


**RAHA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

**GARDENS CAMPUS**

POLICIES

Policy title	Safeguarding Child Protection Policy
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Prepared by	Name
SLT	SLT

Approving Committee	Name	Signature
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## **Guiding Statements:**

In line with our Mission and Vision, to empower and equip individuals to excel through providing a happy, caring and inclusive community we recognise and value that;

- The health, safety and protection of our students is of paramount importance and takes priority in all decisions regarding school operations. In consideration of this the RIS Child Protection Policy will be included in the induction programme for all staff new to the school and in faculty handbooks.
- The policy is intended to provide clear direction for staff and to support the school's commitment to best practice and appropriate procedures to ensure that child protection concerns are handled sensitively and professionally.
- All decisions related to child protection will be made in the best interests of the child. This includes the sharing of information. (*UN Convention Article: 3*)

The RIS Child Protection Policy has been updated to incorporate *Article 1* of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, stating everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the convention and *Article 2*, which states that the convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language ability or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

## **Categories, Definitions and Signs of Abuse:**

If you are worried about a child, it can be hard to know what to do. There is information and advice on different types of child abuse, how to spot the signs and what you can do to help keep children safe. For further information, please click this link; [nspcc.org.uk/types-of-abuse](https://nspcc.org.uk/types-of-abuse)

Types of abuse can include;

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation
- Neglect
- Peer on Peer abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Online Abuse
- Potential Abuse

## Physical Abuse

The actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. (*UN Convention Articles: 16, 19, 37, 39*)

This can include, for example, non-accidental cuts, bruises, wounds, burns, fractures, bites, deliberate poisoning, attempted drowning, attempted smothering and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (also known as Factitious Syndrome).

Possible signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained injury or refusal to explain or discuss them
- Cigarette burns
- Long bruises (possibly made by a belt)
- Teeth marks
- Fingertip/nail/slap marks or bruises
- History of bruises/injuries with inconsistent explanations
- Bilateral black eyes
- Self-destructive comments, possibly repeated, or tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Untreated injuries or fear of medical treatment

## Emotional Abuse

Actual or likely severe adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment, inappropriate treatment, or rejection. (*UN Convention Articles: 12, 16, 19, 36, 37, 39*)

A diagnosis will require medical, psychological, psychiatric, social and/or educational assessment. It is accepted that all abuse involves emotional abuse, but this category supersedes only when it is the main or the sole form of abuse.

Possible signs of Emotional Abuse:

- The child is developmentally delayed
- Inappropriateness of social responses
- Self-mutilation
- Extreme passivity or aggression
- Truanting from school or running away from home
- Drug or solvent abuse (either in the child or in its principal carer/s)
- Excessive fear of situations or people
- Social isolation
- Depression

- Pressure (possibly when careers are unstable emotionally or behaviourally)

Emotional abuse is more than just the occasional criticism of a child. Abuse is a symptom of continued negative treatment that ostracizes or belittles a child. This is usually the result of extremes of inappropriate care by the parents and as such, very difficult to confront. All abuse is emotional abuse irrespective of whether or not it is accompanied by physical injury, sexual abuse or neglect.

### **Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation**

Actual or likely exploitation of a child by involvement in sexual activities without informed consent or understanding, or that violate social taboos or family roles. (*UN Convention Articles: 16, 17, 19, 34, 35, 39*)

This is the involvement of dependent (legally under 18), developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent. The key elements in any definition of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation are:

- The betrayal of trust and responsibility.
- Abuse of power for the purpose of the sexual gratification of the abuser.
- The inability of the child to consent.

Possible signs of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation:

- Depression, suicidal tendencies, self-harming
- Anorexia or bulimia
- Acting in a sexually inappropriate manner towards adults/peers
- Unexplained pregnancies
- Truancy/running away from home
- Seeking guidance for a "friend with a problem of abuse"
- Sexually abusing a younger child/sibling
- Sudden changes in school or work habits or fear of people
- Abnormal precociousness or aggression
- Chronic medical problems (stomach pains/headaches)
- Withdrawn, isolated, excessively isolated
- Genital/abdominal or anal injury or pain

### **Neglect**

This is the persistent or severe neglect of a child, which results in serious impairment of that child's health or development. (*UN Convention Article[s]: 3, 6, 9, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39*)

This may involve exposure to danger or the repeated failure to attend to the physical and developmental needs of a child. The non-organic failure of a child to thrive may result from the neglect of a child but will always require medical diagnosis by appropriate exclusion of organic causes.

Possible signs of Neglect:

Failure to thrive (looks thin, emaciated, unwell, below average height, weight)

- Unusually hungry
- Has regular accidents especially burns
- Poor personal hygiene
- Avoidance of school medicals
- Tiredness
- Reluctance to go home, frequent lateness or non-attendance
- Poor social relationships

### **Peer on Peer Abuse**

Occurs when a young person is exploited, bullied and/or harmed by their peers. Everyone directly involved with peer on peer abuse is under the age of 18 which defines the legal definition for a child as per the UN Rights of the Child Charter.

Peer on peer abuse can take many forms, including (but not limited to) bullying, cyberbullying, gender-based abuse, hazing (initiation type violence), sexually harmful behaviour and violence, upskirting (which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. This is now a criminal offence); and 'sexting'.

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. If one child causes harm to another this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse. However, it may be appropriate to regard a child's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (age, size, ability, development) between the children concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged child if the evidence suggest that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim or to

exploit them, this should be regarded as abuse whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

Possible signs of Peer on Peer Abuse:

- Absence from school or disengagement from school activities
- Physical injuries
- Mental or emotional health issues
- Becoming withdrawn, lack of self esteem
- Lack of sleep
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Changes in behaviour
- Inappropriate behaviour for age
- Abusive towards others

RIS firmly rejects the idea that deliberate unpleasantness can be excused by describing such behaviour as banter. RIS believes that abuse is abuse and it will ever be tolerated, dismissed or minimised. Any incidents of peer on peer abuse will be managed in the same way as any other child protection concern.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic Abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship that takes place in the home or residence. It can seriously harm children and young people and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. Living in a home where domestic abuse happens can have a serious impact on a child or young person's mental and physical wellbeing as well as their behaviour – and this can last until adulthood.

Possible signs that a child has witnessed domestic abuse can include:

- Aggression or bullying
- Anti-social behaviour e.g. vandalism
- Anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts
- Physical recoil from adult touch/invasion into physical space
- Attention seeking tantrums, bedwetting nightmares and insomnia
- Withdrawal

### **Online Abuse**

This is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that is connected to the web for example computers, tablets and mobile phones. It can happen anywhere online including:

- Social Media
- Text messaging and text messaging apps
- Emails
- Online chats
- Online gaming
- Live stream sites

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline like bullying or grooming or the abuse might only happen online.

Possible signs of online abuse include:

- spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- seem distant, upset or angry after using the internet or texting
- be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone
- have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Some of the signs of online abuse are similar to other abuse types:

- cyberbullying
- grooming
- sexual abuse and sexual exploitation

### **Potential Abuse**

Situations where children may not have been abused but where social and medical assessments indicate a high degree of risk that they might be abused in the future.

This includes situations where another child in the household has been abused, or where there is a known abuser. (*UN Convention Article[s]: 6, 13, 23, 27*)

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

None of the signs listed above may actually prove that a child is being abused and these indications should not be taken as proof. They may be indicators, which when put into context,



provide justification for action. It must be remembered that even an explicit disclosure by a child may be untrue. Children may sustain injury by accident or design in order to implicate someone else.

### **Indicators of Troubled Children\*:**

The student is observed:

- Crying a great deal over the most minor of things
- Being anxious, feeling scared and/or insecure
- Becoming aggressive and violent
- Having difficulties with concentrating on their work
- Having difficulty getting on with peers
- Having sleep problems, nightmares and bed wetting
- Health complaints like headaches, stomach aches, and asthma
- Hyperactivity or lack of control
- Conduct problems like truancy, delinquency and stealing

*\*(IBO – OCC Document, Violence in Families, p. 1, 2007)*

### **Dealing with Disclosure:**

If a student discloses that he/she has been abused in some way, member of staff should:

- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief
- accept what is being said
- allow the child to talk freely
- reassure the child, but do not make promises which it might not be possible to keep
- not promise confidentiality as it might be necessary to refer to the relevant DSL, Head of School or CPO
- reassure the student that what has happened is not their fault
- stress that it was the right thing to tell
- listen, rather than ask direct questions
- ask open questions rather than leading questions
- avoid criticising the perpetrator
- explain what has to be done next and who has to be told
- document the information on the school record of concern sheet where possible and pass this to the relevant DSL without delay

We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. All staff are expected to fully comply, at all times, with the School's Professional Code

of Conduct. All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues towards students to the DSL.

- In the case of allegations brought against a colleague refer the incident to the DSL who will then immediately refer to the Principal and CPO.
- If a member of staff has concerns about the conduct of a member of the School's Leadership Team (other than the Principal) they should contact the Principal.
- If a member of staff has concerns about the conduct of the Principal, they should contact Taaleem Central Office.

Following a complaint, the DSL or CPO will share appropriate information with the relevant staff. There may be instances where the sharing of this information will not be possible.

### **Responsibilities of Staff Members:**

- To familiarize themselves with the RIS Safeguarding Child Protection Policy and to seek clarity from the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead on any aspects that are unclear.
- 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 within a framework of agreed and understood behaviour. The use of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden.
- Immediately report any case of suspected child abuse the relevant DSL and be prepared to follow up with a clear, dated, factual and confidential record of the concern within 24 hours. According to law a person who fails to report a criminal offense is liable to prosecution (Penal code Federal (3) Article 274).
- Maintain confidentiality and refrain from sharing the details of the case with others. Access to information on a case should be restricted and based on a need-to-know basis.
- To treat sensitive information received about students in a discreet and confidential manner.
- To take responsibility for their own actions and behavior and avoid conduct that would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intention.

- Staff members should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way (especially when working with individual students). Staff should not invite students to visit their place of residence unless as guests of his or her son or daughter.
- To submit to HR, prior to assuming a position at the school, a document from the country of previous employment or local authorities that confirms a record of good conduct.
- Staff members should be aware of breaches of the law and other professional guidelines that could result in criminal or disciplinary action taken against them.
- Note: Any staff member using corporal punishment will be immediately suspended from school pending an investigation

### **Staff Safety:**

- The law is weighted in favour of the child, applying a burden on staff to safeguard children's welfare and providing for the child's protection rather than protecting the adult. Due to the requirement for schools and agencies to share information about allegations:
  - there is little anonymity once an allegation has been made, even if it proves to be false in the end
  - the burden of evidence is to disprove rather than prove the allegation
  - staff are advised to think carefully about the setting and nature of varied relationships with students, so as not open undue suspicion or accusation.
- Coping with concerns about the possible abuse of a child can be very stressful for all involved, however the first responsibility is to the child. For staff, consider seeking support and discuss with the relevant DSL in school. The school counselor is also available to staff.

### **Procedures:**

- Any member of staff who suspects a case of child abuse must inform the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately. This pertains to suspected cases of abuse committed on or off campus, by members of staff or by members of the public and by a student or group of students.

- The reporting staff member will collate a detailed, accurate and confidential report making reference to specific signs of abuse and submit this document to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead.
  - The handwritten report should be submitted within 24 hours of the initial verbal report.
  - In cases where there is physical evidence of abuse those reporting should refer to the body maps to indicate the location and extent of the abuse.
  - Body maps should be attached to the report. Under no circumstances is photographic evidence to be used.
- After receiving a report of suspected abuse either verbally or in writing the Designated Safeguarding Lead will:
  - conducts interviews, gather information and consider all factors in collaboration with the counselors (risk assessment), the CPO and the Principal where appropriate
  - record decisions made and reasons for it if concerns are allayed and no action is required
  - meet with the CPO/Head of School/Principal where appropriate to consult on next steps If concerns are ongoing
  - determine if next steps include contacting a member of the student's family, ADEK, and/or the Ministry of Interior

### **Commitment to Safer Recruitment:**

- As a part of the Raha contract, every employee must have a signed Criminal Background Declaration form.
- Reference checks are conducted for every employee at the school.
- Criminal/Police clearances provided must be less than 3 months old.
- Advertising of post will include the following statement:
  - Raha International School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Successful applicants will be subject to a police check.
- At least one member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for making offers of employment will have successfully completed Level 3 child protection training within the last two years.

### **Legal Requirements in the UAE:**



Crimes of abuse and penalties are defined in Federal Law (3); which was updated in June 2016 to include the Child’s Rights Law.

Updated article will be provided when available. Below are the specific articles pertaining to each type of abuse as listed in the previous Federal Law (3).

- Physical Abuse Crimes: Articles 336–343
- Sexual Abuse Crimes: Articles 354, 356, 358, 363, 364  
*\*Article 362 pertains to the distribution of drawings, photos, films*
- Emotional Abuse Crimes: Articles 351, 352, 372–374
- Neglect: Articles 348–350
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As of September 2022, Key Members of the Child Protection Oversight Team Include:

1. Mrs Pali Nahal, Principal: [pnahal@ris.ae](mailto:pnahal@ris.ae)
2. Ms Carol Pratt, Vice Principal and Child Protection Office: [cpratt@ris.ae](mailto:cpratt@ris.ae)
3. Mr Matt O’Dowda, Head of Primary: [modowda@ris.ae](mailto:modowda@ris.ae)
4. Ms Tara Manson, Head of Secondary: [tmanson@ris.ae](mailto:tmanson@ris.ae)
5. Ms Mairead Ryan, Primary DSL: [mairiad.ryan@ris.ae](mailto:mairiad.ryan@ris.ae)
6. Ms Kerry Mesmer, EY DSL: [kmesmer@ris.ae](mailto:kmesmer@ris.ae)
7. Ms Claire Armstrong, Secondary DSL: [carmstrong@ris.ae](mailto:carmstrong@ris.ae)

## Revision Log

Date	Changes	Reviewed By
18/02/2020	Updates to contact information	Yvonne Donoghue & Naomi Clancy
24/08/2020	Updates to contact information	Naomi Clancy
08/2022	Updates to contact information	Carol Pratt
10/2023	Updates to contact information; inclusion of procedures as appendices	Carol Pratt