

Child Protection Policy

2026-2027



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1. Introduction

1.1 Executive summary

Here at the Inter-Community School Zurich (ICS), our most important responsibility is the safety of our students. We place the children at the centre of all that we do, and work assiduously to create and maintain an environment that enables every student to thrive.

We are aware of our moral, ethical and legal duty to safeguard the welfare of our students, as well as those children using our facilities or involved with adjacent programs and activities. To that end, our goal at ICS is to build a proactive environment that protects children by either preventing maltreatment, neglect or abuse before it occurs, or by ensuring its earliest possible detection.

To achieve this goal, we work to ensure that all ICS school personnel, students and parents understand definitions of safety in our school. Further, we educate our community on how to recognize signs and symptoms and how to report.

The child protection policy is the guiding document for this process. It outlines the steps taken by the school to minimize the risks of children in our community and to respond promptly and effectively should a risk be suspected, observed or disclosed. It applies to all ICS staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants, and is reviewed annually.

1.2 Policy overview

The ICS child protection policy contains six main elements that work together to create a robust approach to prevention of and response to child maltreatment, neglect or abuse within the school community. It includes:

1. **Policy Statement:** articulates ICS's position regarding child protection, and the ways we promote safety in our school community.
2. **Staff Agreement:** outlines expectations around behaviour and conduct of members of the school community, particularly school personnel.
3. **Training:** provides all members of the school community with a shared understanding of protection, both for self and others.
4. **Screening Process:** ensures the Human Resources team engages in safe recruiting practices.
5. **Safeguarding Lead:** ensures that the child protection policy and accompanying processes are effectively implemented in the school.
6. **Reporting Process:** ensures that in the event of a child protection issue arising, there are appropriate and standardised response processes in place.



1.3 Policy Statement

1.3.1 Context

We recognise our responsibility to ensure that all children in our care are afforded a safe and secure environment that nurtures academic, social and emotional growth.

The [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), to which Switzerland is a signatory, articulates the fundamental rights of children and the responsibility of adults in ensuring those rights are not violated. Any abuse of rights or form of maltreatment negatively affects a child's emotional and physical development, as well as their education.

Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who are in need of help and protection. They therefore have a professional, legal, and ethical obligation to respond to and report suspected or confirmed incidents of child maltreatment, neglect or abuse.

1.3.2 Guiding Principles

This child protection policy is informed by the principles outlined by [The International Taskforce on Child Protection](#). As a school, we agree that:

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse
- Everybody has the responsibility to support the protection of children
- 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.

1.3.3 Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of ICS. Further, it aims to provide staff and other ICS community members with a shared understanding of child protection in an educational context, and the resources to make informed and confident responses to specific incidents involving child maltreatment, neglect or abuse.

1.3.4 Our Commitment

All children have the right to be and feel safe in their school. At ICS, it is our commitment to ensure that every child has the opportunity to develop to their fullest, and that every child is protected from harm.

To uphold this commitment, ICS will:

- distribute this policy annually to all parents and prospective school applicants;
- educate students about their rights, how to keep themselves safe, and what to do if they are in danger;
- train all staff annually in identifying and responding to issues of maltreatment, neglect or abuse;
- implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children, and
- review this policy annually for compliance and effectiveness.

1.3.5 Safeguarding Lead

The Head of School is the designated Safeguarding Lead at ICS. The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for the welfare and protection of all students, overseeing staff training and contributing to policy development.

2. Prevention

2.1 Screening

The first and most effective means of promoting child protection in the school setting is to control who has access to our environment through close screening of people who will come into contact with our students. To do this, we adhere to the following guidelines:

	Local (>1 year in Switzerland)	International (<1 year in Switzerland)
New staff*	Provide Swiss criminal background check** and wear security badge	Provide criminal background checks for each country resided in over the past 5 years** and wear security badge
Existing Staff*	Provide Swiss criminal background check and wear security badge	Provide criminal background checks for each country resided in over the past 5 years*** and wear security badge
Visitors	Security badge	Security badge
Consultants	Security badge or provide Swiss criminal background check	Security badge or provide criminal background checks for each country resided in over the past 5 years**
Suppliers	Security badge	Security badge
Regular volunteers	Provide Swiss criminal background check and wear security badge	Provide criminal background checks for each country resided in over the past 5 years** and wear security badge
Non-regular Volunteers	Security badge	Security badge
Host Families	Provide Swiss criminal background check	Provide criminal background checks for each country resided in over the past 5 years**

*Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Administration, Bus Drivers, Cleaners, Catering Staff, Operations

**If necessary, alternative background checks may be required.

*** External staff working with students may require alternative background checks to those working with staff.

For more specific information on the screening procedures, please contact the HR department at HR@icsz.ch.

2.2 Education and Training

Developmentally appropriate education for students and ongoing training for staff and parents is the cornerstone of the ICS child protection policy. The objective of our educational and training programs is twofold:

1. to provide students with knowledge and understanding to successfully safeguard themselves.

2. to provide staff and parents with knowledge and skills to successfully safeguard our students.

2.2.1 Safeguarding Training for Students

The safeguarding curriculum at ICS is informed by the [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education](#), an evidence-based framework developed by UNESCO in conjunction with the World Health Organization. This human rights-centered approach ensures that sexuality and relationship education is positive, affirming, and age-appropriate across all grade levels.

Primary School

Child protection education in the Primary School is guided by the IB Personal, Social and Physical Education (PSPE) continuum. These lessons are integrated into grade-level units of inquiry and led by classroom teachers or the primary counselor. The instruction is further reinforced during school assemblies and counseling groups.

The goal of the PSPE program is to empower students, for example, lessons focus on:

- Situational Awareness: Recognizing potentially dangerous situations (e.g., "stranger-danger" and "good touch/bad touch").
- Digital Citizenship: Introducing foundational concepts of online safety, privacy, and respectful digital communication.
- Rights & Advocacy: Helping students understand their rights and how to seek help.
- Personal Safety: Practicing practical safety strategies tailored to their developmental stage.

Secondary School

In the Secondary School, safeguarding is embedded into the Personal Development Program (PDP). It builds upon the UNESCO guidance to develop a specialized program covering Wellbeing, Digital Citizenship, Sex and Relationships, Substance Education, and Service Learning.

These themes are broken down into specific topics appropriate to the students' age and stage, for example:

- Grade 6: Focuses on foundational topics such as "chatting safely online" and "puberty and the body's responses."
- Grade 11: Explores complex themes like "effective communication in expressing personal needs and sexual limits" and digital footprint management.

2.2.2 Reporting and Support

An essential component of safety training at both levels is ensuring students understand how to report concerns. Students have direct access to:

- The school counselling team.
- Homeroom and Grade Level Leaders.
- Tutors (who deliver the PDP and maintain consistent connections with students).
- Our [Student Safety and Wellbeing Concern](#) form is available to all community members to report concerns

2.2.3 Safeguarding Training for Parents

Child protection at school is a partnership with parents: as a community, it is essential that we work together to ensure a shared understanding of what constitutes a safe environment for our students.

Parent education is multifaceted, and includes:

- Information about the content of explicit child protection/safeguarding lessons is communicated to parents in advance so that parents are aware of the content being taught, and have the information they need to discuss the content of the lessons with their children at home.
- Parents are reminded annually about the child protection policy, and have the opportunity to obtain further information about the policy or the curriculum from a teacher, grade level leader or principal.
- Upon request, further resources are available for parents through the counselling team.
- Opportunities are offered throughout the school year for parents to join workshops and discussion groups with internal and external experts

2.2.4 Safeguarding Training for School Staff

All ICS staff are required to participate in a prescribed Safeguarding Training course, and a yearly refresher course. These courses are provided through reputable online learning platforms.

Furthermore, ICS conducts regular meetings devoted to updating the training of staff members, and to inform of any changes to procedures and policy. The goal of these updates is to ensure that all school personnel feel confident in their ability to detect potential maltreatment, and respond if a student discloses maltreatment.

2.2.5 Professional Boundaries

Defining professional boundaries and ensuring all staff are aware of them can protect the school and its employees, and reduce the risk of accusations of inappropriate behaviour. Explicit professional boundaries are outlined in the ICS Staff Agreement, as well as strategies to ensure staff-student interactions are professional. Some examples include:

- **Interactions between adults and students should be observable and interruptible:** we encourage the use of windows that provide a clear view into classrooms and open doors when a teacher is working one-on-one with a student
- **It is the adult's responsibility to set and respect boundaries:** If a student attempts to involve an adult in inappropriate behaviour, the adult must reject the overture and inform the Head of School or the relevant Principal of the exchange
- **Joking and sharing of personal stories must never include sexual or other inappropriate content:** Sharing personal stories or jokes that reference sex or overly personal details are explicitly forbidden.
- **Physical contact with students should occur only to meet the needs of the child in a way that is appropriate and necessary:** Touching can be misconstrued both by the recipient and by those who observe it, so is required to be kept minimal, only when clearly necessary and in public spaces.

2.2.6 Swiss Law

As a school, we have a legal duty to report any suspected and/or disclosed child maltreatment, child endangerment, neglect, or abuse under Swiss Law (**Art. 314c ZGB**). If a situation arises, the Head of School will submit an official **Gefährdungsmeldung** (Risk Report) to the local authority, [KESB Meilen](#). This report can be made either in writing or via telephone, and provides a factual, objective account of the situation and any actions the school has already taken. On the basis of this report, the KESB

activates the case, clarifies the situation and makes a decision about the appropriate next steps.

3. Reporting

Any report of child maltreatment, child endangerment, neglect or abuse at ICS, including potential reports against a member of the ICS staff, will prompt an internal examination of the issue which may lead to an external investigation in partnership with the local Child and Adult Protection Authority. This process aims to prioritise the safety of the child, while maintaining the professional reputation of the adult concerned until the investigation has reached a satisfactory conclusion.

All staff employed at ICS must report student safeguarding concerns in our tailored safeguarding software. This system is used to monitor student wellbeing, safety, behaviour and accidents. Any incident of concern related to any of these areas is logged in the secure system, accessible only to the Safeguarding Lead and relevant members of the pastoral care team. Working in collaboration, this team determines the need for further information gathering activities such as staff/family interviews and confidential consultation with ICS personnel to review the student's history at the school.

3.1 Follow-up

Subsequent to a reported child protection issue, the Safeguarding Lead will ensure the school:

- Maintains contact with the student/family to ensure appropriate support is provided
- Provides the student's teachers with on-going support as needed, including guidance materials
- Maintains contact with any external professionals involved in the case

3.2 School Response

3.2.1 Child on Child Abuse

Child-on-Child abuse refers to the abuse of one student by another student, or a group of students. It may include, for example, bullying and cyberbullying, abuse in intimate personal relationships, physical abuse, racism and harmful sexual behaviour. In promoting Safeguarding at ICS, all staff are made aware of the nature and level of risk to which their students are or may be exposed to child-on-child abuse, and they are made aware that this type of abuse can take place between students both inside and outside of the school grounds and online. ICS has a zero tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse: students are taught to refer any such behaviour to a trusted adult or an appropriate school representative, (eg. Dean of Students, Deputy Principal, Homeroom teachers, Grade Level Leaders, counsellor/s) who will then confidentially investigate the issue and, where necessary, apply appropriate consequences.

3.2.2 In-School Offender Response

If a student discloses inappropriate behaviours of ICS personnel, ICS will respond immediately. The Head of School will be informed and will convene an emergency meeting of the CPT to determine the best course of action. Where necessary, the Chair of the Board of Trustees may also become involved.

3.3 Record Keeping

Any documentation related to a child protection issue case is considered to be highly confidential and remains in the school safeguarding software. This data is subject to the regulations set out in the ICS Data Privacy Policy.

3.4 Policy Review

This policy is reviewed and revised on a yearly basis.

Revision Cycle Details	
Name:	Beth Hampton and Janice Boucher
Role:	Designated Safeguarding Officers
Date:	June 2026
Date of next revision:	June 2027

4. Appendix

4.1 Definitions

4.1.1 Child

In Swiss law, a child is legally defined as any person under the age of 18. This universally applies across the [Swiss Civil Code](#) and aligns with Switzerland's obligations under the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

4.1.2 Child Maltreatment

According to the World Health Organization, child maltreatment constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual maltreatment, 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."

4.1.3 Physical

Physical maltreatment of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be a single or repeated incident. Physical maltreatment may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or failing to protect a child from that harm.

4.1.4 Signs of Physical Maltreatment

- 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
- Changes to unusual or out of season clothing, typically worn to conceal physical signs of harm
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Being very passive and compliant
- Running away from home

4.1.5 Emotional

Emotional maltreatment can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs. It includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells.

There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening,

scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

4.1.6 Signs of emotional maltreatment

- Physical, mental and emotional development delays
- Highly anxious
- 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
- Persistent tiredness
- Drug or alcohol use
- Running away from home
- Compulsive stealing
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention-seeking behaviour

4.1.7 Sexual

Child sexual maltreatment is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual maltreatment is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.

This may include but is not limited to:

- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

4.1.8 Signs of Sexual maltreatment

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Sexualised drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation (could lead to suicide attempts)
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Infection, bleeding, STD

4.1.9 Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers. This causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible. Neglect is not limited to environments of socioeconomic hardship; it also manifests as "affluent neglect," where material wealth is present, but children experience severe emotional deprivation, a lack of parental supervision, and a failure to provide meaningful parental engagement.

4.1.10 Possible Indicators of Neglect

- Medical needs unattended
- Overly material provision paired with emotional unavailability
- Lack of supervision
- Inappropriate dress
- Inadequate nutrition
- Fatigue or listlessness
- Repeated risk-taking
- Signs of anxiety, depression, or perfectionism linked to parental neglect or pressure
- Behavioral issues stemming from emotional deprivation
- Expressions of feeling invisible, unimportant, or unsupported at home
- Reluctance to return home or limited connection to family life
- Failure to grow
- Poor personal hygiene
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Drug or alcohol use
- Difficulty forming secure attachments
- Inappropriate independence for developmental age
- Lack of boundaries or inconsistent caregiving
- Excessive screen time or social isolation without parental oversight

4.1.11 Offender Behaviour

In addition to knowing the signs of victimisation, it is important to be aware of typical behavioural patterns in potential offenders:

Signs of offenders (students)

- Unusual interest in sex, sexualizing inanimate objects and activities
- Does not stop sexual misbehaviour when told to stop
- Uses force and coercion in social situations
- Unusual intensity when discussing sex and sexuality
- Socializes with children much younger
- Gives gifts, requires secrecy in relationships
- Repeatedly violates personal boundaries or consent
- Engages in manipulative or controlling behaviour
- Uses technology or social media in sexually inappropriate ways

- Pressures others into sharing explicit images or information
- Uses sexual language, jokes, or gestures that are developmentally inappropriate
- Demonstrates a pattern of bullying, harassment, or exploitation

Signs of offenders (adults)

- Has a "favourite" student or child
- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
- Inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about students/children
- Sexualized talk in the presence of students/children
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on Social Media platforms
- Takes or requests photos/videos of children without a legitimate purpose
- Ignores or violates professional boundaries

6. References

Council of International Schools: International Task Force on Child Protection [Guiding Principles](#)

Farrer & Co LLP (2022) Addressing Child-on-Child Abuse: a Resource for Schools and Colleges
<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf>

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Journal of Social Issues, 62(4): 685-716.

Finkelhor, D. (2009). The Prevention of Childhood Sexual maltreatment, *The Future of Children*, 19(2), 169-194.

Finkelhor, D. (2007). Prevention of Sexual maltreatment Through Educational Programs Directed Toward Children. *Paediatrics*, 120(3), 643.

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Jones, L. and Finkelhor, D. (2009). *Updated Trends in Child Maltreatment*: Durham, NH. Crimes Against Children Research Center.

Plummer, C. (2013, March). *Using Policies to Promote Child Sexual maltreatment Prevention: What is Working?* Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center

on Domestic Violence.

WHO and ISPCAN, (2006). Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence.

Taina Laajasalo et al (2023). Current issues and challenges in the definition and operationalization of child maltreatment: A scoping review, Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 1

7. Support Agencies/Resources

<https://www.kesbmeilen.ch/>

Child and adult protection authority in Meilen

<https://www.cois.org/for-schools/child-protection-and-well-being>

Council of International Schools (CIS) Child Protection and Wellbeing Resources

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-maltreatment/types-of-maltreatment/neglect/>

Support and tips to help you keep children safe. From advice on children's mental health to staying safe online, support for parents and what to do if you're worried about a child.

<http://www.speakupbesafe.org/>

Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe is an evidence-based curriculum program with developmentally appropriate lessons for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade to help students prevent, interrupt, and speak up about various types of child maltreatment—physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, bullying, and cyber maltreatment.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/>

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center's mission is to provide leadership in preventing and responding to sexual violence through collaboration, sharing and creating resources, and promoting research.

<https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/winter-2015/how-to-talk-with-your-child-about-maltreatment/>

National Association of International Schools: 'How to talk to your child about maltreatment' article.

www.unicef.org

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

www.savethechildren.net

Save the Children.

www.ispcan.org

International Society for the Prevention of Child maltreatment and Neglect (ISPCAN).

www.childhelplineinternational.org

Child Helpline International.

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