



Copeland Elementary School

1440 Jackson Road
Augusta, Georgia 30909
Office: (706) 737-7228
Fax: (706) 731-7656

<https://copeland.rcboe.org>

Tonya Cogle, Interim Principal



PYP Child Protection Policy

Copeland Elementary is an Authorized School for the Primary Years Program (PYP). This school has obtained authorization as an IB World School, aligning with a shared philosophy dedicated to providing high-quality, challenging, and internationally-focused education that Copeland Elementary deems essential for our students.*

**Only schools authorized by the IB Organization can offer any of its four academic programmes: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme, or the Career-related Programme (CP). For further information about the IB and its programmes, visit www.ibo.org*

Mission: Empowering all learners through curiosity, equity, excellence and strong foundations for lifelong success!

Vision: Inspiring inquirers and thinkers to grow, lead, and thrive in a global community.

Philosophy on Child Protection

It is our belief that it is the school's responsibility to promote and protect the welfare of all children in our learning environment. Representatives of the school's community and stakeholders will be involved in policy development and review. Policies will be reviewed annually unless an extenuating circumstance requires policy be reviewed sooner. We recognize our moral and statutory obligation to safeguard the welfare of all children. We will provide a safe and welcoming environment for children in which they feel respected, valued and safe to learn. We will be vigilant and alert to the signs of abuse or neglect. We will follow the procedures outlined by the State of Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators, Richmond County Board of Education and Copeland's Child Protection policy to ensure all students receive effective support and protection. The procedures outlined in this policy apply to all faculty and staff at Copeland Elementary School.

Aims

We aim to:

- Support students who may have been or are at risk of neglect or abuse (physical, mental, emotional, sexual).
- Increase staff awareness to child protection concerns.
- Establish and maintain an environment where students feel safe to learn.
- Ensure all students are aware of adults in the school they can talk to if they feel unsafe in any way.
- Include activities/programs within the curriculum that support student's emotional and social well-being as well as equip student with the skills they need to feel/stay safe.
- Demonstrate effective, positive working relationships with parents and colleagues.
- Ensure all staff understand the local procedures for reporting and acting upon their concerns.

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Key Personnel

Mrs. Tynisha Brisco- Principal – Head of School

Mrs. Inez Mitchell- Assistant Principal – Site Safety Coordinator

Mr. Jerome Rouse- School Counselor – Provides in-house counseling services, referrals and family assistance

Ms. Dametria Whitaker- School Social Worker – provides families with support and works with Georgia Department of Family and Children’s Services

Mandated Reporters:

In Georgia law, it designates certain professionals as mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5) Teachers who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused, must make a report, immediately but no later than 24 hours, to your local DFCS office or law enforcement and are subject to criminal penalty for failing to do so. According to Georgia State University,

“the majority of reports are made by mandated reporters, making them a first line of defense. The law protects and prevent further abuse and its adverse effects as well as bring protective services into the home with the hopes of improving the child’s welfare and preserve the family when possible.”

If an educator suspects abuse/neglect they will first fill out a Richmond County Board of Education Georgia Child Protective Services Mandated Reporter Form. The form must be submitted no less than 24 hours after the incident/observation took place. The form may be submitted by phone, online or by fax. Once a form has been submitted DFACS has the option to contact the reporter for more information. All reports remain anonymous unless subpoenaed by the court to make a statement in a child abuse case. In effort to maintain the safety of all children within the school, educators ensure the following good practice protocols are in place:

Good practice:

- Treating everyone with respect
- Modeling proper behavior
- Involving students in decisions which affect them
- Encouraging positive and safe behavior at all times
- Being alert to changes in student’s behavior
- Recognizing behaviors that may indicate abuse
- Reading, understanding and complying will all school safety protocols
- Requiring student’s permission before performing anything of a physical nature (physical support, first aid, clothing functions, restroom assistance)
- Maintaining appropriate language and conversations
- Avoid all derogatory language with others
- Being aware of family circumstances that may increase the risk of abuse.

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Abuse of Trust

All school employees are required to complete the Georgia Teacher Code of Ethics training at the beginning of each school term. All school staff are aware that inappropriate behavior towards children violates the Georgia Department Code of Conduct for Educators as well as the school's child protection policy and

employee code of conduct for Richmond County Schools. Under the sexual offences Act of 2003, it is an offense for any person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18 when that person is in the position of trust. This means that any sexual activity, whether it be consensual or not, is a criminal offense.

The school's Code of Ethical Practice sets out our expectations of staff (see Appendix 1 – Employee Handbook Page 20).

Complaints/Reports from Staff

Faculty and staff are able to raise concerns/allegations in confidence and report directly to the principal. All concerns of poor practice should be brought to the attention of the principal immediately. Complaints regarding the safety of our students are taken seriously. The principal reports issues directly to the Human Resources department. Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress. Further guidelines on how to handle complaints and allegations are outlined in the Richmond County Schools Employee Handbook. (See Appendix 2)

Photography and Images

Parents must provide consent for use of their student's photographs/videos to be taken and published. When publishing images/videos online student's first names are to be used only. Students are asked permission before any image/video is taken. Student's have the right to request to not be photographed or video-recorded. Parents are reminded at gatherings/social/school events that they must not upload images of other people's children to social media. Staff should not post images of students on their personal social media accounts without direct consent from the parents.

Safety Online

Cyber-bullying is treated as seriously as any other form of bullying and is managed through our behavioral and safety procedures. Social network sites and chat rooms are not allowed to be accessed while in school. Other potentially harmful sites including social media networking sites are blocked on the school campus. The school takes efforts to educate students about risks associated with online social media accounts.

Indicators of Abuse

School staff are required to report any signs of indicated abuse. However, school staff should not investigate the abuse. Key personnel are assigned to handle the investigation of abuse.

Signs of abuse include but are not limited to:

- Bruising, bleeding, burns, fractures, injuries
- Signs of pain or discomfort
- Keeping arms and legs covered in warm weather

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- Concerned about changing clothes
- Appearance of being unkempt
- Change in eating habits
- Difficulty making friends
- Appears fearful or scared
- Reckless in regards to safety of self or others
- Harming oneself
- Frequent number of absences
- Showing signs of not wanting to go home
- Sudden change in behavior
- Challenging authority
- Lack of motivation or interest in school work
- Constantly tired
- Afraid of physical contact
- Involved or knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- Knowledgeable about sexual behavior beyond what is normal for the age of the child

Confidentiality

Child protection issues are highly confidential. Staff should only discuss concerns with the school counselor, assistant principal or principal. These are the designated people whom staff will report to in the case of alleged abuse. In an effort to maintain the student's privacy and not compromise the case, the child's situation will not be discussed with outside parties. The for mentioned designated people will decide how the information should be disseminated on a "need to know basis" if information is to be shared. Child protection information is stored and handled securely. Information security protocol includes:

- Information is processed for limited purposes and not kept longer than necessary
- Information is processed for defined purposes
- Information is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Information is accurate
- Information is processed in accordance with the student/subject(s) rights
- A secure record of concern forms and other information will be locked within the facility and all electronic information containing confidential information about students will be password protected.

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Resources

Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators 505- 6 -.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS Effective October 15, 2019

Georgia Southern University. 2020. *PCA Georgia*. [online] Available at:

<<https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/free-online-mandated-reporting/>> [Accessed 22 October 2020].

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/830121/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_060919.pdf

Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy at IBIS <https://www.ibis-school.com/files/docs/Child-Protection-Policy.pdf>, September, 2019.

Appendix 1

REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE

Georgia Law requires that all persons who suspect child abuse/neglect to report it to the proper authority, which is the Department of Family and Children Services. **As the law relates to school institutions, it requires the observer to report it directly or cause it to be reported.** Failure to adhere to the administrative procedures set out herein may also result in appropriate disciplinary action by the school system, including but not limited to, suspension without pay. If you suspect abuse:

1. Notify the principal or her designee
2. **Complete the report form – [see Appendix D] and give a copy to the principal.** The individual making the report needs to describe specifically the injuries seen. The severity of the injury is very important in setting the appropriate response time of DFACS and the local Law Enforcement Agency. **However, the severity does not change the requirements for the school system to immediately make such report.**
3. Either call to report your suspicion or be present when the call is made by the principal, school counselor, or school social worker.

Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) 1(855) 422-4453.

In any incident where a teacher is not sure whether his or her observance is accurate or promotes reasonable cause to suspect child abuse/neglect, the individual should understand that it is the primary obligation of the individual to report the allegation, not to decide the validity of the allegation. All other pertinent “need to know” information will be explained in the Mandated Reporter Video that is mandatory for everyone to view.

SABOTAGE

We are often our own worst enemies. Choose your words carefully, even if you must pause before you speak. It should not be about getting “blame” off of you and onto someone else. It is about explaining the facts and helping others understand our purpose. *If you do not know, it is incumbent upon you to ask. It is your responsibility to know what is going on and why!* Do not use words that excite parents or students or intentionally incite fear or anger. Examples include but are far from limited to:

Your child was “jumped” today.

He punched him over and over.

I couldn’t even get to him he was hitting so fast.

Your child didn’t do anything wrong. The other kid just started punching him.

If your child isn’t going to try, then neither am I.

There’s nothing I can do with him when you don’t give him his medicine.

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I can't even teach when he's in the room.

All he does is disrupt the class.

This wasn't my idea. You'll have to talk to

I don't know what's going on either. I don't even know why we are doing this.

I have a lot of behavior problems in my room.

I have all the special education students this year.

I'm not doing that!

SAFETY MANUAL (SITE)

Georgia Law requires each school to develop and implement an emergency preparedness plan. The plan is an ongoing process of assessment and revision and updates are made periodically. Safety is everyone's responsibility so input from all staff into the development of the safety manual is encouraged. The site safety committee will address safety concerns in quarterly meetings and collaborate on Copeland Elementary having the safest possible school environment for all staff and students.

Appendix 2

Richmond County Board of Education Employee Handbook

<https://www.rcboe.org/cms/lib/GA01903614/Centricity/Domain/82/Employee%20Handbook%202018-2019%20FINAL%20v4.pdf>

Appendix 3

Georgia Professional Standards Commission Code of Conduct for Educators

<https://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf#:~:text=The%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20for%20Educators%20defines%20the,the%20citizens%20of%20Georgia%20a%20degree%20of%20>

Revision: 12/08/2020

This policy was written by the PYP Coordinator and Gifted Teacher. This policy was reviewed by the School Counselor, Assistant Principal and IB Steering Committee

Revision 2/23/2022

This policy was reviewed and edited by the faculty.

Revision: 10/23/23

This policy was revised by the Pedagogical Leadership Team in October of 2023. The edits were submitted via hard copy documents.

Revision: 02/24/25

This policy was revised by the PYP Coordinator and reviewed by the Pedagogical Leadership Team.

Revision: 03/09/26

This policy was revised by the PYP Coordinator and reviewed by the Pedagogical Leadership Team.

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