



Satyam Shivam Sundaram

Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

Child Protection Policy

Philosophy:

Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata was founded in 1952 by Rukmani Devi Birla is an all-girls' institution. MHS is free of any bias and embraces all students on equal terms irrespective of religion, community or socioeconomic background. It offers a liberal education which is intended to motivate students to discover and build on their own individual strengths and contribute to society in turn.

The school has an established reputation for academic excellence and for providing its students a wide array of co-curricular activities. Its curriculum is dynamic, with sports and games, communicative skills, health and value education, environmental studies, community service, art, aesthetics and life skills woven seamlessly into the school programme.

The school takes a no compromise approach on the matter of health and safety of its students and its staff. With this in view the school has initiated and put into place steps to ensure the safety and security of all.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the school's anti bullying policy and its health and safety policy. All three policies work together to protect the student on the school premises and to support a student when there is a need for it. Protection is ensured by having protocols in place for the physical safety of the student, the anti-bullying policy which addresses any and all attempts to endanger the sense of safety and security of the student. Finally the child protection policy takes this a step further to protect the students.

Policy towards students:

Duty of care: The school acknowledges its duty of care towards all who are in the school. For the student, the school aims to clarify the following

- Anyone **below the age of 18** is legally a “CHILD”.
- **All children** are protected by law.
- There are at least three major legal documents (apart from The Constitution of India, reference, Article 17, 19, 21, 21A & Fundamental Principles), which deal with the rights of a child and child protection.

Legislation that protects the child: There are three documents: (For details see Appendix)

- **UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (1989)** – which has laid down some basic principles which keep in mind **the best interest of the child**.
- **RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT (2009)**
- **PROTECTION OF THE CHILD FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT (2012)**

This Act is designed to enforce child safety and protection.

Offences under this act are non-bailable, non-compoundable (cannot be settled) and an arrest under this act can be made without a warrant.

Under POCSO, three types of offences are recognised:

1. **Touch-based**
2. **Non-touch based**
3. **Others***

****Please note however:***

- **Abetment** of an offence is also an offence.
- **Failure to report** is also an offence.
- **False complaint** is also an offence.
- **Disclosing the identity** of the victim/child, is also an offence.
- **Statistics show that the accused in 94% of the cases are members of family or neighbourhood.**

Being Proactive: The school will also take the initiative in creating awareness about legislation that protects the child. The school will provide opportunities for dissemination of information creating awareness of the dangers that students face and equip them with strategies to deal with the situation should they experience such a situation.

Role of the students:

A student, if uncomfortable/ unsafe/ vulnerable in the presence of any adult, must REPORT this immediately to a trusted adult like parent/ guardian/ teacher.

If a student has the slightest feeling that a friend/ classmate is in danger/distressed/ compromised, the friend must be persuaded and encouraged to REPORT to a trusted adult/teacher. If the friend does not seek help, then the student has an equal responsibility to share her concerns with a TRUSTED ADULT /teacher immediately.

The student who is able to find out what is affecting another student is encouraged to not disclose this information to anyone other than a teacher or counsellor at school. The student has a responsibility to avoid spreading rumours and to not discuss this information with friends .

Warning signs for teachers to watch out for: If any or a number of these signs are observed in a student, then the teacher has a duty of care, to take action.

Procedure to be followed:

Child Protection Committee is alerted immediately.

Step 1: Call in the child and attempt to initiate a conversation

Step 2: Alert the Department Coordinator (Middle, Secondary, Senior, IGCSE and IBDP)

Step 3: The relevant Department Coordinator may or may not meet with the student but will inform the Principal

Step 4: The Principal with one or more PPC member will meet with the student and the counsellor. If need be the teacher, Department Coordinator as needed will be included.

Step 5: The Principal, after a follow up discussion with teacher, counsellor and Department Coordinator will

A: Notify parents and meet them

B: Advise Counselling for the student

C: Take any further appropriate action as needed - this could include investigation of a staff member

When a student brings such a matter to the **attention of any teacher**, that teacher must immediately report the matter to the Department coordinator, who will then report it to the Principal.

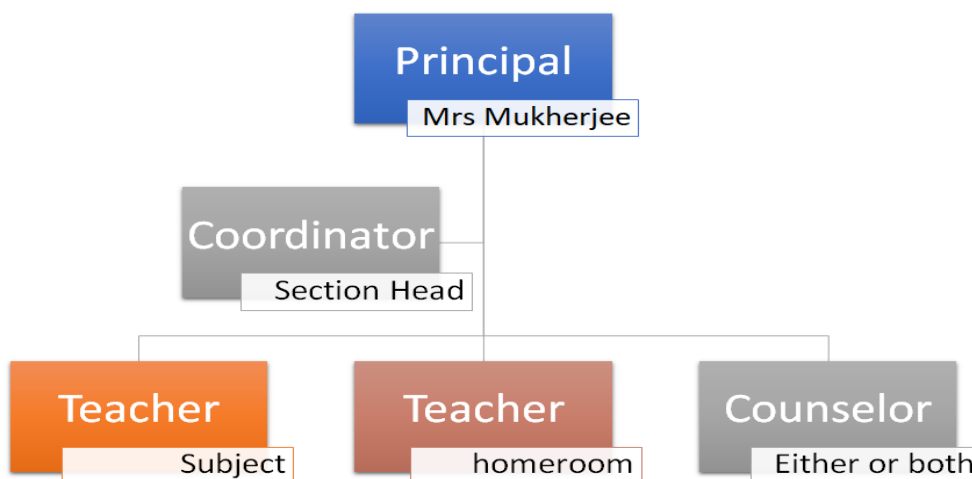


Chart - Reporting protocol - when the student confides in a teacher or counselor

The role of the teachers at the school

The school recognizes its duty of care towards all who are in the school. It acknowledges its responsibility towards the students when in school, and upholds their right to be protected from abuse - physical, emotional or sexual within and outside the school premises. It is the policy of the school to make both its teachers and staff aware of their rights, their duty in safeguarding the rights of the children in their care.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to reassure a student that they will not be judged, scolded, criticized. The student must be reassured that she will not be in trouble.

Teachers are NOT expected to diagnose issues or provide solutions. Their primary role is to identify symptoms and direct the concerned cases to the counselors/ appropriate authority.

FOR TEACHERS:

SIGNS TO WATCH OUT FOR

If a teacher notices a child with any of these indicators, it may be necessary for her to ask some gentle questions or direct the friends of the student to explain this change in the student. All teacher, subject and homeroom teachers should be concerned if the following signs are observed:

General signs

1. Lack of personal hygiene - soiled unwashed clothes, unkempt hair, body odour
2. Evidence of Injury
3. Inappropriate clothing
4. Significant inconsistencies in academic performance
5. Unprovoked/ unnecessary aggression
6. Sadness
7. Social isolation :
 - i) No eye contact
 - ii) Non-inclusion by peers
 - iii) Being ok with being ignored by peers
8. Defiance, Non- compliance
9. Inappropriate emotional reactions
10. Extreme anxiety
11. Sudden withdrawal from interest areas- co-curriculars, hobbies, participation in fests

Academic performance

1. Discrepancy in oral and written work
2. Disorganised thoughts (irrelevant, incoherent, disconnected)
3. Consistent & significant poor performance in selected areas/ subjects

4. Extreme absenteeism

Procedure for preliminary chat

A general chat/conversation with the student held in a classroom could follow and perhaps lead to disclosure. It is important for the teacher to:

1. Listen with genuine attention
2. Try to decode behaviour by understanding the logic/emotion behind it
3. Understand the situation without forming assumptions
4. Respond without reaction
5. Create an environment of trust and respect
6. Alert parents; refer for professional help BUT before that, the matter needs to be reported to school authorities following the protocols set up.

GUIDELINES TO HANDLE DISCLOSURE:

- **The best interest of the child is to be ensured at all times**
- **Believe** the child in the first instant **and give her the assurance that you understand how difficult it was for her to share this piece of information.**

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN THERE IS AN INSTANCE OF CHILD ABUSE

- **Reassure** the child that she has done the RIGHT thing to tell you.
- **Do not make promises** that cannot be kept (for example: “ I will not tell anyone”)
- The **tone** of the conversation must be kept in mind. The teacher should be **sensitive and listen** to the children first and not begin to question and investigate.
- Keep the information **confidential**. The Principal must be kept informed at all times
- **Ensure** that the child is getting **medical help and professional therapeutic intervention, if needed.**

The role of the school: The school will seek to protect its students. It will deal with instances when it is reported by a student or for a student. However, the role of the school goes beyond addressing a matter. To protect all those in the school, including the children in its care, the school will take the following proactive measures.

- Screening and training of all persons having access to children.
- Implementation and enforcement of CHILD PROTECTION POLICY for reporting child sexual abuse and handling disclosure from children.
- Development of child safety programmes involving parents and non-teaching staff also; personal safety curriculum and life skill training.
- Relationship and sex education for students- there is a life skills/value education programme in place

- Awareness sessions- in school by staff, outside qualified personnel and even a cyber-security expert - to alert children to possible problems, how to avoid them and avenues for help should they need it.
- Yearly reconstitution of Child Protection Committee.
- Beginning AY 2020-2021 there will be a screening document for teachers. If any of the tell-tale signs are observed, this is to be reported to the Principal (developed by Reenadi)
- Campus security system.
- Maintenance of emergency contact register
- Mandatory sharing of school contact details and details of relevant local agencies with family members.
- Maintaining notes of every discussion and decision.
- Mandatory supervision for classes/ activities beyond school hours.
- School suggestion box.
- In case of reporting of alleged sexual abuse in schools- Safeguarding of evidence/ensuring privacy of child/ Ensuring privacy of accused. Mandatory reporting by school.

THE HOME AND PARENTS:

According to legal terms the correct terminology is parents/guardians and caregivers.

The school and the family are stakeholders in the care and the emotional and physical wellbeing of the child. While the school will address concerns of its students, the school advises parents/guardians/caregivers the following

1. No domestic violence in front of the child:
 - i) Physical/verbal assault between parents/ other family members
 - ii) Child is not to be subject to physical abuse
2. Parents to refrain from comparison with other children/ siblings
3. Parents should have an empathetic ear/ hugs/ show of affection for the child & in front of the child
4. Provide for the child healthy food at home & at school. Ensure that your child eats proper meals and at the right time. Skipping meals should not be condoned.
5. Spend time, rather than money, with your child
6. Take heed when you hear about avoidance of certain classes – observe, enquire & then inform the school
7. Treat children equally irrespective of gender
8. Allow children to follow their passion

9. Help the child to deal with frustration / failure.
 10. Parents should be able to say “NO” to child but should do so with logic & care
 11. Use age-appropriate language to communicate with the child
 12. Parents are encouraged to seek professional help to learn such communication techniques
 13. Parents need to be sensitive to the fact that marks/ academic performance is NOT the only measure of a child’s ability.
 14. Regulate screen time and use of electronic gadgets
 15. Immediately alert the school if there is a need for the school to know about a changed domestic situation or a in the behaviour of the child.
-

APPENDIX 1

Legislations that protect the student

- **UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (1989)** – which has laid down some basic principles (54 articles), all of which keep in mind **the best interest of the child**. It includes the following

Right to Life - Every child under the Right to Life and Survival is entitled to the right to have a **home**, a safe and **loving family**, a **healthy environment** and **positive upbringing**. They should also be given **clean clothes** to wear, nutritious and **healthy food** to eat, scheduled **doctor visits** in times of sickness and ensure that **medical facilities** like vaccinations are made available to the children.

Right to Development - All children have the right to have an **education**, to have access to the **correct kind of entertainment**, a **positive environment** for them to blossom in and a right to protect their **privacy**, the right to have **knowledge** of a variety of things and the right to **choose and follow any religion**.

Right to Security - This right protects the child from all forms of assault and abuse, verbal or physical. It protects the child from **personal attacks** like getting **beaten up**, being given **harsh punishments** and **sexual assaults**. It protects the child from **verbal attacks** of **abusive language and bullying**. It also protects the child from **social attacks** like that of **child marriage, early marriage, child trafficking and child labour**.

Right to Participation - This right protects the children’s need to feel like they belong; like they are part of the community, where they are **not being judged, segregated or excluded for being “different”**. The right offers **equal rights to all**

segments of the society, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, gender and economic status. The equal rights cover **equal opportunities, equal participation** in every programme and gives children the freedom to openly **express their views, often by forming a student council/child cabinet**.

The UNCRC also protects the needs of special children and since India is a signatory, cases for **special children** can be evoked here.

- **RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT (2009)**

This is a law enacted by the Government of India which states that all children between 6 to 14 years of age will receive **FREE, COMPULSORY, and QUALITY EDUCATION** in a child-friendly environment.

25% of seats in ALL schools will be reserved for disadvantaged children (SCST/BPL).

Children will be **treated equally** irrespective of their special needs, gender or family background.

Commissions are setup which look into whether the RTE is being fulfilled or not (the WBCPCR is located in Ultadanga and can be contacted at **033 23560385**)

- **PROTECTION OF THE CHILD FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT (2012)**

This Act is a great enforcer of child safety and protection since offences under this act are non bailable, non-compoundable (cannot be settled) and an arrest under this act can be made without a warrant.

Under POSCO, three types of offences are recognised:

1. Touch-based

2. Non-touch based

3. Others*

**Please note:*

Abetment of an offence is also an offence.

Failure to report is also an offence.

False complaint is also an offence.

Disclosing the identity of the victim/child, is also an offence.

Statistics show that the accused in 94% of the cases are members of family or neighbourhood.

Sources

- Document prepared by Ms Sujana Mukherjee and Ms Amie Bhattacharya following workshop by WBCPCR
- Power point by Ms Janhabi Banerjee following workshop by WBCPCR
- Discussions with IGCSE faculty
- Session held in MHS for staff by Ms. Ananya Chakraborty, Chairperson WBCPCR