



Child Protection and Safeguarding Whole School Policies

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IMPLEMENTED: September 2015

DUE FOR REVIEW: September 2021 or sooner if there is a change in legislation

Modern English School Cairo (MES Cairo) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all members of our community and especially for our students. Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy outlines the standards and practices adopted by the school to meet this aim. This policy reflects Article 3.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: “in all actions concerning children...the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration” and applies to all staff, members of the Board and volunteers working with/for the school.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

- MES Cairo will ensure that that welfare of children is given paramount consideration when developing and delivering all school activities
- All children, regardless of age, gender identity, ability, culture, language, religion and race have equal rights to protection
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest that a child is at risk of harm in accordance with this guidance
- All students and staff are to have access to appropriate support from CPCs and Senior Leadership Team members who will follow this policy guidance

POLICY AIMS

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their responsibilities to promote and safeguard the well-being of children
- To ensure consistent good practice across the school, in accordance with standards and practices which reflect Egyptian, UK and USA legislation
- To demonstrate the school’s commitment with regard to safeguarding children

POLICY PRACTICALITIES

- At least two members of both SSLT and PSLT are to hold current certification (trained in the last two academic years)
- Nomination of a Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) in both Primary and Secondary who have direct access to SLT at all times and who also hold current certification (trained in the last two academic years)
- Compulsory annual training for all employees via Educare as designed by SLT
- Annual training delivered by CPC’s for all staff in the sentiment of this policy and its practical implementation
- Any identified deficiencies or shortcomings in this policy will be immediately addressed
- The SLT and Board of Directors will review this policy and associated procedures and their efficient implementation annually

- The school extends a firm commitment to practicing safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children
- The school pledges to notify the relevant authorities (including the Independent Safeguarding Authority in the UK and the State Licensing Board and relevant State Agency in the USA) immediately in the event of any member of staff whose relationship with the school ceases because they are deemed unsuitable to work with children

TRUSTED ADULTS

All adults employed by the school are considered appropriate for the position they hold. The school operates safe recruitment procedures, including the following:

- In Egypt, the Department of Education with the Department of State Security complete criminal reference checks on non-Egyptian nationals before issuing a work visa.
- Newly recruited teachers must provide original evidence of relevant teaching credentials as well as a current police clearance which is no more than 12 months old
- Professional references are sought and referees are asked to declare the suitability of the colleagues to work with children; at the point of offering a prospective colleague a contract at least one reference ought to be verified via telephone call by a relevant member of SLT
- Teachers renewing their contracts have their credentials 'on file'; any activity involving security services in Egypt or abroad is to be reported to SLT. Police clearance may be sought at any time
- Locally-hired, non-teaching colleagues are vetted by national security services at the point of employment. At least 5% of colleagues are randomly checked annually; all transportation personnel undergo annual toxicology checks.

As 'trusted adults' all employees are expected to act appropriately in the company of children and not place themselves in situations that may be misunderstood or misinterpreted. It is in the interests of children and colleagues for classroom windows to remain uncovered (except in the event of a 'Safe and Sound Procedure'); classroom doors are to remain open when an adult is talking alone with a child. If a child insists on privacy for a meeting with an adult, with door closed, the adult should insist that a third person (chosen by the child), and preferably another adult, join the conversation.

All staff are to participate in an annual review of this policy and to be notified of any updates in a timely fashion. All staff are to be informed of who the CPC's are.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

For the purposes of interpreting this policy, the following definitions of specific types of abuse have been adopted by MES Cairo, adapted from Child Welfare Information Gateway: Child Abuse and Neglect, 2010:

Child Physical Abuse: Physical abuse occurs when a person causes physical injury to a child from behaviour such as hitting, choking, shaking, kicking or burning OR when there is perceived to be a substantial risk of physical or psychological harm. The abuse may result from physical discipline which is not appropriate for the child or from a person who is unable to control his or her anger and misdirects it towards the child. Children who live in homes where punishment is often physical may not always realise that they are being abused. Signs of physical abuse include unexplained, repeated or excessive bruises, broken bones, black eyes or other injuries. Abused children may have long absences from school or may wear clothing inappropriate for the weather in an attempt to cover up injuries. They may be afraid to go home or to be on their own with another person.

Child Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is behaviour that makes the child feel unloved and unwanted. It can include things like bullying, belittling, insulting, threatening, isolating, exploiting and ignoring. Emotional abuse can consist of either a pattern of such behaviours or extreme examples in isolation. Emotionally abused children may seem unusually unattached to their parent and/or others. They may exhibit physical or emotional developmental delays or show extremes in behaviour. These children may also either regress to childlike behaviour or may exhibit unusual maturity, such as providing caretaking for other children.

Child Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves sexual acts or behaviour involving the exploitation of children. Sexual activity between children can constitute sexual abuse when there is a difference in age, developmental levels and/or maturity; it includes when one child coerces another into participating in a sexual act. Behaviours can include fondling, digital or penile penetration, genital contact, oral sex and indecent exposure. Sexual abuse can also include non-penetrative acts or actual physical contact, such as: forcing, tricking, bribing, threatening or pressuring a child into sexual awareness. Involving children in prostitution or pornography would also be considered child sexual abuse. Incidents involving incest or sexual behaviour among family members are a common type of sexual abuse. Children who are sexually abused may show symptoms such as difficulty walking or sitting, torn or bloody underwear, nightmares, bedwetting, inappropriate knowledge of sex or inappropriate sexual behaviours, or anxiety. Children who are sexually abused are also at a much higher risk of contracting an STD or getting pregnant.

Child Neglect: Neglect occurs when a parent/caregiver fails to provide for a child's most basic needs. These can include food, clothing, housing, education, medical care or supervision. Emotional neglect may include permitting the child to use drugs or alcohol or participate in other maladaptive or dangerous behaviour, allowing the child to witness domestic violence, refusing to obtain needed psychological care for the child or failing to provide the necessary nurturing for the child. A child who is chronically neglected may be frequently absent from school, may have poor hygiene or clothing that is inappropriate for the weather or may beg or steal food or money. There may also be an obvious need for dental or medical care that is going unchecked. The child may be unsupervised for long periods of time or may be out getting into trouble and no one seems to notice.

Educational Neglect: Where a parent/s, or nominated caregiver, neglects their duty to provide a child with access to mandatory education. This includes preventing a child's access to school for any reason as well ignoring determined attendance requirements (85%).

Medical Neglect: The failure of the responsible adult/s to provide adequate health and hygiene care for a child, including appropriate treatment of evident medical conditions. Medical neglect also includes inappropriate treatment and/or mismanagement of treatment, over-medication, and administration of inappropriate medication without evidence of authorisation from a licensed medical practitioner.

Bullying - Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidences of fighting, arguing, or disagreements between individuals of equivalent power and authority does not constitute bullying.

Harassment: Behaviour that targets an individual or group due to their: identity, race, culture or ethnic origin, religion, physical characteristics, gender, sexual orientation, marital, parenting or economic status, age, ability or disability. It offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment. It may be an ongoing pattern of behaviour or a single act directed randomly or towards the same person(s) and can be intentional or unintentional.

Teenage Relationship Abuse: Broadly includes any of the types of abuse outlined above, but where the child victim is perhaps unaware that they are being mistreated because of their perceived consent/endorsement of the relationship.

Child Coersion (Extremism) and Radicalisation: Promoting ideas which are radically different to, and perhaps in contradiction with, the school's undying principles and those of the wider community.

MES CAIRO PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

Egypt is making progress in its protection of children, reforming legislation and providing some services for the most vulnerable children. Resources are stretched, however. There remains limited provision for referral beyond the school and limited opportunity for children to seek assistance in the wider community. It is therefore quite likely that students will turn to school personnel, and/or that school colleagues will identify concerns before self-referral.

Initial response guidelines for the MES Cairo colleague

Notification of abuse or neglect is required when 'a person suspects on reasonable grounds that a child has been, is being, and/or is perceived to be at substantial risk of being abused or neglected'.

Anyone aware of such a situation MUST report it to a member of PSLT or SSLT or one of the school's CPC's as a matter of urgency and certainly within 48 hours of acknowledging their suspicion or awareness of abuse. Reporting and subsequent actions must be kept confidential.

There are three scenarios to consider, each with its own protocol:

- 1) Staff member suspects abuse by observing unusual behaviour or injury first hand
- 2) Student self-refers to a staff member
- 3) A third party shares concerns with a member of staff

Management of referrals by CPC and SLT

The CPC maintains a confidential register of all initial referrals; this register is to be kept in a secure location known to the CPCs and SLT. Referrals will be archived at 24 months if 'cold'; records to be destroyed 24 months following student's graduation. CPC referrals concerning N/E transfers from other schools will be sought reactively, not proactively.

It is the CPCs responsibility to read every referral they receive, to check the report for adequate detail and to discuss the situation it refers to with the relevant member of SLT.

Information in a referral will be shared on a 'need to know basis'. The CPC and SLT will decide what further action is required within 24 hours of receiving the report. The action agreed upon may be to monitor the child. In the event of self-referral, the child is to be spoken to by an appropriate adult before the end of the next school day as promised.

A decision will be made by the CPC and SLT member, in consultation with a member of the BOD (preferably the Chairman or Managing Director) regarding the involvement of parents, caregivers and/or external authorities. Under no circumstances is a parent/caregiver/external authority to be informed of any instance of abuse or suspected abuse of a child without the express approval of an authorised member of the BOD.

If the suspected offender is a teacher/employee/volunteer the following protocol is to be observed:

STAGE ONE:

1. The suspected abuse is reported to the CPC and the Principal (if the CPC is the subject of the allegation the report should be made directly to the Principal; if the Principal is the subject of the allegation the CPC should report it to another member of SLT).
2. The Managing Director and Chairman of the Board are to be informed – they will notify the child's parents of the situation
3. Restrictions will be placed on the accused adult's access to the child, and possibly to all children

STAGE TWO:

1. At least 2 members of SLT meet with the teacher/employee/volunteer concerned – their response to the allegations is discussed with notes taken by either member of SLT in attendance. The notes should feature the names of all present and the time and date of the meeting. The accused colleague is to authenticate the notes as accurate with his/her signature and the date. If the accused colleague does not regard the notes as an accurate representation of the meeting he/she may provide an alternative summary of their recollection/interpretation to be regarded as appendix to the notes taken by the SLT member
2. The teacher is to be isolated from the school, with no access allowed to the school, pending investigation
3. The Chairman of the Board will determine an appropriate outcome

If the suspected offender is a student at MES Cairo the following protocol is to be observed:

STAGE ONE:

1. The suspected abuse is reported to the CPC and the Principal
2. The Managing Director and Chairman of the Board are to be informed – they will notify parents of the situation (both the parents of the accused and the parents of the alleged victim, if that alleged victim is a child)
3. Restrictions will be placed on the accused student's access to the alleged victim at school, and possibly to all children

STAGE TWO

1. At least 2 members of SLT meet with the student accused of abusing another person – their response to the allegations is to be discussed with notes taken by either member of SLT in attendance. The notes should feature the names of all present and the time and date of the meeting. The student accused of abuse is to authenticate the notes as accurate with his/her signature and the date. If the accused student does not regard the notes as an accurate representation of the meeting he/she may provide an alternative summary of their recollection/interpretation to be regarded as appendix to the notes taken by the SLT member
2. The accused student is to be isolated from the school, with no access allowed to the school, pending investigation
3. The Chairman of the Board will determine an appropriate outcome

APPENDIX

1. PROCEDURE FOR CONFIRMED CASE OF CHILD ABUSE

The CPC, relevant member/s of SLT including the COB and/or MD are to approve any of the following actions.

- 1.1 Ensure the physical and emotional safety of the child – if the child faces danger by returning to the family alternative living arrangements should be sought where possible.
- 1.2 Assess and provide appropriate medical care
- 1.3 Consult with School Doctor and School Psychologist, if appropriate
- 1.4 Parent meeting arranged
- 1.5 All adults involved are to commit to an agreed Plan of Action of support and counselling
- 1.6 If any agreed condition is not followed to the satisfaction of the psychologist and/or doctor, the school, or the family, the case will be reviewed to see whether the child is fit to return to an academic environment and whether external agencies* should be notified

*Note that in the absence of social services in Egypt, external agencies may be reputable religious authorities, influential community members or the police.

2. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

This policy has been written to reflect obligatory practices enforced by The Egyptian Authorities as well as agreed practices expected of schools regulated by UK and USA authorities. In particular, the following legislature was consulted:

Department for Education, England:

- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' July 2015 update
- 'Protecting Children from Radicalisation: The Prevent Duty' published June 2015

USA Federal Guidelines:

- 'School Safety Laws'
- 'Title IV Civil Rights Act of 1964'
- 'Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972'
- 'Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973'
- 'Americans with Disabilities Act 1990'
- 'School Safety Laws'