

# SOS Hermann Gmeiner International College



## Safeguarding Policy

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## Definitions and Abbreviations

Term	Definition/Abbreviations
Bullying	The repeated and intentional actions or words of an individual or a group of people (with more power: real or perceived), that causes hurt or harm to another person or group of people who feel helpless to respond.
Child	All children and young people below 18 years of age and any student admitted to SOS-HGIC irrespective of age.
Child Abuse	Consists of all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, 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.
Child Protection	A commitment that all suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school will be investigated and followed by appropriate action.
Child Protection Officer	CPO
Designated Safeguarding Lead	DSL
Safeguarding	The policies, structures and activities that are proactively implemented to ensure all students are safe and to guarantee they have the best outcomes.

## **1. MISSION STATEMENT, PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES**

The Mission of SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College (SOS-HGIC) is to provide a school of academic excellence for students from SOS Children's Villages from all over Africa, together with students from the host country, Ghana, in a spirit of Pan-Africanism and an awareness of the social needs of society.

The school's philosophy embraces internationalism in its widest sense, a commitment to uplift Africa and active service to the community. Its educational mission is holistic in nature, aiming to develop all students into confident adults capable of facing the challenges of a fast-changing world, by inculcating in them critical and analytical abilities which will equip them to become compassionate thinkers who are aware of their common humanity, with a belief and pride in themselves as Africans. The College's ultimate mission is to graduate lifelong learners who are fully prepared for the best universities worldwide and who are also committed to putting their knowledge, skills and resources into developing their continent, Africa.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

Children's welfare and safety have always been a very important part of all institutions that work with children because of the threat of various forms of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and often impede a child's education, as well as, negatively impacting their physical, emotional, and spiritual development.

SOS-HGIC endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which our resident country, Ghana, is a signatory. Furthermore, SOS-HGIC has a moral and legal responsibility to safeguard the well-being of its students. It is on the basis of this that this Safeguarding Policy has been developed. This policy is also based on the Child Protection Laws of Ghana and guided by the provisions of the SOS Children's Villages International Child Protection Policy. These two key articles from the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child are important to the development of this policy:

**Article 19: Protection from abuse and neglect:** “The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.”

**Article 34: Sexual exploitation:** “The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.”

All students, parents and staff of SOS-HGIC will receive paper and/or electronic copies of this policy. Copies will also be available in the VALCO Library and Learning Centre, and on the school’s website ([www.soshgic.edu.gh](http://www.soshgic.edu.gh)). The policy will be clearly explained to all members of the SOS-HGIC community through our various programs and activities such as school assembly, Personal and Social Education sessions, hostel meetings, Adolescent Health Awareness Day, and staff meetings, among others.

SOS-HGIC will provide training for all staff, and will ensure best practices are implemented when recruiting staff to guarantee the safety of students.

### 3. KEY CONTACTS

For Safeguarding and Child Protection, the College has two Designated Safeguarding Leads: one female and one male, and a child protection officer.

#### Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

<b>Contact email</b>	<a href="mailto:viceprincipal2@soshgic.edu.gh">viceprincipal2@soshgic.edu.gh</a>
<b>Telephone</b>	0504627454

#### Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

<b>Contact email</b>	SHT@soshgic.edu.gh
<b>Telephone</b>	0200545588

#### Child Protection Officer (CPO)

<b>Contact email</b>	emotionalcounselor@soshgic.edu.gh
<b>Telephone</b>	0243310555

#### **4. PURPOSE OF POLICY**

SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College fully recognizes its responsibilities for safeguarding children. Our students' welfare and safety are at the heart of our school's ethos and in everything we do.

In this policy, a child means all children and young people below 18 years of age and any student admitted to SOS-HGIC irrespective of age.

The purpose of this policy is to communicate the school's commitment to the safety of our students, and also serve as a guide for all members of the community (students, staff, parents and other stakeholders) on issues concerning child protection. The policy is consistent with the National, SOS Children's Villages International, IBO and UN standards for safeguarding children.

This policy details our procedures for safeguarding and child protection. It is applicable to the whole school community. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, whether they work or volunteer in the school. Everyone has a role to play in child protection and safeguarding.

All staff and volunteers will ensure that their approach and actions are child-centered. This means that they will consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child. Because of the day-to-day contact with students, school staff and volunteers are well placed to observe signs of harm, abuse, neglect, peer on peer sexual violence and sexual harassment, victimization and/or exploitation.



## 5. AIMS OF POLICY

- To achieve a common understanding of the importance of safeguarding to the general well-being and development of the student.
- To communicate the school's responsibilities for ensuring the safety, protection, welfare and wellbeing of students to its students, staff, parents, the school board and other stakeholders.
- To enable all stakeholders, have a good understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.
- To empower all members of the school community to be able to identify instances of abuse.
- To provide guidelines and procedures for safeguarding students from abuse and neglect and for reporting and responding to cases of abuse.
- To clearly outline child protection procedures.
- To emphasize the need for employees of the college to respect the rights of the child to live without fear of abuse.

Embedded within this Safeguarding policy is the schools Child Protection Procedures. Understanding the relationship between the two is important. *Child protection is a part of Safeguarding.*

SOS-HGIC recognizes that **safeguarding** covers a broad range of areas and it aims to achieve the following:

- Protecting children from abuse and maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health and/or development.
- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Undertaking that role so as to enable children to have optimum life chances, so they can enter adulthood successfully.

Embedded within these, **Child Protection** describes the activities and procedures that are undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

## **6. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to anyone who is a part of SOS-HGIC: staff (full-time, part-time, volunteers) and students.

## **7. STATEMENT OF POLICY**

Child abuse and neglect are concerns throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development.

Schools need to ensure that all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop, both at school and away. 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. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff and students of SOS-HGIC must report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever they have reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate employer, and/or to local authorities.

SOS-HGIC seeks to be a safe environment for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. As part of our commitment, SOS-HGIC will distribute this policy annually to all parents and applicants, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide training for all staff, and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children.

SOS-HGIC will investigate each report of abuse irrespective of the personality involved by following due process and keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

For detailed information on the Convention on the Rights of Child see the following link:

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

## 8. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

This part of the policy outlines what staff and students should know, expect and do about child abuse and covers these **four main areas**:

- **Awareness:** what do I need to know about abuse?
- **Prevention:** what do I do to prevent it from happening?
- **Reporting:** what do I do if it happens?
- **Response:** what can I expect the school to do if it happens?

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting. Children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

### 8.1 Awareness

This section focuses on raising awareness of child abuse and its risks by providing the definitions of different types of abuse, where they can occur and the signs that can serve as an indication that they are occurring. Additionally, commonly held myths and the realities about child abuse and neglect are discussed. Many of the terms and words used in relation to safeguarding and child protection is broad and defined sometimes in different ways. This section provides the definitions that apply to the words and terms used within this document.

## **8.2 Safeguarding**

These are the policies, structures and activities that are pro-actively implemented to ensure all students are safe and to guarantee they have the best outcomes. This includes paying attention to policies and governance; ensuring safer recruitment, implementing attendance procedures, facilitating online safety, providing a whistleblower policy.

## **8.3 Child Protection**

A commitment that all suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school will be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

## **8.4 Designated Safeguarding Leads**

The two Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for:

- Ensuring the college's safeguarding policy is known, understood and used appropriately.
- Being available for all staff to discuss any safeguarding issues or concerns.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of their contact details.
- Ensuring that all cases of suspected or actual problems associated with child protection or safeguarding concerns (including cases where the early help process may be appropriate) are referred to the appropriate agencies in line with procedures set out in this policy.
- Leading all investigations when a report is made and keeping the Principal apprised.
- Attending accredited, enhanced training each year, as required to fulfil the role.
- Ensuring the Safeguarding policy is available publicly to all stakeholders and that parents are aware as stipulated by law, that the college may refer cases of suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate agencies.

## **8.5 Child Protection Officer**

The Child Protection Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring that appropriate training for staff (including periodic updates via e-bulletins, email, or as part of staff meetings) is organized according to the agreed programme with the Principal

- Ensuring that all staff and students have an understanding of child abuse, neglect, and peer on peer abuse.
- Providing emotional support to all parties involved in child protection procedures.

## **8.6 Child Abuse**

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

<b>Definition of Emotional Abuse</b>	<b>Signs of Emotional abuse</b>
<p>“The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child’s emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children to frequently feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. This may also include name calling, insulting, criticizing, or telling a student that they are not very clever. Some forms of bullying are linked to class and socio- economic categories.</p>	<p>Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly anxious.</li> <li>- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder.</li> <li>- Fear of new situations.</li> <li>- Low self-esteem.</li> <li>- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations.</li> <li>- Extremes of passivity or aggression.</li> <li>- Drug or alcohol abuse.</li> <li>- Chronic running away.</li> <li>- Compulsive stealing.</li> <li>- Obsessions or phobias.</li> <li>- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.</li> <li>- Attention-seeking behavior.</li> <li>- Persistent tiredness.</li> <li>- Lying.</li> </ul>

<b>Definition of Physical Abuse</b>	<b>Signs of Physical Abuse</b>
<p>“May involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. These symptoms could indicate harm to self, such as, cutting and suicide ideation.” (AISA pg17) Some forms of bullying such as asking a child to kneel for a long period of time.</p>	<p>Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries</li> <li>- Injuries which have not received medical attention</li> <li>- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.</li> <li>- Refusal to discuss injuries</li> <li>- Withdrawal from physical contact.</li> <li>- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather.</li> <li>- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted.</li> <li>- Showing wariness of distrust of adults.</li> <li>- Self-destructive tendencies.</li> <li>- Being aggressive towards others.</li> <li>- Being very passive and compliant.</li> <li>- Chronic running away.</li> </ul>

<b>Definition of Sexual Abuse</b>	<b>Signs of Sexual Abuse</b>
<p>“The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It is defined by the World Report on Violence and Health (2000, p.60), as those acts where a caregiver uses a child for sexual gratification. Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material, online exploitation, requesting and sending explicit photos, sexual advances or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed.</li> <li>- Highly anxious.</li> <li>- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder.</li> <li>- Fear of new situations.</li> <li>- Low self-esteem.</li> <li>- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations.</li> <li>- Extremes of passivity or aggression.</li> <li>- Drug or alcohol abuse.</li> <li>- Chronic running away.</li> <li>- Compulsive stealing.</li> <li>- Obsessions or phobias.</li> <li>- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.</li> <li>- Attention-seeking behavior.</li> <li>- Persistent tiredness.</li> <li>- Lying.</li> </ul>



<b>Definition of Neglect</b>	<b>Signs of Neglect</b>
<p>Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed.</li> <li>- Highly anxious.</li> <li>- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder.</li> <li>- Fear of new situations.</li> <li>- Low self-esteem.</li> <li>- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations.</li> <li>- Extremes of passivity or aggression.</li> <li>- Drug or alcohol abuse.</li> <li>- Chronic running away.</li> <li>- Compulsive stealing.</li> <li>- Obsessions or phobias.</li> <li>- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.</li> <li>- Attention-seeking behavior.</li> <li>- Persistent tiredness.</li> <li>- Lying.</li> </ul>

### 8.6.1 Potential Areas where Child Abuse May Occur

Within the SOS-HGIC context there are a variety of areas where child abuse can occur, these include:

- Classrooms
- Laboratories
- Sport facilities
- Teacher hosted events
- Field trips or other school outings
- Unofficial contact outside school hours
- During unscheduled classes or hostel functions
- Restrooms

### 8.6.2 Myths and Facts about Child Abuse

**Myth:** Child abuse is carried out by strangers

**Fact:** Research indicates that 90% of abuse is from domestic causes and is committed by individuals known to the child.

**Myth:** Learning about child protection is harmful to your children

**Fact:** Research indicates that developmentally appropriate education makes children more confident and able to react to dangerous situations. Teaching using a specific population context increases protective behavior.

**Myth:** Abuse education is sex education; thus, the former is not necessary.

**Fact:** Research-based Abuse education programs prepare students to develop the skills and attitudes to keep themselves safe from perpetrators, and behaviors that include bullying, harassment and other forms of exploitation.

**Myth:** Abuse is a matter of culture; physical or sexual abuse falls within the norms of some cultures and is acceptable.

**Fact:** The reality is that there is no excuse for child abuse! No culture supports harming

children.

**Myth:** Child abuse is a result of poverty and happens in low socioeconomic circumstances.

**Fact:** Research indicates that child abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural sectors of society. A common characteristic of an abusive family is isolation, such as that commonly found in our international school families who move often or are separated from their extended families at home.

**Myth:** International Schools do not have to report abuse to local authorities.

**Fact:** International schools are bound by the laws of the host country and as such international schools must be knowledgeable and compliant with the child protection laws in their locality. Furthermore, international schools are legally and ethically liable for any violation of existing laws related to reporting of cases of abuse or neglect; there are cases now pending where schools are facing legal action in regard to non-compliance.

## 8.7 Bullying

SOS-HGIC defines bullying as the repeated and intentional actions or words of an individual or a group of people (with more power: real or perceived), that causes hurt or harm to another person or group of people who feel helpless to respond. Aggressive or unwanted behavior from one person or group towards another person or group that has two consistent elements:

1. An imbalance of power: (real or perceived), age, year in school, physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity. It is important to note that power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
2. Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

This can be narrowed down to some more specific types and also things that fit into our context as a boarding school

### ***Physical bullying***

(Causing harm/hurting a person's body or possessions.)

- Hitting/lashing/kicking/punching
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things
- Sending (repeatedly)
- Washing shirts (repeatedly)
- Ironing shirts (repeatedly)
- Fetching water (repeatedly)

### ***Verbal bullying***

(Saying or writing discriminatory, abusive or mean things)

- Teasing
- Name-calling

- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

### ***Cyber bullying***

Takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers and tablets

- Sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else.
- Sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

### ***Other forms***

- Taking and using MiFi and data
- Taking snacks

### ***Bullying is not:***

(Even though these may cause distress)

- A single episode of social rejection or dislike
- A single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- Mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

Even though these acts are not defined as bullying, they are not behaviors and attitudes that the College encourages. They do not align with our commitment to being mindful of each other.

## **8.8 Prevention**

This section seeks to provide guidance on how the College plans to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and implement child protection as needed. It also aims to communicate student responsibilities and the steps to take if a student is not sure they have been or are being abused.

To prevent child abuse, we need to create and maintain an environment which promotes our school's core values. The College focuses on a wide range of actions that can support this. We are committed to building trustful relations and understanding the importance of listening

carefully to children, taking their views seriously and encouraging them to participate in discussions on child protection issues. The school will take the following steps to safeguard our children: -

1. SOS-HGIC will employ the highest standards of staff selection, recruitment and verification procedures.
2. All SOS-HGIC staff will receive adequate training and sign the code of conduct confirming their understanding of, and commitment to, our safeguarding policy and child protection procedures.
3. We will enable and encourage children to participate in all matters affecting their welfare and to be involved in discussions on their rights including what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior.
4. We support awareness raising and capacity building of parents, and other stakeholders on positive discipline.
5. Use our Personal Social and Education programs to educate students on how best to prevent and respond to issues of child protection, particularly issues raised by students

## **9. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES (PEER ON PEER)**

### **Do's**

1. Be conversant with the Safeguarding Policy
2. Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
3. Maintain appropriate physical and sexual boundaries with other students at all times.
4. Comply with the mandatory reporting regulations of the SOS-HGIC Child Protection procedures under the safeguarding policy when there is evidence of or reasonable cause to suspect any kind of child abuse.
5. Use designated public areas and open spaces which are easily accessed by others for tutoring sessions and other meetings with staff members or fellow students.

### **Don'ts**

1. Refrain from inappropriate physical, emotional and sexual acts.
2. Refrain from inflicting any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading other students
3. Refrain from one-on-one private meetings or discussions with staff members or fellow students in isolated spaces. An exception to this would be meetings where because of the nature of discussions privacy/confidentiality is required. Nonetheless in these private/confidential meetings at any time should you feel uncomfortable politely but firmly request to be recused/excused and leave.

## **10. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students can expect that staff will:

1. Be conversant with the Safeguarding Policy
2. Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration
3. Maintain appropriate boundaries
  - a. Physical: use discretion when touching a child, use discretion when holding. One-on-one meetings must be held in designated public areas and open spaces. An exception to this would be meetings that require confidentiality because of the nature of discussions. Nonetheless in these meetings at any time should you or the student feel uncomfortable either party can request for the meeting to be adjourned.
  - b. Verbal: use discretionary language and avoid profanity when speaking to and about a child
  - c. Sexual: avoid overt or covert sexual behaviors, including seductive speech or gestures.
4. Intervene when there is evidence of or reasonable cause to suspect any kind of child abuse
5. Comply with the mandatory reporting regulations of SOS-HGIC Safeguarding Policy when there is evidence of or reasonable cause to suspect any kind of child abuse.
6. Fully cooperate in any investigation of abuse of children.
7. Refrain from inflicting any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading children.
8. Refrain from smoking or use of tobacco products or possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while working with children.



## 10. REPORTING (CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES)

This section of the policy outlines simple procedures and reporting guidelines for students. The policy seeks to put in place fair, secure and transparent reporting channels in all instances of abuse to encourage reporting. It is important for students to report any instance of abuse because it ensures that the appropriate measures are taken to:

- Keep you safe
- Keep others safe

### 10.1 Channels for reporting

Any instance of abuse, be it student to student or a staff to student, must be reported to a trusted adult in the College, who is then responsible for reporting it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

### 10.2 How to report

There are no restrictions on how instances of abuse are reported, however, there are some suggestions below:

- Verbal reporting - Walk up to a trusted adult and simply indicate that you would like to talk.
- In writing - Send an email or hand in a hand written complaint. *While we understand that students may choose to remain anonymous in some cases, it is essential that students who are abused can be identified to provide adequate support.*

A complaint form must then be filled by the adult reporting the case and submitted to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The complaint form will contain:

1. Student's name, hostel, form group, House and Form tutor
2. Incident(s) which gave rise to concern(s) with date(s) and time(s)

3. Verbatim record of what was said (by student) or verbatim record of what was witnessed
4. Action taken

As much as confidentiality is assured, it is important not to swear anyone to secrecy before reporting an instance of abuse. This is because the trusted adult is expected to pass on the report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Abuse typically happens over time and may be noticeable to other parties other than the abused.

For this reason, instances of abuse may be reported by:

- The abused person
- An observer which could be another student or a staff member
- A trusted adult who has sought the consent of the reporter

It is obligatory for faculty, staff, and administrators to report incidents of physical or psychological violence, aggression, harassment, and physical or sexual abuse immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

- In the case of a weekday or weekend emergency; if a student is physically hurt or in psychological distress the student should be offered immediate assistance with the help of the appropriate staff professional (Senior House Tutor, School Nurse/Doctor or Emotional Counsellor) and a report must be filed with the DSL(s) immediately.
- For a non-emergency situation if the report is made during working hours of a weekday, a report must be filed with the DSL(s) before the close of day.
- For a non-emergency situation if the report is made after working hours of a week day, a report must be filed with the DSL(S) first thing the following day (before noon).

### 10.3. Response

This section of the policy outlines the response procedures the school will follow as part of the Child Protection Procedures once a report has been made. SOS-HGIC assures all students that there will always be a response to each report.

### 10.4. Confidentiality

All information pertaining to Safeguarding and child protection is **CONFIDENTIAL** and will be shared with appropriate stakeholders solely on a “need to know” basis as determined by the Designated Safeguarding Lead

As part of the investigation process all students involved in any reported cases will be informed beforehand of who the details of a case will be disclosed to and updated if this list changes during the course of the investigation.

### 10.5. Procedures

Once an instance of abuse has been reported, this is the procedure that will be followed and counseling support will be provided throughout the process:

The DSL(S) will be responsible for all investigation procedures.

1. Determine if medical or psychological attention is needed.
2. Acknowledge receipt of report to the person reporting the incident
3. Due to confidentiality requirements, the person reporting the incident shall not disclose to parent/guardian, any other stakeholder or the general public that safeguarding investigations have been initiated.
4. DSL(s) initiates investigation to determine reasonable cause for further investigation.
5. DSL(s) puts together an investigative team that carries out an in-depth investigation.  
(The team will decide when parents and guardians should be informed)

6. Principal and other relevant stakeholders informed of the outcome.
7. The DSL(s) and Principal will invite all other relevant stakeholders as appropriate for a meeting.
8. Debrief will be determined by the complexity of the case.

## 10.6. Timelines

Once a case is reported, an acknowledgement of receipt of the report will be sent within **48 hours**. Once a reasonable cause is established, a full investigation will be carried out and completed within **1 to 3 weeks** (depending on the severity and complexity of each individual case).

Procedure	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
Determine if medical attention is needed.	DSL(s) and CPO	Immediately
Acknowledge receipt of report to the person reporting the incident	DSL(s)	Within 48 hours
Initiate investigation to determine reasonable cause for further investigation.	DSL(s)	Within 48 hours
DSL(s) put(s) together an investigative team that carries out an in-depth investigation.	DSL(s)	Within 72 hours

## **11.0 GUIDELINES FOR STAFF**

*For the purposes of this document, school staff refers to administrators, teachers, house tutors, supporting house tutors, laboratory technicians, administrative staff, kitchen staff, cleaners, grounds men, Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) resource persons, security officers, interns and all other staff contracted by the college on a short-term basis.*

### **11.1. Professional Expectations and Individual Responsibility**

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues and be conversant with safeguarding policy. All adults working in, or on behalf of the school have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes:

- Responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
- Identifying children who may be in need of extra help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm.

All members of staff will have regular contact with children and therefore are highly likely to notice a change in behavior suggesting a child is unhappy or troubled. They could be the person that the child chooses to confide in, and it may be the only chance a child gets to tell someone what is happening or has happened to them. All staff then have a responsibility to take appropriate action, working with the DSL(s).

It is, therefore, essential that the College has clear and accessible guidance and policies so that a member of staff who has concerns or has been spoken to knows what to do and who to speak to. All staff who work with children need to have basic safeguarding training that equips them to recognize and respond to child welfare concerns. This training will be refreshed on a regular basis. Given the implications of possible safeguarding concerns, staff who wish to bring their children to the college for any reason should first seek permission from the SLT.

## 11.2 Confidentiality

Staff may have access to confidential information about students from their day-to-day interaction. In some circumstances, they may have access to, or be given, highly sensitive or private information about a student. These details must be kept confidential at all times and only shared when it is in the interest of the student to do so. Such information must not be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the student concerned. Such information should also not be discussed out in the open.

If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from the DSL(s) or CPO. Any actions should be in line with agreed information sharing protocols. While staff need to be aware of the need to listen to and support students, they must also understand the importance of not promising to provide confidentiality with a child since the situation might call for reporting to a higher authority.

### 11.2.1 Communication with students

All communication with students should be done using official school approved mediums. Staff are to follow guidelines laid out in the school's ICT policy.

### 11.2.2 Guidelines on how a member of staff should respond if a student shares information relating to abuse:

#### **DO**

- Treat any allegation extremely seriously and act at all times towards the student as if you believe what they are saying
- Tell the student they are right to tell you
- Write down everything said
- Reassure them that they are not to blame
- Be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why
- Take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse – tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

## **DON'T**

- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Don't interrogate the student – it is not your job to carry out an investigation – this will be up to the DSL(s).
- Don't cast doubt on what the student has told you and don't interrupt or change the subject
- Don't say anything that could make the student feel responsible for the abuse
- Don't do nothing – make sure you tell the DSL(s) – they will know how to follow this up and the appropriate action to take.

## **Note**

If at any point it becomes clear that the student has been harmed or is at imminent risk of harm then the following procedure should be followed: ***REPORT TO THE DSL(s) OR CPO IMMEDIATELY***

## **11.3 Keeping Yourself Safe**

Safeguarding and child protection is an issue that also involves staff protection. There are certain things which you must do to protect yourself and in so doing you are also protecting children.

- If you are meeting students, particularly for an individual student, arrange for it to be in a public place, or where other staff are around. Leave doors open so that you can be seen and let another member of staff know where you are.
- Do not arrange to meet parents personally. Always use the school conference room and let someone know where you are.
- Ensure the Travel Policy is adhered to.
- Get approval from the Senior House Tutor or Vice Principal before offering students a ride out of school. Ensure seat belts are always worn.
- If you have concerns that a student is taking an unhealthy interest in you, tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as you can so that it can be dealt with.

- When disciplining students do not cut off escape routes for them, for example, by standing in doorways to block their exit. If they choose to run away then let them go – you can pick this up later.
- You must not touch children inappropriately. Members of staff have the right to physically restrain a student only if their behavior is likely to pose a threat to other students, other staff or themselves. This right requires the use of appropriate force only.
- Do not post information and photographs about yourself, or school-related matters, publicly that you wouldn't want employers, colleagues, students or parents to see;
- Use discretion in how you engage with students or other members of the school community on social networking sites (you should consider carefully the implications of befriending ex-students).
- Use discretion in the use of your own mobile phones to contact students or parents;
- Do not ever give out information concerning a child to an outside agency or person without consulting a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Report any incident to the Designated Safeguarding Lead should you be the subject of bullying/cyber-bullying yourself.
- If a child makes an allegation against you, inform the Principal immediately.
- If you have any questions about any issue involving a child, always seek clarification from the DSL(s) or CPO.

#### **11.4 How the school will respond if a child makes an allegation against a member of staff**

At any time, a student may speak to a member of staff and make an allegation about another member of staff's conduct towards them. In such situations appropriate action is taken to ensure that the school carries out its statutory duties relating to the handling of allegations against staff. Following an appropriate procedure ensures that students and staff are treated fairly and consistently, with appropriate support in place until the matter is resolved and that:

- Priority is given to student safety and staff well-being.
- The matter is resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- Confidentiality is ensured; information is shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- Malicious allegations are exposed and dealt with.



All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves either via peer-on-peer abuse or teacher-student abuse. Both forms of abuse are most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyber bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults and sexting.

On hearing an allegation, the member of staff **must**, immediately:

- Take details of the allegation, including: who was involved; where the incident took place; what happened; the names of any witnesses; who else has been informed (parents)
- Report the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and fill out a complaint form
- Reassure the student that the matter will be looked into, that someone will want to talk to them again about what they have said has happened;
- Maintain strict confidentiality.

The member of staff **must not**:

- Inform the colleague or student against whom the allegation has been made.
- Pre-judge what may or may not have happened, whether it is true or otherwise.
- Share any details with anyone other than the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Contact parents.

**On receiving details of an allegation, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will appoint an Investigative Team who will be responsible for:**

- Considering whether the case as currently presented and if proven, meets the criteria for abusive behavior.
- Determining and addressing any risk factors for both the student and member of staff whilst the investigation is ongoing;
- Making a recommendation on disciplinary measures;
- Ensuring the member of staff is informed at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensuring support for the member of staff is provided (a member of department or staff welfare representative);
- Liaising with all relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

- Following the school's disciplinary procedure in the event that abusive behavior has been identified.

## **12. FINAL APPEAL ON SAFEGUARDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL STAFF**

Children can be subjected to neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation anywhere. There is some abuse that may happen inside the school premises, while a lot of it is what children suffer at home and in non-school environments. A child in your class may be a victim of violence/abuse/exploitation that happens outside the school. You cannot ignore it. Rather you must help the child. This is possible only if you are able to identify that there is a problem and you spend time to understand it and explore possible solutions. Always remember that your duty to protect children does not come to an end once you are out of the school premises. Once you are aware of an instance of abuse, kindly follow the college's outlined procedures for handling child abuse cases. The life of a child who is in or out of the school system can be changed with your positive intervention.

## Sources:

<https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Child-Protection-Policy.pdf>

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<http://www.childmatters.org.nz/254/child-protection-policy/section-2-child-protection-policy/child-protection-procedures/procedures-for-responding-and-reporting-child-abuse#Processes>

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<http://det.wa.edu.au/childprotection/detcms/navigation/reporting-child-abuse/>

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