



Yangon International School Child Safeguarding Policy 2023-2024

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- Dr Emily Meadows & Alysa Perreras for allowing public access to their policy on identity-based harm for international schools
- Council of International Schools for their extensive resources on Child Protection and Child Safeguarding
- Yangon Child Protection Interdisciplinary Team for being a sounding board during the process of writing this policy

2.0 Introduction to our Policy

Child abuse and neglect is a reality in every country of the world, and can happen regardless of age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic class. Child abuse and neglect can have a significant negative impact on the life and well-being of children and young people. YIS's Child Safety Policy is based on international law and on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in which Myanmar is also a signatory.

In particular, the two key articles which address protection to children are:

Article 19 – Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 34 – Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

Yangon International School (YIS) is committed to providing a safe and nurturing learning environment. We are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of the children and young people who attend our school.

2.1 Principles for Child Safeguarding:

1. Empowerment

- Children and young people are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions. They feel safe to speak up if they need to.

2. Prevention

- If possible, preventative measures should be taken and issues addressed at the earliest opportunity.

3. Proportionality

- Responses should be proportionate to the assessed risk.

4. Protection

- It is our responsibility to support and protect the students while they are in our care.

5. Partnership

- All members of the school community have a role in preventing, detecting and reporting any reports or suspicions of neglect, abuse, self-harm, suicidal ideation, bullying, or harassment.

6. Accountability

- YIS is accountable and transparent with our child safeguarding and safeguarding practices.

2.2 Mandatory reporting:

Adult members of the YIS community play a critical role in ensuring the safety and well-being of each student. Every adult member has an obligation to report any disclosures or concerns of bullying, harassment, abuse, neglect, self-harm or suicidal ideation to the appropriate staff members immediately, through the appropriate channels.

2.3 Staff Hiring Process:

As part of our commitment to community that places the needs and safety of students at the forefront of our work, Yangon International School requires all international staff to complete background checks. Much of this process is managed by International Schools Services (ISS). ISS complete as thorough check as possible, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Complete criminal history check from country of citizenship, including fingerprinting analysis where available.
- Criminal history from the most recent countries where the teacher has been employed.
- Reference checks from at least 2 of the employees most recent line managers.

2.4 Child Safeguarding Team

The purpose of this team is to respond to and manage all child safeguarding reports. The team may consist of the following individuals on an as-needed basis. The appointees for the 2023-2024 school year are listed below:

- Child Safeguarding Lead – Secondary counselor or as appointed
- Elementary and secondary principals
- Elementary and secondary counselors
- Director, Mike Livingston
- Other appointed staff member (e.g. teacher, other administrator), Business Manager

2.5 Implementation and review

2.5a Scope

This policy applies to all members of the YIS community, including but not limited to:

- School management and administration
- All local and expatriate employees of YIS and employees of the school's affiliated organizations.
- Individuals and entities with contractual relationships with the school.
- All students, parents, and legal/designated guardians; in particular, with respect to upholding the school's code of conduct, respect for one another, and the reporting of incidents/reasonable suspicions.
- All school chaperones and volunteers who work with children and youth; or participate in school programs and activities involving children and youth.

2.5b Staff training

YIS commits to training all expatriate staff and local staff during orientation week each year. Training is to be conducted by the Child Safeguarding Lead. Training will include the most current research and knowledge of best practice in Child Safeguarding Policy.

2.5c Parent/guardian training

Each year, YIS will inform parents of the Child Safeguarding Policy via a letter home to families.

The director will send home a letter at the beginning of every school year. The letter will be reviewed annually.

Dear Parents,

At Yangon International School, we desire that our students have the best available educational experience that is free from any type of bullying, neglect, or abuse of any kind. In this regard, and in keeping with YIS's core values and mission statement, the administration team has adopted a Child Safeguarding Policy to guide our staff and families in matters related to the health, safety, and care of children in attendance at our school. This policy is important to YIS and as your director, I am required to notify parents and other community members at

the beginning of each school year, or as necessary, reminding them about this truly critical issue.

YIS's Child Safety Policy is based on international law and on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in which Myanmar is also a signatory.[2] In particular, the two key articles which address protection to children are:

Article 19 – Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 34 – Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

By enrolling your student at YIS, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by the YIS administration. All of us at YIS want you to know that we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of our students. It is for this reason that YIS has endorsed a Child Safety Policy that *defines the standards* by which all YIS students should be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

As part of our overall educational programs and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children, to protect them, and to learn and grow in a safe environment, YIS will:

- 1) Provide age-appropriate lessons for all grade levels to help students understand personal safety, needs and rights.
- 2) Provide parent materials and information sessions to help parents better understand our programs and policy.
- 3) Annually train faculty, staff and outside contracted adults to recognize and report issues of abuse and neglect.

Working together can ensure that our children are safe and are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and to each other so that they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment. I thank you for your support of our efforts and invite you to contact the school counselor or principal regarding any specific questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Director

2.5d Student Education

Education is a key tool in the prevention of child abuse. A child and young person should know they have a safe adult with whom they can speak to if they are the victim of any sort of harm. As such, YIS commits to educating our students in the best way possible. YIS will provide age-appropriate lessons implemented by our trained counselor(s) throughout the school year. In these lessons, students will learn personal safety, needs and their rights as children.

2.5e Accessibility of Policy

The Child Safeguarding Policy is to be translated into the Myanmar language and distributed to all staff at the beginning of each school year. All staff members are required to sign the policy, acknowledging that they have read and understood the policy and that they will implement the policy while employed at YIS.

In addition to distribution to all staff, this policy will be made available on the school website.

2.5f Policy Review

The Child Safeguarding Policy is to be reviewed annually and changes made in line with the current internationally recognized best practice. The Child Safeguarding Lead will coordinate the process by reviewing the policy from International School Services and the Council for International Schools and implementing adaptations as appropriate.

3.0 Definitions and Signs of Harm

The below definitions are shared from the widely accepted definitions via www.childwelfare.gov. YIS acknowledges that sometimes cultural values and culturally accepted standards of care can influence what is perceived as maltreatment. This may indicate that a family may be in need of assistance or information.

3.1 Physical abuse is defined as “a nonaccidental physical injury to a child [or young person] caused by a parent, caregiver or other person responsible for a child and can include punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise causing physical harm.

A child or young person who exhibits the following signs may be a victim of physical abuse:

- Has unexplained injuries, such as burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other noticeable marks after an absence from school
- Seems scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or aggressive
- Seems frightened of his or her parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home

3.2 Neglect is the failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. Neglect generally includes the following categories:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, lack of appropriate supervision)
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment, withholding medically indicated treatment from children with life-threatening conditions)
- Educational (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child’s emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, permitting a child to use alcohol or other drugs.

3.3 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child’s genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

- *Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse:*
 - o Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level.
 - o Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns.
 - o Sexually transmitted disease in a child of any age.
 - o Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anal areas.
 - o Difficulty in walking or sitting.
 - o Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms.
 - o Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint.
 - o Not wanting to be alone with an individual.

- Pregnancy, especially at a young age.
- Extremely protective parenting.

3.4 Emotional abuse (or psychological abuse) is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection as well as withholding love, support, or guidance.

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse but you may spot changes in a child's actions or emotions. Be alert to behaviors which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development.

3.5 Abandonment is when a child has been left alone in circumstances where the child suffers serious harm and has been deserted with no regard for his or her health or safety and the parent has failed to maintain contact with the child or provide reasonable support of a specified period of time.

3.6 Parental substance abuse can also be considered child abuse. Substance abuse can be harmful when it includes the following:

- Manufacturing methamphetamine in the presences of a child
- Selling, distributing, or giving illegal drugs or alcohol to a child
- Using a controlled substance that impairs the caregiver's ability to adequately care for the child

3.7 Human trafficking is considered a form of modern slavery and includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Sex trafficking is recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining someone for a commercial sex act, such as prostitution, pornography, or stripping. Labor trafficking is forced labor, including drug dealing, begging, or working long hours for little pay.

3.8 Identity based harm

YIS acknowledges that targeting a person based on identity markers such as race, color, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, national origin, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, age, language, or ability constitutes harm and abuse.

YIS recognizes that marginalized identities are at particular risk for identity-based harm.

YIS recognizes that, within the same systems where identity-based harm operates, marginalized identities are at higher risk of being targeted for sexual abuse.

YIS and all its staff take responsibility for preventing, interrupting, and correcting identity-based harm. Identity-based harm can manifest in many forms including, but not limited to, microaggressions, hate speech, online harassment, peer-to-peer abuse, physical violence, and social exclusion. Staff development will include training and resources on how to recognize and respond to identity-based harm.

The use of trauma-informed restorative practices may be part of addressing identity-based harm, when appropriate. This approach is intended to maintain agency and dignity for the person who is targeted, as well as to build responsibility and accountability for the person who has committed the harm

3.9 Grooming – definition, signs and examples

Grooming is defined as when an adult forms a relationship and emotional connection with a child or young person in order to manipulate, exploit and abuse them. The abuse may be in the form of sexual abuse, exploitation, or trafficking. This relationship may be formed over a short or long period of time. Groomers may also seek to build a relationship with their victim's family and/or friends in order to make themselves seem trustworthy or authoritative (National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2023).

Possible indicators that a child or young person is being groomed:

- Secretive behavior about how they are spending time, including when online
- Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Having new things like clothes and mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- Underage drinking or drug taking
- Spending more or less time online or on their devices
- Being upset, withdrawn or distressed
- Sexualized behavior, language or an understanding of sex that's not appropriate for their age
- Spending more time away from home or going missing for periods of time.

Any of these behaviors on their own are more than likely not to be grooming related. If a teacher or staff member is concerned that a student is being groomed, it is recommended that a referral be made to the Child Safeguarding Team.

4.0 Process for disclosures (See Appendix A)

- 1) If a child or young person makes a disclosure, listen to the child. Gather as much information by asking open-ended questions (e.g. What else? Is there anything else you think I should know?) Thank the child for telling you and inform them that you will need to report this to the school counselor.
- 2) Fill out the Microsoft form *Child Protection Referral* as soon as possible (within 24 hours). This should be done via the Microsoft form provided for this purpose and then in a face-to-face conversation. If the concern needs immediate attention (i.e. the student is at risk of imminent harm, speak to a principal or counselor immediately).
- 3) The report will be emailed to the school counselors and/or principals (Child Safeguarding Team). The Child Safeguarding Team will hold a meeting regarding the referral. The staff member who made the referral will be asked to participate in this meeting.
- 4) A decision will be made in this meeting whether a full assessment is required and/or what the next steps will be.
- 5) Assessment/investigation process:
 - a. A school counselor will interview the child or young person
 - b. The counselor will speak to the child or young person's teachers to identify any details of the concerns and to gather any additional relevant information.
 - c. A follow-up meeting will be held with at least 3 members of the Child Safeguarding Team and a decision will be made regarding the next steps.
- 6) Next steps:
 - a. No further action:
 - i. The concerns are not serious enough or the concern has been resolved
 - b. Follow up in school
 - i. The concerns are of a lower level, pertaining only to the school environment, and it is collaboratively determined that the concerns can be effectively managed by the school staff.
 - c. Report to family
 - i. In many situations, it may be agreed upon that the parents should be notified of the concerns.
 - d. Meeting at school with family
 - i. If the concerns are of a serious nature, a meeting should be held between the parents, principal, and school counselor at the earliest opportunity

5.0 Staff behavior guidance

5.1 General physical contact

Physical contact with children and young people can be misconstrued both by the recipient and those who observe it and should only occur when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private. School employees and support staff should show **prudent discretion** before touching another person, especially children and young people, and be aware of how physical touch will be perceived or received, and whether it would be an appropriate expression of greeting, care, concern or celebration.

5.2 Lone working guidance

Sometimes it may be appropriate or necessary for an adult to have one-to-one contact with a student or supervise a small group of students on their own. This could happen for example if a student wishes to speak to a teacher or trusted adult alone or if lunchtime or afterschool instruction is necessary. If you are working with students alone, it is necessary for you to ensure their safety and your own safety. This must be done by following the guidance as follows:

- A. Wherever possible and when appropriate, have another adult present in the room.
- B. All meetings with singular students or small groups *must* be held on campus.
- C. In the unusual event that a meeting is occurring off campus, approval must be sought from an administrator and the off-campus policy must be followed (section 5.3)
- D. Inform another staff member of your plans to be alone with the student. In the case where you are unable to inform another staff member prior to the meeting, you must do so as soon as possible following the meeting. Inform the other staff member of the following:
 1. The purpose and plan for the meeting.
 2. How long you expect the meeting to occur.
 3. Where the meeting will be held.

5.3 School trips and off-campus student contact guidance

Examples of off-campus events include:

- Inter-city sporting competitions
- Overseas sporting events
- Field trips
- Overseas academic events such as Model United Nations, Week Without Walls, etc.
- Any other out of the ordinary off-campus event

Yangon International school acknowledges that off-campus events have an increased number of risks for students. Any YIS representative of an off-campus event, (including but not limited to teachers, administrators, coaches and volunteers) should ensure they are following the protocol:

- General off-campus event guidelines:

- All off-campus events must be approved by an administrator in writing prior to the event. Any other unplanned contact with a student should be disclosed to an administrator as soon as possible. (It is acknowledged that in the international community, there may be staff events where the children of staff members are also students. In this case it is not necessary to inform the administrator.)
- For any event that does not include the immediate parent or legal guardian, a signed permission form is obtained prior to the event.
- Bathroom guidelines are followed as outlined in section 6.3.
- Any volunteers not normally employed by YIS are recruited safely and have undergone the school vetting process.
- Any volunteers should be provided with a copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy and agree to adhere to the policy when supervising the event or trip.
- All contact information for supervisors and students participating in the event shall be shared with each of the supervisors and a phone tree established for contacting students in case of an emergency.
- Emergency contact information for each student is easily accessible to the chaperones.
- Chaperones are made aware of any student special needs.
- Chaperones are aware of how to contact emergency services if required.
- Overnight events
 - Accommodation policy:
 - Adults will not stay in the same room as students, unless they are immediately related to the student.
 - Males will stay with males and females will stay with females (n.b. if a student identifies as transgender, this will be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the school counselor or other appropriate staff person and a plan will be implemented accordingly).
 - Curfew
 - The chaperones will decide on an appropriate curfew for students according to the event schedules. Chaperones will check rooms at the time of the curfew to ensure all students are accounted for.

5.4 School doctor

The school doctor has a clinic where they see students or staff members on occasion. There may be reasons why they may need to close the door or curtain. The doctor has the right to administer medication and treatment with the approval of parents/guardians. This may necessitate touching body parts of the students (such as administering creams or ice packs) or asking students to undress enough to show injured or affected body parts. In this case the doctor will always first ask the students' permission and explain what they will be doing before doing so. The parents/guardians will be informed that this has occurred.

6.0 Campus Safety

6.1 Crisis Management

Yangon International school will ensure that there are up-to-date emergency plans in accordance to local and international best practices. These will be outlined in the school's crisis management policy document. This policy will include procedures for the following:

- A. Emergency contact numbers and phone tree
- B. Liaison with embassies
- C. Fire evacuation procedure
- D. Earthquake procedure
- E. Lockdown/intruder on-site procedure
- F. Medical emergency procedure
- G. Bomb threat
- H. Local civil disruption procedures
- I. Incidents Off-Site
- J. Weather related emergency procedures
- K. Other Site-Related Emergencies

6.2 Visibility and supervision

As part of the prevention of child abuse in our school, YIS will ensure that all children and young people at YIS are adequately supervised and all student areas have clear visibility:

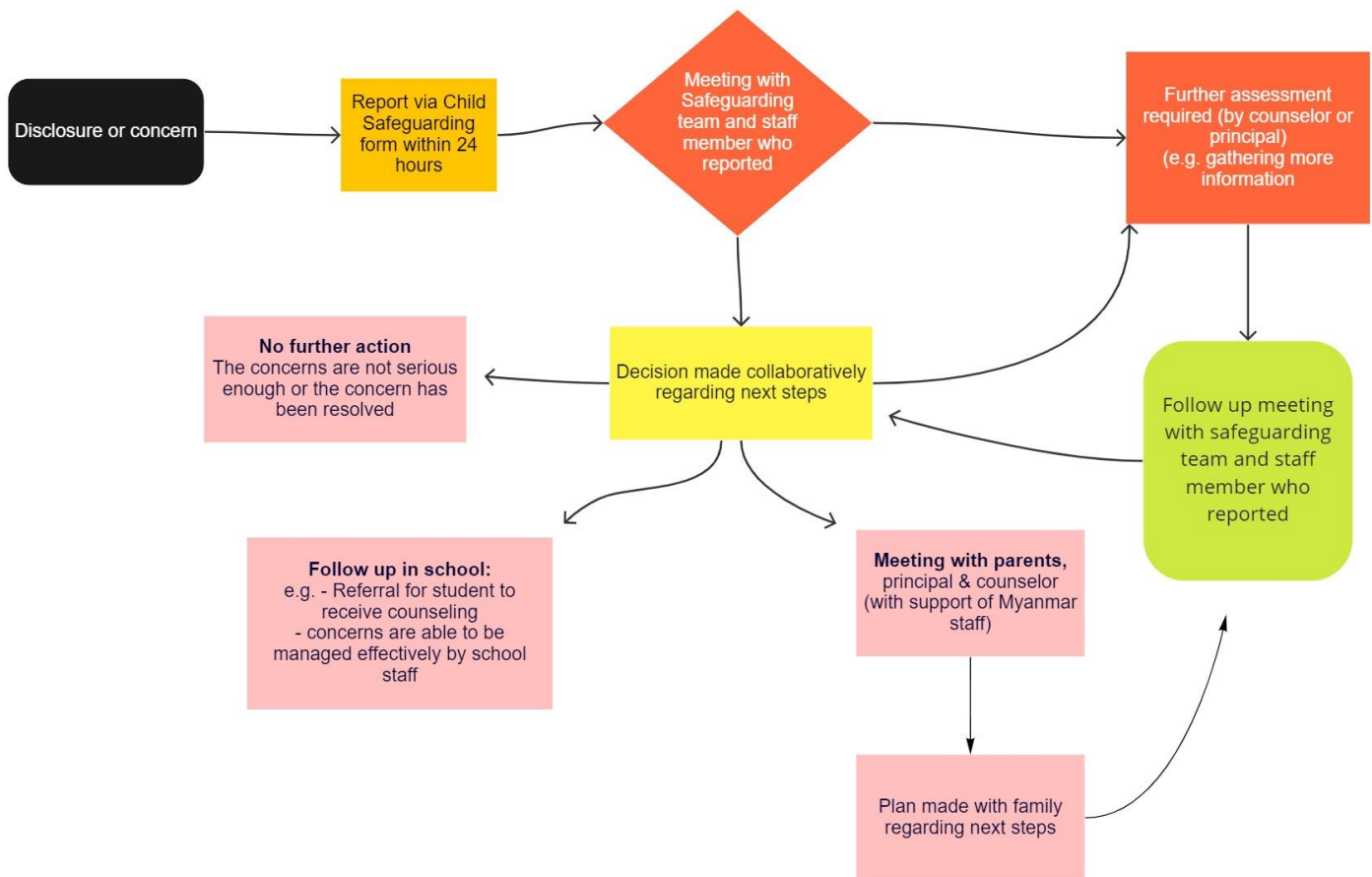
- All classrooms have windows into the classroom and the doors will remain unlocked during the school day.
- All children and young people will only be in classrooms where there is a teacher present.
- All closets and facilities with no windows will remain locked during the school day.
- Teachers will be rostered to supervise areas where students congregate during breaks.
- Any area of the school with unsafe chemicals or electrical components must remain locked when students are present at school.

6.3 Bathroom, toilet and locker room policies

- A. In order to prevent secluded one on one contact between adults and students, YIS has separate toileting facilities for employees and students.
- B. Employees should only ever use a toilet that is marked with "adult" or "faculty".
- C. Employees shall not access children's toilets at any time unless a child is in need of assistance. If children are in need of assistance, the door of the toilet should be kept open and the staff member shall inform another staff member that they are going to the toilet.
- D. Locker rooms are for student use only. When elementary students require adult assistance when changing, a staff member of the same gender should assist. Wherever possible, two adult staff members should be in the locker room assisting. If only one staff member is available, they should inform another staff member what they are doing.

Appendix A

Process for Disclosure Action Flowchart



Appendix B

Referral Form QR Code

Referral to Child Safeguarding Team 2023-2024



QR code for making a report to the child safeguarding team.

Forms link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/etdt9X3mTP>

Appendix C

Staff Acknowledgement Form

As a YIS staff member, I

- ☐ Have read and understood the school's safeguarding policies
- ☐ Know who the members of the safeguarding team are for the school and how to contact them
- ☐ Make sure my safeguarding training is up to date
- ☐ Am open and prepared to listen to children and young people
- ☐ Stay aware of the children and their needs and behaviors
- ☐ Stay aware of my own behavior and that of my colleagues
- ☐ Will always act if I have any concerns about a child or young person
- ☐ Am vigilant and know that abuse can happen anywhere
- ☐ Follow my own personal code of conduct

Full name

Date

Signature

Policy writer:

Emily Jones

Date for review: May 1, 2024

Responsible for review: Child Safeguarding Lead