Child Safety & Protection Policy

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Al Raja School
Child Safety and Protection Policy

Distributed to: All Staff, Board Members, Students, and Parents

Revisions: This document will also be reviewed annually by the Crisis Committee and approved by the Principal

Custodian: Crisis Committee

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1. INTRODUCTION

Because of God's high regard for the safety and well-being of children, Al Raja School places priority in maintaining a safe environment for children. The board, staff, and administration at Al Raja School are committed to providing a safe environment for children that supports children's rights. Al Raja School will take into consideration the local law regarding the policies set forth in this document.

2. DEFINITIONS

Abuse: The maltreatment of a child or another person or persons in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power, which endangers or impairs the health or welfare of a child.

Adult: Generally, a person of 18 years or more of age.

Bullying: Willful, aggressive behavior by an adult or student towards another student, which may include a wide variety of physical or verbal conduct.

Child: Generally, a person of less than 18 years. This also includes any student under the responsibility of Al Raja School.

Inappropriate behavior: Interactions between two or more students, which the organization sees as inappropriate, up to and including actual abuse. Should both students be under the age of 18, it will typically be considered abuse if there are more than two years difference (730 days or more) between the students or there is a difference in responsibility, trust, or power between them.

If there is less than two years age difference and there is not a significant difference in responsibility, trust, or power between them, what would normally be defined as abuse ill be considered inappropriate behavior, with an action plan put in place to address the behaviors of concern and their effect.

The following actions may involve abuse or inappropriate behavior of one student to another and are prohibited:

Bullying, hazing, derogatory name-calling, ridicule or humiliation, singling out a child for negative treatment or exclusion, child-to-child inappropriate sexual touch, inappropriate sexually explicit language, showing of sexually explicit images, hitting, slapping, pushing, holding against will, or otherwise assaulting another child, or any other action that inflicts harm on another student, mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Because of these and other variables, student-to-student cases will be judged on a case-by-case basis, and the school reserves the right to label a situation as abuse or inappropriate behavior based on the situation. Student-to-student abuse includes all types of abuse as defined in this policy.

Child Safety Officer: The person who conducts the Child Safety Program of an organization.

Commercial exploitation: Commercial exploitation of children can involve using minors as child soldiers, child labor, slavery and all aspects of human trafficking. Commercial sexual exploitation of children involves crimes of a sexual nature committed against juvenile victims for financial or other economic reasons. Common forms of child commercial sexual exploitation are sex trafficking, child pornography, and child sex tourism.

Emotional Abuse: Subjecting or exposing a student to behavior that may result in psychological trauma including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. It includes acts of commission or omission.

Grooming Behavior: Intentional activities engaged in by a respondent with a student, and possibly the student's parents or other gatekeepers, over a period of time which result in greater trust being placed in the respondent, which in turn permits him or her greater access to, control over and privacy with the student, thereby placing the student at greater risk of harm or abuse.

Harm: The endangerment or impairment of the health or welfare of the student.

Inappropriate behavior: Interactions between an adult(s) and a student or between students which cause concern for the safety of the student(s), without meeting the definitions of abuse.

Inappropriate sexual behavior: Activities between students of a sexual nature which do not meet the definition of sexual abuse but are deemed undesirable due to their impact on each student's health and welfare, including those activities generally classified as "grooming behaviors."

Neglect: Harm or significant risk of harm to a child or children caused by a significant and unreasonable failure to provide a child with basic needs of food, clothing, warmth and shelter, safe living conditions, emotional and physical security and protection, medical and dental care, cleanliness and education which are reasonably available, and appropriate supervision by the parents and guardians.

Personnel/Staff: All members or associates, employees, board members, or volunteers who work directly with Al Raja School.

Physical Abuse: Any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury. Abuse may be a single incident or repeated incidents.

Reporter: A person who provides the information required to register a concern for child safety and initiate the planned response process of the organization's child safety program.

Response: An established process which is initiated in response to any allegation or report of harmful behavior toward a student(s), and which has three purposes:
     a) Assess the safety of students
     b) Determine if any personnel have engaged in misconduct toward a student(s)
     c) Identify where there may have been organizational failures – Ask the question "How did this happen?"

Respondent: A person, usually an adult, who has been reported to have caused harm to another person, usually a child, in the context of child safety.

Risk: A multi-layered assessment of the probability and consequences of an event occurring either immediately or in the future. Risk may be categorized in general terms as high, medium and low, or acceptable and unacceptable.

Sexual Abuse: The involvement of a student in sexual activity by physical, verbal or visual means, by a person in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Sexual Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Spiritual Abuse: Spiritual abuse may include but is not limited to patterns of abusive behavior that involve misuse of scripture and scriptural principles to create fear, guilt, humiliation, to control or manipulate a student, to protect the abuser, or to manage the student for the convenience of adults.

Victim: A person who has suffered harm.

Witness: A person who has observed behaviors or heard statements made by other persons, which are deemed material to an inquiry into child safety concerns.

3. PREVENTION PROCEDURES

Prevention procedures occur through screening, training and adherence to the Al Raja School Code of Conduct.

Screening

As a duty of care to our students, Al Raja School mandates that any potential personnel undergo a screening process. Screening includes:

- Written applications for any persons working in any capacity with students which include the following minimums:
  - Specific history of employment or volunteer work with children
  - Questions related to inappropriate behavior with or abuse of children
- References for everyone beginning or transferring to a position with Al Raja School working in any capacity with students
- Interviews with applicants following a standard interview format.

Training

Al Raja School will ensure that child safety training occurs for all new staff and that annual child safety training is conducted for all Al Raja School personnel. The elements of training will include but not limited to:

- foundational principles of Child Safety
- how to respond to a disclosure by a student
- indicators of abuse
- awareness of factors that put students at risk
- reporting procedures
- confidentiality
- explanation of the roles and responsibilities of personnel under this policy
- up to date and recent information pertaining to child abuse
- screening training for those involved in the hiring process

4. CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff including volunteers are expected to read, sign and adhere to the Code of Conduct.

5. SECONDMENT

Al Raja School may receive staff through secondment or placement from other organizations. The applicant is required to comply with Al Raja School screening procedure and child safety policy.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

In the event of a potential child safety issue, Al Raja School has adopted a policy of confidentiality on a "need to know" principle. The "need to know" principle is to be applied at every level during an inquiry. The intent is to keep the circle of confidentiality small in order to protect the integrity and privacy of those directly involved. Caution should always be used in the preparation of all information disseminated both within and outside the Al Raja School community. It is extremely important that results of findings in each situation be addressed truthfully and without malice for the care, reconciliation and restoration of all concerned individuals.

7. SCHOOL WIDE TRAINING

Al Raja School has a school-wide child safety program. This program includes both initial and ongoing training for all personnel, staff and volunteers to enable them to prevent, recognize and respond to child safety issues.

There is a safety program for students in grades KG1-12. Age-appropriate classroom lessons, materials and/or discussions will be delivered to all students and parents including but not limited to the following areas:
- Bullying
- Personal Safety
- Physical Abuse
- Manipulation
- Grooming
- On-line safety
- Healthy relationships
- Neglect & negligent behavior
- Self-harm
- Staying safe away from home
- Commercial exploitation
- Disclosing/Reporting Abuse

8. CHILD SAFETY TEAM

The Al Raja School Crisis Committee, composed of a mix of gender and nationality, will be responsible for ensuring the full implementation of this policy, including screening, training, tracking of documents such as the code of conduct and responding to disclosures of child safety issues. A Child Safety Protection Officer (CSO) will be appointed by the team who will coordinate training. The appropriate social counselor, if not already on the committee, will be included in all meetings related to responding to specific Child Safety Issues.

The current Crisis Committee Chair is:
> Name: Vinolia John
> Email: vp.secondary@alrajabahrain.org

The current CSOs are
> Name: Soral Jameel
> Email: soral.jameel@alrajabahrain.org
>
> Name: Cara-Jay Steytler
> Email: cara-jay.steytler@alrajabahrain.org
>
> Name: Hnen Jaber
> Email: hnen.jaber@alrajabahrain.org

A member of the Board will be designated as the Child Protection Officer of the Board (CPO-B). The current CSO-B is:
> Name: Maria Khoury
> Email: maria.khoury128@gmail.com

The Chair of the Crisis Committee should meet with the CPO-B annually in September at the School campus to discuss training plans, the responsibilities of the committee, and procedures that the Board member would follow in the case of an allegation against one of the Senior Staff.

9. RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OF A CHILD SAFETY ISSUE

Reporting
Any disclosure or concern regarding the abuse or safety concern of a student will be treated seriously with adherence to the following procedure. Particular care will be taken in regard to confidentiality and the sharing of information. Care should be taken in protecting the confidentiality of the reporter.
- All personnel will report any child safety concerns to the CSO in the instances of:
  - abuse (observed or suspected)
  - an allegation of abuse
  - a student's disclosure of abuse
- Personnel members will ensure the immediate safety of the student as much as possible.

- All reports must be made in writing using the Child Safety Reporting Form (Appendix 1). The person receiving the allegation will immediately (within 24 hrs) notify the CSO.
- Students are expected to report safety concerns to their Social Counselor as per the child safety training provided by Al Raja School.

The CSO should notify the Vice Principal immediately of any allegations. The Vice Principal will notify the Principal and the Crisis Committee Chair, and those staff members will conduct the initial assessment.

If the alleged abuser is one of the senior staff (Principal, Vice Principals, Curriculum and Quality Controller, Executive Board Member), the CSO is required to report to the CPO-B. The CPO-B will then participate in all aspects of the inquiry process as a part of the team, reporting all findings to the Board.

Initial Assessment
The purpose of the initial assessment is to ensure the safety of the targeted student and other students by ensuring the respondent is not in contact with students. During this phase the child safety team will respond to a child safety report following the steps of
1) Plan: who will gather information, what questions need to be answered, who needs to be talked with
2) Gather Information: carry out the plan
3) Analyze Information: discuss the information collected
4) Outcome Decision: Depending on the outcome of the initial assessment, the inquiry may be closed, or the team may move to the next phase and conduct a Child Safety Assessment.

Child Safety Assessment
In conducting a child safety assessment, the team will follow the recommended steps of 1) Plan 2) Gather 3) Analyze Information 4) Outcome Decision

Inquiry Process
Although there is a great deal of work involved in inquiries, it is still important that an allegation of abuse be investigated as quickly and thoroughly as possible, preferably within 24-72 hours of the report being made.

The following is included as a minimum in our inquiry protocol:
a. Those interviewed will include the following:
   1. Targeted Student
   2. Known witnesses
   3. Those persons whom the targeted student indicates are witnesses or can contribute to the inquiry
   4. Respondent, after having completed interviews 1-3.
   5. Those persons whom the respondent indicates are witnesses or can contribute to the inquiry
b. Two or more interviewers are required to be involved in student and respondent interviews, the interviews are required to be done in person, and include an interviewer of the same gender.
c. Due diligence is exercised in determining if there are additional students affected.
d. Standard interview formats are used for each type of interview.
e. The Child Safety Officer will determine the Trained Interviewers to be used with the student, witnesses and respondent.
f. Support people will be available for the respondent and the student(s) during the inquiry process.

Interview Format: These are crucial parts of the process.
The interview format should utilize non-leading questions and obtain behavioral information regarding:
- the actions involved
- the length of time over which the abuse occurred
- the number and frequency of incidents
- any threats or coercion used
- location in which the abuse occurred
- others involved
- the effect on the victim

Preparation of Findings and Conclusions

Once the extended inquiry has been completed, conclusions will be drawn, an official report (see below) filed, and a debriefing of the process completed with the members of the Child Safety Team. Hard copies of the report will be kept in the office of the Board Secretary.

The official report (Statement of Findings) is to include a description of the reported behaviors, the response process, the data collected, and the conclusion reached. These findings will be submitted to the Principal, who will inform the Board. The Principal (and the Board if necessary) will determine any administrative outcome including discipline required, reporting to appropriate authorities, safety plans, and counseling follow-up. A copy of this document will be given to both the respondent and the affected student(s) (or their parents in the case of current reports where the victim is still a child).

If the alleged abuser is one of the senior staff, the CPB-O will report all findings to the School Board. The School Board will then determine any administrative outcome for the alleged abuser and report it to authorities. The CSO will be responsible for revision of any safety plans and counseling follow-up.