

Al-Rayan International School Child Protection Policy 2017

Contents

Introduction	1
Policy Statements	2
Our Approach	3
Definitions	4
Forms of Child Abuse	5
Procedures	9
Step 1 - Disclosures	12
Step 2 - Responding to Disclosures	15
Step 3 - Support and Monitors	18

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse and neglect possesses a peril to the educational as well as physical and emotional well-being of children. Child abuse and Neglect are both a violation to a child's human rights and growing concerns in schools worldwide.

Schools play an instrumental role in society as an institution to protect and care for children by ensuring a safe and secure environment. ARIS is totally dedicated to conserving and safeguarding the welfare of all children in its quarters. We recognize our duty to take all practical steps to support best and safe practices to protect all children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

ARIS considers that, all children, innumerable of their gender, ages, culture, nationality and religious background have the right to protection from abuse. Consistent with ARIS's vision, mission and core values of respect, integrity and accountability, we seek to create and maintain a school environment that is free of harassment and exploitation, and to ensure the same in all of our work with the students and communities with whom we work

Policy Statements

The ARIS child protection policy aims at instituting a well ordered and harmonized system that will protect the children in the school from harm and abuse of any form.

This policy is linked to the local, national and international law in relation to child protection namely; the UN Convention on the rights of Children (Article 1, Article 19 and Article 34), the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Chapter 28; Article (1d), Article 3 and Article 5) and the Children's Act.

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.

Our Approach

Training and Education

All parents, staff and volunteers have to be fully responsive to the policy and its procedures, recognize their responsibilities and be signed up to them.

Students

ARIS will ensure that students are getting an age appropriate education to be familiarized with their personal safety, social duties, and also be able to identify the indicators of abuse and acts intended to cause harm to them.

ARIS will ensure that students understand their responsibilities to standing up for their own and others rights, and refer any child abuse concern to the Child Protection Officer.

Staff/ Volunteers

The Child protection team would communicate to all staff and members their legal and moral responsibility to protect children from harm and abuse.

Our aim is to engage them in the topics of Child's Rights and Child Protection. Moreover, train them to recognize abuse and neglect by its indicators.

ARIS would ensure that all members of staff recognize their duty to report concerns of abuse that arises on a child or staff conduct toward a child. Faculty

will also have the duty of teaching and imparting their knowledge of Child Abuse, Neglect and Child Protection to their students as well.

Parents

The school will alert parents in recognizing signs and symptoms of abuse. ARIS will facilitate involvement of parents or careers in the work and to make the child protection policy available to them.

DEFINITIONS

Child

A child is a person below the age of eighteen years. (UN Convention on the Rights of Children; Article 1), and the 1992 constitution of Ghana, Chapter 28, Article 5)

Child Protection

Any act that seeks to promote the wellbeing of children, prevent abuse and protect them from harm.

Harm

Any damaging or detrimental effects on a child's physical, socio and emotional wellbeing.

Child abuse

Any physical, sexual and/or emotional acts of others on the child that cause harm on the child.

FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse can take many forms including physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of, but not limited to, slapping, pinching, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

- ***Indicators***

- Child's inability to explain the causes of bruises , burns on the body or explanations that are vague and inconsistent

- An injury reflecting the shape of the article used (e.g. belt, buckle, electric cord)
- Rope marks on arms, legs, neck or torso
- Unexplained lacerations or abrasions or fractures
- A marked delay of injury and seeking medical attention
- Increased fear , guilt and self-shame
- Parents or caregivers showing little or no interest in the wellbeing of their child
- Parents or caregivers showing little concern about the treatment and care of injury on the child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a chronic attack on a child or young person's self-esteem, emotional or social development. It can take the form threatening, hostility, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person

- Indicators

- Showing severe or extreme form of anxiety and fear in children
- Children showing signs of depression
- Lack of trust in people
- Feeling of worthlessness about life and themselves

- A parent or caregiver or worker constantly criticizing, threatening or rejecting the child

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is used by any stronger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification, or economic gain. This can take the form of exposing a sexual body part to a child, having a sexual exploitation with the child, fondling the child, rape or incest.

- Indicators

- Displaying greater sexual knowledge than normally expected for the child's age and development.
- Use of language
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Inappropriate sexual play with other children or dolls and toys
- Refusal to change into PE clothes
- Fear of bathrooms
- Torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear
- Bruising, bleeding, swelling tears or cut on genital or anus
- A fear of being alone with particular person
- Extremely protective parenting

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life (where such necessities are available) within their own environment. This can be –

Physical Neglect – failure to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter and supervision. This is to the extent that a child’s health and development are put at risk e.g. when the child is left unsupervised and shows a lack of adult guardianship for an extended period of time.

(ARIS requires one parent or guardian to be a full-time resident of Accra. Should the parents or the legal guardians of the child be leaving Accra for any reason, then it is their responsibility to inform the school via email and provide the details of other appropriate contacts.)

Medical Neglect – Failure to provide necessary treatment or basic medical or mental health treatment.

Emotional Neglect – Failure to provide emotional and psychological care to the child through verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge the presence of the child, invasion of privacy, threats, or permitting the child to indulge in age inappropriate activities.

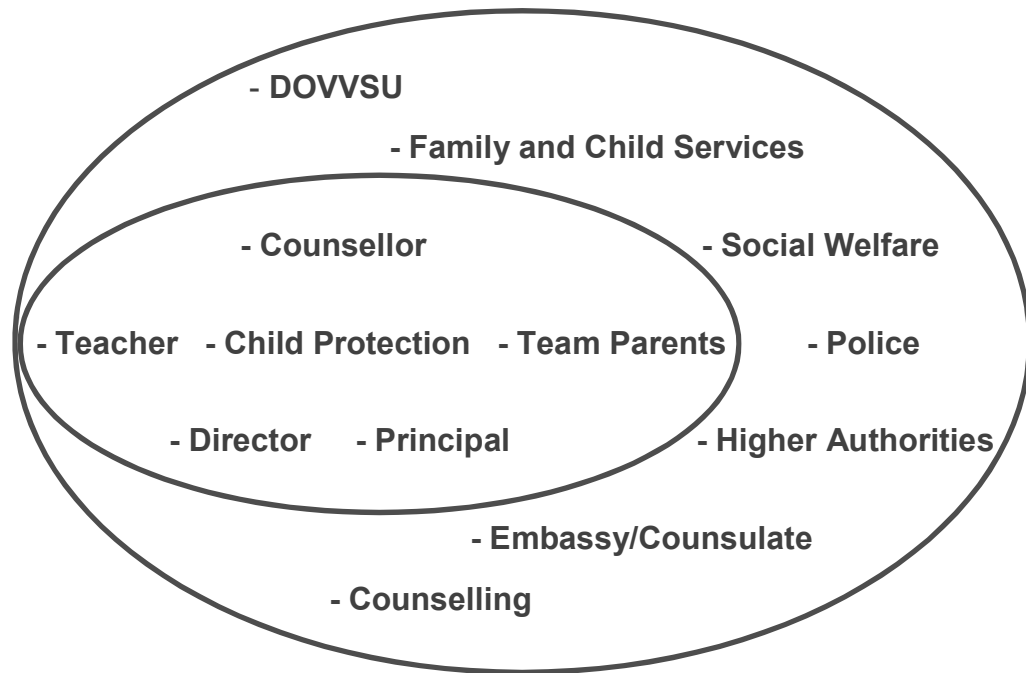
- ***Indicators***

- Poor hygiene , matted hair, dirty skin or body odor
- Unattended physical or medical problems

- Being left unsupervised for long periods
- Malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food.
- Parents uninterested in child's performance
- Child does not want to go home
- Parents cannot be reached in case of emergency

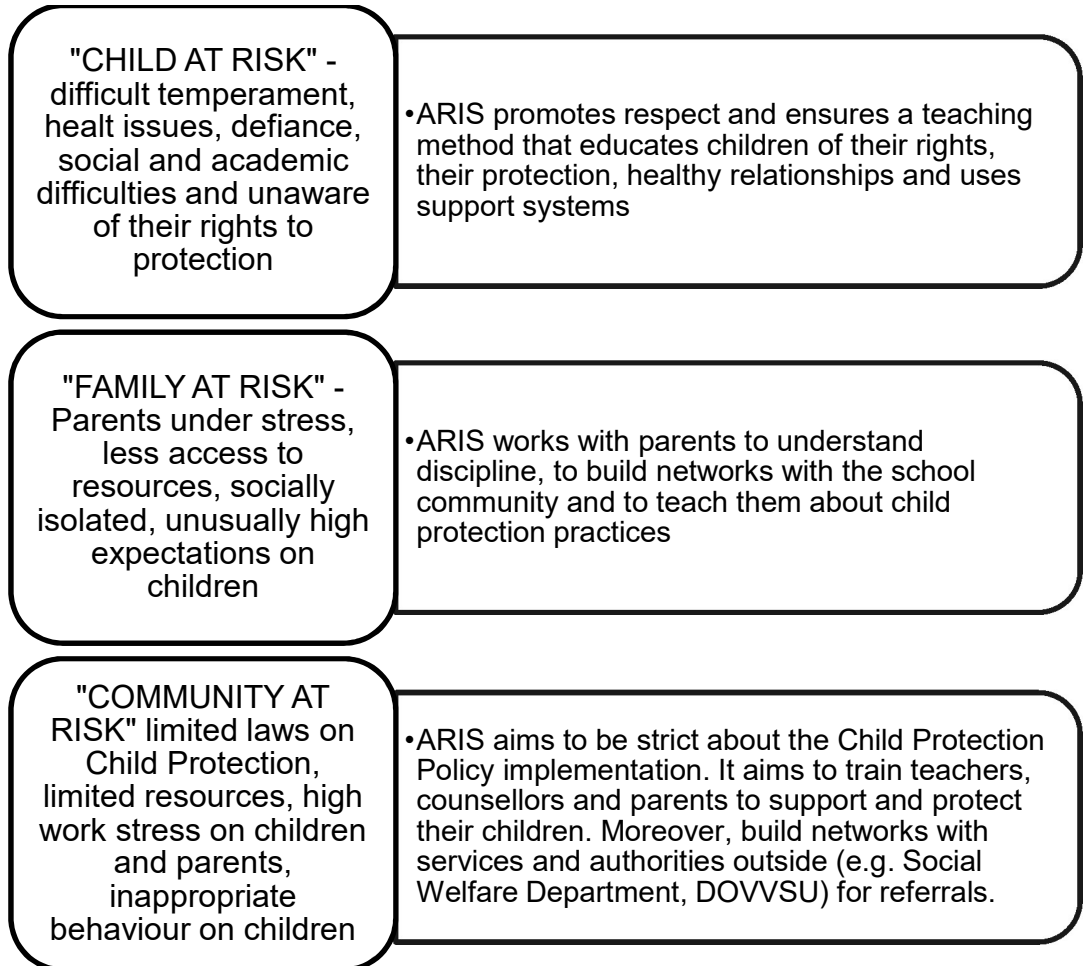
PROCEDURES

The ARIS Child Protection Policy recognizes the multi-faceted nature of child abuse, which involves the dynamics of the child, family and the community. Our aim is to work primarily for the child, the family and the community, which we call the "Circle of Care", to signify that each person has an influence and an impact on the child's development. The "inner circle" will involve parents, teachers, counsellor and other members of the Child Protection team. An incident may be handled within the school by consulting and working within the "Inner circle". The "outer circle" are the Social Welfare Office, Outside Counselling services, and higher authorities in the case where an incident of child abuse or neglect must be reported to authorities working outside of the school.



The indicators listed above of abuse (physical, sexual emotional, or neglect) will be the guidelines to follow. When a teacher or a fellow peer notices any probable indicators of abuse or neglect, they will promptly report it to the Head of Counselling and Support. If the case needs to be taken further, the school counsellor will take it to the Child Protection Team and higher authorities when and if necessary.

ARIS's response to At-Risk Characteristics



School's Child Protection Team

The school's child protection team consists of the Director, the Child Protection Officer, teachers and the school's Disciplinary Committee.

Step 1 - DISCLOSURES

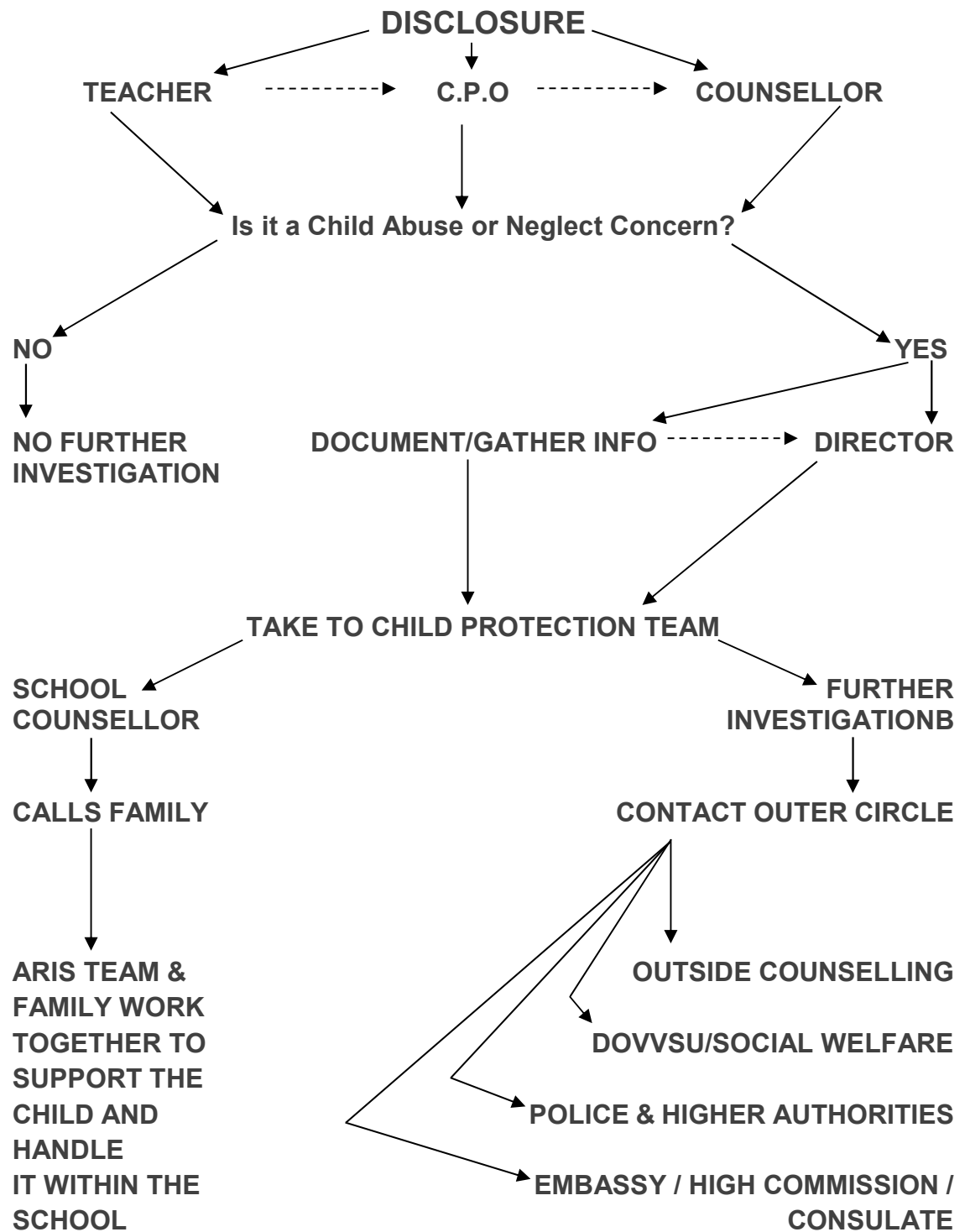
When there is an incident or a cause to suspect a case of child abuse or neglect, ARIS will ensure that staff members, other workers and even students are clear about what steps to take when concerns arise regarding the safety of children and to know appropriate quarters to disclose a concern.

The incident or the suspicion must be reported to either the teacher or the counsellor. If the cause or the case is reasonable enough to be reported, it will be informed to the principal and subsequently the head of school to further investigate and contact the school Child Protection Team.

Process of Disclosure

(Will be elaborated further below)

- 1. Disclosure must be reported to either the Teacher, Child Protection Officer or the Counsellor. If it is reported to either one of them, then the other must inform.**
- 2. Assess the disclosure and decide whether it is a genuine concern or not. If not, then no further investigation.**
- 3. If the incident is a genuine concern, it can either be handled within the school or be taken to the “Outer circle of care”.**
- 4. The Counsellor handles it by calling the families of the child/children involved and works with them to support their children.**
- 5. If the incident needs outside intervention, upon further investigation, the school will contact any player in the “Outer circle” to handle the incident more professionally and swiftly.**



Incident reporting

It is mandatory for any allegation, belief or suspicion of sexual, emotional or physical abuse (past or present) by an ARIS employee, sponsor, donor, board member or other person, to be reported immediately to the Child Protection Officer or to the Director.

Children, who report incidents of abuse regarding themselves or other children, must be taken seriously and listened to.

Once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimization. Where appropriate, the family of the child victim should be informed of the allegation and action proposed and they should be consulted where possible as to the process to be followed.

Once a student or a teacher discloses the incident to the teacher or the counsellor, it will be assessed on whether it will be a reasonable concern or not. By reasonable concern, we mean any action or behavior or incident that has violated any of the guidelines given in the ARIS Child Protection Policy. This process will be steered and guided by the Counsellor within the school or the Child Protection Team and the Director depending on the incident reported.

Documenting the incident

Within 24 hours of disclosure, the staff member receiving the disclosure must also report it to the counsellor, if the counsellor is not alerted yet. The disclosure has to be fully documented. The staff member or the counsellor will document the allegation in the form of a report with details including – time, place, exact incident and any witnesses. This report should be submitted to the Child Protection Officer, who will discuss the case with the Director.

This report may be used in court if charges are forthcoming.

All reports and documents will be confidential within the school records.

Step 2 - RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

Al-Rayan International School has a Child Protection reporting procedure that takes into account the local context of Ghana and the culture of the child involved.

If any staff member is alleged to have committed, or been arrested for, or convicted of, criminal offences relating to child abuse then the staff member's contract will be immediately terminated and the case transferred to the school's disciplinary committee.

If the incident occurs in Ghana or involves a Ghanaian, the Executive Board will consult with legal counsel and all appropriate bodies (e.g., Police (DOVVSU),

Department of Family and Community Services, such as Social Welfare) to ascertain due process and guide participants accordingly, subject to the nature of the incident reported.

If the incident involves an international staff member (non-Ghanaian), then the appropriate Embassies, Diplomatic Missions and bodies will also be contacted and consulted.

Case review

Internal investigations will involve a confidential, thorough, impartial and prompt process. The investigation may consist of interviews with witnesses and others as appropriate, collection of information about the alleged conduct, gathering of documentation, or other procedures as appropriate. The individual alleged to have violated this ARIS policy will have the opportunity to present his or her view of the events in question. ARIS will hold its determination until the investigation is over.

Child Abuse and Neglect Cases to be handled by the Counsellor within the school include:

- ***Students' relationships with parents (Unhealthy relationships, discipline issues, absence of parents, lack of enough food, lack of hygiene etc.)***

- *Students' relationships and conflicts with other students (Fights, bullying etc.)*
- *Depression, Anxiety Disorder, Self-confidence issues and other mental health issues*

Child Abuse and Neglect issues to be handled outside of the school by reaching out to the "Outer Circle":

- *Clinical Depression affecting students' relationships with anyone around them and their academics*
- *Suicidal thoughts*
- *Dissociation*
- *Physical abuse or neglect (especially once this is consistent)*
- *Any kind of sexual advancements, abuse or incest*

Investigation of complaints

Physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a child is a crime. ARIS may be required to notify authorities when there are reasonable grounds for reporting abuse, particularly if the allegations are made in Ghana or involve a Ghanaian citizen. Allegations involving international staff and students will need to take into account international and national legislation and procedures in order properly

to investigate and address the allegations. ARIS will work closely with relevant embassies and governments to resolve such allegations.

It is important to note that consideration should be given to how the local authorities will treat the alleged perpetrator (e.g., torture, death penalty, corrupt justice systems) as well as the child (e.g., will the child be victimized, criminalized or forced to undergo medical checks).

Step 3 - SUPPORT AND MONITORS

Prevention

ARIS will ensure that, through awareness and personal and professional conduct, staff and others minimize the risk to children. The counsellor will continue to observe the child and the family to ensure that the child is safe and can eventually be re-integrated back into school without fear of alienation.

The school will provide necessary help and resources from their side to ensure that such cases are dealt with appropriately for the safety of the child and the overall prevention of such cases in the school environment.

Vigilance in Recruitment and Selection

The Human Resources team and Administration Office adhere by strict guidelines in the recruiting process of new staff, consultants, volunteers and interns. The recruitment guidelines will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that they accurately reflect child-safe recruiting and screening standards.

The recruitment guidelines will include:

- A clear and bold statement that confirms ARIS's commitment to child protection in all contracts
- Adopting 'best practice' recruitment and selection techniques
- Conducting reference checks
- Conducting police checks where required and feasible

Police Checks

All personnel who work with children will be asked to sign an authorization for a police check. In addition, police checks will be conducted for all full-time, part time and long-term contract employees, regardless of whether or not they work with children.

In cases where international and national criminal record checks cannot be completed in time, or where a country does not provide criminal record checks with adequate reliability, rigorous referee checks will be used instead.

Code of Conduct

All staff, consultants and volunteers will be expected to sign and adhere to a Code of Conduct for the Protection of the Child.

Code of Conduct for the Protection of the Child

- Use of Child Photos and Information

Pictures, images, or other likenesses of children and/or information related to children that could compromise their care and protection will not be made available through any form of communication media without proper protection and understanding of their use. Moreover, any images of children will not be accompanied by detailed information.