

Child Safeguarding Policy

<2024-25>

Purpose

The School places utmost importance in ensuring that all our children learn in a safe and joyful environment that promotes social and creative learning.

Primary caregivers (parents/guardians) and educators have the responsibility of creating and facilitating safe spaces for learning and development of children. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who need help and protection.

Scope The School has been building structures to raise awareness about child safety amongst all our stakeholders aligned to our values of wellbeing, equity and diversity. An ecosystem of child safety can only be achieved when students, caregivers & educators proactively work towards it.

- To ensure all children feel safe and supported at school.
- To prevent child abuse by identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- To ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- To value and empower children in decision-making processes.
- To ensure responsible reporting of allegations of child abuse while keeping the wellbeing of the child is kept at the centre.
- To ensure that all staff (including contractors), volunteers, visitors to the school, parents/caregivers, and students adhere to The School's child safety policy at all times.
- To comply with Prevention of Child Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and child rights as per the Indian Constitution.



Contents

Section A: Background & Context

- 1. Legal Framework for Child Safeguarding 3
- 2. Child Abuse - Types & Signs 5
- 3. Dynamics of Child Abuse 12

Section B: Policy of the School

- 1. Preventive Measures for Staff 16
- 2. Responsibility of Staff 17
- 3. Preventive Measures for Parents/ Guardians 20
- 4. Responsibility of Parents/ Guardians 21
- 5. Preventive Measures for Students 22
- 6. Responsibility of Students 23

Section C: Response to Breach of the Policy 24

Section D: Implementation of the Policy 28

SECTION A: Background & Context

This section of the policy outlines the provisions available for safeguarding children under the Constitution of India, addresses what constitutes as child abuse and discusses some of the factors that contribute to this complex issue.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has been drafted keeping in mind the various laws governing the well-being of children in order to ensure protection of children's rights enshrined under the laws, some of which have been listed below. Any incident of child abuse that the school suspects or becomes aware of shall be dealt with/reported in accordance with this policy. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list although the policy of the school is compliant with all regulations applicable - regional and national.

Constitutional Guarantees

Constitutional Guarantees that are meant specifically for children include:

- Right to early childhood care and education to all children until they complete the age of six year (Article 45)
- Right to free and compulsory elementary education (RTE) for all children in the 6-14 year age group (Article 21 A)
- Right to equal opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and guaranteed protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Article 39 (f))

Besides this, children also have rights as equal citizens of India, just as any other adult:

- Right to equality (Article 14)
- Right against discrimination (Article 15)
- Right to personal liberty and due process of law (Article 21)
- Right to being protected from being trafficked and forced into bonded labour (Article 23)
- Right of minorities for protection of their interests (Article 29)
- Right of weaker sections of the people to be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- Right to nutrition and standard of living and improved public health (Article 47)



Specific Punishable Offences

Specific provisions against child abuse in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) rule that the following offences/behaviour are punishable by law:

- Corporal punishment in schools (RTE, 2009)
- Corporal punishment in child care institutions (Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, as amended from time to time)
- Production, dissemination and use of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) (Information Technology Act, 2000)
- Marrying a child/ promoting or solemnising a marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006)
- Any employment till the age of 14 years and any hazardous employment between the ages of 15-18 years (Child Labour Amendment Act, 2016)
- Sale and procurement of children for any purpose including illegal adoption, trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, use of children by militant groups, giving children intoxicating liquor, narcotic drug or tobacco products or psychotropic substances, offences against disabled children, trafficking of children for sexual exploitation/exploitative labour/other reasons and, kidnapping (Juvenile Justice Act, 2015; Immoral Traffic Act 1956)
- Adopting a child without due procedure through CARINGS and child welfare committees/ promoting or facilitating such illegal adoption (Juvenile Justice Act, 2015)

The POCSO Act, 2012

The Protection Of Children From Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) act of 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

Important features of the Act:

- "Children" according to the Act are individuals aged below 18 years. The Act is gender-neutral.
- Different forms of sexual abuse including but not limited to sexual harassment, pornography, penetrative & non-penetrative assault are defined in the Act.
- The Act stipulates that such steps must be taken which makes the investigation process as child-friendly as possible and the case is disposed of within one year from the date of reporting of the offence
- Police personnel receiving a report of child sexual abuse have the responsibility of making urgent arrangements for the care and protection of the child. This may include emergency medical treatment for the child, or placing the child at a shelter home.
- The Act provides for the establishment of Special Courts for the trial of such offences and matters related to it.
- To monitor the implementation of the Act, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority. Both being statutory bodies.
- **It requires mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. Any person who has knowledge of child abuse is required to report it to the police or a designated child protection agency. Failure to report child abuse is punishable with imprisonment for up to six months, or a fine, or both.**

2. What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is any intentional behaviour that harms a child. It includes 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 (WHO, 2020).

This section of the policy contains 6 broadly defined forms of child abuse. The contents of this section are generalised (not specific to any context) and the indicators are not exhaustive.

2.1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. It includes:

- hitting with hands or objects
- slapping and punching
- kicking
- shaking
- throwing
- poisoning
- burning and scalding
- biting and scratching
- breaking bones
- drowning



It's important to remember that physical abuse is any way of intentionally causing physical harm to a child or young person. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Physical Indicators

Bumps and bruises don't always mean a child is being physically abused. All children have accidents, trips and falls. There isn't just one sign or symptom to look out for, but, it's important to be aware of the signs. If a child regularly has injuries, there seems to be a pattern to the injuries or the explanation doesn't match the injuries, then this should be reported. Signs of physical abuse include:

- bruises
- broken or fractured bones
- burns or scalds
- bite marks
- scarring
- the effects of poisoning, such as vomiting, drowsiness or seizures
- breathing problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning.

Behavioural Indicators

- appearing frightened of a particular person
- actively protesting going to a particular place
- flinching when touched
- talking about being injured or creating fanciful explanations for their injuries

2.2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the intentional and/or continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own. Emotional abuse includes:

- humiliating or constantly criticising a child
- threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names
- making the child the subject of jokes, or using sarcasm to hurt a child
- blaming and scapegoating
- making a child perform degrading acts
- not recognising a child's own individuality or trying to control their lives
- pushing a child too hard and setting unrealistic expectations or not recognising their limitations
- failing to promote a child's social development
- not allowing them to have friends
- persistently ignoring them
- being absent
- manipulating a child
- never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
- never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.



Physical Indicators

- Bed-wetting that has no medical cause; frequent psychosomatic complaints (eg. headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- Act in a way that's inappropriate for their age, such as sucking a thumb in elementary or middle school

Behavioural Indicators

As children grow up, their emotions change. This means it can be difficult to tell if they're being emotionally abused.

But children who are being emotionally abused might:

- seem unconfident or lack self-assurance
- lack attachment to a parent or caregiver
- struggle to control their emotions
- have difficulty making or maintaining relationships
- show behavior extremes, such as compliance then aggressiveness
- display attention seeking behaviour
- use language/ act in a way/ know things you wouldn't expect them to know for their age.

Older children might:

- struggle to control their emotions
- have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills, have few or no friends
- be aggressive towards self and others
- display symptoms of anxiety, depression
- appear withdrawn or emotionally distant.



2.3. Sexual Abuse

Forcing or tricking a child into sexual activities is sexual abuse. Children might not have the awareness to process that what is happening to them is abuse or that it's wrong. They might also be afraid to tell someone. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – and it can happen in person or online.

There are 2 types of sexual abuse – contact and non-contact abuse.

Contact abuse is where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. This includes:

- sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether they're clothed or not
- using a body part or object to rape or penetrate a child
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities including touching, kissing, oral sex
- making a child undress or touch someone else.

Non-contact abuse is where a child is abused without being touched by the abuser, including:

- exposing or flashing
- showing pornography
- exposing a child to sexual acts
- making them masturbate
- forcing a child to make, view or share child abuse images or videos
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images or videos
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone.

Physical Indicators

- Bruises
- Bleeding, discharge, pains or soreness in their genital or anal area
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy



Behavioural Indicators

- Avoiding being alone with or frightened of people or a person they know
- Language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know
- Having nightmares or bed-wetting or sleep problems
- Alcohol or drug misuse
- Social withdrawal
- Self-harm
- Changes in eating habits or developing an eating problem

2.4. Family Violence

Family violence is abuse in the domestic environment of the child where the child may be a direct victim or a witness of abuse. Children exposed to family violence are more likely to become involved in family violence throughout adolescence and adulthood as both victims and perpetrators.

There is also an established link between child abuse and crime in later life; children who have experienced abuse are nine times more likely to become involved in criminal activities. Abused children have a higher risk of exhibiting violent behaviors.

Family violence, whether physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal, is one of the most direct and potentially harmful forms of violence exposure that children experience due to its unique nature. It is usually not a sudden, isolated incident, but rather may involve years of emotional, psychological, and physical trauma that can escalate over time.

How Family Violence Can Affect Children

- Impaired brain development - reduces cognitive and sensory growth in infants and small children
- Lose ability to feel empathy for others
- Exhibit lack of emotional control and disobedience
- Face difficulties in maintaining friendships
- Normalise aggressive behaviour like fighting and bullying
- May feel powerless and scared, or that they are to blame
- May intervene when they witness severe violence, placing themselves at risk for physical injury.

Emotional and Psychological Abuse

This kind of family violence is when a family member insults, upsets, intimidates, controls or humiliates another family member. It includes:

- yelling, swearing and name-calling
- putting someone down in front of other people or in private
- using words to intimidate or threaten someone
- doing or saying things to make someone feel confused or less confident



Physical Abuse

This kind of family violence is any harmful or controlling physical behaviour that one family member uses towards another. It includes:

- shoving, pushing, punching, hitting, slapping, biting or choking
- using weapons or objects to harm someone
- damaging or destroying someone's personal belongings or property
- harming other family members or family pets

2.5. Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care. This can put children and young people in danger. It can also have long term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Neglect can be a lot of different things, which can make it hard to spot. But broadly, there are 4 types of neglect.

Physical neglect

A child's basic needs, such as nutrition, clothing or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.

Educational neglect

A parent/guardian doesn't ensure their child is given an education.

Emotional neglect

A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them.

Medical neglect

A child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Since neglect can be very difficult to identify and having one of the signs doesn't necessarily mean a child is being neglected. If multiple signs are observed and they last for a while, it might indicate a serious problem. Children and young people who are neglected might have:

Poor Appearance and Hygiene

- being smelly or dirty
- being hungry or not given money for food
- having unwashed clothes
- having inappropriate clothing- such as torn dresses.

Health and Development Problems

- anaemia, weight or growth issues
- body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints
- missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations
- poor language or social skills
- repeated accidental injuries, often caused by lack of supervision
- skin issues, such as sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
- medical or dental issues
- not given the correct medicines
- regular illness or infections
- thin or swollen tummy
- extreme fatigue
- untreated injuries



Housing and Family Issues

- being left alone for a long time
- taking on the role of carer for other family members

2.6. Online Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. It can happen anywhere including

- social media applications/ platforms
- text messages or other messaging applications/ platforms
- emails
- online gaming applications/ websites
- live streaming websites

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming, or the abuse might only happen online.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technology. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

Examples include:

- spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos of someone on social media
- sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms
- impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf.
- face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying happening alongside each other.



Cyberbullying happening in a severe form or for a long period of time can cause anxiety, depression, and other stress-related disorders in victims and bullies.

Signs vary, but may include:

- being emotionally upset during or after using the internet or the phone
- being very secretive or protective of one's digital life
- spending more time than usual in their room
- withdrawal from or lack of interest in family members, friends, and activities
- slipping grades and sudden drop in performance at school
- "acting out" in anger at home changes in mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite
- suddenly wanting to stop using the computer or device
- avoiding discussions about computer or phone activities
- being nervous or jumpy when getting a message, text, or email

Online Sexual Abuse

Online child sexual abuse and exploitation is the use of technology or the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child. It involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Examples of online child sexual abuse include:

- Sending nude or pornographic images of themselves to a child or exposing themselves via live streaming
- Asking a child to view pornographic images/videos
- Asking a child to perform sexual acts, expose themselves or share a sexual image
- Production, distribution and consumption of child sexual abuse material
- Grooming for sexual exploitation and attempting to meet the child in person or extort them for explicit content

Online child sexual exploitation can be hard to detect, there is no single sign that a child has been abused online. Those offending against children use manipulation to prevent children from speaking to a parent/safe adult or family members and friends. They may make the child feel special and encourage them to keep their actions a secret or make them feel ashamed about what has happened and tell them they'll be in trouble for their actions.

Some behavioural indicators may include:

- Unexplained relationships with older people
- A change in the use of words/language the child uses
- Showing sexual behaviours which is not in line with their age/stage of development
- Changes in their online habits – spending more/less time online, only being online in private
- Having unexplained gifts, unexplained money or frequently taking part in activities requiring money
- Changes in mood, behaviour and/or eating habits
- Drop in performance at school
- Staying out late, not returning home

3. Dynamics of Child Abuse

Ongoing abuse and maltreatment of a child can be linked to various causes. Recognising and understanding these factors can help us provide more protective environments and minimise the risks and impact of such abuse.

3.1. Physical, Emotional Abuse & Neglect

Most cases of physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect occur in environments familiar to the child and are perpetrated by those who already have a relationship with the child - parents, extended family, friends of the family, teachers or even peers. Cultural factors influence attitudes and practices regarding family relationships, how children should be raised, and the definition of abusive acts.

Environmental and Social Stresses

Child abuse is especially destructive when perpetrated by the parent, as it reflects a devastating corruption of the parent-child relationship. The child may experience an “accommodation syndrome” in which they may eventually attempt to normalise their experience of abuse. Secrecy, helplessness, entrapment and accommodation, disclosure, and retraction are all common manifestations of child abuse.

Family factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect include:

- unrealistic expectations for children’s development
- financial difficulties (e.g., unemployment, poor housing, poverty)
- many children close in age
- single parenthood (with limited support from extended family)
- marital problems; gender roles and roles in marriage (e.g., lack of spousal support because it is the “woman’s role” to look after the children)
- domestic violence perpetrated by either or both partners towards the other
- lack of quality child care, health care and other social support systems
- violence and gender inequality in the community
- chronic health problems (physical or mental illness) in primary caregivers
- substance abuse at home and in the community
- personal history of abuse; violence in the family; childhood trauma
- poor parenting skills that are influenced by age, education, personal experiences, unplanned pregnancies, and/or social norms that encourage harsh physical or emotional punishment



Vulnerable Children

Some children may have characteristics that make them more difficult to care for putting them at increased risk for abuse:

- chronic health problems (physical or mental)
- differently abled - requiring additional resources for developing physically/ mentally/ cognitively
- challenging personality/temperament
- constant crying and cannot be easily soothed or comforted during initial years
- problems with attachment (e.g., hospitalisation due to prematurity, extensive involvement with many professionals reducing parent-child time)
- an unwanted child or child that does not fulfil the parent's expectations (e.g., sex, appearance, congenital abnormality)

3.2 Grooming

Grooming is a method used by offenders that involves building trust with a child and the adults around a child in an effort to gain access to and time alone with them. Children and young people can be groomed online, in person or both – by a stranger or someone they know. In extreme cases, offenders may use threats and physical force to sexually assault or abuse a child. More common, though, are subtle approaches designed to build relationships with families.

How Groomers Form Relationships

The offender may assume a caring role, befriend the child or even exploit their position of trust and authority to groom the child and/or the child's family. These individuals intentionally build relationships with the adults around a child or seek out a child who is less supervised by adults in her/his life. This increases the likelihood that the offender's time with the child is welcomed and encouraged.

Groomers might also try to isolate children from their friends and family, making them feel dependent on them and giving the groomer power and control over them. They might use blackmail to make a child feel guilt and shame or introduce the idea of 'secrets' to control, frighten and intimidate. It's important to remember that children and young people may not understand that they've been groomed. They may have complicated feelings, like loyalty, admiration, love, as well as fear, distress and confusion.

Indicators of Grooming

Examples of grooming behaviour may include:

- giving gifts or special attention to a child or young person, or their parent or carer, making the child or young person feel special or indebted to an adult
- making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling or play fighting
- openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault)

Groomers may rely on mobile phones, social media and the internet to interact with children in inappropriate ways and will often ask the child to keep their relationship a secret. The grooming process may continue for months before the offender arranges a physical meeting.

Some other behaviours displayed by adults engaging in child sexual abuse (not necessarily through long-term grooming) include

- insist on physical affection such as kissing, hugging, tickling or wrestling even when the child clearly does not want it
- are overly interested in the sexual development of a child or teenager.
- insist on time alone with a child with no interruptions
- spend most of their spare time with children and have little interest in spending time with people their own age
- regularly offer to baby-sit children for free or take children on overnight outings alone
- insist on keeping secrets with the child



3.3 Paedophilia vs. Molestation

Paedophile

Paedophilia is a sexual interest in children of any gender, usually pre-pubescent or at the beginning of puberty, being classified among others as a sexual preference disorder, considered a type of sexual perversion, that is, they are adults who permanently and intensely have physical attraction and fantasies of sexual relations with children.

The American Psychiatric Association categorises it as a psychiatric disorder and for it to be considered paedophilia it is necessary for the paedophile to be at least five (5) years older than the victim and the children who are often targeted for these behaviours are 13 years old or younger.

Child Molester

Child molester is a person who attacks a child sexually (refer to types under sec. B - 2.4. Sexual Abuse). Many people use the terms "paedophilia" and "child molester" interchangeably. A paedophile only becomes a molester or a child sexual offender when they act upon their urges. A person sexually attracted to children but who fights the attraction by avoiding touching kids and avoiding child pornography is not a molester.

Situational Child Molester

The 'situational' child molester does not have a true sexual preference for children but engages in sexual activity with children for varied and complex reasons. Offenders need not necessarily 'seek out' an opportunity to abuse a child, but rather, find themselves in a situation that enables them to abuse a child and took it. Some predatory paedophiles may purposely seek such positions, but situational offenders usually do not. For such a child molester, sexual offense against children may range from "once-in-a-lifetime" act to a long term pattern of behaviour.

3.4 Common Myths About Child Abuse

Myth	Fact
Sexual abuse is mostly perpetuated by strangers. Teaching children that strangers are dangerous can prevent most cases of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)	Most children are sexually abused inside their own homes. Over 90% abusers have the trust of children and their families and access to their homes.
Only girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Boys are generally safe and hence don't need to be educated about personal body safety.	Over 50% of victims of CSA are boys. Disclosure rate for boys is extremely low due to shame, guilt and fear of disapproval.
In case of CSA, the abuser is always an adult and always a man.	Over 1/3rd of CSA crimes are committed by persons under the age of 18; 4-10% are committed by women
Children often make up stories about abuse. In case of CSA, they promptly flag the incident to parents.	Most children do not disclose incidents of abuse to anyone due to fear, shame and guilt. A child rarely lies about abuse. A child may change what they've said if they've been pressured or threatened to deny what's happened, or they're afraid of being removed from their family after they've told someone about it.
It is only abuse if it is violent. Emotional abuse and neglect are less serious than physical or sexual abuse.	All forms of abuse cause negative emotional impact. Neglect and emotional abuse can be just as damaging, and since they are more subtle, others are less likely to intervene.
Child abuse only happens in lower economic classes of society.	Rates of physical abuse and neglect can be affected by socioeconomic status. CSA perpetration/victimisation occurs across the socioeconomic strata.
Physical discipline is not child abuse. Punishment is required to change undesirable behaviour of children.	Any form of discipline that causes harm or injury to a child is physical abuse. Using punishment (physical or otherwise) causes harmful psychological and physiological responses. Children not only experience pain, sadness, fear, anger, shame and guilt, but feeling threatened also leads to physiological stress.

Reference for stats on CSA: Study on Child Abuse: India 2007, Child Sexual Abuse in India: A systematic review (2018)

SECTION B:

This section of the policy describes the steps taken by The School to proactively address child safety and minimise the risk of child abuse both inside and outside The School. It also details the responsibility of each of these stakeholders towards creating a child safe environment.

1. Preventive Measures for Staff

To ensure that all staff of The School are aligned with the Child Safeguarding Policy of the organisation and have the resources to provide safe learning environments for students, the following steps are taken:

Child Abuse Sensitisation

All staff (teaching and non-teaching) go through sessions that educate them on the types of child abuse, signs, and symptoms of each type, dynamics of child abuse, and the POCSO Act, and are trained on reporting protocols in case of a suspected incident of child abuse. They are also made aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy of The School and provide an understanding of their roles in child safety.

Capacity Building for Safeguarding

In addition to trainings targeted towards content and pedagogy, teaching staff go through periodic workshops related creating safe spaces for all children. These workshops are conducted by both in-house and external experts and focus on equipping teachers with mindsets of creating a positive culture in their classrooms and the practical skills and strategies of behaviour management.

Ongoing Support

Individual support is provided to staff by coordinators/ managers-in charge, counsellors and social workers where ever required.

Support Staff Training

All support staff (housekeeping staff, drivers, conductors etc) undergo sessions in regional language (Tamil) that delineate how they should behave and interact with children within the scope of their roles. They are trained on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours regarding helping children with hygiene (in case of younger children),The School transport and general interactions with students.



2. Responsibility of Staff



Staff - Student Relationships

Accepted	Not Accepted
<p>Treat all students fairly and respect their personal choices and views.</p>	<p>Discriminate against a student on the basis of race, economic status, cultural affinity, age, sex, disability, religion, caste, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, political persuasion or any other status.</p>
<p>Create a positive classroom culture and use child-safe behaviour management tools in case of behavioural breakdowns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hit or otherwise physically abuse a student. • Act in any way that threatens the self-esteem of the student, like shouting/ humiliating/ shaming/ being sarcastic/ putting them down. • Use language or behavior towards students that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate.
<p>Avoid physical contact unless in case of providing hygiene and medical assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave or suggest physically, or otherwise in a manner, which is inappropriate or sexually provocative or may be considered to be sexual abuse. • Kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a student in any way that may be considered inappropriate or culturally insensitive, and which may or may not be construed as sexual abuse. • Demonstrate any lessons by physically touching a student, that maybe considered inappropriate or culturally insensitive and which may or may not be construed as sexual abuse.
<p>Ensure all communication with students is respectful and professional.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, induce or support relationships with students which could in any way be deemed inappropriate or abusive. • Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive. • Engage in conversations about personal life of staff with/around students. • Expose students to age inappropriate content (jokes/ stories/ pictures). • Engage in any conversation/ activity with small number of children in a room that is locked or does not have windows

Staff - Student Relationships (continued)

Accepted	Not Accepted
Ensure actions of students inside and outside the classroom are safe and age-appropriate.	Allow students to engage in inappropriate, abusive or sexually provocative games with each other
Ensure that the Child Safety Committee (refer section 6) is kept in the loop in case of any conversations/ discussion with a student/parent relevant to the scope of this document (physical or virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have any secretive or confidential conversations/discussions with students/ parents on any personal matter relevant to the scope of this document • Engage in familial issues of a student without prior consultation from the Child Safety Committee • Discuss any mental health issues of a student without prior consultation from the Child Safety Committee

Internet, Communication and Technology (ICT)

Accepted	Not Accepted
Restrict all online communication to educational and administrative announcements via the approved platforms and groups between 8:00A.M. and 6:00 P.M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with a student through personal/ private contact channels (social media, email, messaging, texting, calling) without prior approval from respective coordinators. • Deliberately accept any student's request to be a part of your personal social media network. • Exchange details of any personal social media network. • Be a part of/ engage with any student's personal social media network. • Fraternise with students on social media platforms including (but not limited to) Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.
Restrict the use of internet and ICT equipment by students to educational purposes only.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with unsupervised access to the internet during or afterThe School . • Allow students to use personal devices such as laptops, phones or tabs for any purpose other than emergencies.
Use discretion before taking photographs or videos of children in their classrooms taking necessary permissions where relevant, and follow the social media policy for sharing or posting this content.	Post or share any content that can potentially identify students on personal social media platforms

Extra Classes/ External Activities

Accepted	Not Accepted
Obtain necessary consent from the Principal for external activities/ trips/ extra classes.	Plan any School trips without prior written consent of the Principal.
Obtain necessary approval from the Head for extra classes beyond the scheduled timetable (physical or virtual).	Plan any extra classes (physical or virtual) without prior approval of the coordinator Conduct any extra classes in a closed or isolated environment.
Obtain necessary consent (documented) from parents of the students who are attending extra classes/ external trips/ activities (physical/ virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take any child/children to one's own or other people's homes or any other place without supervision, where the children will be alone with staff without the prior written consent of the parents and management. • Spend time alone with any child/ children without the consent of parents and management, inside/ outside of School (physical/ virtual)



In the Event of Allegations of Child Abuse

Accepted	Not Accepted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report knowledge of any incident related to the POCSO Act (suspected or reported or witnessed) immediately to the Principal. • In case of incidents of child abuse outside the scope of the POCSO Act, report to any member of Child Safety Committee (details in section 7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignore or not take any action where inappropriate actions are inflicted by a student on other students. • Ignore or not take any action where offensive material (including violence/abuse/pornography) in any form of media (including in any magazines/newspapers/personal computers) is found in possession of any staff or student. • Ignore or not take any action where a student indicates or informs about an incident of abuse inside or outside of School . Promise to keep secrets that may harm the child.
Respect the privacy of the student in case incidents of abuse and disclose only to the Child Safety Committee.	Disclose details of the incident or the identity of the student(s) to any staff/ parent or other student



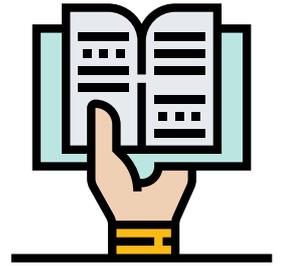
Orientation to Child Safeguarding

All the planned child safety programs for the year are communicated during the parent induction at the start of the year. In case of any additional updates, parent orientations for the same will be held during the year.



Guiding Manuals on Child and Cyber Safety

School provides guiding manuals for child safety and cyber safety that outline the important indicators and effects of abuse, both in person and in the digital world and provides recommendations on dealing with these issues. The hard copy of the manuals can be availed at the school.



Counselling Sessions

Parents/guardians may be asked to attend one-one sessions with/without the child with the Child Safeguarding Committee, external counselling on a need basis. Parents/guardians can also request for private counselling sessions by contacting the school (contact details given at the end of the policy).



4. Responsibilities of Parents/ Guardian

As the primary caregivers of children, parents/ legal guardians are responsible for ensuring safety of their child(ren) even if they are not physically monitoring them, for eg., school, extra classes, virtual sessions, digital platforms etc. To help the School build a safe ecosystem for children at school, kindly ensure that this policy is understood thoroughly and the following protocols are followed.

- Make the child aware of the risks and harm of child abuse.
- Bring and collect the child on time during school and during activities. Staff members are not responsible for children's safety outside of programme hours.
- Provide correct information wherever applicable. This may include: any health ailments the child is suffering from, emergency contacts, etc.
- Complete and sign consent forms on time and without fail. Without these forms, the child will not be allowed to participate in the activities which may hinder the progress of the child.
- In case of taking photos/ videos of children during cultural programs (wherever approved within school), ensure that identity (name, face etc.) of other children is not shared on any personal social media platforms.
- Attend all parent orientation sessions conducted by the school.
- Ensure that all communication/ circulars sent by the School to the phone numbers/ email IDs provided (by parents) is received and noted duly.
- Come to school when called by the director/ head/ teacher/ counsellor for any urgent meeting. Failure to attend such meetings will be treated as neglect and serious action may be taken.
- Ensure that for attending meetings, ONLY the parents/ primary guardians are allowed. Relatives, neighbours, etc. will not be entertained.



5. Preventive Measures for Students

Empowering children with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities guides them to making healthy, informed choices, not just while in school, but throughout their lives. Children who are confident, assertive and have good support networks are less likely to be at risk of abuse or find themselves in dangerous situations. The School collaborates with experts and trained consultants of child safety to design sessions for students. The following steps are taken to educate and empower students in the School

Safety Education

Safety education taught for Grades 3-12 encompasses personal safety education, socio-emotional learning and digital safety by trained facilitators both in-house and external experts.

- Personal Safety Education covers core messages about one's rights, responsibilities, the concept of consent and boundaries, safe and unsafe feelings, body safety rules, safe adults and response to unsafe situations.
- Socio-emotional learning facilitates skills such as self-awareness, self-management, reflection, decision making, stress management and helps students develop self-esteem, self-regulation and healthy interpersonal relationships.
- Digital safety sessions range from sensitising about cyberbullying, social media etiquette, privacy, internet banking safety, and the norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour on the internet.

Counselling

Need-based one on one or group counsellor can be availed by the students through the school-appointed child psychologist.

6. Responsibilities of Students

As children grow, they start recognising boundaries and forming relationships with people in their lives - parents, teachers, siblings and peers. While they are adapting to their growth and navigating these relationships, it is important that they understand their responsibilities towards others in the society they live in.

The major stakeholders in a child's life - parents and teachers play an important role in setting healthy and safe norms in a way that builds an internal desire in the child to follow basic expectations that make them a safe human being in any environment they are a part of. The School holds all its students accountable to its **Student Safety Code of Conduct**. This code is applicable within the school campus at all times and outside wherever the student is acting on behalf of the school.

Accepted	Not Accepted
Treat peers, juniors, seniors, teaching and non-teaching staff with respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tease, bully, use foul language or verbally, physically, sexually or emotionally abuse any student or staff Discriminate against peers, juniors, seniors, teaching and non-teaching staff on basis of sex/ caste/ religion/ race/ sexuality/ gender identity/ economic status
Behave in a manner that promotes a safe and positive learning environment for others	Act in a manner that disrupts the learning of self/ others
Move in a structured manner while transitioning between rooms to and from the classroom to ensure safety of all	Run/ walk in groups while transitioning between rooms/ playground to the classroom
Follow all the safety rules laid out depending on the circumstances and places (For eg – Following safety rules during PT, assembly, dispersal)	Act in a way that endangers self or any other student/ staff or member in the school.
Carry only approved materials to school (For eg, stationery, books related to topics covered in school, lunch, water, relevant learning aids etc)	Carry or use any age-inappropriate or illegal substances (cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, sexually explicit material) or any unsafe items (blades, knives, crackers, lighters etc)
Take/ post pictures/videos of the school/ staff/ students (in school uniform) on social media only after necessary approval.	Take/ post pictures/videos of the school/ staff/ students on social media without the necessary approval/ consent
Report any violation of the Safety Code of Conduct to the respective class teacher.	Ignore or cover up any instance of violation of the Safety Code of Conduct that has been witnessed/ made aware of

SECTION C: Response to Breach of Policy

This section of the policy describes the protocol to be followed in the case there is a breach of the policy. It also includes details about who will be involved in investigating incidents and what some possible actions are. The School's response to breach of policy is compliant with the POCSO act, 2012 and TN G.O. 83.

What constitutes a breach of policy?

- Violation of Safety Code of Conduct by any person (staff/ child/ parent)
- Any incident of allegation of child abuse (suspected or disclosed by a child)
- Neglect by the primary caregiver of the child
- Neglect by staff to report a suspected/witnessed case of child abuse



Who can report an incident of breach of policy?

Any individual who suspects/witnesses a breach of policy as per reasons mentioned in section 6.1 OR believes that they have breached the policy themselves, can report the breach. Individuals include:

- Student
- Staff
- Parent/ Guardian

How can one report breach of policy?

Any individual who suspects/witnesses a breach of policy as per reasons mentioned in section 6.1 OR believes that they have breached the policy themselves, can report the breach to the **Child Safeguarding Committee** in the following ways:

- In-person
- Sending a text message/ email
- Over a call

What happens to the person who reports?

All details of the person who reports an incident will be kept confidential by the Child Safeguarding Committee (refer to the next section). They will be involved only until the incident report is filed.

In case any of the details are required to be disclosed to any other person during the course of the investigation, prior consent will be obtained for the same.

Who will handle a breach of the policy

Breach of the policy will be handled by either one of the below committees, depending on the case.

Student Safeguarding Advisory Committee (SSAC)

This committee will consist of the following members:

- Director (Management Representative)
- Principal
- 2 teaching staff
- 1 non-teaching staff
- 2 parent representatives
- External consultant

This committee has been set up in accordance with the Government Order 83 of Tamil Nadu School Education (ERT) Department and will monitor, review and report any case of sexual offence defined under the POCSO Act of 2012 (section 2).

Child Safeguarding Committee (CSC)

This committee is a subset of the SSAC and will consist of the following members:

- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Child Safety Coordinator
- Counsellor

This committee will be chaired by the Director the school.

Cases of suspected abuse/neglect that come under the purview of the Child Safety Committee:

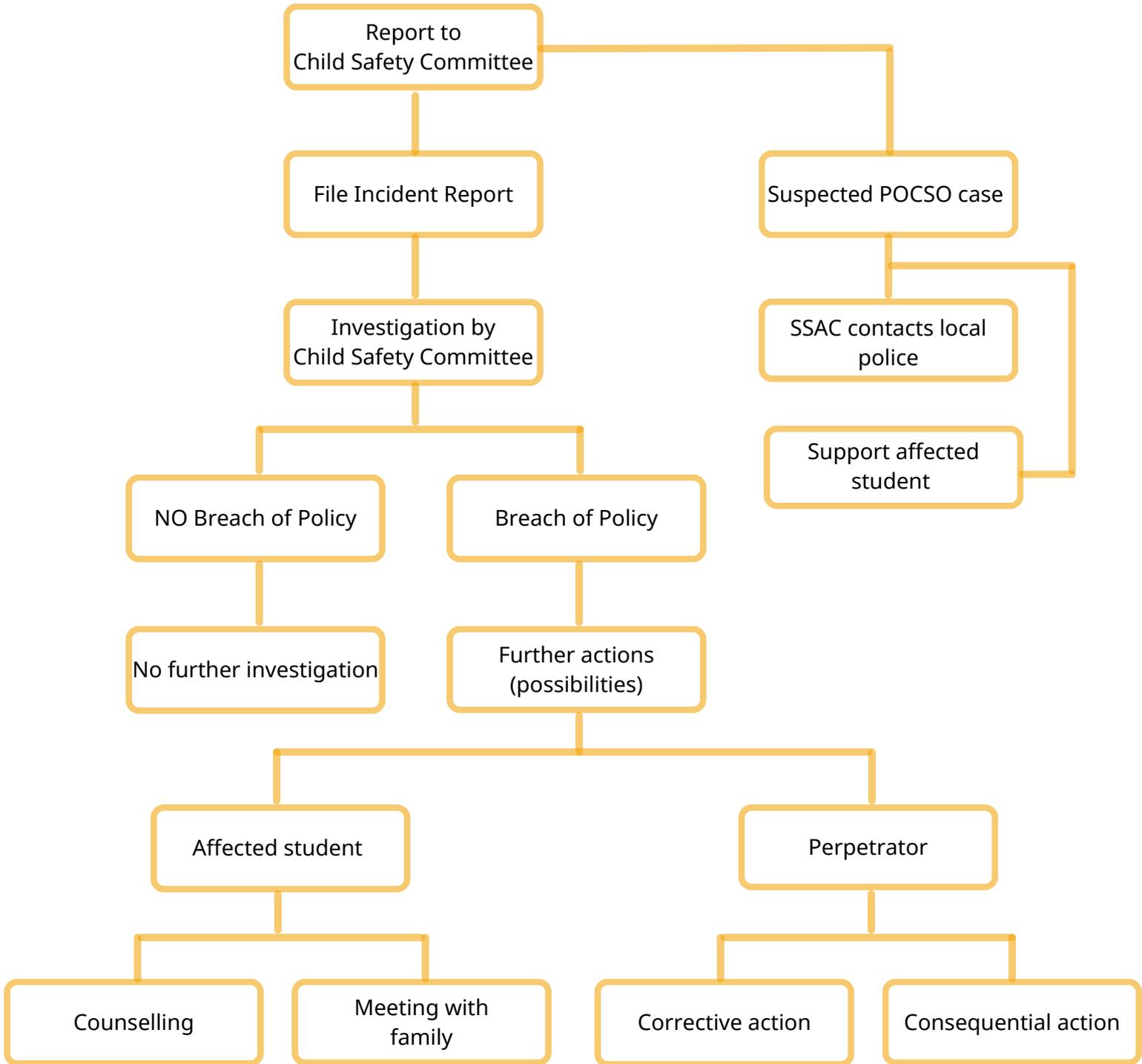
- Student relationships with staff
- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Abuse related mental health issues such as low self-esteem and grieving.

Cases that may be referred to outside resources:

- Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicide ideation
- Severe and ongoing abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and incest



What is the reporting process for breach of policy?



How does the school handle non-POCSO cases?

Step 1: Report to Child Safeguarding Committee (within 12 hours)

In case of suspecting /witnessing/ committing a breach of the policy, the incident has to be reported to any members of the Child Safety Committee at the earliest.

Step 2: File Incident Report (within 24 hours)

All cases are to be documented, irrespective of severity. An incident report (refer Annexure II) is to be filed by the person who is reporting the breach, in the presence of one of the members of the Child Safety Committee. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student(s) involved will be informed of the incident and next steps as soon as the incident report has been filed.

Step 3: Investigation by Child Safety Committee (within 72 hours)

Investigation may include (but not limited to) interviews with students and staff relevant to the incident, interviews with reports/ managers of staff accused and review of history of the persons involved to obtain all the necessary information. Parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the student(s) may be interviewed as part of the investigation.

Step 4: Closing the Case (within 1 week)

Based on evidence obtained during investigation, an action plan is made for students/ staff/ parents. The following are possible steps that can be taken.

Course of Action for Student(s)

Based on the information acquired, a plan of action will be developed for the affected student(s)/ student(s) complained against. This may include:

- Conversation between the student and counsellor. These conversations will be kept confidential in the interest of respecting the child's privacy, unless there is cause to suspect potential harm to the student in which case the primary care-giver of the child will be informed of the same.
- In-class observations of the child by the counsellor, managers, child safety coordinator.
- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counselling or help.

Course of Action for Staff

Any action that is taken against the staff will be documented. Depending on the severity of the case, possible actions are

- Warning and resetting of expectations (repeated offences will result in termination of employment)
- Attending child safety workshops, either in-house or outside
- Attending training sessions on handling children or creating a safe culture in the classroom
- Referral to a psychologist or counsellor
- Termination of employment by the management
- Registering a case with the police

Course of Action for Parents

Once the case is closed, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student(s) involved will be informed of the final outcome and steps taken unless the parent/ primary guardian in this case is the alleged perpetrator.

SECTION D: Implementation of the Policy

This section of the policy outlines the role of the different stakeholders representing the school management in ensuring effective and comprehensive implementation of the policy.

Management

- Oversees effective functioning of the Child Safeguarding Committee
- Ensures that due diligence is done during recruitment of all staff, contract workers and volunteers.
- Ensures that this policy is updated and reviewed periodically

Child Safety Coordinator

- Ensures effective execution of this policy at school
- Ensures that all new staff, service providers, contract workers and volunteers undergo an induction process to be informed and supported in understanding and meeting the expectations laid out in this policy
- Coordinates the investigation and resolves any breaches of the policy in a timely, fair and accurate manner

Permanent Employees (Staff & Support Staff)

- Are fully aware and informed of this policy handbook and adhere to it at all times
- Report any incidents that arise relating to child safety and ensure they are documented and/or appropriately investigated. Failure to report this will be considered as a gross misconduct

Contract Employees (External Partners, Interns, Volunteers)

- Sign adherence to the policy as part of contract letter/ service agreement
- Undergo induction workshop to get oriented with the Child Safeguarding Policy
- Report any incidents that arise relating to child safety and ensure they are documented and/or appropriately investigated. Failure to report this will be considered as a gross misconduct

Service Providers

- Do not engage, communicate or interact with any student
- Must be accompanied by a staff member at all times.





Report a Grievance

Students can **anonymously report** any issue (relating to self or others) by dropping a note in the **Help Box** available in the **school campus specific location**>. The Child Safeguarding Committee will periodically check and address/resolve all grievances reported.

Contact Us!

If you would like more information about the policy/ want to report an incident, get in touch with the **Child Safeguarding Committee** at **email id**> or **phone number**>

Child Emergency Helpline

1098

Tulir

Centre For The Prevention And Healing Of Child Sexual Abuse

Telephone: +91-44-43235867

Email: tulircphcsa@yahoo.co.in

Sneha India

Helping People In Despair, 24 hour Suicide Prevention Helpline

Telephone: +91-44-24640050

Email: help@snehaIndia.org

Tele Manas (24 x 7)

Telephone: 1800 8914416 (Short code: 14416)

Annexure - I

Given below are details of committee members

Child Safeguarding Committee

Designation	Name	Contact details
Managing Director		
Principal		
Vice Principal / Coordinator		
Child Safeguarding Coordinator		
Counselor		

Annexure - II

Incident Report Format

Details

Name of the person reporting	
Designation	

Date of incident	
Time of incident	
Location of incident	
Name of child	
Class & Section	
Name of person(s) reported	
Relationship with child	
Nature of abuse	Physical/ Sexual/ Emotional/ Online/ Neglect/ _____

Description

Use the guiding questions given below to describe the incident in the space provided on the next page. Make sure to include all necessary details as per the situation. Please tick the situation applicable.

If the incident was directly observed/witnessed by you:

1. What did you see?
2. What caused you to notice it?
3. Were there any other witnesses? If so, who?
4. How did the child react?
5. Did you take any action? If yes, please specify.

If the incident was reported to you by the child:

1. When did the child talk to you?
2. How did the conversation start?
3. Has the child tried to approach you regarding something similar on any previous occasions? If yes, please specify details of the earlier conversations.
4. How did the child sound when he/she was narrating the incident?
5. Did you notice any visual evidence of the incident? If yes, please specify.
6. Did you take any action? If yes, please specify.

If the incident was reported to you by someone other than the child:

1. Who reported the incident to you?
2. When did they report it?
3. Did you take any action? If yes, please specify.

Please include a verbatim record of any conversation you had, to ensure all details are available.

