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# 7 Hills International School CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## Introduction

7 Hills International School is located in Kololo, Kampala, Uganda. The school was founded in 2017 to provide a high quality, international education to young people. We have a mission to inspire our children to reach their full potential by fostering curiosity and an interest in learning, awakening their minds and illuminating their world.

7 Hills International School has a vision to educate children, regardless of their religious, social or economic background and it recognizes and acknowledges the need to protect all children from all forms of abuse as stated in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) and The Children's Act Uganda Chapter 59 (1997 Laws of Uganda).

#### **Commitment statement**

7 Hills International School is opposed to all forms of abuse suffered by children. 7 Hills International School seeks to ensure that through its work, there is commitment to its policies, practices and procedures, that are consistent with the best interests of the child and the protection of all children at all times.

7 Hills International School recognizes that child protection is both an organizational and an individual responsibility. Therefore, it is crucial that everyone connected with 7 Hills International School (i.e. staff, volunteers, board members) understand the issue of child abuse and their own role and responsibilities in preventing abuse and protecting children.

#### Definition of a child

According to the Constitution of Uganda, a "child" is defined by every human being below the age of 18. This policy adopts this operational definition of a child in all provisions and interpretations.

#### Definition of abuse

According to the World Health Organization, "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or 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.

#### The following are the specific types of abuse:

#### • Physical abuse

Results in actual or potential harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

#### Emotional abuse

Includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of competencies. This can be caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment such as threatening, discriminating, ridiculing, rejecting, belittling, or other forms of hostility.

#### • Sexual abuse

The involvement of a dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent to, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society.

#### • Neglect

The inattention or omission on the part of a caregiver to provide for the development of the child in all spheres such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions. This includes the

failure to properly protect children from harm as much as feasible.

#### • Exploitation

Refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution.

#### • Grave concern / at risk

This is not a separate category of child abuse, but covers a number of situations where a child may be at risk of abuse. Grave concern may be felt when a child shows symptoms of stress and distress, or whose home circumstances present as high-risk for abuse (i.e. parents abuse drugs/alcohol; another child in the home has been abused; an adult in the family has a history of violent behavior, etc.)

\*See Appendix 2 for Indicators of Child Abuse pertaining to each of the types of abuse listed above.

#### Specific scenarios of child abuse

- **Corporal Punishment** physical punishment in the use of a physical force intended to cause pain for discipline, correction and control.
- **Child Pornography** the viewing, use, trade, and transference of abusive sexual images of children engaged in explicit sexual activity or showing their private parts for the purpose of sexual gratification.
- **Traditional Harmful Practices** cultural practices that may put the child in harm (i.e. child marriage, female circumcision).
- **Bullying** a child experiences deliberate hostility from a peer. It can be in the form of physical intimidation, verbal intimidation, or emotional intimidation.
- **Spiritual Abuse** when someone in a position of spiritual authority misuses his or her power with the intention of controlling, coercing manipulating or dominating a child.
- Witchcraft/Ritualistic Abuse Children may be abused through ritualistic practices and ceremonies in the form of beating, maiming, rape, or as a sacrifice.

#### Scope and purpose of this policy

7 Hills International School recognizes its responsibilities for child protection. This policy applies to all staff, board members and volunteers working within the school.

There are two main elements to this policy:

- Prevention: which includes provision for child protection through recruitment and screening of staff and implementation of child protection measures.
- Intervention: which in includes the procedure to follow when there is any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

## Prevention

7 Hills International School provides child protection through recruitment and screening of all staff, volunteers, and other partners of the school, implementing prevention focused measures on management level, abiding by a Code of conduct and following guidelines to discourage incidents of abuse.

#### a. Recruitment and screening

The purpose of our policy for recruitment is to ensure effective, fair and consistent recruitment processes. We want to deter applications from unsuitable people who may seek to gain access to our students, as well as ensure that successful applicants are safe to work with children. The following steps establish a process of safe selection and recruitment for all staff, volunteers, partners, trustees and representatives of our school.

- A. <u>Identification of documents</u> to confirm their identity and provide proof of qualifications
- B. <u>Police Report or Criminal Records Bureau check</u> from the Interpol office in Kampala, or from the country of residence of the applicant, before the contract can be signed. An updated check must be

obtained every 3 years. A comprehensive police check should be obtained if possible as well.

- C. <u>Disclosure Form</u> detailing any court cases that have at any time been pending against the applicant, or any arrests/cautions or other involvements with the police.
- D. <u>References</u> 3 academic and 3 personal that can speak to the candidate's prior experience working with children.
- E. <u>Interview</u> specific child-protection questions will be asked during their pre-hiring interview.
- F. <u>Signing of the Acknowledgement of Consent to the Child Protection Policy</u> complying with the terms outlined in our policy (see Appendix 3)
- G. <u>Orientation</u> to the Child Protection Policy before beginning work after signing the contract.
- H. <u>Documentation</u> All documents will be maintained indefinitely on each staff/volunteer.

#### b. Prevention on management level:

- 1. Ensure the school has a Designated Child Protection Person for child protection who has received appropriate training and support for this role and will receive ongoing training.
- 2. Ensure the Child Protection (CP) Team meets each semester.
- 3. Ensure the school has a nominated Board Member responsible for child protection.
- 4. Ensure all staff and volunteers are acquainted with the Child Protection Policy and understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated senior person responsible for child protection by organizing training sessions, twice a year for all staff.
- 5. Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the school prospectus.
- 6. Develop effective links with relevant agencies and cooperate as required with their inquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- 7. Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed.
- 8. Incorporate child protection measures into all planning, assessing, and management procedures.
- 9. Ensure a school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment, and gives the student a sense of being valued, which should be incorporated in the content of the school's curriculum.

#### c. Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, partners, trustees, representatives, board members, and students are required to understand and abide by the following Code of Conduct, which outlines rules of appropriate and proper behavior when working with children, and extends to behavior outside the workplace. This Code of Conduct is designed primarily to protect children; however it also serves to protect representatives from false accusations. 7 Hills International School representatives should:

- Understand that the adult will always be held responsible
- Be accountable to each other so that any behavior can be challenged for the safety of children
- Ensure that risks of working alone are minimized by ensuring the "two-adult" rule whenever possible, and that you're always visible when working with children.
- Avoid inappropriate dress and be culturally sensitive to the environment
- Respect each child's boundaries and their right to privacy (including taking photographs). Consent to use images should be obtained from the child's parents/guardians. Personal information and details of children, which may identify them and increase any potential risk or harm to them, should not be used.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child. Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they give with others.

Typical safe forms of contact that may be given in a public setting:

- side hug/arm around shoulder;
- touch on arm, back, head;
- carrying as a result of injury or sickness;
- demonstrating techniques, e.g. in Drama, PE or Dance;
- shaking hands;
- medical attention

Inadvisable forms of physical contact are as follows:

- any form of touch that is resisted by the child;
- any form of touch that is initiated due to the needs of the adult, not the needs of the child;
- inappropriate touching of 'off-limits' areas: buttocks, chest, genital areas, thighs;
- kissing
- Use positive, non-violent behavior to manage children's behavior. (See Stoplight Approach)
- Raise any concerns of inappropriate behavior immediately to the DCPP.
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse.
- Ensure children, when changing for PE or swimming, change with members of the same-sex. An adult of the same-sex should supervise them. If this is not possible then the teacher should remain outside the door of the changing room and not enter the room until all children are changed.

7 Hills International School representatives should not:

- Condone or participate in illegal, unsafe or abusive behavior involving children.
- Leave the class unattended. The classroom teacher has primary responsibility for the class under his/her charge. The teacher **must not** leave the classroom unattended for any reason other than an emergency. In the case of the teacher having a classroom assistant, the assistant may be left but there should be clear indication where the classroom teacher is during his/her absence from the classroom. Parent/High School student volunteers must **never** be left on their own in control of the class.
- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children in a way that is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the case of breaking up a fight or physically restraining a child who may do harm to himself or others then the teacher is to respond appropriately using the required amount of force. The aim in these situations is to secure a safe environment for the students involved.
- Spend time alone with a child away from others or behind closed doors.
- Meet with a child away from the school without the child's caretaker presence or consent.
- Develop physical or sexual relationships with children or develop relationships that could be deemed exploitative.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they could do for themselves.
- Be under the influence of alcohol or drugs prior to assuming responsibility for any child.
- Act in ways that may place a child at risk of abuse by another adult.
- Use language, make suggestion, or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive, demeaning or abusive.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
- Conduct or be a part of harmful traditional practices or spiritual rituals.
- Use inappropriate touch with a child, including; touching any area covered by a swimsuit; kissing; or tickling.
- Expose children to inappropriate materials such as pornographic videos or literature.

• Discriminate against, show different treatment to, or favor particular children while excluding others.

The Code serves to establish an open culture in which any issues or concerns can be discussed. Adults will be held mutually accountable in regards to protecting our children, and we will empower children by informing them of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and encouraging them to raise concerns about their safety.

#### d. Guidelines to discourage incidents of abuse

7 Hills International School implements the following guidelines in regards to our facility to discourage incidents of abuse:

- <u>Attendance</u>: all children are accounted for during morning attendance. If a child needs to leave school grounds for any reason, they must checkout at the office.
- <u>Controlled Access of Visitors</u>: any visitors, including parents, report at the reception before continuing on the campus.
- <u>Open-Door Policy</u>: All doors will be left open for surveillance purposes whenever a child and adult are in the same room. Rooms/sheds/closets that are not in use will be locked.

Hall Monitors: A member of staff is designated to circulate periodically between classrooms for extra surveillance.

- <u>Washroom Guidelines</u>: The school has separate male and female. Adults and children must go to the washroom of the same sex.
- <u>Health & Safety:</u> Staff will ensure furnishings and equipment are safe and do not present overt risk to students. The school will maintain cleanliness throughout the facility, including cleanliness of food prepared on site. Access to and training of first aid care is provided. Any injuries occurring on school property should be recorded by the person attending to the child in an incident form that is sent to the Head of School and Safety Officer.
- <u>Off-Site Procedures:</u> A risk-assessment must be done in regards to any off-site trips to ensure the safety of students. Consent should be received from each child's caregiver.
- Emergency Procedures: In the event of an emergency (fire, lock down, etc.), the supervising adults will follow the guidelines within the school's Crisis Management Plan and the instructions of the Head of School, if at school. When away from school, students will gather at a pre-arranged muster point away from the current facility. Attendance should be taken as soon as possible to ensure all students are present and safe.
- <u>School Bus Transport</u>: Parents must sign up their children for school bus transport, if their children plan to use the school transport. Children must have their own seat with a seatbelt. The bus driver must ensure this is enforced. An assistant will also be assigned to each bus. A safety inspection on the vehicle must be completed each term and submitted to the management of the school.

We recognize that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behavior may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school will endeavor to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives students a sense of being valued.

• The school behavior policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable students in the school. The school will ensure that the student knows that some behavior is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.

## Intervention

7 Hills International School recognizes its responsibility to report abuse and the duty to cooperate in the incidence of suspected or reported child abuse. The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration in the process of recognizing abuses, reporting cases and supporting the victims of child abuse.

This section describes the procedure to follow when there is any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. In the Appendix 4 you can find a summary of this procedure.

#### a. Recognizing

Every member of the 7 Hills community has the duty to be aware of child abuse, to observe and listen to staff and students and being alert to signs of abuse and neglect, such as changes in appearance and behavior.

Medical concerns should be addressed by liaising with the school nurse.

A suspicion, observation or allegation of child abuse/ neglect **must** be reported to the Designated Child Protection Person (DCPP) immediately. The DCPP has received appropriate training and support for the task of child protection.

If the situation turns out not to be a case of abuse, no fault lies with the one who reported. However, if one fails to report, the risk to a child's safety is ones responsibility. Better to report signals early than to wait for obvious signs when more severe harm has occurred. It is up the DCPP and other authorities to interpret, investigate, and act upon the situation.

If a child makes an allegation, listen without judgment. When outward signs of abuse are apparent, the value of the child is paramount. A child must be encouraged to talk and assured that he/ she is being listened to carefully, without the intention to blame or bring further harm.

#### DO

1) Remain calm.

2) Let the child know he/ she did the right thing by telling.

3) Let the child know you take the story seriously.

#### DO NOT

1) Convey doubt in what the child is telling you. This can happen inadvertently if you ask the child to repeat what he/ she has said, which can feel to the child like you are questioning the validity of the story.

2) Ask leading questions.

3) Promise confidentiality, but make it clear to the child that the allegation will be passed on.

#### b. Reporting

It is critical that reports are made first-hand by the person who has observed, suspects, or has directly heard an allegation of possible abuse. Fill out the Abuse Report Form (see Appendix 5) or make a verbal report to the DCPP, preferably the same working day as the concern arises. Do not discuss the concern with someone else instead of reporting to the DCPP even though this might be done with the good intention of getting input or confirming/ disconfirming your suspicions. The DCPP and the members of staff in the chain of reporting are trained in child protection. You will not be judged for making an "unnecessary" report. Rather, the DSP will know what to do with the information you provide.

Report *directly* to the DCPP. Do not involve other parties. Involving other people prior to making a report or in making a report potentially compromises the information, violates the privacy of the alleged parties, and can cause further harm.

#### • Preliminary report procedure

When any 7Hills employee has reasonable suspicions, observes, is given an allegation of child abuse, or has knowledge which gives reason to suspect child abuse or neglect:

He or she **must** make a report and submit it to the DCPP immediately without taking any other action.

If a child discloses information, the adult **must** make it clear to the child that this will be passed on. The adult **must not** promise confidentiality.

#### • Child Protection Team meeting

The designated senior person will contact the CP Team. A meeting will be held as soon as possible. In attendance are the Designated Child Protection Person, respective Principal, School Nurse, School Counselor, Director of Student Support Services and the adult responsible for initial report. Wherever possible someone should be in this meeting who is knowledgeable of the language and culture of both the victim and alleged offender. The meeting will address the following issues:

- o Is there evidence of the alleged incidences?
- o How can the school offer care and protection for the victim?
- o What evidence needs to be collected? Statements, photographs, witness testimony, etc.

COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY IS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO THE INVESTIGATION AND INFORMATION WILL BE COMMUNICATED ON A 'NEED TO KNOW' BASIS ONLY.

At the end of this meeting an action plan, including potential liaison with police and legal representatives, will be formulated that looks to the interests of the child, whilst at the same time supporting an 'innocent until proven guilty' ethos with regards to the alleged offender.

#### • Preliminary Report compiled

Following investigations as per action plan, the DCPP is to complete a report of all findings, evidence, testimony, disclosure and confession. Report should be submitted to the Board member responsible for child protection and the CP Team for approval and to discuss appropriate action.

#### • Report to the Authorities

Following consultation with the school's legal advisor, if appropriate a report is made to the relevant body as required by the law/statute/regulations of Uganda.

#### Review and Final Report

Following any action taken, a full report is compiled by the DCPP detailing findings, actions, authority involvement and conclusion of matter. This report will be approved by CP Team and filed. Information will be passed to other staff/family members as appropriate.

#### • Suspension of Duties

If any member of staff employed by 7Hills is accused of child abuse then that member of staff MUST be suspended from duties, on full pay, whilst the investigation takes place. This is not an admission of guilt, but simply allows the

incident to be investigated in a way that protects both the child and the staff member should the allegations turn out to be unfounded.

#### c. Supporting

All allegations and/or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously by the school, and handled with respect for the child's confidentiality. The school offers assistance and support to cope with any trauma that the child(ren) and their families may be experiencing. The school counselor may offer counsel for the victim and their family. The DCPP will offer any advice or support needed by staff to fulfill their obligations under this policy.

## Acknowledgements

This policy and its appendices have been developed with guidance from and reference to:

- UN Convention of Rights of the Child
- Children's Act of Uganda
- World Health Organization
- Stoplight Approach
- Tearfund Child Protection Policy 2009

## **APPENDICES**

#### **APPENDIX 1 - Definition of Terms**

Child – any person below the age of 18 years, regardless of national laws or cultural practices that may stipulate a younger age.

Student – a child who is registered and attending classes at the school.

Teacher/Staff – a person who has been hired by the school with the qualifications and expectation to work with students.

Board Member – an elected member that sits on the Board of 7 Hills International School and engages in decision making for the school.

DCPP (Designated Child Protection Person) – a member of the staff responsible for this policy and its application.

CP Team – this includes the DCPP, School Counselor, School Nurse, Director of Student Support Services and the respective Principal, who are responsible for maintaining and monitoring the child protection within the school.

Visitor – a person, adult or child, who is on school property for a short duration for a specific purpose (i.e. parents, police etc.).

## **APPENDIX 2 - Indicators of Child Abuse**

Note: Most forms of abuse have a combination of the above indicators and observations and sometimes cannot be put into a specific category.

Туре	Physical Observations in Child	Behavioral Observations of a Child
Physical Abuse	Bruising, burns, bite marks, fractures, swelling, serious injuries with no explanation or conflicting explanations, untreated injuries.	Unusually fearful of adults, unnaturally compliant to parents, refusal to discuss injuries, fear of medical help, aggression towards others, covers-up with clothing.
Sexual	Damage to genitalia, anus or mouth, sexually transmitted disease, unexpected pregnancy (especially in very young girls), soreness in genital area, anus or mouth, unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain.	Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age, sexualized behavior in young children, promiscuity, hinting at sexual activity, sudden apparent changes in personality, lack of concentration, restlessness, aimlessness, socially withdrawn, overly compliant behavior, acting out, aggressive behavior, poor trust in significant adults, regressive behavior, wetting day or night, insecure and clinging behavior, arriving early at school, leaving late, running away, suicide attempts, self-mutilations, self-disgust, eating disorders, hysteria.
Neglect	Poor personal hygiene, dressed inappropriately for the weather, is inadequately supervised or left in the care of an inappropriate care giver, untreated medical problems, malnourished (being undersized, having low weight and a sallow complexion, lacking body tone, being constantly tired), drug or alcohol abuse.	Constant hunger, constant tiredness, frequent lateness or non-attendance at school, destructive tendencies, low self-esteem, neurotic behavior, no social relationships, running away, compulsive stealing or scavenging.
Emotional	Highly anxious, showing delayed speech, low self-esteem, self-harming behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse.	Development lags, acceptance of punishment which appears excessive, over-reaction to mistakes, continual self-deprecation, sudden speech disorders, fear of new situations, inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations, neurotic behavior (such as rocking, hair-twisting, thumb sucking), self-harming or mutilation, fear of parents being contacted, extremes of passivity or aggression, drug/solvent abuse, running away, compulsive stealing.

## APPENDIX 3 – Acknowledgement of Consent to the Child Protection Policy Form

I have received and read a copy of the Child Protection Policy of 7 Hills International School in Kampala and I have understood its contents.

To clarify my role and responsibilities in this area I consulted	d with
	(insert name of DCCP or trainer's name)
I agree to abide by the policy and the principles therein. I u	nderstand that I must raise any concerns I may have about
child protection during my role as	with 7 Hills International School's Designated
(insert role)	
Protection Person,	
(insert DCCP's name)	
Name:	-
Signature:	_ Date:
DCCP's name:	
Signature:	Date:

#### **APPENDIX 4 - Procedure in Case of Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect**

The duty of every member of the 7Hills community is to be vigilant about child protection. This is the procedure to follow when there is any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Recognize	Be aware. Observe. Listen. Be alert to signs of abuse and neglect such as changes in appearance and behavior.		
	Address medical concerns by liaising with the school nurse.		
		DO	
	If a child makes an	1) Listen without judgment.	
	allegation,	2) Remain calm.	
		3) Let the child know he/ she did the right thing by telling.	
		4) Let the child know you take the story seriously.	
		DO NOT	
		1) Do not convey doubt in what the child is telling you. This can happen	
		inadvertently if you ask the child to repeat what he/ she has said, which can feel to the child like you are questioning the validity of the story.	
		2) Do not ask leading questions.	
		3) Do not promise confidentiality. Make it clear to the child that the allegation will be passed on.	
Report	Fill out the report form or make a verbal report to the DCPP* preferably the same working day as the concern arises. Report <i>directly</i> to the DCPP. Do not involve other parties.		
Support	Be available to the investigation. Be trustworthy to the victims. COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY IS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO THE INVESTIGATION AND INFORMATION WILL BE COMMUNICATED ON A 'NEED TO KNOW' BASIS ONLY.		

\* If the DCPP (Designated Child Protection Person) is unavailable, follow this chain of reporting:

1) School Principal

2) Administrative Officer

If your concerns involve the DCPP or the person to whom you should be reporting, move on to the next person in the chain of reporting.

#### **APPENDIX 5 – Abuse Report Form**

THE INFORMTION IN THIS FORM IS CONFIDENTIAL. IT SHOULD BE SENT ONLY TO THE DCCP. IT MUST BE KEPT IN A SECURE PLACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS.

You should attempt to fill in as much of the form as possible. Leave blank those areas for which you have no knowledge. If you are raising a general concern about behavior that you have observed then please make this clear. Distinguish between what you know personally or observed and what was told to you by someone else.

#### PART ONE - DETAILS

Your name:	Your position:		
Child's name:	Grade:		
Child's living conditions (who does the child live with):			
Where is the child now?			
If there is more than one child involved: Child's name:	Grade:		
Child's living conditions (who does the child live with):			
PART TWO – YOUR CONCERN			

Who is the alleged perpetrator?

Was the abuse observed, suspected, or disclosed, and by who?

Nature of concern / allegation (what were the circumstances, what is alleged to have happened):

Date(s), time(s), location(s) of incident(s):

Report exactly what the child has said (in his/her words) and what you said:

External agencies contacted (if any) – Date / time, name of person, advice received:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_