



MWASHITA ACADEMY

Child Protection Policy

The health, safety, and wellbeing of all our learners are of paramount importance to all adults who work at Mwashita Academy. Our learners have the right to protection regardless of age, gender, race, culture, or disability. They have a right to be safe in our Academy. At Mwashita Academy we respect our learners. The atmosphere within our Academy is one that encourages all learners to do their best. We provide opportunities that enable our learners to take and make decisions for themselves.

Definitions of abuse and neglect

Definitions of abuse are complex and culturally based, influencing 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 staff member, or a friend. Research guides much of the definitions that are based in understanding the impact of certain behaviours. Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

Physical abuse may involve...

- Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury, such as implementing extreme discipline which demonstrates a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child Fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the aforementioned occurrences.

Emotional abuse is...

a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs

Specific examples may include...

- verbal humiliation
- refusing to acknowledge presence of child
- invasion of privacy for no specific reason
- violent threats, etc.

Possible indicators of physical abuse include...

- Unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, abrasions, or fractures on any part of the body
- Bruises of different ages (various colours)
- Injuries reflecting the specific shape of an object (electric cord, belt, buckle, table tennis paddle, hand)
- The regular appearance of injuries after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette
- Rope burns to extremities
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child

Neglect may be...

- Physical - failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision (This would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship, such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time)

- Medical - failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment

Possible indicators of neglect include...

- Child is unbathed or hungry
- Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the Academy
- Child does not want to go home
- Parents cannot be reached in the case of an emergency

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is committing or allowing any sexual offence against a child to be committed. This includes intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for reasons other than hygiene or childcare purposes. Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning. 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, making it more difficult to identify and report. Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that the sex is a form of love, and the children can present as happy and well-adjusted with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved. Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counsellors.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse include...

- Sexual knowledge, behaviour, or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anus areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into physical education (PE) clothes or fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaints
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting

Peer-on-peer abuse

Peer-on-peer abuse is defined as any form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships, both intimate and non-intimate.

Peer-on-peer abuse can involve but is not limited to, the following:

- Physical abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) or sexual abuse
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Cyberbullying
- Initiation/Hazing

All behaviour takes place on a spectrum and may or may not constitute abuse. To effectively manage peer-on-peer allegations, the following aspects of the behaviour will be considered:

- Is the behaviour a single episode or has it occurred over a period of time?
- Is the behaviour problematic and concerning?
- Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived?
- Does the behaviour involve any overt elements of victimization or discrimination (related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability)?
- Does the behaviour involve a power imbalance between the child/children involved?
- Does the behaviour involve a misuse of power?

All responses to safeguarding allegations found to have reasonable cause will:

- Include a thorough investigation of the concerns/allegations and the wider context in which they may have occurred,
- Inform parents of the investigation, unless doing so would result in significant risk to the child,
- Treat all children involved as being at potential risk, and ensure a response is in place for both the child who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the child who has allegedly been responsible for it.

Consider during the investigation:

- The abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the children involved.
- The potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and interplay between power, choice, and consent.
- The views of the child/children affected, including keeping them and their parents informed of developments where appropriate and safe to do so.

If the behaviour or action does not occur within the context of the school program or activities (including trips and extracurricular activities), the school can exercise its right to respond if the off-campus student misconduct contributes to a hostile environment at school, either for an individual or group. Students often experience the continuing effects of off-campus misconduct while at school, sometimes using digital media, and it is important for the school to be able to respond as warranted.

A hostile environment can include

any situation in which there is misconduct that limits, interferes with or denies educational benefits or opportunities. This can include compromised physical and emotional safety. Here are some considerations when deciding whether the threshold of a hostile environment has been met:

- The type, frequency, and duration of the misconduct.
- The identity of and relationship between the accused and the complainant(s)
- The number of individuals involved.
- The age and gender of the accused and the complainant(s).
- The location of the incident(s) and the context in which it occurred.
- The nature and severity of the misconduct.
- Whether the misconduct was physically, emotionally, or sexually threatening.
- Whether the misconduct was humiliating.

- The effect of the misconduct on the complainant's mental or emotional state.
- Whether the misconduct arose in the context of other discriminatory conduct.
- Whether the speech or misconduct deserves the protections of academic freedom.
- A single or isolated incident of harassment may be severe enough to create a hostile environment.

What happens when a staff member has reasonable cause to believe?

The indicators of abuse and neglect will be used by staff as a guideline for reporting to the child protection officer or counsellor through the school principal, who will determine if the case needs further attention. A report must be made when a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All reports are confidential.

When there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is your responsibility to report your suspicions to the principal. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform the Executive Chairperson of the suspected case of child abuse or neglect. All incidences of abuse or neglect should be reported as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours. We recognize that every child and every case are unique and must be dealt with appropriately.

Procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect

Step 1

Staff will discuss any child report or reasonable cause for suspicion of abuse or neglect with the principal within 24 hours. The principal will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and form a school-based response team, which will include the school nurse, child protection officer, counsellor, psychologist, and other individuals as the principal sees fit. In all cases, follow-up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually, and that strict confidentiality is maintained. Designated response team members may include the following:

- Interview as necessary and document information relative to the case.
- Review the child's history in the school with school personnel.
- Report case status to the Executive Chairperson.
- Determine the course of follow-up actions.
- Protect confidentiality

Step 2

Based on what is learned, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. This plan may include any of the following:

- In-class observations of the child by a member or members of the school response team.
- Discussions between the child and child protection officer or counsellor to gain more information.
- Meeting with the family to discuss the school's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counselling.

In cases where outside authority is deemed necessary, one or more of the following may take place:

- Notification to the management of the sponsoring employer or the welfare office of the home-of-record.
- Consultation with local authorities
- If evidence of mistreatment is sufficient, a criminal case may be initiated

Step 3

After a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect, the following will occur:

- The principal will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance.
- The principal will maintain contact with the outside therapist to discuss the child's progress in school.
- All case documentation will be kept in the child's school confidential records file.

Guidelines for listening and talking to children

If a child chooses to disclose, you, as a staff member, **SHOULD**:

Be accessible and receptive.

- Listen carefully and uncritically at the child's pace.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Reassure the child that they are right to tell.
- Tell the child that you must pass this information on.
- Make a careful record of what was said verbatim.
- Avoid leading the students with your questions.
- Use open questions "tell me, describe to me, show me, explain to me etc.

You should **NEVER**:

- Take photographs or examine an injury.
- Investigate or probe aiming to prove or disprove possible abuse – never ask leading questions.
- Make promises to children about confidentiality or keeping secrets.
- Assume that someone else will take the necessary action.
- Jump to conclusions or react with shock, anger or horror.
- Speculate or accuse anybody.
- Confront another person (adult or child) allegedly involved.
- Offer opinions about what is being said or about the persons allegedly involved.
- Forget to record what you have been told.
- Fail to pass the information on to the correct person.
- Ask a child to sign a written copy of the disclosure.

Guidelines for record keeping

Well-kept records are essential in situations where it is suspected or believed that a child may be at risk from harm.

Records should:

- State who was present, time, date, and place.
- Use the child's words wherever possible.
- Be factual/state exactly what was said.
- Differentiate clearly between fact, opinion, interpretation, observation and/or allegation.
- Be written in ink and signed by the recorder.

CODE OF CONDUCT -for all staff at Mwashita Academy

Private meetings with pupils

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place but where possible such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, with the door open or in a room or area that is likely to be frequented by other people. All windows in the area should remain uncovered.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff is advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.
- Where possible another pupil or adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general rule teachers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- Physical contact which could be misconstrued by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided. Such contact can include well-intentioned informal gestures, such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, which if repeated with an individual pupil could be misconstrued. More obvious or more intimate contact should never occur.
- There may be times when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical contact such as a caring parent would give. Teachers should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that it is normal and natural contact. They should be wary of unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time.
- Staff should be aware of any “negative” withdrawing action by a child when touched “normally”. A child should never be touched if the touch is unwelcome.
- Some teachers are likely to come into physical contact with their pupils from time to time in the course of their teaching eg: when showing a pupil how to use a piece of equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during P.E. Teachers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the pupil.
- Members of staff who must administer First Aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions could be misconstrued a written report of the incident should be submitted to the principal immediately. This applies particularly where a teacher has had to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury.

Out of School Visits

All pupils visiting any venue need prior written permission from their parents. The school will organise the visit very carefully ensuring the venue is suitable for the pupils. The group leader will issue parents with all relevant information regarding the trip in good time for proper preparations to be made. This information may include some or all the following:

- Dates, times, and places of leaving and returning.
- Transport arrangements.
- Name, address, telephone number and any other relevant information regarding the venue.
- Details of the purpose for the visit – itinerary with dates, times, and activities.

- Cost incurred by parents and recommendation on pocket money.
- List of supervisory staff.
- Copy of guidelines drawn up for the trip eg: no child will be left unsupervised, no mobile phones, etc.

The group leader must find out all relevant information from the parents regarding the children eg: medical details, special dietary requirements etc.

Any venue which the school visits must be vetted prior to its use to ensure the safety of all the pupils. In some cases, children may need prior teaching/preparation in self-protection, without being alarmist.

An evaluation of the trip should be carried out afterwards to ensure quality control.

Choice and use of Teaching Materials

- Teachers should avoid using materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect on the motives for the choice.
- When using materials of a sensitive nature, teachers should be aware of the danger that their use, either by pupils or the teacher, might be criticised. Teachers should seek advice and consult school policy when teaching sensitive aspects of the curriculum

Relationships and Attitudes

Teachers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour, and language require careful thought particularly when teachers of either sex are dealing with maturing boys and girls. Teachers' language should be positive and encouraging. No put-downs" should be used nor demeaning and embarrassing comments. Children must always be treated with respect and their feelings taken into consideration.

Staff Guidelines for Self-Protection

- In the event of injury to a child ensure that it is recorded, and an Accident Report completed by a witness. Accident reporting documentation is available in the school office.
- Keep records of any false allegations a child makes against you or other staff including comments such as "You are always picking on me". Record dates and times and any adult witnesses to the incident.
- If a child touches you or talks to you in a sexually inappropriate way, record what happened and tell another adult. Do not make the child feel guilty as it may have been totally innocent. However, ignoring it or allowing it to go on may place you in an untenable position. Neither is it good for the child to go on doing this as the next person might take advantage.
- If you must take children in your car always acquire parental permission unless it is an emergency. Make sure you carry at least two children at the same time. If practical place children in the rear seats of the car. On a residential trip always check bedrooms in pairs. Never take a child to your room under any circumstances.
- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child. If you must speak one-to-one, make sure the door is open and that you are not blocking the child's route to it. Tell another member of staff that you are going to see the child on your own.
- If a child displays sexually inappropriate behaviour, explain that this is unacceptable and could get the child into difficulty but do not make the child feel guilty. The behaviour may be an imitation of the abuse the child has suffered and is not his/her fault.

- If the situation arises where a young child needs a change of clothing, have another person present or contact the child's parent.
- Never do something of a personal nature for a child that they can do for themselves.
- Do not go to the toilet area alone with a learner.
- Be mindful how and where you touch learners. Never pat a child on the bottom, allow them to sit on your lap or kiss you.
- When taking learners on an outing think how your actions may appear to others. This may mean that disruptive pupils cannot go on outings for their own safety and the safety of others.
- Never keep suspicions of abuse or inappropriate behaviour about a colleague to yourself. Your silence may implicate you.

Vetting Procedures

No one will have unsupervised access to learners unless they have had a police check/ a criminal history background check. This includes all voluntary staff, classroom assistants, work experience students, ancillary and auxiliary staff etc. Only those authorised by the principal may address the pupils and no guest speakers will be left alone with pupils. Those who wish to address the pupils must have prior permission and have given the principal an outline of what they intend to speak about. The principal or a delegated member of staff will monitor their talk.

Internet

All teachers are aware of the dangers of the Internet. The ICT co-ordinator will draw up an Internet Policy which will be circulated and signed by all parents. Members of staff have signed an agreement that the Internet will be used only for educational purposes. The children are supervised during the use of the Internet and have been made aware of the rules governing its use.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The school will update this policy and procedures as necessary in the light of any further guidance and legislation and will review it annually. Parents will be issued with a booklet outlining the main points of this policy and will be made aware that a full copy is available for consultation.

Board of Governors Policy Manual

1. The Board considers the protection and safeguarding of children at Mwashita Academy as its highest priority.
2. The Academy shall have a Child Protection Policy and procedures that address child abuse in all of its potential forms (including physical and/or emotional abuse or neglect, sexual abuse and peer to-peer abuse) and focus on ensuring a child-safe environment, training staff, vetting potential staff members and guests, creating awareness in the community and empowering students to protect themselves.
3. The principal shall ensure that every member of staff at the Academy understands their responsibility for contributing to the safety and well-being of students at the Academy and in all school-related settings. This includes the following:
 - setting out procedures for suspected cases of child abuse or neglect,
 - creating a plan of action to assist the child and family,

- reporting identified cases of abuse or neglect to relevant school authorities,
 - identifying services, the counselling staff shall be expected to provide, and
 - ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of where they can access our Child Protection Policy and procedures.
4. The principal shall ensure that the Child Protection Policy and procedures are followed and implemented consistently throughout the school including appropriate structures for both prevention and intervention.
 5. The Child Protection Policy and procedures shall be submitted to the Board of Governors for approval annually and kept under review by the Executive Chairperson.
 6. The Child Protection Policy and procedures shall be made available on the school's website and other efforts shall be made to ensure that all members of the community are aware of the provisions.

DISCIPLINE

- The head Principal shall oversee observance and implementation of all disciplinary issues in the school.
- The disciplinary procedures should be as outlined in Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Policy

Adoption of Policy

Policy adopted on: 5th June 2022 by the Board of Directors and signed off by

Dr. Weston Mwashita

Designation: Executive Chairperson and Founder

Signature:



Representing the Board of Directors

Date of Review	5th June 2022
Date of next whole policy review	June 2023