



**CHATSWORTH  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

# **Child Protection Policy Handbook**

**For All Members of the School Community**

## Acknowledgements

Chatsworth International School has created this policy handbook with the assistance of materials from other international school policies around the world (in particular the Association of International Schools in Africa), information from the Council of International Schools (CIS), Amnesty International, and the Committee for Children. We give thanks to the hard work of colleagues around the globe so that we can put in place a strong policy for the protection of Chatsworth students.

# Child Protection Policy

All International Schools face a growing concern of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect are a violation of a child's human rights and are an obstacle to their growth and development.

Schools hold a particular role in the community to ensure that all children are provided a safe and secure environment in which to learn, grow and develop. International schools, in particular, hold a critical role as families and children sometimes lack the local resources that they might have access to in their home countries, thus placing increased need for support on the school community. Schools and educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over an extended period of time, are in a unique position to observe, identify and assist children who need help and protection. As such, international schools and educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who may be in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the child and family have access to the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes abuse or neglect. In addition to protecting children from abuse and neglect, schools must also protect them from suspected or identified abusers and sex offenders.

All staff employed at Chatsworth International School, regardless of their designation, have a professional and moral obligation to report suspected occurrences of child abuse or neglect. Staff members must also report, under any circumstances, suspected or identified child abusers and sex offenders. Reporting and follow through of all suspected incidences shall proceed in accordance with administrative procedures related to this policy. In addition, the Head of School, after consulting with the Board of Management, may report cases of suspected child abuse/abusers and neglect to the appropriate employers of those involved, embassies, appropriate child protection agencies or authorities in the home country of the child/family, and/or locally in Singapore.

Chatsworth International School is committed to ensuring child protection is part of every aspect of the school. As such, Chatsworth commits to distribute this policy annually to all parents and guardians, to communicate this policy annually to all students, to provide annual training for all staff and support staff (ie ECA providers, canteen operator) and to make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. In the event a staff member or member of the school community is reported as an alleged offender, Chatsworth will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed policy and due process, which may include both local and international authorities and experts. Chatsworth's Child Protection Policy will internally be reviewed annually, as well as being reviewed by our accrediting bodies.

Chatsworth subscribes to the child protection training and course work through TES EduCare and Childsafeguarding.com, and follows a K-13 child protection and safeguarding curriculum through Keeping Safe Australia (international edition).

At Chatsworth International School, the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Lead is the Dean Of Students, Mr. Rob Newberry** (rnewberry@chatsworth.com.sg)

In order for us to better understand the students and families we work with, the below characteristics/attributes of international school communities should be taken into account within a Child Protection Programme. Not all are related to our Singapore context.

### 1. Characteristics/attributes of international school children

- transience and mobility impacts development of identity and relationships (especially for support in times of need);
- early maturity/sophistication vs naivety and immaturity in other areas;
- separation from extended families; working and travelling parents, and separation from long term friendships/relationships can result in attachment issues and thus support during times of crisis or need may be minimal or non-existent;
- lost between multiple and sometimes conflicting cultures and value systems resulting in confusion of behavioural expectations;
- high expectations placed on students to achieve academically;
- access to maids and other daily helpers (drivers); and
- access to expensive international schools because of inability to attend local schools while they (and their peers/parents) in their home country/home-of-record, previously attended public schools

### 2. Characteristics of international school families

- isolation from extended family, previous community for support;
- power differential in marriage (who has the work permit) creates vulnerability;
- impact of absentee parents;
- 'love-hate' relationships with host country for expats;
- lack of control over critical life decisions: company decides where, when and how the family moves. Lack of stability;
- superficial/tourist relationship with host country; and
- use of maids/helpers in parenting and supervision of children

### 3. Characteristics of international school communities

- school takes on sole role as center of family life - 'the goldfish bowl' - and often provides superficial relationships that cannot meet mental health needs;
- power influence: family's 'position' in community can be an inhibitor for the school to act;
- sense of being 'lost' in diversity of community can cause further isolation

### 4. Cultural dynamics of international school communities

- multiple norms rooted in different cultural traditions can cause confusion: religious values, values of parenting, discipline, care-giving, sexuality, gender roles and responsibilities;
- impact of rapidly changing 'pop culture' from developed nations;
- varying degrees of openness rooted in cultural traditions; and
- varying cultural attitudes toward gender issues and child development - different concepts of developmental needs through childhood.

## How is Abuse Defined?

Definitions of abuse are complex and based in various cultures of child-rearing behaviours, gender and role responsibilities and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the need of the more powerful person, either a member of the family, a teacher, or a friend. Research guides much of the definitions that are based in understanding the impact of certain behaviours.

### Abuse is:

- Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health or loss or impairment of any bodily function, death; and/or
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental/emotional suffering; and/or
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by local criminal code (or school policy); and/or
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child; and/or
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above

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### Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises or welts on any part of the body
  - Bruises of different ages (different colours)
  - Injuries reflecting the shape of the article used (belt, buckle, paddle, hand)
  - Injuries that regularly appear after absence from school or vacation
  - Unexplained burns, especially to the soles of feet, palms of hands, back or buttocks
  - Burns with a pattern from items such as an iron, cigarette
  - Rope burns on arms, legs, neck
  - Injuries inconsistent with the information that is offered by the child
  - Unexplained lacerations, abrasions, or fractures
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## How is Neglect Defined?

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs within their own environment.

### Neglect is:

- Physical, such as the failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or the lack of appropriate supervision (inclusive of appropriate guardianship such as leaving children at home and unsupervised for any extended period of time). Chatsworth requires all students reside with either a parent or guardian, full-time, residing in Singapore. Chatsworth has a Guardianship Policy to this effect; and/or
- Medical, such as failure to provide a necessary medical or mental health treatment; and/or
- Emotional, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting a child to use alcohol or drugs

### Possible Indicators of Neglect

- Child is unwashed or hungry
- Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance or school life
- Parents do not respond to continued and repeated communications from the school
- Child does not want to go home
- Both parents or legal guardian are absent from Singapore for any period of time greater than 24 hours (depending on age of the child)
- Parents cannot be reached in the event of an emergency

**Note:** Any of the behavioural indicators in and of themselves do not necessarily constitute neglect. Together, with other indicators, they warrant a referral.

## Links to Chatsworth's ESLRs

### Principled

Students take safe and informed actions which create a positive impact on our changing world (self-management)

### Global Communicators

Students communicate effectively on multiple platforms in a global context (communication)

Sexual abuse is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offence against a child (for the purposes of this document) as defined in the criminal code of the host country (Singapore) or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes.

Sexual abuse has different characteristics of child abuse that require special attention in this policy. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious. The planning, referred to as *Grooming*, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt and shame for the sexual behaviour of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so is more difficult to report.

Many victims, through the process of *grooming*, are taught that the sexual act is a form of love, and tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

Working with sexual offenders in a suspected sexual abuse case cannot be done by Chatsworth school counsellors. Chatsworth will seek external support in such cases.

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### Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behaviour, or use of language not appropriate to the age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting

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**“ Students learn best in a safe, positive, supportive and nurturing learning environment.”**

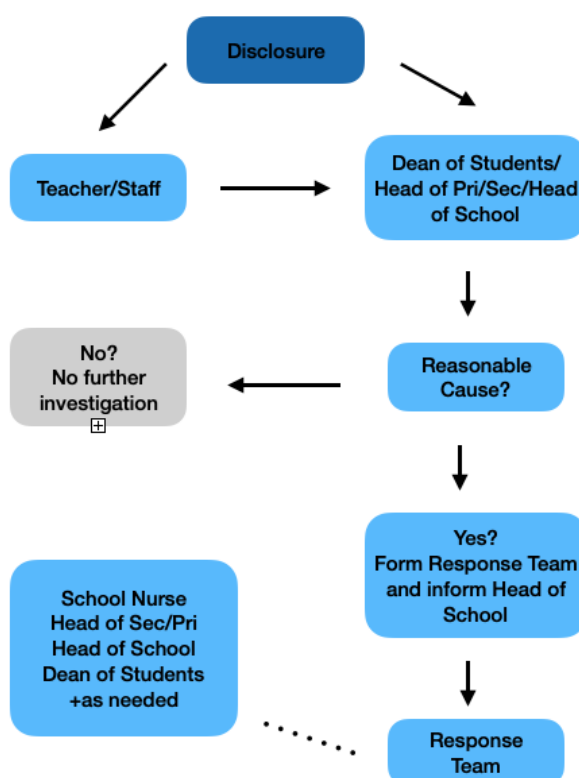
### Chatsworth Learning Principles

## Procedures for Reporting Suspected Cases of Child Abuse or Neglect

Where there is cause to suspect an incident of child abuse or neglect, or a pattern of behaviour that indicates a child may be subject to abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the teacher/staff member (or parent/caregiver) to report this suspected incident to the Head of Primary/Secondary (or any member of the child protection team). If the Head of Primary/Secondary is unavailable then the Dean of Students is to be informed (who will inform the Head of Primary/Secondary soonest possible). It is the responsibility of the Head of Primary/Secondary to inform the Dean of Students and the Head of School of the suspected case of child abuse and neglect. In all cases, the Head of School must be informed.

Upon reporting the incident, the staff member must immediately complete a child protection CPOMS entry for tracking purposes. CPOMS training is conducted for all academic staff each year. It is the responsibility of the teacher reporting the incident to complete the entry in CPOMS, not to have someone else to do this for them.

The Dean of Students, in consultation with the Head of School, will form a response team and will take initial steps to gather information regarding the matter. In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner to ensure information is documented concisely and factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained. A typical response team may include the referring teacher, a school counsellor, the Dean of Students, the Head of Primary/Secondary and the Head of School. Depending on the case, others may be involved keeping strict confidentiality in mind so as to protect the child.





## Procedures for Addressing Sexual and Physical Abuses

Based on the information acquired, a plan of action is developed to assist the child.

Possible actions include:

- Interviews between the child and counsellor to attempt to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child and the nature of the information acquired, these interviews may be conducted with the assistance of an external counsellor and parental involvement.
- Review of the child's history in the school.
- Ongoing in-class observations of the child by the teacher, counsellor or admin team.
- Meetings with the family to present school concerns.
- Consultation with the Board of Management and school attorney.
- Informal consultation or formal consultation with local Singapore authorities.
- Consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family.
- Informal consultation or formal consultation with local or external child protection specialists.

### **Ethical Mandate and School Policy for Reporting**

All Chatsworth employees are required to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect. All reports of abuse or neglect must be made to the Head of Primary/Secondary and/or the Dean of Students within 24 hours. Any report or other actions to be taken must be kept confidential to protect the student.

### **Reporting to External Authorities**

When making a report to authorities, the Head of School/Campus Principal or Director of Administration must include as much information as is available or can be gathered through interviews with teachers and other relevant adults close to the child.

### **Follow Up and Continuing Support**

In the incidence of a reported or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The Dean of Students and/or Head of Primary/Secondary will maintain follow-up contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate
- The Dean of Students and/or counsellor will meet with the child's teachers, the Head of Primary/Secondary and the Head of School to review the needs of abused or neglected children and the important role teachers play in assisting the child's recovery and future development
- The Dean of Students and/or counsellor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use
- The Dean of Students and/or counsellor will maintain contact with outside therapists and investigators to update the situation of the child in the school
- The Dean of Students will keep the Head of School updated on all aspects of the case

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's confidential school records file and may be a part of information sent to schools to which the student may transfer.

## Commonly Held Myths vs Realities About Child Abuse and Neglect

**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. International school communities tend to have families that move often and are separated from their extended families in their home-of-record. When abuse is within the family, the transient life-style then increased the risk to international school students who tend not to have access to outside resources and therefore cannot get help.

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

**Fact:** Research indicates that developmentally appropriate education makes children more confident and able to react to dangerous situations.

**Myth:** *Abuse education is sex education.*

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

**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:** *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 the harming of children.

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

**Fact:** International schools are bound by the laws of their host country.

### Closing Notes

The Chatsworth Child Protection Policy is a fluid document that will be reviewed annually and will be updated as and when new information about child protection practices and policies develop throughout the world and our region. While some elements may change as we move forward with our policies, one thing that will always remain constant is the requirement of all staff at Chatsworth to report cases or suspected cases of abuse or neglect within 24 hours. The school's ability to act appropriately and in the best interests of the child(ren) involved is severely impacted the more time goes by without action. A staff member's failure to report cases or suspected cases of abuse and neglect may impact current or future employment with the school.



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