NIS Safeguarding (Child Protection Against Abuse) Policy

All students at NIS have a right to safety and wellbeing. This right exists in the home, in their daily lives, while at school and while on any school-related activity. All NIS staff have a contractual obligation and duty to defend and uphold this right. These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and this commitment is affirmed in NIS Board Level Policy.

This policy serves to protect students from abuse or neglect and empowers teachers and other adults with a 'safeguarding code' that will support them in maintaining healthy and positive student-developmental relationships with students.

1. Definitions

Abuse is defined as a stronger/more powerful individual engaging in a pattern of behaviour in order to make personal gain at the expense of a weaker/less powerful person. Abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual. Neglect is also a specific type of abuse.
Emotional Abuse is the routine and harmful shaming, demeaning, belittling, ostracising or otherwise harming of a child's sense of self-worth and self esteem
Physical Abuse is the routine anger-motivated and unpredictable causing of physical harm or injury to students (hitting, scratching, cutting, punching, etc.) with the result of causing the child to be fearful of the abuser.
Sexual Abuse is the exploitation of a student for sexual purposes. It may or may not involve physical contact and can include sexual imagery or language and the exposure of an NIS student to any manner of sexual contexts.
Neglect is a specific type of abuse defined as the failure of responsible adult to provide adequate care to a child. Care can include food, clothing, shelter and supervision, emotional or medical care.

2. NIS Safeguarding Code

NIS staff, sub-contracted employees and any other adult working with NIS students (including volunteers) are expected to adhere to the NIS Safeguarding Code. The code provides guideposts for adults to support healthy relationships and the development of student independence. All adults working with students at NIS are required to adhere to the safeguarding code as a condition of continued employment (or other relationship) with NIS.

The code is established to protect both adults and children and is built upon 4 'guideposts' as follows:

1. Roles

Adults should engage in behaviors associated with their professional roles (teacher, mentor, coach, advisor) and avoid behaviours which are associated with personal roles (friend, parent/family, peer, romantic partner).

Aim for:	Professional, contextually appropriate and clear
Avoid:	Personalised and ambiguous

2. Boundaries

Boundary violations occur when a person in a position of power (e.g. an adult) crosses a boundary with a person who is vulnerable (e.g. a child). Students will also try to set and test boundaries. It is the adult's responsibility to establish, set and maintain boundaries, for example, by making healthy, role-appropriate choices concerning space, time and language.

Aim for:	Establishing and reinforcing clear boundaries; crossing boundaries only when it is clearly in the best interest of the student and in consultation with the school Designated Safeguarding Lead
Avoid:	Blurred boundaries between personal and professional roles; repeated or serious boundary violations which do not serve the students' best interests

3. Power

Adults in schools are in a position of power over students. Adults are responsible for ensuring that there is no abuse of this power. Rather, the role of the (more powerful) adult is to support the (less powerful) student in developing autonomy and independence rather than to create power-based dependency or an otherwise unhealthy attachment.

Aim for:	Use your power to develop autonomy and independence in students; Make student interests paramount when exercising power
Avoid:	Actions which contribute to unhealthy attachments or dependency Using power to meet the adult's needs

4. Accountability

Adults are accountable for their actions. As a school, NIS is collectively accountable for the welfare of its students. Adults need to take reasonable safeguards to ensure that their actions cannot lead to (or be misinterpreted as) violations of the NIS safeguarding code. Collective accountability for the safety of students means that all adults are required to internally report suspicions of abuse (including neglect) using the process outlined in this policy.

Aim for:	Acting transparently and unambiguously; ensuring that all reasonable steps* are taken to avoid actual or mistaken violations of the NIS safeguarding code; reporting any suspicion of abuse or neglect immediately
Avoid:	Conduct which can be inferred as being opaque or secretive and/or which lead to student isolation and regression; failing to immediately report any suspicion of abuse or neglect;

***** *Examples of 'reasonable steps' include leaving your door open when meeting with students, ensuring the window to your room is never covered, ensuring any additional sessions with students are well advertised and approved by the administration, avoiding 'favoritism' in working with students, avoiding 'friending' students on Facebook and locking down personal social media so students don't have access, sharing with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or an administrator whenever there is potential for a breach of the safeguarding code)*

Prevention and Training

NIS shall ensure adequate preventative measures are taken to prevent abuse on campus, and the failure to identify and report on abuse and neglect off campus.

These steps shall include:

- Student education: the curriculum and pastoral program shall support students in developing healthy independence and teach them how to respond when facing behaviors which are (or which may potentially lead to) unhealthy relationships. Students will receive training in the NIS Safeguarding Code to help them understand the role that 'roles', 'boundaries', 'power' and 'accountability' have to play in their personal safety, and the safety of their peers.
- Staff education: all new staff shall receive training in the NIS Safeguarding Code. All returning staff shall receive annual refresher courses in the NIS Safeguarding code.
- Safe Recruitment and Screening: The priority NIS places on child protection shall be made explicit throughout the advertising and interview process by stressing the high threshold of child safety in existence at NIS. Candidates shall be questioned on their understanding of safeguarding issues (role, boundary, power, accountability) in interview. Telephone references shall be taken on all new hires and safeguarding questions shall be asked explicitly.

Discovery of Child Abuse or Neglect

All adults at NIS are asked to remain alert for the signs of abuse and neglect. There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of a legitimate concern in which case the adult (including those in positions of enhanced confidentiality such as a nurse, counselor or administrator) are mandated to report her/his observations to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the steps indicated under 'Reporting and Action', below.

Signs of neglect and abuse include the following:

Warning signs of emotional abuse in children

1. Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
2. Shows extremes in behaviour (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive).
3. Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
4. Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, throwing tantrums).

Warning signs of physical abuse in children

1. Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
2. Is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen.
3. Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt.
4. Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home.
5. Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.

Warning signs of neglect in children

1. Clothes are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather.
2. Hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odour).

3. Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.
4. Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments.
5. Is frequently late or missing from school.

Warning signs of sexual abuse in children

1. Trouble walking or sitting.
2. Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behaviour.
3. Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.
4. Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.
5. An STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14.
6. Runs away from home.

Child Self-Reporting

In many cases, abuse or neglect is discovered via child self-reporting. In the case that a child confides in an adult staff member or adult volunteer/visitor that they are the victim of abuse/neglect that adult should:

1. Believe the child
2. Tell them that you will help them by contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will make sure that their voice is heard, valued, respected and acted upon
3. Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately (as explained below) and stay involved as much as is deemed appropriate and as much as you are comfortable

   Under NO circumstances should the adult attempt to resolve the issue him/herself or promise confidentiality.

<u>Reporting and Action</u>

At NIS Internal reporting of suspected abuse is mandatory.

Mandatory Reporting Step One: Making an Initial Report

All staff at NIS are <u>required</u> to report to the designated Designated Safeguarding Lead in the case of reasonable grounds for concern that a student <u>may</u> be in danger from abuse from any adult including parents, carers, other staff or community members. The report should be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to any contact with the adult(s) who may be subject to an investigative process.

In the case that the DLL cannot be contacted a report can also be made to any member of the Child Safety Team in person or through iSams.
The act of making a report does not assume 'guilt', rather the report should simply be made in good faith based upon a ***reasonable*** presumption that there is a situation which is worthy of investigation.
Notes:

The term 'abuse' includes, but is not necessarily limited to: neglect, medical neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or dangerous home environment (e.g. violent household).

The term 'reasonable grounds for concern' includes, but is not limited to, evidence such as:

- Explicit reference to abuse verbally or in writing (e.g. the student reports that they or their friend is a victim of abuse)

- Implicit reference to abuse verbally or in writing (e.g. artwork, poetry)
- Signs of physical abuse (frequent/repeated unexplained marks, bruises, etc.)
- Erratic and/or unhealthy behavioural patterns (overly familiar or excessively nervous around adults, excessive risk taking, excessively introverted, tardy/attendance problems, excessive tiredness, self-harming, etc.)
- Age-inappropriate behaviours (e.g. sexually explicit behaviours)

Mandatory Reporting Step Two: Initial Investigation:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should convene a Child Safety Team. (S)he should then immediately arrange for the conducting of a reasonable small-scale investigation into the case. In the case that the parent/carers are NOT the subject of the investigation they should be contacted at this time and included fully in the process. However, in the case that the parents/carers ARE the subject of the investigation they should not be involved at this stage.

The purpose of this investigation is to determine whether or not there is a legitimate cause for concern for child safety.

Consequently, the investigation may include a combination of the following:

- Conversation with the reporting teacher and examination of any documentary/supporting evidence
- Conversation with the child (to include any involved siblings)
- Conversation with a member of the Child Safety Team as appropriate
- Conversation with any other significant adults (with the exception of those who are named as being potentially culpable)

Mandatory Reporting Step Three: Decision for Action

Following this small-scale investigation, the Child Safety Team, including at least two other senior staff (drawn from administrators, school counselor, school nurse and head of student services) will evaluate the evidence presented and make a decision as to the next steps.

The decision will be taken as follows:

1. In the case that there remains **reasonable grounds for concern** that a student **<u>may</u>** be in danger from abuse from any adult including parents, carers, other staff or community members:
    - The child guidance centre will be contacted for advice with the aim that this advice will be followed
    - Parents/carers will be contacted prior to contacting the child guidance centre in the case that the alleged perpetrator is NOT a parent/carer. In the case that the parent/carer is the alleged perpetrator contact will be made as soon as possible as authorised/guided by the child guidance centre

2. In the case that there is no longer **reasonable grounds for concern** that a student **<u>may</u>** be in danger from abuse from any adult including parents, carers, other staff or community members:
    - The child guidance centre will not be contacted and no further action will be taken
    - Parents/Guardians will be contacted for a debrief of the situation as appropriate

Outcomes for Perpetrators

In the case that an NIS employee is found to have engaged in abuse, he/she shall have his/her contract terminated. In the case that a non-contracted service provider engages in child abuse she/he shall no longer be permitted to provide services to NIS. In the case that an NIS student or Parent engages in abuse, he/she shall no longer be permitted on site at NIS.

Outcomes for Victims

It is the duty of NIS to remain involved in any process, for as long as is feasible and reasonable, in support of the rights of the child, as stated in paragraph 1 of this document.

Sources:

1. Setting Behavioral Expectations Based on 4 Guideposts, David Wolowitz
2. Helpguide.org (nonprofit guide to mental health and well-being)

Guideposts for Teachers to Maintain Healthy Relationships with Students

Roles

Teachers often function in multiple roles with students, such as classroom instructor, coach, or advisor.

- Teachers should avoid behavior in one role that undermines another. For example, using off-color language with students in a coaching role will undermine the teacher's role in the classroom when trying to discipline students for using similar language.
- Teachers should stay in professional roles and avoid personal roles which send mixed or ambiguous signals to students.
- Blurring professional and personal roles causes confusion with students and contributes to the breakdown of boundaries.
- It is appropriate for teachers to be friendly with students, but not to act as their friend or peer.
- Teachers should also avoid taking on a parental role. Teachers should act as a role model, always making the student's interests primary and never meeting the teacher's needs through the student.

Safe ground:

- Maintaining professional roles with students
- Acting as a role model at all times

Risky territory:

- Acting in peer or parental roles
- Dependency that meets the teacher's needs

Boundaries

Boundaries are the physical and emotional limits individuals set in their interactions and relationships with others. Boundary awareness is a key element in promoting healthy relationships with students and avoiding misconduct. Boundary violations occur when a person in a position of responsibility crosses a boundary with someone who is vulnerable to meet his or her own needs. Boundary violations are self-serving and exploitative.

Teachers promote boundary awareness, in themselves and students, by establishing clear limits at the beginning of relationships with students and maintaining them consistently. Teachers should expect and be prepared for students to test boundaries. When they do, teachers can use the situation as an opportunity to educate students about the reasons for boundaries and reinforce them.

- It is always the role of the teacher to set and maintain boundaries, regardless of the behavior of the student.
- Setting and respecting healthy boundaries should not interfere with forming close, supportive relationships with students.
- When interacting with students, teachers should be alert for their own boundary violations. Minor violations are unavoidable. When they occur, teachers should examine their behavior so that similar conduct can be avoided going forward.
- Make sure your actions promote the interests of the student and not your own needs.
- Keep in mind that good intentions can still create a harmful impact.
- Teachers with boundary awareness will learn to identify and avoid risky situations and conduct. For example, teachers need to be especially careful to avoid conduct with a student that could be mistaken for romantic or sexual in nature.
- Teachers should be alert for behavior that may send signals of intimacy such as shared secrets or excessive self-disclosure.
- If a teacher is concerned that a student may have misinterpreted an action or statement as having a romantic or inappropriate overtone, the teacher should immediately seek guidance on how to handle it.

Safe ground:

- Establishing and reinforcing clear boundary guidelines
- Boundary crossings which are in the service of the student's interests

Risky territory:

- Blurring the boundaries between professional and personal roles
- Repeated or serious boundary violations

Power

Teachers are in a position of perceived and actual power over students and should always be alert to this inherent power imbalance. Students often idealize their teachers. They may put them on pedestals. They may even develop a crush. It is normal for a teacher to enjoy the admiration of students. However, it is the responsibility of teachers to assist students with developing into autonomous individuals.

- Teachers should encourage the healthy development of autonomy in students.
- Some of the students willingly follow the teacher wherever he or she leads. Such a relationship produces an unhealthy power dependency that meets the teacher's needs but impedes the student's development.
- It may be difficult for colleagues and administrators to deal with this type of teacher because they are often popular not just with students, but also with parents and alumni.

  Safe ground:
  - Encouraging autonomy and independence in students
  - Making the student's interests primary

  Risky territory:
  - Actions contributing to unhealthy attachment, dependency, or disengagement
  - Using power, authority, or position to meet the adult's needs

Accountability

Teachers have many opportunities to be alone with students during and after school hours. Misconduct often occurs when a student and teacher are spending significant time physically alone or communicating privately. Being alone with students is often unavoidable. When this occurs, teachers should avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
Whenever possible, leave the door to the room open and avoid repeated unscheduled meetings alone with students.

- Avoid frequent private meetings with students who may be perceived as favorites (This can cause resentment among other students and raise suspicions with other adults).
- Teachers need to be especially careful to stay in a professional role and maintain boundaries when using technology to communicate privately with students. Teachers should avoid any language which could be ambiguous or misunderstood by the student or others. Keep electronic communications with students focused on matters about school work.
- Teachers should never ask students to keep secrets in order to maintain the relationship.
- All interactions with students should be transparent as if they are subject to review.

Safe ground:

- Acting transparently
- Supporting the student's developmental growth and social integration

Risky territory:

- Opaque or secret conduct
- Conduct which may lead to the student's regression and social isolation.