



HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

March 2016

Child Protection

Hong Kong International School is committed to building and sustaining a culture of respect, care and safety for all members of our school community. Child abuse and neglect are in direct opposition to that goal and are of growing concern in schools throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as their physical, emotional, and spiritual development.

Schools fill a special institutional role in society as protectors of children, where all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop. 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. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed at Hong Kong International School must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow-up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in a careful and confidential manner in accordance with the procedures outlined. In addition, cases of suspected child abuse may be reported to the relevant local authorities including Child and Family Protective Services of the HK Social Welfare Department and the Hong Kong Police.

Hong Kong International School endorses Amnesty International's Convention on the Rights of the Child, adheres to the statutory provisions of the Hong Kong government, and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. Hong Kong International School will communicate these procedures annually to faculty and staff and will provide annual training for all members of the community. HKIS makes every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, Hong Kong International School will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of action led by the Head of School as per Appendix C.

Sources:

1. Amnesty International Unofficial Summary of the UN Rights Convention of the Child: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/unofficial-summary/page.do?id=1101782 &n1=3&n2=78&n3=1272>
2. Actual Convention on the Rights of the Child: <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/uncrc.asp#Nineteen>

3. Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (revised 2007; updated October 2014) Social Welfare Department Hong Kong SAR
4. Child Protection Handbook 3rd Ed. (May 2014) Association of International Schools in Africa
5. The Role of Educators in Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect. (2003) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
6. Child Safeguarding Standards (2014). <http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk>

What is abuse and neglect?

According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting 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.”

Hong Kong defines child abuse as ".... any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs the physical / psychological health and development of an individual under the age of 18."

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting; children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem. Most child abuse is inflicted by a person the child knows, respects and trusts.

Specific signs and symptoms depend on the type of abuse. Keep in mind that warning signs are just that — warning signs. *The presence of warning signs doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being abused.*

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child.

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures, burns, bites, cuts
- Injuries that don't match the given explanation
- Injuries that regularly appear following absences or holidays

- Improbable excuses or refusal to talk about injuries
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Injuries to parts of the body not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

- Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
- Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Social withdrawal
- Depression
- Headaches or stomachaches with no medical cause
- Desperately seeks affection
- Fear of going home

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

- Sexual behavior or knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age
- Pain or irritation to the genital area
- Infection, bleeding
- Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Statements that he or she was sexually abused
- Abuse of other children sexually
- Fear of people or places
- Regressive behavior, bedwetting

- Excessive masturbation
- Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Mentioning a special “secret” friendship with an adult

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical or physiological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child’s health or development.

- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor growth or weight gain
- Poor record of school attendance
- Lack of age-appropriate supervision
- Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental, or psychological problems, even though the parents have been notified
- Emotional swings that are inappropriate or out of context to the situation
- Indifference
- Low self-esteem
- Drug or alcohol abuse

Parent behavior

Sometimes a parent's demeanor or behavior sends red flags about possible child abuse. Warning signs include a parent who:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Appears unable to recognize physical or emotional distress in the child
- Denies that any problems exist at home or school, or blames the child for the problems
- Constantly blames, belittles or berates the child and describes the child with negative terms, such as "worthless" or "evil"
- Uses harsh physical discipline
- Demands an inappropriate level of physical or academic performance
- Severely limits the child's contact with others
- Offers conflicting or unconvincing explanations for a child's injuries or no explanation at all

NOTE: Some people use corporal punishment (such as spanking) as a way to discipline their children. One way to think about corporal punishment is that spanking is meant to hurt but not to cause injury. Causing injury crosses the line to abuse.

HKIS does not endorse spanking as means of discipline. For more effective strategies of teaching and redirecting children’s behavior, parents are encouraged to reach out to their School Counselor who will be happy to discuss more positive and proactive alternatives.

Guidelines for Responding to a Disclosure

Children and young people are far more likely to disclose abuse to adults they trust. It is important to put aside your own feelings and maintain a calm presence. Do not lead or press for details and avoid asking "why" or "how" something took place. Do not make promises you cannot keep or promise that things will get better. Respect the trust that you have been given and share the information only with the response team.

What to say and do:

- Repeat the last few words in a questioning manner
- "I believe you"
- "I am going to try to help you"
- "I am glad you told me"
- "You are not to blame"
- "You did the right thing by telling me"
- "I will only tell someone else who needs to know in order to help you"
- "And then what happened?"
- Let the child know what you are going to do next
- Limit information sharing to the response team
- Document as accurately as you can what he/she has told you

What not to say or do:

- "You should have told someone before"
- "I can't believe it! I'm shocked!"
- "Oh that explains a lot"
- "No not ___ he's a friend of mine"
- "I won't tell anyone else"
- "Why? How? When? Where? Who?"
- Make disparaging comments about the suspected abuser
- Promise that that things will get better

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (see Appendix B and Appendix C)

All HKIS employees share a collective responsibility for the safety of HKIS students. When there is reason to think abuse or neglect is occurring, all employees are mandated to follow the HKIS procedures for reporting. ***If another employee is involved, the concerns should be brought to the Division Principal/Department Head or directly to the Head of***

School who will conduct an investigation following the procedures detailed in Appendix C.

In all other cases faculty and staff will seek advice from the grade level Counselor within 24 hours. No person at HKIS seeking such advice or making a report in good faith will be penalized in any way by the school. The Counselor will take initial steps to gather information about the reported incident(s) and, in consultation with the Director of Student Services, will determine if reasonable cause exists to convene the HKIS response team.

The HKIS response team includes the Director of Student Services, building Principal or designated Associate Principal, the School Nurse, and the Counselor. The Provost will be notified when the HKIS response team is conducting an internal investigation. In all cases follow-up will be conducted in a manner that ensures information is documented factually and the strictest confidentiality is maintained.

What happens when suspected abuse or neglect is reported to the Counselor?

The response team will conduct a prompt, confidential and thorough investigation to determine if immediate intervention is required. Investigation may include interviews with other staff members to gather more information about the child and family as well as consultation with school personnel to review the child's history at HKIS. If investigation supports reasonable cause, the Provost will inform the Head of School.

The response team will keep factual and confidential documentation of their investigation and findings and consider what course of action is most appropriate to support the child and family. Our goal is to ensure safety and not to punish the child and family. Options for follow up include:

- HKIS Counselor support for the child and family
- Family meeting with administration
- Referral for the child and family for outside counseling/therapy
- Contact Hong Kong Social Welfare Department Family and Child Protection Services
- Report (sexual abuse allegation) to Stanley police
- Transport child to hospital (Government social worker will assume responsibility for the case)

In all cases, the Counselor will continue to support the child and provide on-going monitoring to ensure safety.

A confidential report of the action(s) recommended by the response team will remain on file with the Director of Student Services.

Guidelines for Maintaining Safe and Healthy Relationships with Students

HKIS is committed to the care and protection of all members of our school. We join with the international school community in doing our best to ensure that all adults understand and adhere to principles of safe practice in their interactions with students. To that end we require background checks for all employees and provide ongoing training and support in child safeguarding and protection.

We recognize that it is also important to maintain appropriate boundaries within an environment of openness and trust to ensure that all the young people in our care continue to feel safe. We adhere to the HKIS Code of Conduct in our interactions and relationships with members of our community

As a school community:

- Intentionally develop an environment of trust where students are free to share their concerns with the adults in the school
- Listen to student concerns without judgment and connect with the School Counselor when additional support is needed
- Do not promise confidentiality if abuse is suspected or disclosed
- Immediately bring our concerns about possible abusive situations to the appropriate support resource
- Protect the confidentiality of sensitive situations by not discussing our concerns with other faculty members or parents
- Do our best to ensure that physical contact with students (e.g. high-five, hug, pat on the back) is "out in the open" and would not reasonably be construed as hurtful, intimate, sexual, or otherwise compromising
- Avoid sharing details of our personal life with students
- Are cautious in our connections with students via social media

At each division, our Counselors educate and equip students in age appropriate ways to maintain their personal safety. Each year guidance lessons include internet safety, safe and unsafe touch, boundaries and assertive communication. Awareness and specific skills are introduced and reinforced at all levels and students are encouraged to identify trusted adults to turn to when feeling unsafe or if personal boundaries are crossed.

APPENDIX A

EDUCATOR CHECKLIST FOR POSSIBLE CHILD MALTREATMENT

(adapted from US Department of Health and Human Services: The Role of Educators in Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect)

Physical Abuse

Does the child have:

- Extensive bruises, especially in areas of the body not normally vulnerable? Are the bruises of different colors indicating various stages of healing?
- Frequent bruises around the head or face, the abdomen or midway between the wrist and elbow? (these areas are less likely to be bruised in normal falls)
- Bruises in specific shapes such as handprints, hangar marks or belt buckles?
- Marks that indicate hard blows from an object like a cord or whip-like objects that make a burn around the body?
- Bruises on multiple parts of the body?
- Extreme sensitivity to pain or complaints of soreness or awkward movements that might indicate pain?
- Bald spots from severe hair pulling?
- Adult-sized human bite marks?
- Burns especially from cigarettes, irons or other objects?
- Injuries for which the explanation is inadequate?

Emotional Abuse

Does the child show:

- Inappropriate affect such as turning negatives into jokes and laughing when in pain?
- Extremes in behavior -- manically happy or very down and depressed, overly compliant or demanding, extreme passivity or aggression?

- Inappropriately adult (parenting younger children) or infantile (thumb-sucking, rocking) behavior?
- Extreme withdrawal -- no verbal or physical communication with others?
- Self-destructive behaviors (e.g. cutting)
- Difficulties concentrating or learning new material or compulsive attention to detail?
- Cruelty to others?
- Vandalism, stealing, cheating?
- Alcohol or substance abuse?
- Eating disorders?
- Frequent stomachaches, headaches, or unexplained weight loss or gain?

Sexual Abuse

Does the child:

- Have difficulty walking and sitting?
- Complain of genital or anal itching, pain or bleeding?
- Have frequent psychosomatic illnesses?
- Frequently vomit without organic causes?
- Have any sexually transmitted diseases?
- Show exceptional secrecy?
- Talk about a secret "special" friendship with an adult?
- Have more sexual knowledge than is age appropriate?
- Engage in in-depth sexual play with peers (different from the "playing doctor" form of exploration)?
- Show an inordinate fear or unusual affection/attraction toward males (or females)?
- Show cruelty to animals?
- Set fires and enjoy watching them burn?

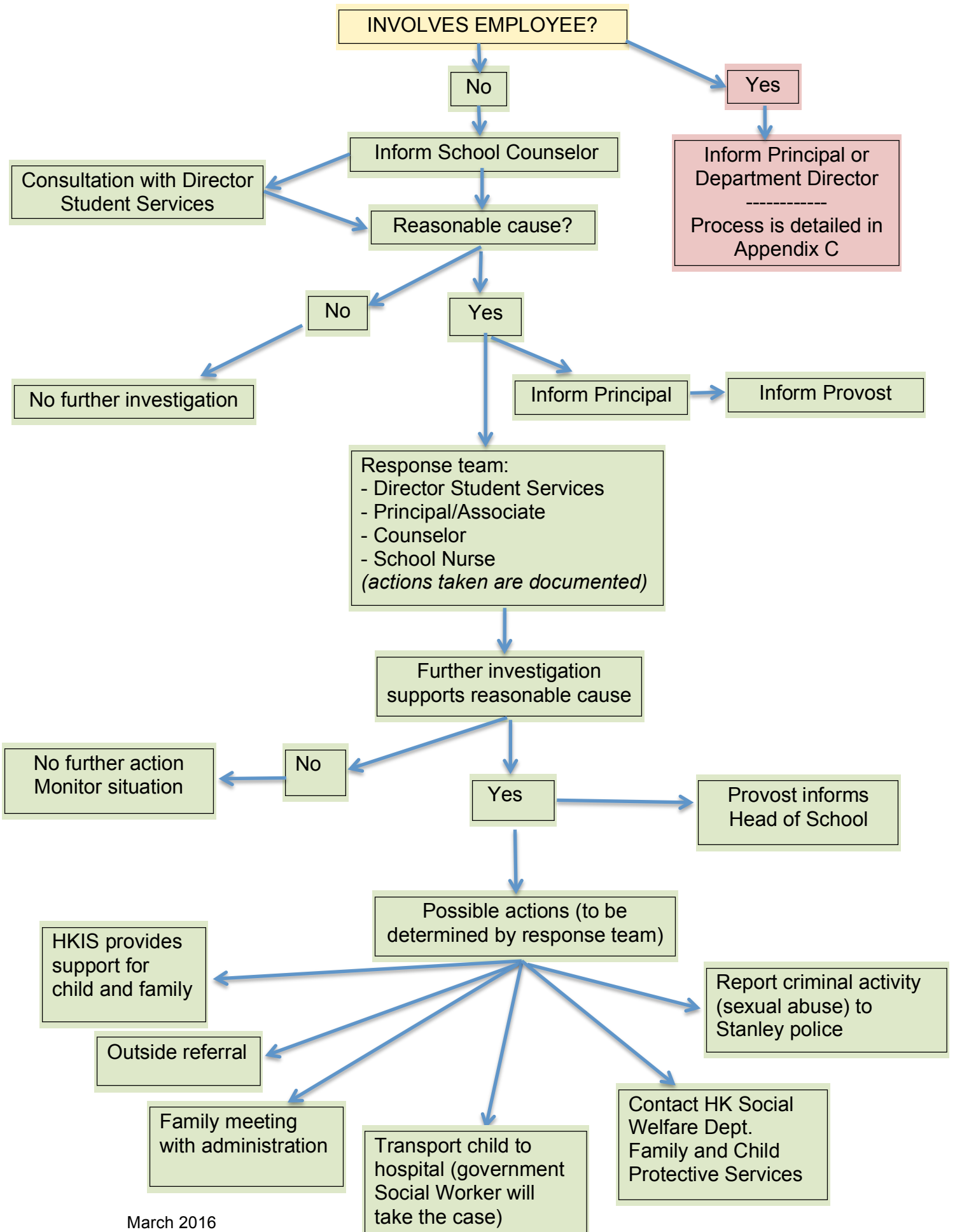
- Self-mutilation (cutting, scratching to draw blood)?
- Talk of being damaged and worthless?
- Have sudden phobias or sudden onsets of crying without provocation?
- Masturbate excessively

Neglect

Does the child:

- Come to school in torn or soiled clothing or clothing that is markedly too big or small?
- Always appear hungry, hoarding or stealing food?
- Appear listless and tired with little energy?
- Show poor hygiene, severe body odor, have very bad breath or dirty teeth?
- Have unattended medical or dental problems such as infected sores or decaying teeth?
- Crave attention, even eliciting negative responses to get it?
- Have poor peer relationships possibly due to hygiene problems or depressed and negative attitude?
- Have difficulty coping or problem-solving?
- Behave in destructive ways with no apparent guilt or remorse?
- Have a variety of academic problems with little parental involvement?

**APPENDIX B
HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
ACTIONS TO FOLLOW WHEN CHILD ABUSE IS SUSPECTED**



APPENDIX C

Student Protection Policy (as adopted by the Board of Managers)

HKIS is committed to maintaining an environment for all students free of any form of abuse. Abuse is defined as inappropriate behavior of an adult toward a minor or student.

Abuse can take different forms such as:

1. Physical: Physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means upon a student by another person and includes willful cruelty or willful infliction of pain.
2. Sexual: Sexual assault or exploitation of a student including acts of sexual demands, propositions or unwanted physical contact.
3. Emotional: Includes the use of threats, intimidation, acts of injustice or indignity (e.g. suggestive or offensive remarks, jokes, slurs, gestures) by visual, verbal or physical displays.

Policy

HKIS will not permit any employee to engage in any activity constituting abuse.

HKIS will not hire employees that have a record of abuse. Background checks will be part of the hiring process for all employees. Applicants will agree in writing with the terms of this policy as part of the contracting process.

Appropriate abuse prevention and awareness training is mandatory for all employees and students.

HKIS will maintain and periodically review policies and guidelines for employees to address the prevention, reporting and investigation of student abuse.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS (EMPLOYEE-RELATED CASES)

Discovery and Reporting

Hong Kong International School will foster a climate of “freedom to tell” so that individuals feel safe to report suspected cases of abuse.

All employees are mandated to report any suspected abuse they observe or otherwise have a reasonable basis to suspect, to the Head of School, who will subject to the following, maintain utmost confidentiality pending the results of an investigation. However, investigation of a complaint may require disclosure of information to the accused individual and to other witnesses in order to gather pertinent facts. The School may also disclose information to relevant third parties such as the police, Government department or bureau, the School's professional legal advisor, third party investigators or as required by law. The School will ensure that any disclosure of information by the School to a third party is limited to a need to know basis. The report by an employee of any suspected abuse may be made to the employee's divisional or departmental head (e.g. Principal, department Director). Reasonable suspicion must be based on specific and articulable facts, upon which a second, reasonably objective person of similar experience and training could be expected to draw similar inferences or conclusions.

1. Reports (verbal) should be made as soon as possible after observing or reasonably suspecting abuse. A written report should follow as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours following the initial report unless circumstances require different actions (e.g. police statement, government department involvement).
2. No person making a report in good faith will be penalized by the School for making the report.
3. Deliberately false accusations, as determined by the Head of School, will result in punitive consequences, including being expelled (students) or terminated (employees).

Investigation

The accusation will be promptly investigated by the school administration and in consultation with the Board of Managers. The Head of School will determine who will lead the investigation and others involved on the team. This may include the Provost, Division Principal or Department Director, and the Director of Human Resources. In some cases, this may include independent third party investigators and/or authorities. The investigator(s) will conduct a prompt and confidential investigation to determine whether reasonable grounds exist to believe that abuse occurred. A report of the investigation will be submitted to the Head of School.

Employees who are involved in or accused of abuse will be immediately removed from contact with students and placed on paid administrative leave or reassigned until the investigation is completed and his/her access to the school campuses will be restricted. This protective action is taken immediately and before an investigation is resolved so as to protect the School and employee.

The following steps will be followed during the investigation:

1. The accuser should put his/her allegations in writing; this includes signing the statement. If the accuser is a young student and/or incapable of drafting a complete and coherent statement or if the student refuses to put his/her allegation in writing, an oral interview may be justified. If this is necessary, it is recommended that the student's parent or guardian be present for the interview. Whoever conducts the interview should produce a written transcript immediately following the interview.
2. If the accused is an employee, s/he will be advised of the accusation as soon as practicable unless the circumstances warrant a different action. The accuser's identity (and witness' where applicable) will be kept strictly confidential subject to the disclosures mentioned above. In cases where this confidentiality would grossly impede the investigation, the accuser will be advised that confidentiality cannot be maintained.
3. In cases where there are witnesses to the abuse, unless the lead investigator considers otherwise the witness(es) will be asked to put his/her statements in writing; this includes signing the statement. If the witness is a young student and/or incapable of drafting a complete and coherent statement, an oral interview may be justified. If this is necessary, it is recommended that the student's parent or guardian be present for the interview. Whoever conducts the interview should produce a written transcript immediately following the interview.

4. The lead investigator (who will be involved in all interviews) will review the information from the accuser and witness (if any), and the Head of School in consultation with the lead investigator, will determine whether the investigation should be expanded. This may include interviews with other students, employees or parents.
5. Other than as mentioned above and required to investigate allegations or fulfill legal obligations, care will be given to protect confidentiality of the alleged victim(s), the alleged perpetrator(s), and the reporter(s); information access will be strictly restricted to the investigator(s) and those who need and have the authority to know.
6. An "investigation file" will be opened and maintained in a safe, confidential location. The investigation file will not be part of the employee's personnel file unless warranted by the investigation and the Head of School concludes there has been wrong-doing.
7. The lead investigator will forward investigation reports on a timely basis to the Head of School, who will communicate findings to the Board Chair. The investigators will meet periodically with the Head of School to provide updates on the progress and findings and determine any additional next steps required.
8. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the investigation team will present their findings to the Head of School.
9. The Head of School will present the findings and actions to the Board Chair. In cases where the investigation concludes that abuse did occur, the Head of School will submit a full investigation report with findings to the Board Chair.
10. The Head of School will communicate the findings and actions to the accused.

Actions and Consequences

Unsubstantiated Claim

If the Head of School concludes that the investigation indicates that reasonable grounds do not exist to support allegations of abuse, a written statement to that effect will be given by the Head of School to the employee in question. Others involved may also be informed of this conclusion, as determined appropriate by the Head of School in consultation with the wrongly accused. The Head of School in consultation with the Provost and/or Director of Human Resources, will determine consequences for the accuser. Deliberately false accusations, as determined by the Head of School, will result in punitive consequences, including being expelled (students) or terminated (employees).

Substantiated Claim of Inappropriate Behavior

If the Head of School concludes that inappropriate behavior did exist but does not constitute abuse, the perpetrator will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, as determined by the Head of School. This may include an extended administrative leave with pay, extended administrative leave without pay, suspension, or termination.

Substantiated Claim of Abuse

If the Head of School concludes that reasonable grounds do exist to believe that abuse has occurred, the employee's employment will be immediately terminated. The school may also notify relevant legal authorities. The school will report any alleged child abuse that meets the standard of reasonable suspicion to Hong Kong authorities as required by law, including pursuant to s.34(2) of the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance.

Violation of the Regulation

Employees who violate any of these regulations will be officially reprimanded in writing, at a minimum. Any such written reprimands will be delivered in a meeting involving the Head of School (and/or Provost) and divisional principal or department director. Depending on the circumstances, a first offense may lead to immediate termination.