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CHILD SAFETY RESPONSE AND OBLIGATION POLICY

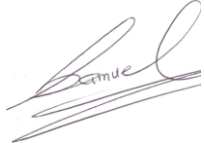
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Record of Policy Review:

Date Policy was Issued	Date of Next Review	Reason for Review
09 January 2024	08 January 2026 or as the need arise.	to ensure that the policy document remains up to date
Signature		

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures EDUQUEST COLLEGE has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, and to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school (physical and online).

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child
- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence. Sexual grooming is regulated by Section 18 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 32 of 2007 and it is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. A perpetrator will make use of their adult authority or economic resources to draw a child into a relationship that is for the benefit of the perpetrator's sexual desires. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or guardian.

School staff member

For the purpose of this policy a school staff member includes a contractor engaged by the school or school council to perform child-related work.

Policy

EDUQUEST COLLEGE understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring at our school or during school activities.

Information for students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at EDUQUEST COLLEGE they should start with their class or subject teachers.
- Students may also approach their Connect teacher, an Assistant Principal or the Principal. Members of the Student Wellbeing Team are also an appropriate first contact for a student with child safety concerns.

Identifying child abuse

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of students and children when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:

- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators - for detailed information on identifying child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators refer to Identify child abuse.
- understand their various legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our school acts in the best interests of students and children and complies with both our legal and Department policy obligations.

At EDUQUEST COLLEGE we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

School staff and volunteer responsibilities

1. Immediate action

If a school staff member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Notify an Assistant Principal as soon as possible, who will ensure our school follows the steps in these procedures.

NOTE for staff and volunteers:

- if you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to an Assistant Principal
- If an Assistant Principal is unavailable the Student Wellbeing Coordinator will take on this role.
- If the concerns relates to the conduct of the Assistant Principal or Student Wellbeing Coordinator, notify the Principal who must then take on responsibility for ensuring our school follows these procedures.

Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse

Important information for staff *when managing a disclosure relating to child abuse you should:*

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals, and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non- suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you")
- Take prompt action in relation to following the procedures outlined below.

When managing a disclosure, you should AVOID:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making any promises you will keep the information the student provided confidential
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

Reporting to authorities and referring to services

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, the Assistant Principal **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.

Contacting parents or guardians

The Assistant Principal must ensure parents and guardians are notified unless advised otherwise by Child Protection Authorities or South African Police SAPS, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/guardians.

Principals may contact the Department of Education and Training Legal Division for advice on notifying parents and guardians, and where relevant, the wider school community.

Ongoing protection and support

The Assistant Principal and the Student Wellbeing Team must ensure appropriate steps are taken by the school to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse

Appropriate, culturally sensitive and ongoing support must be offered and provided to all affected students. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from the Department, parents and guardians, health practitioners, and other authorities and may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, student support group meetings, and, for student to student incidents, behaviour management and support measures.

Recordkeeping

The Assistant Principal will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken, where possible, by the staff member or volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure, or suspicion to them
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the school to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the schools immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in a designated booklet in the Assistant Principal's office.

For school visitors and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse

Additional requirements for all staff

All staff play an important role in supporting student safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse. This means that if, after following the actions

outlined in the procedure, a staff member reasonably believes that a child remains at risk of abuse, they must take the following steps:

- if they are concerned that the school has not taken reasonable steps to prevent or reduce the risk, raise these concerns with the principal in the first instance, and escalate to the regional office if they remain unsatisfied.
- report the matter to the relevant authorities where they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another staff member

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website www.eduquestcollege.co.za
- Included in staff induction processes and annual staff training
- Discussed at annual staff briefings or meetings
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request