

VISS

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2018

Policy and Guidelines

Excellence, Diversity. Learning, Integrity,
Community



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VISS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

United Arab Emirates (UAE) Federal law Number 3 of 2016, previously referred to as “Wadeema’s Law”, ensures that every child in the UAE, whether a resident or tourist, has the right to live and be safe, be educated, and be protected from neglect and all forms of abuse, whether physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or psychological.

At Victoria International School Sharjah (VISS), the health, safety and wellbeing of all our children is crucial and important to every VISS employee. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school.

Protecting children is everyone’s responsibility at VISS and this includes reporting any act committed by a parent, guardian or any other person, to a child enrolled in the school which results in neglect, physical or emotional injury or sexual harm.

All staff have a duty and will report any suspected or disclosed issues of child protection to the Designated Child Protection Officers (DCPO). If the threat is immediate or ongoing it will be reported to the Child Protection Case Management Team (CPCMT).

Purpose

The safeguarding of children and young people from harm is the highest priority here at VISS. Our students have a right to feel safe and protected from significant physical and emotional harm both inside and outside the school. This policy is a crucial part of promoting the welfare of our students; it is designed to inform our staff regarding the signs of child abuse and to equip them with knowledge of what to do in the event of suspected abuse. This policy defines abuse, outlines signs of abuse and explains the procedures for investigating and reporting suspected cases.

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to any act committed by a parent, guardian or any other person to a child under the age of 18, which results in injury to the child. These acts include situations where there is neglect, emotional, physical or sexual harm (See Appendix A: Categories of Abuse).

Aims

This policy ensures that all staff in our school can follow the necessary procedures with regard to a child protection issue.

- To raise awareness and identify responsibility in reporting possible cases of abuse;
- To ensure effective communication between staff and DCPO when dealing with child protection issues;
- To inform all parties of the correct procedures to use in the case of a child protection issue.

When to be concerned

Staff should be concerned if a student:

- Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with the child's activities
- Regularly has unexplained injuries
- Frequently has injuries even when apparently reasonable explanations are given
- Offers confused or conflicting explanations about how injuries were sustained
- Exhibits significant changes in behaviour, performance or attitude
- Indulges in sexual behavior which is unusually explicit and/or inappropriate to his or her age
- Discloses an experience in which he or she may have been harmed

Dealing with disclosure

If a student discloses that he or she has been harmed in some way, the member of staff needs to:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or belief
- Accept what is being said
- Allow the child to talk freely
- Reassure the child but not make promises that may not be possible to keep
- Not promise confidentiality, as it will be necessary to refer the case to the Designated Child protection Officer (DCPO).
- Reassure the child that what has happened is not his or her fault.
- Reassure child that disclosing information was the right thing to do.
- Listen rather than ask direct questions.
- Ask open questions rather than leading questions
- Do not criticize the perpetrator
- Explain what has to be done next and that the Designated Child protection Officer (DCPO) will be informed.

Procedures

When a child reports abuse, the teacher will inform the Designated Child protection Officer (DCPO, Head of Primary School, Head of Secondary School, and School Psychologist) as soon as possible and by the end of the school day. The teacher should inform the DCPO as soon as possible if there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring. The DCPO will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident. At this stage the Designated Child protection Officer (DCPO) will:

- Interview staff member/student as necessary and document information relative to the case.
- Discuss case with School Psychologist
- The DCPO, in consultation with the School Psychologist, will decide whether the matter needs to be addressed with the Child Protection Case Management Team (CPCMT).

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Actions that may take place are:

- Discussions between the child and the DCPO in order to gain more information.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher and/or DCPO.
- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns conducted by two members of the Child protection Case Management team.
- Referral of the student and family to internal/external professional counselling
- Further discussion with the Child Protection Case Management Team (CPCMT)
- Consultation with local authorities

Subsequent to a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect, the following actions may take place:

- The DCPO will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The DCPO will provide the child's teachers with ongoing support, and provide strategies for the teacher to use.
- If the case is referred externally, the DCPO will maintain contact with external therapist/agency, in order to update the DCPO and referring teacher about the progress of therapy.
- The Executive principal refers the case to local authorities for further action.

Responsibilities of the whole school staff

- All members of the school staff have a responsibility to identify and report suspected abuse **to the dedicated DCPO** and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students in the school. In doing so, they are encouraged to seek advice and support as necessary from the DCPO.
- All staff are expected to attend regular and relevant professional development sessions.
- All staff are expected to provide a safe and caring environment in which children can develop the confidence to voice ideas, feelings and opinions. Children should be treated with respect.
- All staff are expected to:
 - Be aware of symptoms of abuse
 - Report concerns to DCPO
 - Keep clear, dated, factual and confidential records of child protection concerns and handover to DCPO.
 - Confidential records are to be placed under lock and key in the office of the School Psychologist or Executive Principal.

Specific responsibilities of the school Doctor/Nurse/Psychologist/Counsellor

- May be requested to provide physical treatment and emotional support after a child has been abused.
- The Doctor or Nurse may be required to conduct an examination if there are physical injuries and write an initial report about the child's physical and emotional condition.
- The Doctor/Nurse/Psychologist/Counsellor can provide positive encouragement to the child, liaise with family members to determine how best to promote the child's safety both at school and at home.
- Child abuse can leave deep emotional scars and the school Doctor/Nurse/psychologist/counsellor should recognize these and help develop a rehabilitation

plan in liaison with the DCPO and other appropriate staff in the Child Protection Case Management Team.

Specific responsibilities of the HR department and Security

- When recruiting any member of the teaching staff, support and auxiliary staff and outside service providers whom have access to children at VISS, all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure compliance as far as possible with the following:
 - Provision of an up to date police 'good conduct' letter and/or criminal records check
 - That two or more references are taken up from previous employers with follow-up questions with regard to the applicant's compliance with any Child Protection procedures.
 - A declaration signed by the prospective employee on any application form and/or contract that he/she has not been convicted or undergoing court or disciplinary proceedings for any offence involving child abuse and/or breach in exercising a duty of care for children.

- The security staff undertake to be vigilant and adhere to the procedures governing the access, detailed record-keeping, provision of a Visitor's Pass to be worn for ease of identification and monitoring of visitors to the school. Emirates ID or equivalent must be provided at sign-in.

Roles and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, visitors and external workers who enter VISS premises.

The staff at VISS have a responsibility to promote the safety and wellbeing of our students. All staff must report any suspected incidents of child abuse to the DCPO. The DCPOs at VISS are:

M. Jim Stearns Head of Secondary School/Deputy Executive Principal

Ms Kerry Graham Head of Primary School

Dr Emma Campbell School Psychologist/Counsellor

In the absence of Ms Kerry Graham, all matters will be forwarded to Mr Jim Stearns or Dr. Emma Campbell. In the absence of Mr Jim Stearns, all matters will be forwarded to Ms Kerry Graham or Dr Emma Campbell. In the absence of Dr. Emma Campbell, all matters will be forwarded to relevant Head of School. In the absence of all DCPOs, all matters will be forwarded directly to the Executive Principal.

The DCPOs will:

Follow the agreed procedures (See Appendix B and C)

- Know how to identify the signs and symptoms of Abuse (See Appendix A)
- Provide advice and support to staff
- Maintain relevant records of incident reports (See Appendix D)
- Keep all information confidential and locked in a safe filing cabinet.

- Know when and how to submit a referral to outside agencies (See Appendix D)
- Decide whether the Child Protection Case Management Team is required to assemble to manage the report and action a safety plan for the child.

Relevant Legislation or Authorities

This policy is underpinned by the fundamental principle of the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child (UNRC)1989, of which the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ratified on the 3rd January 1997, along with the UAE local laws (the Emirates Human Rights Association have launched a Federal law, the Child Rights Law, established in 2016.

School Commitment-Recruitment, Training and Selection

VISS will continue to implement safe recruitment and ensure all staff (teaching and non-teaching), including volunteers who apply to work at the school, will be subject to a rigorous recruitment process to ensure, as far as possible, their suitability to work with children and eligibility to work in the UAE. At least two references will be taken up and they will be required to give evidence of their qualifications.

Staff will be provided with a copy of the Child protection and Safeguarding Policy and code of behavior and will be required to sign a document certifying that they have read it and agree to abide by its contents.

All these policies are applicable when students go on trips away from school. At least one male and one female will be present to support students.

Framework

Child protection is the responsibility of all staff and especially those working with children. The designated Senior Person for Child Protection at VISS is the Executive Principal and in his absence the Deputy Principal is in charge of child protection/safeguarding matters.

The Executive Principal and Heads of primary and secondary will disseminate policy and provide professional development training to all new staff and will also provide up to date information to existing staff.

CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Is actual or attempted physical injury to a child where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented?

- Unexplained injuries or burns (particularly if they are recurrent)
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Aggression towards others
- Self-destructive tendencies

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs such as to have a severe effect on the behaviour and development of the child. This includes conveying to children the feeling that they are worthless or unloved.

- Physical/mental/emotional developmental lags
- Admission of punishment which seems excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g., rocking, thumb sucking etc.)
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Self-mutilation
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

SEXUAL ABUSE:

Where a child may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect, exploits the child, directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) – including organized networks. This definition holds whether or not there has been genital contact and whether or not the child is said to have initiated the behaviour.

Signs and Symptoms:

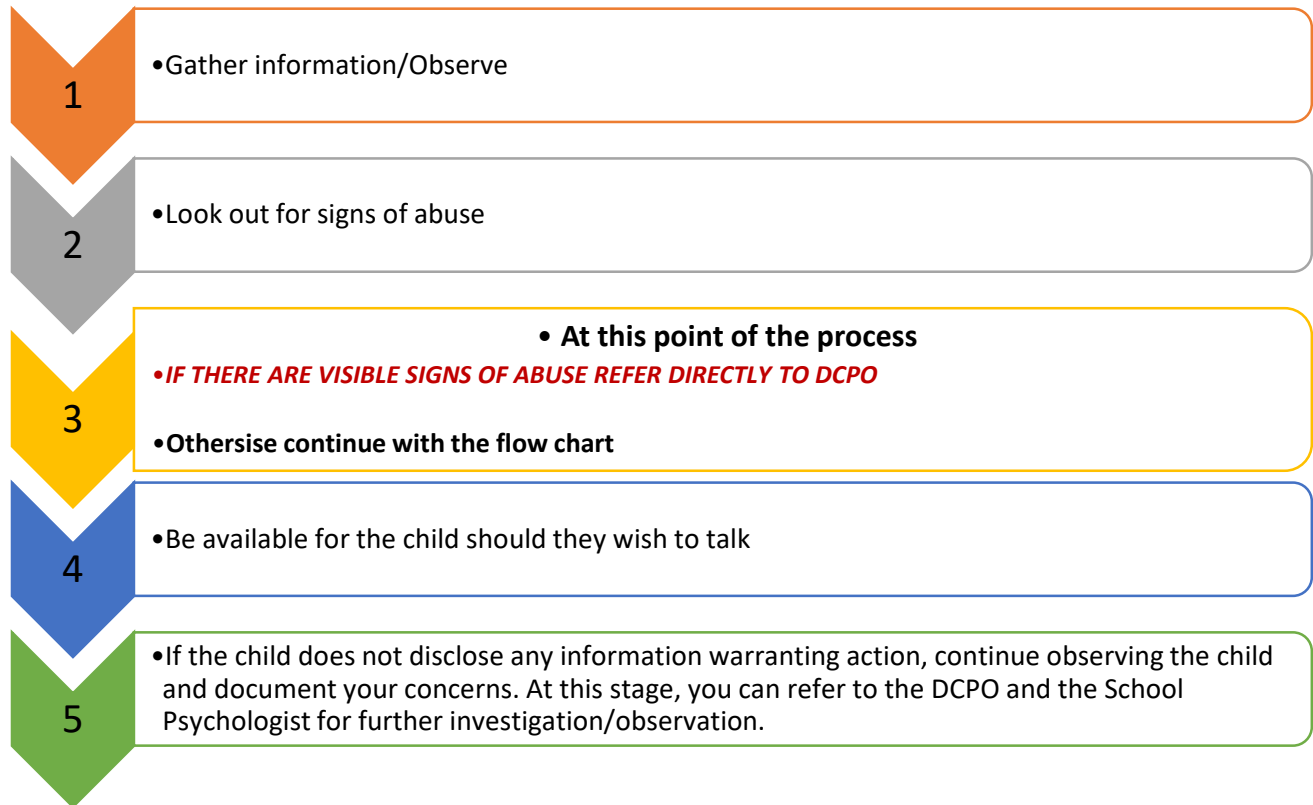
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, behaviours
- Loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Regressive behaviours such as thumb sucking, needing previously discarded cuddly toys
- Becoming withdrawn, isolated
- Inability to focus
- Reluctance to go home
- Bed-wetting
- Drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'extra good'
- Over-reacting to criticism
- Have outbursts of anger/irritability

NEGLECT:

Refers to persistent or deliberate failure to meet a child's physical or psychological needs e.g. a failure to provide adequate food, clothing or shelter, failure to protect a child or failure to provide adequate medical care. It may also involve neglect or failure to give adequate response to a child's emotional needs.

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Frequent lateness and/or unexplained non-attendance
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor peer relationships
- Stealing

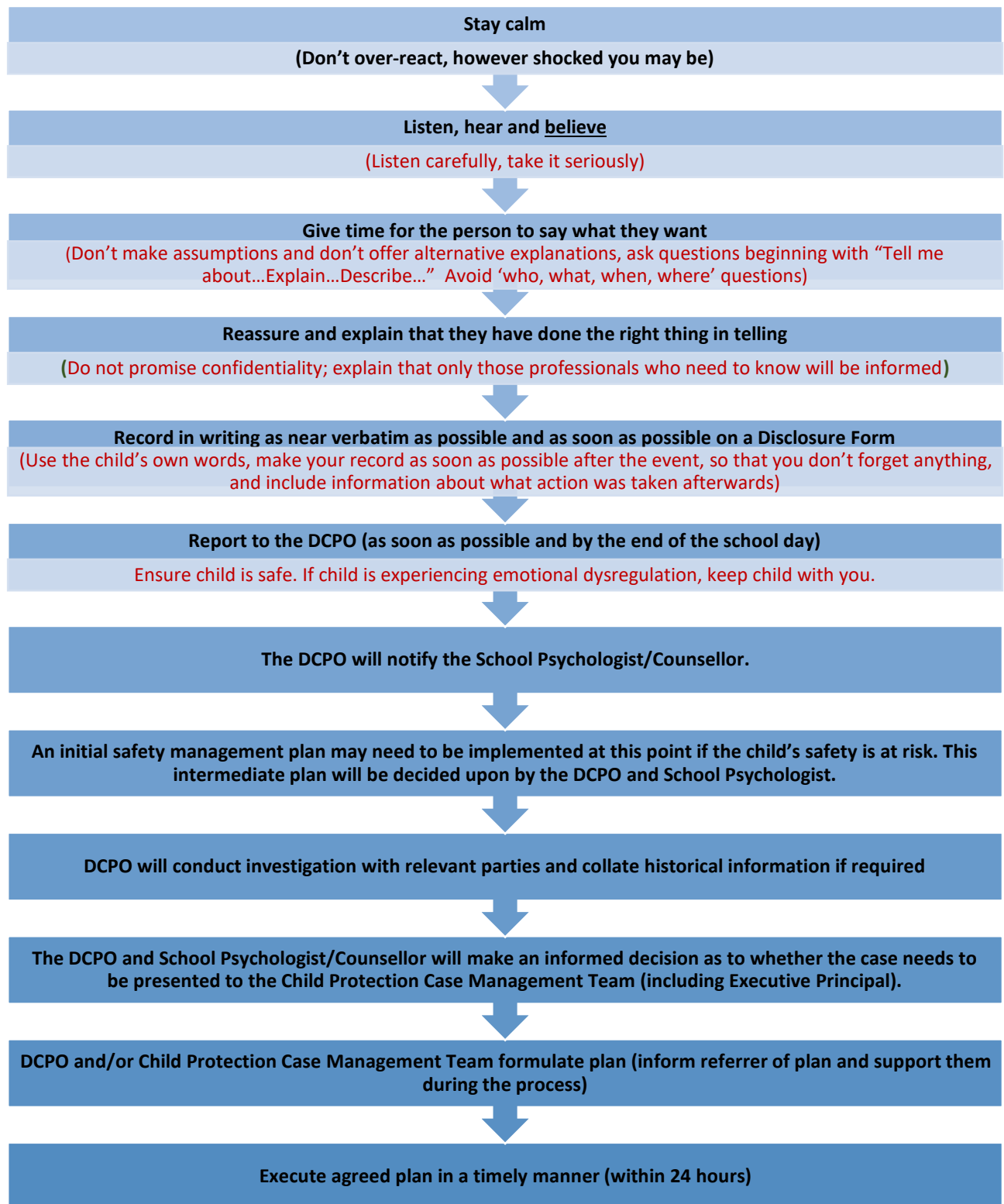
WHAT IS REQUIRED WHEN A TEACHER SUSPECTS A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED



NB: Collecting information refers to documenting evidence in written and pictorial form, and under no circumstances are photos or videos to be taken of a child.

APPENDIX C

WHAT IS REQUIRED WHEN A CHILD MAKES A DISCLOSURE



N.B.: During interviews with a child and/or parents, the interviewer (in this case the DCPO) if possible, should be accompanied by another member of the Child Protection Case management team and may in some cases include referrer (if the child and/or parents have established rapport with the referrer).

The investigation/interview must be thoroughly documented in writing and kept under lock and key in the School Psychologist/Counsellor or Executive Principal's office. All information gathered is confidential and should not be shared with anybody outside of the Child protection case Management Team.

It is crucial that every person involved in the process is aware of the importance of confidentiality.

VICTORIA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHARJAH
DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE FORM

Name of Person Making Disclosure:

Time and Date:

Parent(s) Name and Contact Details:

Nature of Disclosure:

(Continue on separate sheet as required, recording as close to verbatim as possible)

Name and Signature:

Role :

Date and Time :

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