

Child protection policy.

The Canadian International School of Singapore's (CIS) child protection policy is preventive in orientation, transparent by design, and guided by our core values of collaboration, curiosity, creativity, generosity, and respect. As a school, we are committed to championing the welfare of students and expect all board members, administrators, teachers, staff, third-party employees, parents, students, volunteers and visitors to share in this commitment. The safety of children is our primary consideration.

In the case of a child protection allegation or incident, CIS will refer to the guidelines outlined in Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development Sector Specific Screening Guide (SSSG) and Child Abuse Reporting Guide (CARG). CIS will not act alone, and will consult with and/or report to local external agencies as appropriate.

POLICY RATIONALE

The rights of a child under the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) are affirmed and safeguarded.

The International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP 2018) commitment to child protection states:

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.
- All actions on child protection are taken with consideration for the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

While Singapore has agreed to the Convention, it made several reservations. Singapore believes that the "judicious application of corporal punishment in the best interest of the child" is allowable and not in contradiction to the tenants of the UNCRC.

CIS does not allow, promote or condone the use of corporal punishment.

N.B.(b) Singapore law allows a parent to inflict moderate and reasonable corporal punishment on his or her own child as "lawful correction" which is deemed to be an exception to Family Violence under Section 64 of the Women's Charter. [See paragraphs 11 to 15 of the Singapore Family Justice Court case of TCV v TCU [2015] SGFC 3 to read the explanation of what would qualify as "lawful correction" under Singapore law.]

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Child protection is everyone's responsibility, with members of the school community having different roles and responsibilities.

Child Protection Team

The child protection team includes

- Chief Child Protection Officer (Head of School)
- Senior Child Protection Officer (Head of Inclusion)
- Divisional Senior Child Protection Officers (Principals)

- Child Protections Officers (Vice Principals)
- Counsellors
- Head Nurse

Head of School - Chief Safeguarding Officer

The Head of School or designee is responsible for implementing, auditing and enforcing safe practices across the school. They will:

- Be alerted to all escalated child protection cases by the Head of Inclusion, when police are involved.
- Work with the Executive Committee around matters of public relations.
- Ensure that the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and associated documents are reviewed and updated annually.
- Serve as a member of the Investigation Committee that manages staff allegations.

Head of Inclusion - Senior Child Protection Officer

The Head of Student Support & Well-being or designee is responsible for overseeing child protection situations in the school. They will:

- Ensure that child protection policies and procedures are reviewed annually and aligned with the CIS Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure that the child protection roles & responsibilities are clear and understood by members of the child protection team.
- Be alerted to all child protection reports in CPOMs.
- Work closely with the divisional CPOs to facilitate next steps in escalated cases.
- Report to Child Protective Services (CPS) as needed.
- Ensure that they and the CPOs, Principals & Counsellors receive CARG training.
- Serve as a member of the Investigation Committee that manages staff allegations.

Principals - Divisional Senior Child Protection Officers

Divisional Principals in their role as Senior Child Protection Officers will:

- Be alerted to all child protection reports in CPOMS.
- Support the CPOs (VPs) as needed through the process.
- Support meetings with parents as needed.
- Collaborate with the Head of Inclusion with escalated cases.
- Communicate with divisional staff and parents as needed.

Vice Principals - Child Protection Officers (CPOs)

Divisional Vice-Principals in their role as Child Protection Officers will:

- Facilitate the immediate follow up to all child protection reports.
- Lead the investigation & next steps.
- Liaise with the appropriate stakeholders in each case.
- Ensure that divisional staff understand their role in reporting child protection concerns.
- Ensure their divisional staff understand how to use CPOMs for reporting CP concerns (what should be tagged as CP and what should not).
- Escalate cases to the Principal and Head of Inclusion as needed.

Counsellors

Counselors will:

- Pass on disclosures to the CPO immediately & document in CPOMs.
- Support the CPOs through the investigation process.
- Assist the Head of Inclusion when needed in making reports to CPS.
- Under the direction of the CPO, will be a part of the response plan which may include: being part of the student interview, providing social emotional support of the student and supporting parents through referrals to external services

Lead Health Coordinator

The Lead Health Coordinator will follow-up any physical abuse child protection concern with a physical exam after the concern is raised in CPOMS. The nurse details the outcome of the physical exam in CPOMS to flag the Senior Child Protection Officer.

Additional Responsibilities:

Academic Staff are responsible for mandatory reporting as soon as possible and no more than 24 hours of a disclosure/suspicion (right away if there is immediate risk of harm) through CPOMS for student concerns. Reports about staff, including self-reports must be made to the Principal or Vice-Principal.

Operational Staff and responsible for mandatory reporting to the Head of HR within 24 hours of a disclosure/suspicion and immediately if there is an immediate risk of harm.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Any concerns a student, parent or CIS staff member has about a child's wellbeing, no matter how small, must be reported within 24 hours of a disclosure/suspicion, and right away if there is immediate risk of harm.

Most confirmed cases of reported abuse indicate that prior suspicions of abuse taking place existed, but were not acted upon. If an individual has concerns, it is their moral, professional, and legal duty of care to report on disclosures, allegations or concerns to a designated Child Protection Officer who will investigate. It is not an individual's responsibility to investigate.

If a parent or student wants to contact a child protection officer they should email safeguarding@cis.edu.sg.

Academic staff are required to report all safeguarding/child protection concerns through the Comprehensive Pastoral Online Management System (CPOMS). Once a report has been submitted counsellors and principals will be automatically alerted. These are strictly confidential. Staff should follow the reporting guidelines provided for CPOMS.

DUE PROCESS

CIS follows due process in reviewing cases. Due process guarantees that the proceedings will be fair and that relevant parties will be given notice of the proceedings and opportunity to be heard.

Effective management of an allegation is guided by three duties:

1. The duty to children to keep them safe and act in their best interests. This takes precedence over all other duties and includes providing support for all children affected; ensuring the continuity of education and delivery of services to children, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings when making decisions.
2. The duty to the alleged perpetrator ensures that the person's rights are upheld.
3. The duty to the law and mandatory reporting obligations ensure that local and international legal obligations are complied with; allegations are reported promptly to relevant external agencies; the school's immediate actions protect as far as possible the integrity of any future criminal investigation.

Where an allegation is raised against a staff for misconduct or when there is wilful disregard of any CIS policies, an investigation will be launched, and the staff may be suspended or dismissed.

WHISTLE-BLOWING

CIS is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness. An individual who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter knowing that it will be sensitively and appropriately considered.

Disclosures will be treated with confidentiality. If a disclosure is made in good faith, the reporter will be supported and protected regardless of the outcome. Confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed when internal or external investigations are required.

A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation. They may be expected to put their concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and giving names, dates and places.

The safety of the child will be the primary consideration and no person at CIS will collude to protect an adult or our organization. CIS is committed to reporting confirmed cases to third parties as required.

HANDLING A DISCLOSURE

Any adult to whom a student makes a disclosure must:

- listen carefully and let the student tell the story in their own words. DO NOT prompt, interrupt or ask leading questions.
- reassure the child that they are right to speak up. Be calm, attentive, non-judgemental and do not show any emotion other than sympathy
- Only ask questions to clarify something that was unclear such as where or when, do not ask leading questions,
- Do not promise confidentiality. The adult must make it clear that this cannot be kept a secret and that they have a duty to report it to a Designated Child Protection Officer who is properly trained to help students in this kind of situation,
- Within 24 hours of the meeting with the child, a staff member must inform a designated child protection officer and record on CPOMS using the child's words as far as possible the information that the student shared. This should not be completed while the child is present, so as to remain completely attentive to the student during this time.

LOW LEVEL CONCERNS

A low-level concern refers to allegations against that staff member that does not appear to pose an immediate risk towards the students. The adult in question may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, even if it is a low level breach it must be reported. Your supervisor will determine the course of action for a low level concern.

Examples of low level concerns include: being over-friendly with students, having favourites, being overly strict, engaging with a child one to one in a secluded area, and using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating, or offensive language. These examples exist on a wide spectrum, from behaviour that is seemingly harmless, to seemingly inappropriate behaviour that is actually innocent. However, on the other end of the spectrum, it could be grooming behaviour.

CIS expects that low levels of concern are reported because these small concerns often act as puzzle pieces that lead to a bigger picture of the events. Therefore, it is critical that all concerns are recorded to prevent future harm of students. Dealing with these concerns effectively also protects those working in your organisation from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

DEFINITIONS

A **child or young person (CYP)** is defined as any person aged under 18 years or in receipt of educational services from the school.

Adult or staff, unless otherwise stated, should be interpreted as meaning owners, governors / trustees, all former and current teachers, caregivers, staff (pastoral, interns, support, occasional, supply and contract), leaders, volunteers, visitors, and any other adults working at CIS on any basis, including contract, employment, and volunteer, and third-party providers.

Safeguarding is the umbrella of all measures CIS takes to protect from harm and from harming others. The terms safeguarding and child protection are not used interchangeably.

Child Protection is one component of safeguarding at CIS and describes the activities that are undertaken to protect children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

N.B. The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is the lead agency against child abuse in Singapore. Please note that a person may still be convicted (under the Children and Young Persons Act) even if any actual suffering or injury on the part of the child or young person or the likelihood of any suffering or injury on the part of the child or young person was obviated by the action of another person.

Child abuse is defined as any act of commission or omission by an adult or staff which would endanger or impair the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being or that are judged by a mixture of community values and professionals to be inappropriate. (Adapted from *Ministry of Social & Family Development*, Singapore). Forms of child abuse are: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and emotional and psychological abuse.

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child or young person that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

Emotional/psychological abuse is the persistent and repeated emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause significant and adverse effects on the child's growth and development. It may

involve emotional bullying, manipulating a child's feelings to convey that he or she is worthless, unloved or inadequate, inducing guilt or fear to prevent a child from expressing his/her needs, or deliberately preventing disclosures, causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger. This includes the exploitation and/or corruption of children.

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities (penetrative e.g. rape and/or non-penetrative, e.g. kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in viewing or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, educational, emotional and/or psychological needs, causing significant harm to the child's health or development. Neglect may include, but not be limited to supervisory, physical, medical, emotional, educational and abandonment neglect.

Grooming is the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques with a child or young person used in a range of settings to establish trust and/or normalize sexually harmful behaviour with the overall aim of facilitating abuse and/or prohibiting disclosure. It may include manipulation of family members, colleagues, and organizational practices in addition to victims.

Peer-on-peer abuse is addressed in the CIS' *Peer Safeguarding Policy*.