



strawberry fields
HIGH SCHOOL

Child Abuse Policy

Child abuse is, harm to, or neglect of, a child by another person, whether adult or child. Child abuse happens in all cultural, ethnic, and income groups. Child abuse can be physical, emotional - verbal, sexual or through neglect. Abuse may cause serious injury to the child and may even result in death.

Signs of possible abuse include:

➤ Physical Abuse

- ❖ Unexplained or repeated injuries such as welts, bruises, or burns
- ❖ Injuries that are in the shape of an object (belt buckle, electric cord, etc.)
- ❖ Injuries not likely to happen given the age or ability of the child. For example, broken bones in a child too young to walk or climb
- ❖ Disagreement between the child's and the parent's explanation of the injury.
- ❖ Unreasonable explanation of the injury
- ❖ Obvious neglect of the child (dirty, undernourished, inappropriate clothes for the weather, lack of medical or dental care)
- ❖ Fearful behaviour

➤ Emotional - Verbal Abuse

- ❖ Aggressive or withdrawn behaviour
- ❖ Shying away from physical contact with parents or adults
- ❖ Afraid to go home
- ❖ A child who is apathetic (just doesn't care)
- ❖ A child who suffers from depression
- ❖ A child who won't take part in play or school activities
- ❖ A child with a loss of appetite
- ❖ A child who compulsively overeats

➤ Sexual Abuse

- ❖ Child tells you he/she was sexually mistreated.
- ❖ Child has physical signs such as:
 - difficulty in walking or sitting
 - stained or bloody underwear
 - genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge
 - bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area.
- ❖ Child has behavioural and emotional signs such as:
 - difficulty eating or sleeping.
 - soiling or wetting pants or bed after being potty trained.
 - acting like a much younger child.
 - excessive crying or sadness.
 - withdrawing from activities and others.
 - talking about or acting out sexual acts beyond normal sex play for age.

Note: The school is mandated to follow and adhere to all guideline, laws and protocols specified in the POCSO Act, 2012 – A Comprehensive Law to protect Children from Sexual Offences.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been mandated to monitor the implementation of the POCSO Act, 2012. The 'User Handbook for Implementation of POCSO Act' is provided by the Commission. It explains the various provisions of the Act in a simple language to help all stakeholders. The school is to refer particularly to the section on- Role of School Authorities and Teachers under the Act for details regarding all aspects related to sexual abuse and meet all specified parameters. (Read policy in conjunction with the NCPCR Handbook)

➤ Neglect

- ❖ Any of the signs above.
- ❖ A child who is hungry much of the time.
- ❖ A child wandering outdoors unsupervised.
- ❖ A child unsuitably dressed for the weather.
- ❖ A child who is continually dirty or wearing the same soiled clothes.
- ❖ A child who shows up early or stays late at school.

Abuse can happen in any family, regardless of any special characteristics.

However, in dealing with parents, be aware of characteristics of families in which abuse may be more likely:

- ❖ Families who are isolated and have no friends, relatives, or other support systems
- ❖ Parents who tell you they were abused as children
- ❖ Families who are often in crisis (have money problems, move often)

- ❖ Parents who abuse drugs or alcohol
- ❖ Parents who are very critical of their child
- ❖ Parents who are very rigid in disciplining their child
- ❖ Parents who show too much or too little concern for their child
- ❖ Parents who feel they have a difficult child
- ❖ Parents who are under a lot of stress

If you suspect child abuse of any kind, you should:

- ❖ Take the child to a quiet, private area
- ❖ Gently encourage the child to give you enough information to evaluate whether abuse may have occurred
- ❖ Remain calm so as not to upset the child
- ❖ If the child reveals the abuse, reassure him/her that you believe him/her, that he/she is right to tell you, and that he/she is not bad
- ❖ Tell the child you are going to talk to persons who can help him/her
- ❖ Return the child to the group (if appropriate)
- ❖ Record all information
- ❖ Immediately report the suspected abuse to the proper authorities (follow the flow chart)

Facts about Child Abuse

- ❖ 84 percent of prison inmates were abused as children.
- ❖ One in three girls and one in five boys are sexually abused by an adult at some time during childhood. (Most sexual abusers are someone in the family or someone the child knows, not the proverbial stranger with a lollipop.)
- ❖ Families with four or more children have higher rates of abuse and neglect, especially if their living conditions are crowded or they live in isolated areas.
- ❖ More than 80 percent of abusers are a parent or someone close to a child. Child abuse is far more likely to occur in the child's home than in a day care centre.
- ❖ One in thirteen kids with a parent on drugs is physically abused regularly. (Drug and alcohol abuse in the family makes child abuse about twice as likely.)
- ❖ One out of ten babies born today are born to mothers who are abusing drugs. Drinking and smoking heavily during pregnancy also endangers the health of unborn children.

What kids can do – Know your rights. (the school must consistently educate and inform students)
 Nobody, including your parents, can:

- ❖ Hit you hard enough to cause an injury.
- ❖ Leave you by yourself for a long time.
- ❖ Force you or tell you to have any kind of sex with anyone.

- ❖ Touch you inappropriately in a manner that makes you uncomfortable.
- ❖ Expose you to pictures, movies, videos, visuals about inappropriate/sexual content forcefully and against your wishes.
- ❖ Talk to you explicitly and inappropriately, leaving you uncomfortable and frightened.

Anyone who does any of these things has a problem. They need help. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't believe anybody who says something bad will happen if you talk. Things can only get better than they are.

Incident Information Flow Chart

