduct - Appropriate touch of a child whilst alone with a child*		
Action taken	**By whom?**	**Date**

Appendix 4
Adult Low-Level Concern/ Allegation

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">School Division</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Name of adult making the report</td><td>Role in school</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Adult / adults referred to</td><td>Role in School</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">

- The raising of a low-level concern is seen as a neutral act.
- Use this form to record any concerns or nagging doubts.
- The form should be handed or emailed directly to the Divisional Principal. Information may be shared with the DSL and Head of School.
- Be as precise and accurate as possible.
- Continue a separate A4 sheet if necessary. Each page should be numbered (page x of x), dated and signed.
- Attach any relevant documents, do not share or send pictures of children, without permission.
- Take the time to speak directly to the Division Principal or DSL, in their absence, if you have a serious concern. Do not go home without reporting a serious concern.

</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Nature of Low-Level Concern
Possible low level concern examples:
Breach of Code of Conduct - inappropriate touch of a child.
Bullying, humiliation, or excessive shouting of a child by an adult</td></tr>
<tr><td>Action taken</td><td>By whom?</td><td>Date</td></tr>
<tr><td>Signature of Divisional Principal</td><td>Signature of DSL</td><td>Date</td></tr>
</table>



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