

MEF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

Definition for Child: for the purposes of this document, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18 which is in line with the **UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child**. At MEF International School, any student who is over the age of 18, will still be included within this definition.

See Appendix One for further definitions.

STATEMENT OF AIM

All children have the right to be protected from violence, exploitation and abuse. Yet, millions of children worldwide from all socioeconomic backgrounds, across all ages, religions and cultures suffer violence, exploitation and abuse every day. Millions more are at risk¹. MEF School aims to ensure that all students are given a safe learning environment by maintaining appropriate practices and supervision in the school.

RATIONALE

The school is committed to providing an environment where children can play, learn, develop and achieve. Students will feel safe and empowered to tell or communicate if they are being harmed in some way. We are committed to ensuring that all staff are sensitive to issues of race, culture, gender and diversity but these issues should never be a barrier to sharing and reporting concerns about children.

MEF School endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child² of which the host country for the School, Turkey, is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives.

“State parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 19).

This policy is endorsed by the MEF School Board of Governors.

Key Responsibilities:

We will meet our commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

- **Awareness:** we will ensure that all staff and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

¹ Unicef: https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_57972.html

² Amnesty International Unofficial Summary of the UN Rights of the Child:
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-c>

- **Prevention:** we will ensure, through awareness and good practice that staff and others minimise the risks to children.
- **Reporting:** we will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.
- **Responding:** we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order to ensure that the above standards of reporting and responding are met we will ensure that we:

- Take seriously any concerns raised
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- Support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or cooperating with any subsequent process of investigation
- Are guided through the child protection process by the principle of the “best interests of the child”
- Listen and take seriously the views and wishes of children
- Work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure the protection of children.³

Applicability:

Members of the school community in which this policy applies include:

- All employees of MEF School and employees of the school’s affiliated organizations.
- Individuals and entities with contractual relationships with the school.
- Board members/governors/owners and other school leaders.
- All students, parents, and legal guardians; in particular, with respect to upholding the school’s code of conduct, respect for one another, and the reporting of incidents/reasonable suspicions.
- All school chaperones and volunteers who work with children and youth; or participate in school programs and activities involving children and youth.
- Visitors, vendors, or guests on school premises.

MEF School understands that “appropriate personal conduct” is also dependent of cultural expectations and the need to comply with the legal and ethical expectations and requirements regarding child/youth abuse within the country in which the school operates.

In this regard, and as noted in this policy, the school attempts to inform and train applicable community members with regard to these factors.

³ Save the Children; <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/2690/pdf/2690.pdf>

PROCEDURES

Recruitment

MEF International School will make every effort to implement the highest standards of selection, recruitment and verification in hiring practices to ensure the safety of children.

Before an offer of employment is made, the Principal will conduct reference checks. Two written and two phone reference checks will be made with specific questions relating to Child Protection included. See the MEF IS Recruitment Procedure for more detail. Appendix Three shows questions.

All staff will provide a criminal check before employment begins. A criminal check will be requested for each country that an employee has resided or worked. A criminal record check from Turkey will be required every year afterwards for all employees.

All staff will sign and abide by a code of conduct confirming their understanding of, and commitment to Child Protection. Appendix Two.

Admissions

In order to be proactive in the arena of child protection for newly enrolled children, MEF International School will seek information specifically from the Head of the last school the child was enrolled. A confidential form will be sent to the previous school Head asking for information directly related to Child Protection. This form is needed in order to enrol a child, however every effort will be made to receive this information. Appendix Four.

Education and Training

All staff will be required to complete online child protection training before the beginning of employment, and to take a refresher once every two years. This training is coordinated by the Head of School and the Human Resources Coordinator. All certificates of completion will be shared with the Human Resources Coordinator.

The Child Protection procedure will be shared and discussed at the beginning of each academic year during the Teacher Orientation Session. The **UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child** will be included as part of this discussion. The face to face briefing will explore this procedure, and ensure that the reporting systems are clear to all staff. Teachers will also attend to Appendix Six of this document, discussing Positive Touch and the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention.

Students will also be informed and educated about their rights. Each year, the Primary and Secondary School Counsellors will take responsibility for focussing some learning time on the **UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child** through PSE or Homeroom lessons. The activities and learning opportunities will explore these rights, ensuring students have a good understanding of their rights, and what to do if there is a problem. The activities and language will be modified so

that they are age and developmentally appropriate. Students will discuss what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is, and what to do when they feel something is not right.

Communication Guidelines

MEF International School will communicate this procedure annually to all teachers and parents. This procedure will be available on the school's website to the whole community.

All staff will have access to this Child Protection procedure at all times.

The school will protect children by not sharing information or posting online information such as children's names, locations, photographs, or case studies without the informed consent of parents.

Individual staff members will not connect with students using their own personal social media account. They will not share online, or otherwise, any photos or personal information of children at any time.

The Designated Child Protection Officer (School counsellors) will be required to maintain accurate and relevant child protection records. These records will be kept in the child's confidential folder. This information may only be accessed by the Designated Child Protection Officer, the School Principal and the Head of School.

The Principal in coordination with the Human Resources officer will keep any records of any investigations or allegations made against any staff member, whatever the outcome, in the employee's confidential folder in the Human Resources office.

Any investigations made regarding child protection cases will be kept in the child's school confidential records file. Records sent to schools if a child transfers, will be flagged to let the receiving school know there is a confidential file for the child. MEF International School will make every attempt to share this information to protect the child.

Ramifications of Misconduct

In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, MEF School will conduct a full investigation. The employee will be asked to take leave with pay during the course of the investigation. Immediate termination will occur in the case of any serious misconduct. The incident will be reported to the police and to external recruiting agencies.

Reporting, Reaction and Support

Reporting

1. We take all concerns raised seriously. It is not the person first hearing or encountering a case of alleged or suspected abuse to decide whether abuse has taken place; it is their responsibility to immediately report the concern.

2. If the child has come forward to report any kind of abuse, then your role must be that of active listener. Limit your questions to clarifying your understanding of what the child is saying. Any questions should be framed in an open manner so as not to lead the child.
3. The staff member should make notes of what was shared by the child immediately after the discussion. Should you be expressing your own concerns or the concerns of someone else, you should be prepared to write down your concerns. See Appendix Five for further information about what to include in your notes.
4. Concerns must be immediately reported to the Primary School Guidance Counsellor or the Secondary School Guidance Counsellor. The Primary and Secondary School Guidance Counsellors are the school's **Designated Child Protection Officers**. The role of these officers will be:
 - To coordinate action on child abuse within the school, ensuring all staff/volunteers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection
 - To refer individual cases of suspected abuse to the Principal and Head of School on issues relating to child protection.
 - Maintain a central record keeping system, keep all records up to date and share records when necessary.
5. Confidentiality is of utmost importance. The teacher must assure the child that this information will only be shared with those authorised to have access to this information, and must not disclose the information to anyone but the Guidance Counsellor, Principal and/or Head of School.
6. Every staff member is obliged to immediately provide any information of a possible case of child abuse to the Primary or Secondary School Guidance Counsellor. This information could be from a student who has disclosed, personal observation or any other source. Any adult who withholds information or covers up any kind of abuse is considered an accomplice.

Reaction

1. The counsellor will immediately report the situation to the Principal and the Head of School. In all cases, steps taken and information received will be documented factually and strict confidentiality maintained.
2. In all cases of suspected or proven child abuse or neglect, the focus is placed on safeguarding and protecting the child. Healing measures for the affected persons to receive counselling and support will be included.
3. In all suspected abuse cases, an internal investigation is carried out by a neutral person who is not involved in the case and appointed by the Head of School. Any further information may be acquired through:
 - a. the interview of staff members
 - b. reviewing the child's history in the school
 - c. discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child, these discussions may include drawing pictures and playing with dolls to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.
 - d. In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor, or administrator.
 - e. Consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family.
 - f. Consultation with the school's attorney.

- g. Informal consultation with local authorities.
- 4. The Principal and the Head of School will determine the course of follow-up actions. These may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.
 - b. Involvement of the Turkish Child Police services
 - c. Involvement of Social Welfare Services in Turkey
 - d. Involvement of the consulate of the child's home country
 - e. Involvement of the parent's employer
 - f. Involvement of the welfare office of the child's home country

SUPPORT

Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- a. The counselor will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- b. The counselor will provide the child's teachers and the Principal with ongoing support.
- c. The counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- d. The counselor will maintain contact with outside therapists to update the progress of the child in school.
- e. Information as determined by the counsellor will be shared with teachers in order to provide the student with support.

Approved 2nd March, 2018

APPENDIX ONE

DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

According to the World Health Organisation, child abuse refers to “all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. .”⁴

Abuse is:

- Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function death; and/or
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering; and/or
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the Turkish criminal code or school policy; and/or
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child; and/or
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Most child abuse is inflicted by someone the child knows, respects or trusts. International school communities have a unique characteristic of which school personnel must be aware in terms of the individuals who are around our children. School personnel should be knowledgeable of the potential reasons why children may not be able to talk about any victimization they might have experienced.

To increase the MEF School’s awareness, this Policy focuses on the four main categories of abuse and provides basic information about the physical and behavioural signs associated with each type.

Physical abuse is:

Physical abuse of a child is defined as the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child’s health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing.

Sexual abuse is:

Sexual abuse is defined as the involvement of a child in 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, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children can be sexually abused

⁴The World Health Organization definition of Child Abuse:
http://www.who.int/topics/child_abuse/en/

by both adults and other children who are – by virtue of their age or stage of development – in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.

Emotional and psychological abuse is:

Emotional and psychological abuse involves both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment. Acts in this category may have a high probability of damaging the child's physical or mental health, or its physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Abuse of this type includes: the restriction of movement; patterns of belittling, blaming, threatening, frightening, discriminating against or ridiculing; and other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

Neglect is:

Neglect includes both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or other family member to provide for the development and well-being of the child – where the parent is in a position to do so – in one or more of the following areas:

- health;
- education;
- emotional development;
- nutrition;
- shelter and safe living conditions.

The parents of neglected children are not necessarily poor. They may equally be financially well-off.

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⁵ Source: The World Health Organisation - Preventing Child Maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43499/1/9241594365_eng.pdf

APPENDIX TWO

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF WORKING AT MEF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

All MEF International School staff must sign and abide by this Code of Conduct.

Definition for Child: for the purposes of this document, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18 which is inline with the **UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child**. At MEF International School, any student who is over the age of 18, will still be included within this definition.

Teachers and Staff must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- Develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home
- Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- Condone, or participate in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others
- Communicate with or post photos or any other information of children on personal social media accounts.
- This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid action or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise these risks
- As far as possible, be visible in working with children
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- Empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- Take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct. I understand that any breach of this code of conduct could result in an immediate termination of my employment contract.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX THREE

PHONE REFERENCE CHECK FOR RECRUITMENT OF NEW STAFF

1. Can you please share the strengths and challenges of this teacher?
2. Could you please tell me a little about the teacher's performance in the classroom? Teaching style?
3. Could you tell me about the relationships this teacher establishes with students, teachers, parents and leadership?
4. Do you have any reservations about this candidate working unsupervised with children?
5. How does this person contribute to the community? How do they affect school morale?
6. Does the candidate meet timelines, punctuality etc?
7. Is this candidate open to receiving feedback?
8. Is there anything else that I haven't asked that you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX FOUR



MEF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, Istanbul and Izmir

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

Here at MEF International School we believe that schools play a vital role in the life of a child, and we have shared responsibility to safeguard and protect their physical and emotional wellbeing. Therefore it is a crucial requirement that we should be informed of any child protection issues that have arisen in a student's previous school. Safeguarding enables children to develop in an environment where their physical growth and mental development is supported and protected. With the help of our parents, MEF International School can take precautions to answer the needs of students and to protect them. We would therefore be grateful if you as the Head teacher / Head of School could complete and return this form to us in respect of the following candidate who has joined MEF International School.

Name:

Previous school:

Does this child/youth have any child protection issues? Yes / No

IMPORTANT: If you have answered yes please provide further details to Ms. Figen Sonmez, Head of School. If there are any particular concerns, Ms. Sonmez would be happy to discuss them in order that we can ensure that we provide appropriate support. Please contact her at sonmezf@mefis.k12.tr or by telephone on +90 212 362 26 33.

If you have answered no please sign and return this form to Ms. Sonmez by email.

Name of Head Teacher: _____

Signed by Head Teacher: _____

Date: _____

All information provided will be kept in the strictest confidence.

APPENDIX FIVE

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN NOTES

This is for disclosure from a student, or for your own concerns or concerns of others.

The child's name, age and date of birth of child.

The child's home contact details.

Whether or not the person writing the notes is expressing their own concerns, or those of someone else.

If the child has disclosed to you, write as closely as you can remember exactly what the child has said.

The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any other special factors or relevant information.

Make a distinction between fact, opinion, hearsay,

Include a description of any physical injury or bruising. Include information about any behavioural changes.

APPENDIX SIX

Positive Touch and The Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention

1. Introduction

At MEF IS we believe that students need to be safe, know how to behave, and know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. For a very small minority of students the use of restrictive physical intervention may be needed and on such occasions acceptable forms of intervention will be used. Teachers also treat children with affection, but keep clear and supportive boundaries.

2. Acceptable forms of intervention/touch

Staff will have cause to have physical contact with students for a variety of reasons such as;

- To comfort a pupil in distress
- To gently direct a pupil
- For curricular reasons e.g. PE and Drama
- In an emergency to avert danger
- In rare circumstances when Restrictive Physical Intervention is warranted

When physical contact takes place staff should consider;

- The pupil's age and level of understanding
- The pupil's individual characteristics and history
- The location where contact takes place

3. Definition of 'restrictive physical intervention'

To use Restrictive Physical Intervention to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following

- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property
- Engaging in any behaviour that is prejudicial to maintain the good order and discipline at the school
- In the case of pupils committing a criminal offence

'Restrictive Physical Intervention' are interventions where bodily contact using force is used. The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it. The degree of force must be proportionate to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent.

4. When the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention may be appropriate.

Restrictive Physical Interventions will be used only when all other strategies have failed. Sometimes physical management may be necessary in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency. In addition certain pupils may become distressed, agitated and out of control and need calming with a brief Restrictive Physical Intervention. The safety and welfare of all pupils and staff is an important consideration and the school's duty of care must be an overriding factor.

5. Who may use Restrictive Physical Intervention

All staff have a duty of care to keep children safe. In an emergency all staff should do whatever they think necessary in the situation they face. If they believe they are likely to face the behaviour again then under the school's duty of care they will be trained in Restrictive Physical Intervention.

6. The Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention

Staff will use the minimum force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour. The following principles will be followed;

- Restrictive Physical Intervention is an act of care and control, not punishment.
 - It is never used to force compliance with staff instructions.
 - It will only be used when staff believe that immediate action is necessary in the pupil's/other pupils' best interests.
 - Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for Restrictive Physical Intervention through dialogue and diversion at the level of understanding of the child.
 - Only the minimum force necessary will be used to prevent severe distress, injury or damage. Staff will be able to show that the intervention used was in keeping with the incident.
 - Every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses.
 - As soon as a pupil has regained control any intervention will be relaxed.
 - Escalation will be avoided at all costs.
 - The age and level of understanding of the pupil will always be taken into account.
 - Consideration will be given to an individual pupil's circumstances and reference made to any Behaviour Plan in place and in the case of SEN pupils their Individualized Educational Plan
- Following any incident support will be given to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved.