



*ADOPTED  
on September 1st, 2021, on the basis of directive no 1-7/3  
of the Director of Audentes International School*

## **AUDENTES INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### INTRODUCTION

An essential part of regular school life is for everyone to feel safe and to have a caring and respectful environment. AIS Child Safeguarding Policy is aimed at ensuring that our students are safe and cared for in every area of their lives.

The AIS endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Estonia is a signatory, and seeks to be a haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child includes 54 articles to which governments are expected to be signatories. The main articles relevant to AIS include:

- Article 3: the best interest of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.
- Article 12: Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
- Article 19: (Governments) must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 39: Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

### ABUSE DEFINITIONS

- **Abusive behaviour** is defined as neglect of a child and/or mistreatment in a manner that endangers their mental, physical or emotional health.
- **Physical abuse** is defined as a bodily injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. The statutes define physical injury as anything from severe or frequent bruising to more severe injuries.
- **Sexual abuse** is when the child is used for sexual gratification, such as obscene conversation, exposure to pornographic material, exhibitionism, molestation, incest, rape, or sexual exploitation.
- **Emotional abuse** is when unreasonable demands are excessive or aggressive, such as habitual and inappropriate teasing, verbal abuse that demeans and belittles the child, bullying and lack of love, support, or guidance.

- **Neglect** is inadequate supervision, persistent lack of provision of basic human necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or the failure to protect the child from exposure to any kind of danger (including cold and starvation), affecting the child's health or development.

## **THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL**

AIS has an institutional responsibility to protect children. In this role, we need to ensure that students in our care are safe and secure to grow and develop. As educators, we can observe the students daily and over time. In this way, we have a unique position to identify the children who need help and protection. We have a professional and ethical obligation to share our concerns with an Academic Advisor/or Principal and take steps to ensure that the child and family access the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

AIS reserves the right to pursue abuse cases to the full extent of national and international law. Cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate child protection agency in Estonia or the child's home country.

On a yearly basis, AIS will distribute its Child Safeguarding Policy to all parents, communicate it with students and provide training for the staff. The school will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of the children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, AIS will conduct a full investigation following the carefully designed course due process.

## **THE ROLE OF SCHOOL STAFF**

All the teachers and other staff members at AIS have a professional obligation to be vigilant towards abuse and neglect. Reporting their concerns about the well-being of any student is mandatory. Reporting and follow-up of all suspected child abuse or neglect incidents will occur based on this policy's procedures.

## **IDENTIFICATION**

Members of the School staff are well placed to observe and report outward signs of abuse. Care must be taken as such signs can only be a cause for suspicion and are not, in themselves, proof that abuse has occurred. Unexplained changes in behaviour and changes in school performance may indicate abuse. Inadequate clothing, poor growth, or deficient nutrition may indicate physical neglect, while attention-seeking or excessive dependence may point to emotional neglect.

In addition, School personnel should encourage students to self-report abuse. If a student self-reports abuse or neglect to a staff member, that staff member must immediately file a report, and the process outlined below should be followed.

## **IN-SCHOOL FOLLOW-UP AFTER IDENTIFICATION**

Steps that should be followed after identification of potential abuse or neglect:

- Identifying teacher/s must report suspected abuse/neglect immediately to the Principal/Coordinator, who must inform the School's Academic Advisor. The teacher must not investigate on their own.
- Within 24 hours of a report, the Academic Advisor files the Care Team. The Care Team must meet to assess if the suspected abuse/neglect situation exists. The Care Team includes the Homeroom Teacher and the Principal/Coordinator and is led by the Academic Advisor.

The Care Team may consult the nurse and ATL coordinator for the relevant information. A Care Team member may interview the student without parental permission. A physical examination provided by the school nurse can occur after parent/guardian consent is received. Parents/caregivers should have an opportunity to be present when the examination takes place. The student can also request the presence of their parent or another trusted adult at any medical examination.

In case the Parents/caregivers refuse to cooperate and do not allow the medical examination (or there is a genuine concern or expectation that consent will be prohibited), then, instead of a continuing school investigation, the school will refer the case to the Estonian Child Protection Authority and inform them of the circumstances.

Following the examination, interview or both, the Care Team should prepare the written report and send it to the Principal/Coordinator.

### **FOLLOW-UP WITH PARENTS AND SPONSORING ORGANISATION**

The school will arrange a meeting with the parents to inform them of suspected neglect or abuse. School Personnel will respect the family's right to confidentiality within the AIS Child Safeguarding Policy limits. Suppose the case has been considered and neglect/abuse has indicated to be life-threatening, extreme, and/or it is deemed. In that case, the child should be immediately removed from the home; the civil authorities will be notified immediately (if necessary, without parental notification/ consent).

In cases of not fulfilling the criteria above, a meeting between representatives of the School's Administration will be arranged. Parents will be informed of the suspected abuse and the school's child protection policy. At the conclusion of the meeting, the parents will be requested to complete and sign a document acknowledging the meeting and agreements reached.

While each situation will be handled on a case-by-case basis, it is the intention of the school for one or more of the following to take place, depending on individual circumstances:

- Family counselling – the family, will be directed to a family counsellor of the Audentes Counselling Centre. The family counsellor will periodically communicate with the AIS Academic Advisor to ensure that outside counselling is continuing and the family is making every effort to resolve the problem.
- Referral to the Estonian Child Protection authority by the Principal. If step 1 is not successful or agreed upon, the Principal will notify the Estonian Child Protection Authority and ask them to interfere on the student's behalf. Again, suppose it is considered that the abuse/neglect is unlawful, life-threatening, extreme, and/or it is deemed the child should be immediately removed from the home. In that case, the civil authorities will be notified immediately and, if necessary, without parental notification/consent.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **IMPLEMENTING**

All teachers are involved in the implementation of the policy. The policy will be referred to during staff meetings, assessment period and as necessary throughout the academic year. The policy will

be shared with staff and parents. The policy will be made available to parents through the programmes Handbook and the website's future update.

### **EVALUATING AND REVIEWING**

This policy is created through teachers and leadership team collaboration, and further amendments will also be made through collaboration with teachers. The policy will be reviewed annually by both the leadership team and the teaching staff.