GPS - International
a division of Global Education Trust
An ISO 9001:2015 certified school

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

GPS-International is committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and protection of all students. This policy outlines clear guidelines for safeguarding children and responding to concerns related to child protection, abuse, and neglect, in accordance with the *Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012*, the *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*, and all applicable child welfare regulations.

The purpose of this policy is to create a safe, secure, and nurturing environment by preventing and addressing any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. It ensures that all students feel protected, valued, and empowered to express themselves without fear. Additionally, it equips staff, students, and parents with the knowledge and procedures necessary to identify and respond effectively to safeguarding concerns.

This policy applies to all students, staff, administrators, volunteers, visitors, and external contractors, covering interactions within the school premises, during school-related activities, and in online spaces.

1. Principles

- The safety, well-being, and dignity of children are the highest priorities.
- Every child has the right to be protected from harm, neglect, and abuse in all its forms.
- Safeguarding is a collective responsibility that requires active participation from staff, students, parents, and the wider school community.
- Confidentiality must be upheld while handling safeguarding concerns, ensuring that information is shared only when necessary.
- All concerns and allegations will be taken seriously and addressed with urgency, sensitivity, and fairness.
- A child-centered approach will be maintained, ensuring that students' voices are heard and their best interests prioritized.
- Preventive measures, including training, awareness programs, and a culture of vigilance, will be integral to safeguarding efforts.

2. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will oversee all safeguarding matters and serve as the primary point of contact for reporting and addressing concerns. Their responsibilities include:

- Receiving and documenting safeguarding concerns raised by staff, students, or parents.
- Conducting initial assessments of concerns and determining the necessary course of action.
- Liaising with Child Welfare Committees (CWC), District Child Protection Units (DCPU), Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU), and other relevant law enforcement agencies to ensure proper handling of reported cases.

- Providing guidance and support to staff regarding child protection matters.
- Ensuring all staff members undergo appropriate safeguarding training.
- Keeping confidential, well-documented records of all safeguarding reports and interventions.
- Conducting risk assessments to identify potential safeguarding concerns and implementing measures to mitigate risks.
- Ensuring students are educated on their rights and empowered to report concerns without fear.

3. Recognizing and Reporting Concerns

All staff members, regardless of their role, have a duty to report any concern regarding a child's safety or well-being. Signs of abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to:

- Unexplained injuries, bruising, or burns.
- Sudden changes in behavior, withdrawal, depression, or anxiety.
- Signs of malnutrition, poor hygiene, or consistent lack of basic needs.
- Fear of going home or reluctance to discuss home life.
- Overly compliant, fearful, or excessively aggressive behavior.
- Inappropriate knowledge of or engagement in sexual behavior.
- Any direct disclosure of abuse by the child or a peer.

4. Reporting Procedure:

1. Any concern must be reported immediately to the DSL.
2. The DSL will conduct an initial review to assess the severity and credibility of the concern.
3. If necessary, the DSL will escalate the matter to Child Welfare Committees (CWC), District Child Protection Units (DCPU), Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU), or other relevant child protection agencies.
4. The institution will fully cooperate with external agencies during investigations and provide necessary support to the affected child.
5. If the concern involves a staff member, appropriate disciplinary action, in line with child protection laws, will be taken.

5. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- All safeguarding concerns must be meticulously documented and stored securely.
- Information will be shared only with relevant personnel or external agencies when absolutely necessary.
- The identity of the child and the person reporting the concern will be protected as much as possible, unless disclosure is required by law.
- Records will be maintained in compliance with applicable data protection laws.

6. Staff Responsibilities and Training

- All staff members, including teachers, administrative staff, and support staff, must complete mandatory safeguarding and child protection training.
- Staff must remain vigilant and proactive in identifying and addressing safeguarding concerns.
- Educators must create a trusting, open, and safe environment where students feel comfortable discussing any concerns.
- The school will ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are clearly outlined and reinforced through ongoing professional development programs.

7. Safeguarding in the Online Environment

With the increasing use of digital platforms, online safety is a crucial component of safeguarding efforts. The school will implement the following measures:

- Age-appropriate internet filters and monitoring systems to prevent access to harmful content.
- Strict guidelines on responsible digital behavior, cyberbullying prevention, and online privacy.
- Cyber safety education as part of the curriculum to teach students about online risks, digital footprints, and responsible internet use.
- Policies restricting mobile phone use on campus and outlining appropriate social media conduct related to the school.
- Reporting mechanisms for cyber-related abuse, including bullying, online exploitation, and inappropriate content sharing.

8. Partnership with Parents and Guardians

- The school will actively engage parents and guardians in discussions about child safety and well-being.
- Parents will be informed of concerns regarding their child unless doing so would put the child at greater risk.
- Workshops, training sessions, and resources will be provided to parents to equip them with child protection knowledge and skills.
- A collaborative approach will be encouraged to ensure that safeguarding efforts extend beyond the school environment.

9. Policy Review and Amendments

- This policy will be reviewed as necessary to remain aligned with updated child protection laws, best practices, and institutional needs. It is informed by national child protection laws and aligns with international safeguarding best practices, including principles outlined by Cambridge Assessment International Education and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

- Amendments will be made based on feedback from staff, students, parents, and safeguarding agencies.
- Any changes will be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Implementation & Compliance

- The school administration, in collaboration with the DSL, will oversee policy implementation.
- All staff members are expected to comply with safeguarding principles and proactively engage in creating a safe school environment.
- Regular evaluations will be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding measures.

GPS-International is deeply committed to creating a culture of safety, respect, and protection for all students. By implementing this comprehensive safeguarding policy, we aim to ensure that every child feels secure, valued, and empowered. Together, we can build an environment where learning and growth occur without fear, and where children thrive in safety and confidence.