

Child Protection AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY



1 AMERICAN ACADEMY'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION

All staff working at American Academy should be aware of their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of every student, both physically and emotionally. This involves making sure that students are protected from physical or emotional harm both in the school and outside of school. Staff should also make sure there is a satisfactory development and growth of each individual child. All staff members should be aware of the safeguarding policies for American Academy. American Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy can be found on the school website at www.americanacademy.com

2 PURPOSE

For all students to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Be happy and enjoy their lives
- Make a positive contribution to society

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Give staff clear guidelines about procedures in regards to identifying and reporting child protection and safeguarding issues.
- Make sure that any child protection issue is handled in a timely manner, as well as being
- Handled sensitively, professionally and in a way that will benefit the needs of the child.
- Make sure that parents are aware of our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Make a point to commit to the development of good practices regarding child protection and safeguarding at American Academy.

3 CHILD PROTECTION IN SCHOOL

1. American Academy must, at all times, provide a safe environment. The Head of School is responsible for the implementation of safe recruitment procedures for people wishing to work at the school.
2. American Academy must promote development and growth with its school. The school will aim to create a safe environment for students to be able to discuss such issues.
3. The school must take measures to ensure safety within the school, specifically with the anti-bullying policy.
4. The school will integrate within its curriculum opportunities for PHSE and e-safety which will help students understand how to stay safe. Assemblies will also be a means of delivery for such education.
5. The school will establish, whenever possible, effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from outside agencies.

4 TERMINOLOGY

Safeguarding children refers to the protecting of children from maltreatment and making sure that children's health is not compromised. Safeguarding children ensures that children grow up in a safe environment with effective care.

Child or student refers to young people under the age of 18 or people who are over 18 and are students.

Parent refers to not only birth parents but to other adults who are responsible for the care of a child.

5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The designated safeguarding leads:

American Academy Middle and High school: Amy Smith – responsible for the implementation of the policy and procedures for the protection of children in High School.

American Academy Elementary school: Maria Martin – responsible for the implementation of the policy and procedures for the protection of children in Elementary School and Middle School.

Child Protection Chair: Lenka Titerova – The Child Protection Chair is responsible for acting as a source of advice on child protection matters, for coordinating action within the school and for liaising with families, the police and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of abuse.

The role of the Child Protection Chair is to:

- Provide information and advice on child protection matters within American Academy.
- Ensure that American Academy's Policy and Procedures for the protection of children are followed and particularly to inform the Principal of concerns about individual students.
- Ensure that the appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing and securely and confidentially filed.
- Liaise with outside agencies involved, like the police.
- Keep relevant people within the school informed about any action taken and any further action required.
This is on a need to know basis
- Advise American Academy of child protection training
- Ensure copies of all reports of incidents are stored in safety

DEFINITION OF ABUSE

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. The following definitions of abuse are aligned with the guidelines in Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2018.

All staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

Physical Abuse is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually

inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home; abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment; and may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

EXAMPLES OF ABUSIVE ACTIONS

The key criteria in assessing whether or not to refer a situation to the Chair is whether the harm caused, or risk of harm, is significant and/or persistent.

Any of the following between adult and student should be automatically referred:

Physical Abuse: Any form of physical assault (including attempts), such as:

- Kicking
- Punching
- Pushing
- Smacking
- Slapping
- Shaking
- Throwing a missile at a student, such as a board rubber or white-board pen.

Sexual Abuse: Any form of sexual assault (including attempts):

- Possession of indecent and pseudo indecent photographs of children, including digital images
- Showing indecent or pornographic material to children
- Inappropriate touching, language or behaviour towards any child or student for sexual purposes
- Inappropriate use of text messaging, email or other ICT towards any child or student for sexual purposes

Emotional Abuse and Neglect:

- Racial comments or behaviour, or failing to address these in others
- Homophobic comments or behaviour, or failing to address these in others
- Bullying students, or failing to address these in others
- Persistent sarcasm
- Humiliating students, for example by persistently placing a child in a corner or corridor
- Creating a climate of fear in the classroom
- Inappropriate punishment, for example putting a child in a cupboard
- Failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger
- Failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

Listen to the child

Children who report to a teacher or other adult working at American Academy that someone has abused them must be listened to and heard, whatever form the communication may take.

The following points give guidance on how to deal with a child who makes an allegation:

- Listen to the child, but do not conduct an interview or ask the child to repeat the account. Avoid asking questions and make sure that any questions asked are open-ended (i.e. not inviting yes or no as an answer).
- Do not interrupt when the child is recalling significant events.
- Make a careful note of all information, including details such as timing, setting, who was present and what was said, in the child's own words. The account should be obtained verbatim or as near as possible. Try to record what was said as contemporaneously as possible. Notes written up afterwards will carry less weight than those made at the time.
- Take care not to make assumptions about what the child is saying or to make interpretations.

- On no account should you make suggestions to the child as to an alternative explanation for their worries. Staff should point out to the informant that action will be taken as a result of the allegation and you should ask the informant of any steps they would like taken to protect them now that they have made the allegation.
- The written record of the allegations should be signed and dated by the person who received them as soon as is practicable.
- All actions subsequently taken should be recorded.
- The disclosure should be reported to the Chair as soon as possible, and certainly within 24 hours.

Remember, no member of staff should promise confidentiality to a student who makes an allegation.

In responding to a child who makes such disclosures, account should be taken of the age and understanding of the child and whether the child or others may be at risk of significant harm.

While acknowledging the need to create an environment conducive to speaking freely, the member of staff should make it clear to any student asking for confidentiality that he or she will need to pass on what has been told, to ensure the protection of the child concerned. Within that context, the child should then be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know, and the child will know who these people are.

TAKE ACTION

The member of staff who has listened to the allegations of abuse should report immediately to the Chair, who will make an urgent initial assessment. The Chair will also be immediately contacted. If the Chair is the person against whom the allegation is made, the member of staff should report to the CEO. The supportive needs of a child who expresses concerns about significant harm should be considered and met, utilising resources within or beyond the school as necessary.

Initial Assessment and Further Action, if appropriate

Immediately an allegation is made, the Chair will:

- Obtain written details of the allegation, signed and dated, from the person who received the allegation.
- Record any information about times, dates, locations and names of potential witnesses.
- Where appropriate, talk to the child concerned.
- Make recommendations about further action to the CEO, unless the allegation is against them.
- There are four possible outcomes of the initial assessment:
- Where the student has suffered, is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, the incident will be referred immediately under local child protection
- Where the child has alleged that a criminal offence has been committed, then again this will be referred under local child protection procedures and the police may carry out a criminal investigation.
- The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by a member of staff (which does not fall within the above categories) that needs to be considered under school disciplinary procedures
- The allegation is adjudged to be apparently without foundation.

Only if the allegation is trivial or demonstrably false, will further investigations not be warranted.

Where the initial assessment by the Child Protection Officer and Chair (or, where the allegation is against the Chair, the CEO) concludes that the allegation warrants investigation, there will be a referral within 24 hours to one or more of the agencies with statutory responsibilities to make enquiries.

If a referral needs to be made, parents will be consulted. In really extreme cases the law allows Schools to by-pass parental consent.

Additional Types of Abuse and Neglect

- Children Missing from Education
- Homelessness
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines
- Domestic Abuse
- So-called 'Honour-based' Violence
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- The Prevent Duty & Recognising Extremism

- Peer on Peer Abuse
- Sexting
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools
- Private Fostering
- Forced Marriage

American Academy identifies students who might need more support in order to be kept safe or to keep themselves safe by following the School's Confidential Record of Concern.

In the event of a report or suspicion of abuse any adult at American Academy who is told of any incident or strong suspicion of physical or sexual child abuse occurring in the school, or to a student of the school at home or outside the school, or who suspects or knows this to be the case themselves must report the information immediately to the Chair. In the event of an allegation against the Chair, the information should be reported directly to the Head of School or CEO.

The Chair may, if necessary, interview the student to clarify the nature of an allegation or suspicion, before deciding on an appropriate course of action. If necessary, an immediate referral will be made to the local Czech Republic Social Services Department or police rather than carrying out an investigation.

School staff (including the Chair and the Director) should not investigate reports of physical or sexual abuse themselves. Alleged victims, perpetrators, those reporting abuse and others involved should not be interviewed by school staff beyond the point at which it is clear that there is an allegation of abuse. Guidance on the correct response to a student's disclosure of abuse is given in the Child Protection – General Guidance.

Allegations against members of staff, volunteers and the Head of School

An allegation of abuse by a teacher or volunteer will be taken very seriously. The quick, consistent and fair resolution of the allegation will be made a clear priority for the benefit of all concerned. If staff members have concerns about another staff member or volunteer then it should be referred to the School Principal who will immediately inform the Director.

A multi-disciplinary allegations management team helps to ensure that the necessary preparatory steps are taken to provide a source of expertise to be drawn on as appropriate by the person leading the school's response to an allegation.

Allegations of abuse made against other children

Children are capable of abusing their peers. Peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up".

Gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with peer on peer abuse could, for example, include students being sexually touched/assaulted or students being subject to initiation/hazing type violence.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, staff should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

Staff should refer to the Code of Conduct and Promotion of Good Behaviour Policy, Admissions, Discipline & Exclusions Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy for further guidance.

Whistleblowing

Working closely with children is fundamental to teaching in schools. Where such interaction with children exists, so also does the opportunity to abuse them. It is regrettably the case that, in rare instances, teachers and other staff have been found to be responsible for child abuse. Given their daily contact with students in a variety of situations, staff are also vulnerable to allegations of abuse, whether deliberately or innocently false, malicious or misplaced. However, staff should avoid making their own judgments of whether an allegation is false or otherwise.

The American Academy whistleblowing policy provides staff with an avenue to raise awareness and concern if they feel that a colleague or manager is engaged in conduct that is causing a negative effect upon the welfare and safety of any children in one of the schools. This could also refer to a situation where a staff member considers that behaviour by another member of staff is not being addressed by the management of the school. It provides a clear way to raise awareness of a concern directly to American Academy.

Staff Training

The induction programme ensures that all staff members working at American Academy will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, which is regularly updated. In addition, all staff members should receive safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins and staff meetings), as required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. This includes the briefing of new staff, as part of their induction after arrival at the school and refresher training for all staff at three-yearly intervals.

All new staff, including temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of their responsibilities as part of the induction process.

Safer Recruitment Guidelines

The Recruitment Officer will ensure that guidance is followed particularly with respect to the appointment of staff. Staff who will have unsupervised access to students will be subject to the statutory DBS checks and be checked for compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations on appointment.

The Chair will gain assurance that appropriate child protection checks and procedures apply to any staff employed by another organisation who are working with the school's students.

CHILD PROTECTION – GENERAL GUIDANCE

The Law and Child Protection

Current legislation, is framed around the principle that the child's interests are paramount. In particular, the law now assumes the following:

- We share responsibility for 'safeguarding and promoting' each student's welfare with other adults and agencies. Failure to identify abuse, or potential abuse, and then refer it on may be deemed negligent. The term 'identify' may require us to pick up hints, not just respond to a straight disclosure of abuse - in most cases there may not be one.
- The child should be given credence in all circumstances. Even if we consider the 'harm' to be trivial, the child may not. The law takes the child's perspective and interests before all others. General Guidance for Staff Guidance is given to staff to ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place students or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a student, for example, in one-to-one tuition, sports coaching, conveying a student by car, engaging in inappropriate electronic communication with a student, and so on.

American Academy is required by the legislation to brief all staff on procedures relating to child protection and responding to allegations of child abuse. Staff are asked to operate according to these guidelines.

- **1.1** Staff should familiarise themselves with the School's Child Protection Policy.
- **1.2** If staff members have any concerns about a child (as opposed to a child being in immediate danger) a conversation should take place with the child protection officer to agree a course of action. If the child protection office is not available, staff should speak to a member of the senior management team and/or take advice from local children's social care (KCSIE (2018), paragraph 26).
- **1.3** If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to the appropriate authorities (please see the list of contacts) and/or the police immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the Child Protection Officer and Chair, the designated officer and chair should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.
- **1.4** Child abuse to be reported includes abuse of a student by a staff member or other adult, abuse at home which a student reports to staff, abuse by a stranger outside school, and abuse of one student by another student. In the case of abuse by a student, or group of students, the key issues identifying the problem as abuse (rather than an isolated instance of bullying or 'adolescent experimentation' which could be handled within the normal framework for discipline) are:
 - › The frequency, nature and severity of the incident(s);
 - › Whether the victim was coerced by physical force, fear, or by a student or group of students significantly
 - › Older than himself, or having power or authority over him;
 - › whether the incident involved a potentially criminal act; and
 - › Whether if the same incident (or injury) had occurred to a member of staff or other adult, it would have been regarded as assault or otherwise actionable.
- **1.5** Any member of staff who is told of any incident or strong suspicion of physical or sexual child abuse occurring in the School, or to a student of the School at home or outside the School (or who knows of or suspects such abuse) must report the information immediately to the Chair.

Further guidelines on responding to a disclosure are given below.

Staff are asked not to investigate in detail reports of physical or sexual abuse themselves. The School authorities are asked not to interview alleged victims or perpetrators beyond the point

at which it is clear that there is an allegation of abuse. Questioning should always be limited to the minimum necessary to seek clarification only, strictly avoiding "leading" the student or making suggestions that introduces your own ideas about what may have happened. (The reason for this requirement is that in the event of any legal action subsequently, the whole matter may be prejudiced by such questioning, which may confuse the law of evidence.). Further interviewing or investigation will be carried out by specially trained staff only, following procedures agreed between (amongst others) the local authority and Police in line with Government requirements.

- **1.6** Staff should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to anyone raising complaints about abuse but may point out that they will pass on information to only a minimum number of people who have to be told to ensure that proper action is taken to sort the problem out. See further guidance below.
- **1.7** If any of this happens a written record should be made as soon as possible - ideally at the time of the disclosure (see further guidance below and attachment) - and a copy given to the Chair.
- **1.8** Staff should be aware that the CEO will, if necessary, suspend from duty, pending investigation, any staff member who is alleged to have abused a student or students. Current advice encourages schools to suspend, without pre-judgement of guilt, and as a precautionary measure, where there is a concern about possible abuse.
- **1.9** The School is also required to refer all allegations of abuse to the local Social Services Department. This referral must happen within 24 hours (in writing or with written confirmation of a telephone referral). If in doubt, consult the Chair.

Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the School

Among the special features of life at American Academy is an informal atmosphere. Teachers are expected to fulfil many roles in and out of the classroom and are likely to find themselves working with large and small groups of students. Given the risk of false alarms and even deliberate hoaxes on the part of students, staff are advised to think carefully about the setting and nature of their varied relationships with their students so as not to lay themselves open to undue suspicion or accusation. All staff are required to familiarise themselves with and adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018.

- **2.1** It is probably prudent if engaging with students in non-public setting, not to do so on a one to one basis but to meet with at least two students at any one time. This would normally apply for social gatherings as well. Clearly this would not normally apply in an obvious public place like the classroom or office or study, but outside that formal context, care must be taken.
- **2.2** Inappropriate physical contact should be avoided. Contrary to popular belief, the Children Act says very little about what may or may not be done in this area, beyond the general requirement to look after children properly. There is such a thing as appropriate physical contact and 'non-abusive' actions include:
 - › Applying restraint to prevent a student harming himself or another person;
 - › Removing, with reasonable force, potentially dangerous items from a student's possession, or a student from a dangerous location;
 - › Shepherding students, for example with a hand on back or shoulder;
 - › Comforting, for example with a hand on shoulder, back or arm; and
 - › Securing attention by tapping a student's shoulder.

It is always unacceptable to harm a child.

- **2.3** If you find yourself having to accuse a student of an error of omission or commission beyond the trivial, you should make a brief written record of it and date it.
- **2.4** If you find yourself questioning a student about any serious matter, or one of any possible delicacy, it is advisable to do so with another adult witness present and, again, to make sure that a record is kept. A female teacher questioning a boy should have a male colleague present.
- **2.5** Staff should ensure that if they are in charge of any school activity or facilities where safety regulations and precautions are required, these are clearly published and the attention of students is drawn to them from time to time. Any accidents or other untoward incidents should always be recorded, signed and dated.
- **2.6** It is the responsibility of each member of staff to be aware of the complaints procedure and the policy on sanctions.
- **2.7** It is important not to place students of the same or differing age groups in situations which might make bullying, intimidation or other student-to-student abuse more likely and, where such situations might arise, it is important that proper adult supervision be arranged. Senior students, assisting the supervision of junior ones, should also be aware of this.
- **2.8** Under no circumstances should teaching staff advise on the taking of medicines, increase or decrease of medication and the like. These concerns are strictly within the province of the school's medical staff.
- **2.9** Teaching staff should bear in mind the requirements of both the law, insurance cover, the school's guidelines and good sense if conveying students in cars, minibuses etc.

In addition to the internal procedures required by the Chair when staff plan trips outside the School, either in term or during the holidays, teaching staff should ensure that students are properly supervised and care taken for their safety and security during such trips. In cases where the trip involves obvious risks such as adventure training style activities, the ratio of supervising staff to students should be given careful consideration. Students should be given clear instructions as to timings, rendezvous and the conduct expected of them.

SOCIAL NETWORK

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- **A.** No member of staff should interact with any student in the school on social networking sites
- **B.** No member of staff should interact with any ex-student in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18
- **C.** This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a student's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the student access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- **D.** Where family and friends have students in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Principal in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.
- **E.** If you have any evidence of students or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school.

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018) [Part One]; and school leaders and staff that work directly with children should also read Annex A

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Policy on Social Networking
- Policy on Conduct and Discipline
- Policy on Whistleblowing
- Policy on E-safety
- Policy on PSHE & Citizenship
- Policy on Health and Safety
- Policy on Record Keeping, Information Sharing, Retention and Storage
- Safer Recruitment
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Restraint Policy