



Satyam Shivam Sundaram

Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata

Child Protection Policy 2024

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: The three documents are: (For details see Appendix 1)

- **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:***

- **Abetment** of an offence is also an offence.
- **Failure to report** is an offence.
- **False complaint** is an offence.
- **Disclosing the identity** of the victim/child, is an offence.

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

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 keep this information confidential.

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.

Training and Awareness

In order to detect and report effectively - Planned training and awareness programmes must be conducted for teachers and students about the existing child protection policy, the POCSO Act, what constitutes 'abuse' and 'protection' and the roles and responsibilities of others to the child experiencing abuse of any kind. These especially planned and age appropriate programmes must include students in the primary and junior school.

In general, the following points must be noted by all concerned:

1. Children have to be given assurance and taught that they have to report in case of any abuse that has occurred.
2. Child abuse, if prevalent at home, has to be addressed.
3. There should be designated officers in the **Child Protection Committee (CPC)**.
4. Reporting has to be done by filling up a standard reference form.
5. Once abuse is reported, the type of abuse has to be identified and the course of action has to be planned.
6. The officers have to investigate from multiple and authentic sources to rule out false allegations.
7. Legal advisors have to be consulted if it is a case of criminal offense.
8. Monthly checklists have to be filled up.
9. Regular meetings have to take place among the members of the CPP.

Specific Procedures and steps to be followed if abuse is reported:

1. The Child Protection Committee (CPC) is informed immediately. A standard reference form is duly completed.
2. The child is called for a meeting and attempts are made to initiate a conversation.
3. The Department Coordinator (Primary and Junior/ Middle/ Secondary/ Senior) will be alerted.
4. The relevant Department Coordinator may or may not meet with the student but will inform the Principal or in her absence, another CPC member.
5. The Principal and/or one or more CPC members meet the student and the school counsellor. The teacher and the Department Coordinator will be included, as required.

6. The Principal and/or CPC members after a follow up discussion with teacher, counsellor and Department Coordinator will:

A: Notify parents and meet them

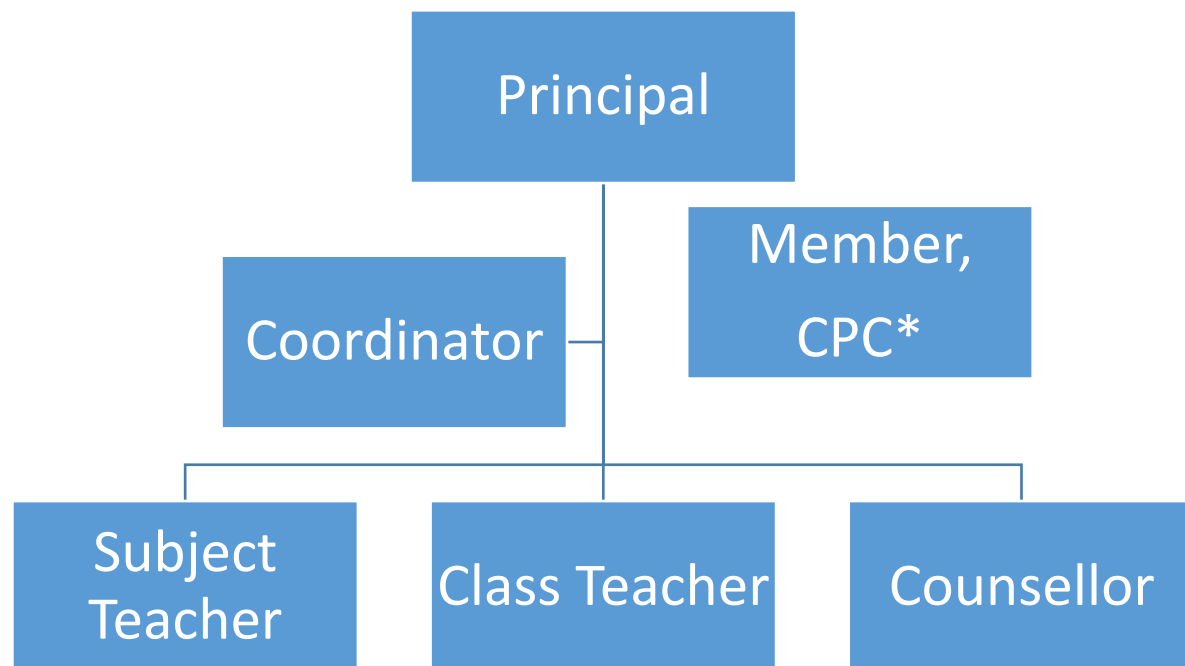
B: Advise Counselling and Support for the student

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

D. A formal written report by the CPC has to be generated about measures that were taken to address the situation.

If 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.

REPORTING PROTOCOL



***In the event the Principal is not available**

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 teachers - class and subject teachers - should be concerned if the following signs are observed:

General signs – Consistent observations of:

1. Lack of personal hygiene - soiled and/or unwashed clothes, unkempt hair, body odour, lice
2. Evidence of Injury
3. Inappropriate clothing
4. Significant inconsistencies in academic performance and signs of consistent lack of supervision
5. Unprovoked/ unnecessary aggression
6. Sadness
7. 'Zoning' out/excessive daydreaming/falling asleep
8. Signs of neglect insufficient quantities or unhealthy quality of food the child brings for short break/lunch time; no money given for buying food from the canteen.
8. Social isolation:
 - i) Avoiding eye contact
 - ii) Non-inclusion by peers
 - iii) Passive about being ignored by peers
9. Defiance, Non- compliance
10. Inappropriate emotional reactions

11. Extreme anxiety
12. Sudden withdrawal from interest areas- co-curricular activities, hobbies, participation in fests
13. High and frequent absenteeism

Academic performance (unless associated with diagnosed ADHD or Specific Learning Disabilities)

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

Procedure for preliminary conversation

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 analyse the behaviour by understanding the logic/emotion behind it
3. Understand the situation without forming assumptions
4. Respond without emotion or judgment but reassure the child that she is safe in your presence
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 as detailed earlier.

SOME 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 ALL students- there is a life skills/value education programme in place but teachers have to be trained in imparting sex education with factual clarity, a non-judgmental attitude and without embarrassment
- Awareness sessions- in school by staff, outside qualified personnel and even a cybersecurity expert - to alert children to possible problems, how to avoid them and avenues for help should they need it.
- The anti-bullying policy must be accessible and discussed in classrooms
- Yearly reconstitution of Child Protection Committee.
- If any of the tell-tale signs are observed, this is to be reported to the Principal
 - 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/GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS – Section has been edited.

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 well-being 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 subjected to physical abuse
- 2. Parents should refrain from comparison with other children/ siblings.
- 3. Parents should have an empathetic ear/ and show visible affection for the child.
- 4. Provide the child with 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.
- 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 the child but should do so with care, explaining the logic behind the decision.
- 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 are 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 in the behaviour of the child.
- 16. If a family member is concerned about an abusive situation of any kind in the home, this must be reported to the school.

APPENDIX 1

- **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 West Bengal Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) is located in ICMARD Building, 9th Floor, Block 14/2, CIT Scheme, Kolkata -700067 (Ultadanga) and can be contacted at **033 23560385**)

- **PROTECTION OF THE CHILD FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT (2012)** (details have been included on Pg 2)

REPORTING FORMAT

1. The incident(s) was reported by:
Child
Staff
Peers
Other
Date of reporting:
2. Details about the Child:
Name:
DOB:
Class:
3. Details of incident with relevant dates and times:
4. Name of the alleged person reported by the Child and relationship:
5. Details of allegation as reported by Child:
6. Observation of the Person to whom the Child has reported the incident (s):
7. Information to Parent/Guardian:
8. Action Taken to Investigate:
9. Conclusion after Investigation:
10. Steps taken to resolve/redress the situation
11. Signatures of CPC Committee

Sources:

- Document prepared by Ms Sujana Mukherjee and Ms Amie Bhattacharya following workshop by WBCPCR
- Power point by Ms Janhaba Banerjee following workshop by WBCPCR
- Discussions with IGCSE faculty
- Session held in MHS for staff by Ms. Ananya Chakraborty, Chairperson WBCPCR
- CP workshops organized by Teachers Centre Kolkata attended by Dr Reena Sen and Ms Mrinalini Mukherjee.
- Child Protection Policy, Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP)

12 February, 2024

Child Protection Committee
Modern High School for Girls

The following are members of the Child Protection Committee till 31st March 2025

1. Mrs. Damayanti Mukherjee, Principal *D. Mukherjee*
2. Mrs. Aban C. Confectioner, Head - Primary & Junior Department *Aban C. Confectioner*
3. Dr. Reena Sen, Head, SEN and Counselling *Reena Sen*
4. Mr. Gopal Prasad Khandelwal, Head - Finance & Accounts *Gopal Prasad Khandelwal*
5. Ms. Sanchayita Routh, Senior Teacher *S. Routh*
6. Ms. Vinita Saraf, Guardian Representative & NGO Representative (Ektara) *Vinita Saraf*

D. Kar
Devi Kar
Director

Please put your signature against your name to indicate your acceptance.