



VICTORY HEIGHTS
PRIMARY SCHOOL
NURTURE • CHALLENGE • EXCEL

Victory Heights Primary School Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

Victory Heights Primary School fully recognizes its responsibility to safeguard, promote and protect the safety of all children. The guiding principle is the belief that it is always unacceptable for a child to experience abuse of any kind. This policy has been formulated to ensure that Victory Heights Primary School takes every possible measure to prevent abuse. It aims to ensure that none of its staff or volunteers engage in behaviour that could allow abuse to occur or actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting or leading to abuse.

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment resulting in the actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility of trust or power according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

A child protection policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that all staff of Victory Heights Primary School take our responsibility of care seriously.

Purpose

An effective whole school child protection policy provides clear direction to staff and others in regard to expected behaviour when dealing with child protection issues. An effective policy also makes explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. This ensures that child protection concerns, referrals and monitoring may be handled sensitively, professionally and in ways which support the needs of the child.

Context

Victory Heights Primary School recognizes that children have a right to feel secure and cannot learn effectively and succeed in school if they are suffering emotionally or physically. School staff are uniquely placed to recognize signs of abuse and build strong bonds with children in their care.

Aims:

The aim of Victory Heights Primary School child protection policy is to safeguard children from all forms of violence, negligence, abuse, exploitation in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UAE Law on Child Rights 2013. The Convention refers to all children up to the age of 18 years.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as protecting children from maltreatment, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care (UNICEF). The best interests of the child should be the primary consideration, children are to be protected from all forms of discrimination and every child has the right to life, survival and development.

It is our aim to:

- Raise awareness of child protection, safeguarding roles and responsibilities with school staff and volunteers.
- Develop, implement and review procedures in our school that enable all staff and volunteers to identify and report cases, or suspected cases of abuse.
- Support children with additional needs.
- Ensure the practise of safe recruitment in checking and recording of the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with children.
- Establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.
- Ensure that allegations or concerns against staff are dealt with in accordance with the Dubai Ministry of the Interior and Department of Education policies and procedures.

The whole school will aim to:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are heard.
- Ensure that children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or to have concerns.
- Include opportunities in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.
- Follow the procedures set out by the Department of Education and the Ministry of the Interior.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and its staff, by setting out its obligations on child protection, on the school website and the parents handbook, and that parents are offered a copy of the policy on request.
- Notify the Ministry of Interior Child Protection Centre of any suspected cases of child abuse.
- Inform parents of any concerns, and provide them with opportunities to change the situation, where this does not place the child at greater risk.
- Develop effective links with the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) Child Protection Centre and local police.
- Liaise with other agencies that support children.
- Ensure there is a designated person/Child Protection Liaison Officer (CPLO) appointed.

The Child Protection Liaison Officer in Victory Heights Primary School is Caroline Lee (Nurse). In the event of this person being unavailable please report to Sasha Crabb (Principal).

The CPLO responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that the school directors and staff are fully aware of and understand their responsibilities and obligations under this policy.
- Ensure that staff have appropriate training and attend training every 2 years.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers know the name of the designated CPLO, their role and contact details.
- Keep written records of child protection concerns, ensuring that they are stored securely and seperately from the main pupil files.

- Ensure that copies of child protection records and/or records of concerns are transferred accordingly (separate from pupil files) when a child leaves the school.
- Ensure that when a pupil leaves the school their information is transferred to the new school immediately.

Responsibilities of adults within the School Community:

- All adults are required to be aware of and alert to the signs of abuse.
- If an adult identifies that a child may be in an abusive situation they should record their concerns and report them to the CPLO as soon as is practical.
- If a child discloses allegations of abuse to an adult, they will follow the procedures attached to this policy.
- If the disclosure is an allegation against a member of staff they will follow the allegation procedures attached to this policy.

Duty of Care

School staff have a crucial role in shaping the lives of young people. They have a unique opportunity to interact with children in ways that are both affirming and inspiring. This policy has been produced to help staff develop the safest possible learning and working environments which safeguard children and reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

One of the key additions to legislation contained in the UAE Child Protection Policy, prepared by the Community Development Authority (CDA), is the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse by child care providers, ***making school staff legally compelled to report concerns.***

This means that adults should:

- Understand what child protection and safeguarding means and understand different types of abuse.
- Always act and be seen to be acting in the child's best interests.
- Pay particular attention to incidents of bullying and take immediate action.
- Have thorough knowledge of Victory Heights Primary School Bullying Policy and Child Protection Policy.
- Avoid any conduct that would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intent.

Types of abuse

Abuse can take a variety of forms. The ill treatment or neglect of a child which causes injury, suffering or distress is abuse. A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse. Abuse may take place on a single occasion or it may occur repeatedly over time. Abuse of children has been internationally defined in the following categories:

- **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the willful, neglectful failure to cause physical injury or suffering. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing or treatment that can cause actual bodily harm. Fictitious illness by proxy may also be considered as abuse.

- **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Domestic abuse, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

- **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of pornographic material, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect the child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include a failure to respond to a child's basic emotional need. Neglect is the failure to act in response to need.

- **Bullying**

Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It may take many forms, but the three main types are physical (eg. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (eg. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling), and emotional (eg. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development or at the extreme end, cause them significant harm (including self harm). All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have in place rigorously enforced antibullying strategies.

Signs of abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy. It is not the responsibility of school staff to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk. It is the responsibility and duty of those

working with and caring for children to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child.

- Many forms of abuse do not leave physical signs.
- Many signs of sexual abuse do not leave physical evidence
- Forensic evidence can disappear within a short period of time.
- Sexually abused children can suffer physical injury.
- Children of all ages, able bodied, disabled, children with or without a learning disability, boys and girls from all races, cultures and classes are abused.
- Young people's unhappiness and distress can often be witnessed in their behaviour.

Refer to: Appendix 1 - Identifying signs of child abuse.

Children Volunteering Information

If a child volunteers information to a member of staff it may be done obliquely, rather than directly eg. through play, drawings etc. Children will talk about their concerns and problems to people they can trust. The role of the member of staff or volunteer hearing this is to listen but not undertake any investigation of the existing or potential abuse. This is the role of the child protection agencies.

Refer to: Appendix 2 - What to do if a child confides in you.

Legal action against a perpetrator can be seriously damaged by any suggestion that the child's words have been influenced in any way by the person they told.

Child Protection/Safeguarding Procedures

The prime concern at all stages must be the safety and interests of the child. Legal and regulatory requirements are necessary for guidance on best practice in safeguarding of children. UNICEF explains safeguarding as "taking all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's welfare is minimised; and where there are concerns about children and young people's welfare, taking appropriate action to address those concerns".

The following procedures should be read in conjunction with the flow chart (*Appendix 8*).

If a member of staff suspects abuse eg. through physical injury etc. they must:

1. Record their concerns.
2. Report it to the CPLO immediately.
3. Consider if there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention and if so assistance must be called for.
4. Make an accurate record (which may be used in any subsequent court proceedings) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the occurrence, of all that has happened, including details of:
 - Dates and times of their observations.
 - Dates and times of any discussions they were involved in.
 - Any injuries.
 - Explanations given by the child/adult.
 - What action was taken.

The records must be signed and dated by the author.

Refer to *Skin Maps (Appendix 7)*

Refer to *Referral Forms (Appendix 8 & 9)*

Following a report of concerns from a member of staff, the CPLO must:

1. Decide whether or not there are sufficient grounds for suspecting child abuse, in which case a referral must be made to the Ministry of the Interior Child Protection Centre in Dubai. It is operated by the United Arab Emirates Ministry of the Interior and its mandate is to protect children across the UAE.
2. If there is no risk of harm the CPLO will either actively monitor the situation or seek advice from the MOI Child Protection Centre.
3. The CPLO must confirm any referrals in writing to the MOI Child Protection Centre, within 24 hours, including the actions that have been taken. The written referral should be made using the Referral Form attached to this document.
4. If a child is in immediate danger and urgent protective action is required, the police should be called using the 999 service. The CPLO should also notify the MOI Child Protection Centre of the occurrence and what action has been taken. The CPLO should seek advice from the police/MOI Child Protection Centre about informing the parents.
5. Normally the school should try to discuss any concerns about a child's welfare with the family and where possible seek their agreement before making a referral to the MOI Child Protection Centre. However, this should only be done when it will not place the child at increased risk. The child's views should also be taken into account.
6. Where there is doubt or reservations about involving the child's family, the CPLO should clarify with the MOI Child Protection Centre whether the parents should be told about the referral and, if so, when and by whom. This is important in cases where police may need to conduct a criminal investigation.

The Child Protection Centre, located in Al Barsha is open between 8 am and 3 pm for drop in services. A member of staff can be contacted 24 hours a day:

Hotline phone number 800988

Mobile phone number 056 682011

Email child@CDA.gov.ae

When making a statement it is important to relay the clear facts, any suspicions or allegations and whether or not there has been any contact with the child's family.

If the CPLO feels unsure about whether a referral is necessary they can phone MOI Child Protection Centre to discuss concerns and obtain advice. To do so will not constitute a child abuse referral and may well help to clarify a situation.

When a pupil is in need of urgent medical attention and there is suspicion that abuse may have taken place, the CPLO or Principal should take the child to the Accident and Emergency Unit at Rashid Hospital, having first notified the MOI Child Protection Centre.

The CPLO should seek advice about what action the MOI Child Protection Centre will take and on informing the parents, remembering that parents should normally be informed that a child requires urgent hospital attention. If the suspected abuse is sexual then the medical examination should be delayed until the MOI Child Protection Centre and/or the police can liaise with the hospital, unless the needs of the child are such that medical attention is the priority. If a decision is made not to inform the parents there must be a responsible adult with the child at all times, whether from the school, MOI Child Protection Centre or police.

When dealing with allegations against staff, directors or volunteers:

- Report any concerns about the conduct of any member of staff or volunteer to the Principal as soon as possible and within 24 hours.
- If an allegation is made against the Principal, the concerns need to be raised with the local Education Authority as soon as possible and within 24 hours.

In either event the MOI Child Protection Centre should be contacted on **800988**.

Safe Working Practice

All staff and volunteers should aim to be positive role models to students by behaving in a respectful, mature, safe, fair and considered manner thereby protecting themselves and their pupils.

It is important to ensure that you:

- Work in an open and transparent way, avoiding actions that would lead a reasonable person to question your motivation and intentions.
- Dress appropriately for your role.
- Are aware of personal space, any physical contact should be professional.
- Understand your position of power and influence over children and not misuse it in any way. This includes and is not limited to:
 - a. accepting regular gifts from children.
 - b. giving personal gifts to children.
- Recognise your influence and do not engage in activities out of school that might compromise your position within school.
- Do not seek to establish social contact with pupils outside of school. This includes the use of emails, texts and other messaging systems including social networking sites.
- Leave glass panels on doors uncovered, it is important that actions are seen.
- Talk to the Principal if you feel there is a difficult issue with a particular student or class.

Ensure that you have parental permission to take photographs and ensure there is a clear educational aim for any photography or filming.

Safeguarding Disabled Children

There is a wealth of research based evidence to support the view that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to maltreatment or abuse and neglect. Therefore knowing and understanding the link between disability and child abuse and neglect is an important step towards planning targeted and appropriate prevention intervention strategies. Safeguarding children with disabilities is the same as safeguarding their non-disabled peers however it requires high standards of practice, increased awareness and support for children and their families.

Refer to *Appendix 3 Guidance on toileting needs*

Child Protection Vetting

Victory Heights Primary School strongly recognises the need for vigilant awareness of child protection issues. It is important that all staff have appropriate induction and training to fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are confident about carrying them out. Staff, pupils and parents should feel secure that they can raise any issues or concerns about the safety or welfare of children and know that they will be listened to and taken seriously. This will be achieved by maintaining an ethos of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and protecting staff. This is supported by having clear child protection policies, appropriate induction and training, briefing and discussion of relevant issues and relevant learning.

Victory Heights Primary School believes it is vital to create a culture of safe recruitment and, as part of that, adopt recruitment procedures that deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children. The Principal and governing bodies will act reasonably in making decisions about the suitability of the prospective employee based on checks and evidence including: criminal record checks, references and interview information.

For most appointments, an enhanced criminal record check will be appropriate as the majority of staff will be involved in regulated activity where they will be responsible, on a regular basis for the care and supervision of children.

There is no requirement to request a criminal record check on a supervised volunteer who regularly teaches or looks after children. Volunteers who regularly teach or look after children in an unsupervised basis must obtain a criminal record check.

A Dubai Police Clearance application form also known as Dubai Police Good Conduct Certificate may be obtained from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) located at Dubai Police Headquarters.

Year Leaders and the Principal will use their professional judgement with regard to the need to escort and supervise visitors.

Refer to *Appendix 5 Briefing sheet for Temporary Staff and Volunteers*

Refer to *Appendix 6 Transporting Children for School Activities*

ANNUAL REVIEW

As a school, we will review this policy annually.

Date Approved by Principal: _____

Date Reviewed by Child Protection Team: _____

Next review date: _____

Date of CPLO training/refreshers: _____

Date of School Training: _____

