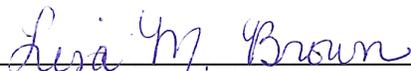


MAS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Date Updated
August 2022

Date of Review
Annually


Principal Approval

MAS Vision: Education for a Lifetime – Creating well-rounded, ethical, global citizens who are innovative and dedicated to lifelong learning

MAS Mission: Mirdif American School strives to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of all students. At MAS, we aim to create a collaborative and inclusive learning environment while developing reflective thinkers, who understand the past, explore the present, and impact the future equipped with 21st Century skills. We are committed to developing well-rounded, ethical and global citizens who can contribute to a fast-paced and changing world

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

At Mirdif American School (MAS), the health, safety and well-being of all our children is of paramount importance. All children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. Everyone is responsible when it comes to protecting children and this includes reporting any act committed by a parent, guardian or any other person, to a child enrolled in the MAS which results in neglect, physical or emotional injury or sexual harm.

All staff members are committed to report any suspected or disclosed issues of child protection to the SEN and Student Support Department (SSSD). Depending on the severity of the situation it will be overlooked and monitored by the Principal, Director of SEN and School Counselor.

Aims

- Maintaining a safe environment in which children can learn and develop
- Using an effective curriculum to clearly define what is and is not acceptable behavior, how to speak up regarding concerns and how to become (as an adult) a safe and respectful citizen.
- Recognizing and reporting incidents of harm and possible offences against children.
- Supporting children who have been abused.
- Appointing a designated member of staff to take primary responsibility for child protection.

Purpose

MAS is an inclusive school and honors diversity and respects individuals. We are proactive in identifying barriers which restrict student's achievement, participation, and learning and will take action to remove any obstacles which lead to educational and emotional exclusion. Our students have a right to feel safe and protected from significant physical and emotional harm both inside and outside of school.

This policy is a crucial part of promoting the welfare of our students; it is designed to inform our staff regarding the signs of child abuse and to equip them with the knowledge on what to do in the event of suspected abuse.

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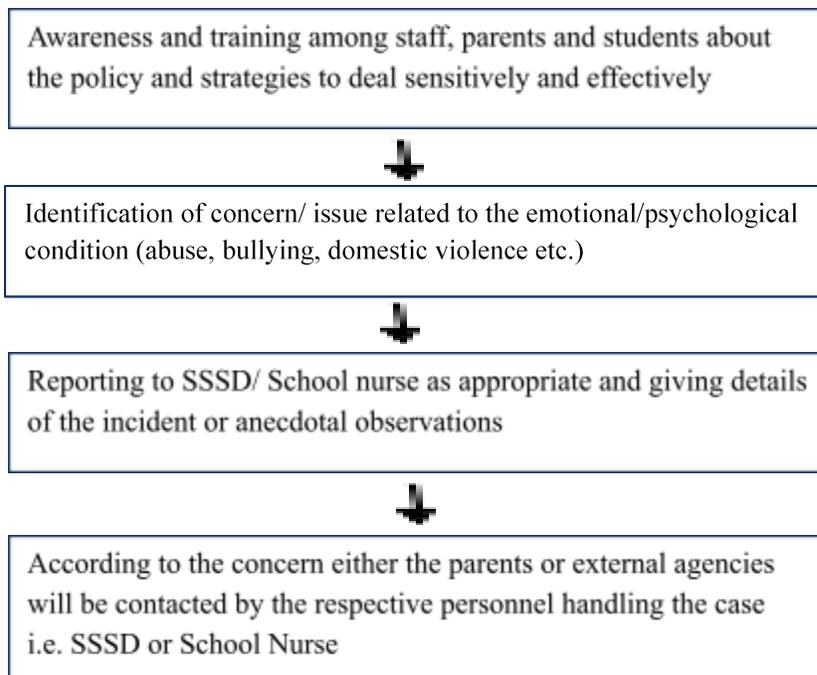
Roles and Responsibilities

It is a moral, ethical and legal responsibility of any teaching professional or other staff member to report suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, bullying or safety concerns to the SSSD or school nurse.

Confidentiality

An abused child or a person disclosing information about abuse is likely to be under severe emotional stress, and the staff member may be the only person whom the child or adult is prepared to trust. When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will endeavor to reassure the child or adult, whilst explaining that the matter will be shared only with people who need to know about it in order to follow procedures aimed at safeguarding their welfare. Confidentiality will be maintained.

Comprehensive plan



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Issues addressed

Child Abuse:

Child abuse refers to any act committed by a parent, guardian or any other person to a child under the age of 18, which results in injury to the child. These acts include situations where there is neglect, emotional, physical or sexual harm. Below are the different types of abuse:

I Physical abuse:

It is actual or attempted physical injury to a child where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Signs:

- Unexplained injuries or burns (particularly if they are recurrent)
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Aggression towards others
- Self-destructive tendencies

II Emotional abuse:

It is failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs such as to have a severe effect on the behavior and development of the child. This includes conveying to children the feeling that they are worthless or unloved.

Signs:

- Physical/mental/emotional developmental lags
- Admission of punishment which seems excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Fear of new situations
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

III Sexual abuse:

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in a sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society.

Signs:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, behaviors

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- Loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking
- Becoming withdrawn, isolated
- Inability to focus
- Reluctance to go home
- Drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Overreacting to criticism
- Have outbursts of anger/irritability

IV Neglect:

It refers to persistent or deliberate failure to meet a child's physical or psychological needs eg. a failure to provide adequate food, clothing or shelter, failure to protect a child or failure to provide adequate medical care. It may also involve neglect or failure to give adequate response to a child's emotional needs.

Signs:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Frequent lateness and/or unexplained non-attendance
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor peer relationships
- Stealing

Bullying:

Bullying is unwanted aggressive behaviour among school aged children that has the likelihood of causing physical or psychological harm or injury and is characterized by:

- a. an imbalance of power**
- b. is an action that is repeated**
- c. it is intentional**

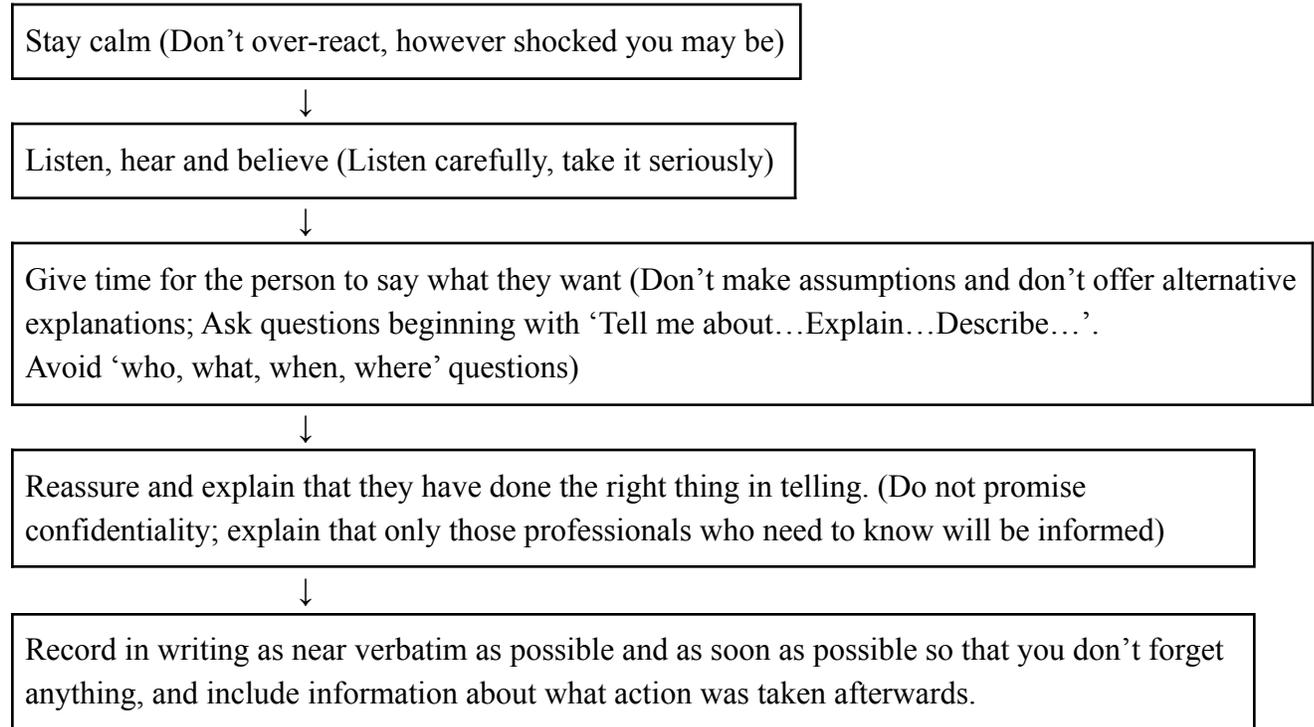
1. *Physical:* pushing, punching, kicking, hitting, pinching, spitting, tripping, blocking and other forms of violence or threats of violence
2. *Verbal:* Name-calling, insulting, teasing, intimidating, taunting, threatening to cause harm

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3. *Social or Relational*: Excluding, persistent teasing, lying or spreading rumors, embarrassing someone in public, damaging someone’s reputation and humiliating
4. *Cyber*: Sending/posting hurtful texts, posts, images or videos through Emails, Messages (Text message, Whats App, Hangout etc.) - Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Schoology), making online threats, using other people’s log-in details, deliberately excluding others online and spready nasty gossip or rumors online.
5. *Sexual*: Use of inappropriate sexual comments or behavior
6. *Racial*: belittling, mocking, intimidating or shaming someone because of their physical appearance, ethnice background, religious or cultural practices (Racial gestures, taunts and/or remarks)

What is expected to do during disclosure?



Reporting this information

After the child discloses the information about abuse, the following steps must be taken:

1. Make some brief notes at the time or immediately afterwards
 - a) Record the date, time, place and context of the disclosure or concern.
 - b) Record facts and not assumptions and interpretations.

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- c) Note the non-verbal behavior and the key words in the language used by a student (do not translate into “proper terms”).
 - d) Sign and date the note.
2. Mark observed injuries and bruises on the Body Map.
 3. Meet with the SSSD and describe the situation that took place.
 4. Meet with the principal and SSSD to discuss how to proceed with the information.

In other situations, the child might not disclose any information but you may suspect abuse based on your own observations. In this case, a similar procedure is carried out:

1. Write a letter describing your concerns and reasons for them
2. If any injuries or bruises are visible, record them on the Body Map
3. Meet with the School SSSD to discuss your concerns
4. If the School SSSD agrees with you, a meeting will be held between you, the School SSSD and the Principal to discuss the issue and how to proceed

Please always report any suspected case of abuse, even if you are doubtful yourself. Our student’s safety is our most important priority.

****Remember-** The best help you can provide is calm, unconditional support and reassurance. Let your actions speak for you if you are having trouble finding the words. Remember that it is a tremendous act of courage for children to come forward about abuse. They might have been told specifically not to tell, and may even feel that the abuse is normal.

Safety of School Buildings, Transportation and Field Trips

MAS takes multiple measures to ensure student safety at all times:

- Buildings are well maintained and equipped with security surveillance cameras and with corridor supervisors who manage entry and exit within the campus.
- The accountability of students is of utmost importance. The teachers, TA’s, and Hall Supervisors are aware of the whereabouts of students at all times. Daily attendance is taken in the morning and followed up throughout the day, to make sure all students are accounted for.
- Bus transportation for field trips and other events are provided by a company that is licensed by the Department of Transport. Students are properly supervised by staff members. The same bus company is available for parents who would like to pay for their child to be transported to and from school.

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- Learning support assistants (LSA) provide supervision to ensure the safety and well-being of children with special needs and accompany them as well.

Involvement of Outside agencies:

Based on the severity of the issue and upon the discretion of the school Principal the following agencies can be contacted if required.

1. Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC):

The first licensed non-profit shelter in the UAE for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, child abuse and human trafficking. DFWAC aims to protect physically, sexually and emotionally abused women and children, prevent ongoing abuse and the escalation of violence and promote social awareness through education and outreach.

DFWAC provides:

- A safe shelter
- Case management
- Medical care
- Psychological support
- Counseling
- Legal, consular and immigration assistance
- Helpline 800 111 or email help@dfwac.ae; Website – www.dfwac.ae

2. Dubai Police Human Rights Department:

·24/7 Duty Officer 056 6862121

3. Latifa Hospital Child Welfare Unit:

·Tel: 04 2193000; Fax: 04 3241717
·UAE Working Hours: 24 Hours

4. Community Development Authority (Centre):

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Any child in Dubai who needs help, protection from abuse, or advice can pick up the phone and dial 800-988 any time. Four social workers and psychologists at the Child Protection Centre in Al Barsha are on standby to assist residents under 18 years of age to ensure their rights are protected and upheld. The recently opened centre under the Community Development Authority (CDA) is part of CDA's comprehensive strategy to make Dubai the most secure and ideal environment for children to live. It is tasked with rehabilitating, providing counselling, visiting and assisting children in need.

5. Al Ameen Reporting (Dubai & Federal Police):

The Al Ameen Service officially launched in September 2003. Using this service, the people of Dubai can communicate confidentially with the authorities to keep abreast of developments in Dubai and on issues that concern them. www.alameen.ae/en/

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