



Al-Rayyan International School



CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

2025-2027

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Policy Statement

ARIS is committed to conserving and safeguarding the welfare of all children in its community. We recognize our duty to take all practical steps to support best and safe practices in order to protect all children from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

Consistent with ARIS's vision, mission, and core values of respect, integrity, and accountability; we seek to create and maintain an empowering school environment that is free of harassment and mistreatment, and to ensure the same in our work with all of the students and communities that we serve.

ARIS will ensure that prompt action is taken to support and protect children when concerns arise regarding possible abuse or neglect.

Policy Scope

The ARIS child protection policy is a guide to all staff including teachers, non-teaching staff, contractors, consultants, volunteers, interns, and board members. This policy should be read and understood alongside all other relevant school policies as it outlines our approach to promoting student mental health, wellbeing, and safety.

Policy Aims

This policy aims at instituting a well ordered and harmonized system that will protect all children from any form of harm and abuse, both in the school and in their home.

This policy is linked to local, national, and international child protection laws¹ which aim to:

- Protect children from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child.
- Establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and treatment.

As the nature of child abuse is multi-faceted and dynamic, the ARIS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy aims to work primarily for the child, the family, and the community, whom we call the "Circle of Care," to signify that each person has an influence and impact on the child's development. The "Inner Circle" involves parents, teachers, and 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" consists of 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.

If an incident is found to be criminal in nature, ARIS is obliged to report the incident to the local police. ARIS will comply with all legal authorities and recommendations in response to the incident. The indicators of abuse, listed on pages 8- 14, will be the guidelines that ARIS follows. When a teacher or a peer notices any indicators of abuse or neglect, they must promptly report it to the Child Protection Officer. If the

¹UN Convention on the Rights of Children (Article 1, Article 19, and Article 34); 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Chapter 28: Article 1d, Article 3, and Article 5); and The Children's Act, 1998 ACT 560.

case needs to be taken further, the school counsellor will take it to the Child Protection Team and higher authorities if and when necessary.

Child Protection Team

The promotion of mental and physical health is the responsibility of all staff members; however, certain staff members have specific roles to play in this process. The school's Child Protection Team consists of the following roles:

- Wellbeing Manager
- Child Protection Lead
- Child Protection Officer for Primary
- Dedicated Child Protection Officer for Secondary
- Child Protection Officers
- IT Department Child Protection Officer

If a member of staff is concerned about the safety of a student, they should report it on CPOMS.

If a child presents a medical emergency, follow relevant procedures that involve the use of emergency services.

Our Approach

Schools play an instrumental role in society as an institution to protect and care for children by ensuring a safe and secure environment. A growing concern for schools worldwide is child abuse and neglect which can cause peril to the physical,

emotional, and educational well-being of children. Child abuse and neglect are both severe violations of a child's human rights.

ARIS acknowledges that the definitions and consequences of child abuse vary drastically on a cultural and individual level. This document attempts to assist our staff and community in acknowledging and accepting the basic universal guidelines and protocols around allegations of child abuse and neglect.

ARIS affirms that all children, regardless of their age, gender, culture, nationality, and religious background, have the right to protection from abuse.

Education & Prevention

All parents, staff, and volunteers must be fully responsive to the child protection policy and its procedures, recognize their responsibilities, and sign in acknowledgement and agreement of these responsibilities.

ARIS will ensure that students receive an age appropriate education that familiarizes them with personal safety and social duties, and teaches them to identify potential indicators of abuse and acts intended to cause them harm. ARIS will ensure that students understand their responsibilities of standing up for their own and others' rights, and how to refer any child abuse concerns to a Child Protection Officer.

ARIS aims to further educate students about online dangers, and strengthen their judgement, should they come into contact with sexual content, extremist content, or otherwise unwholesome content online.

ARIS ensures that, through awareness and personal and professional conduct, staff and others minimize the risk to children. ARIS also ensures that the Human Resources team and the Administration Office adhere to strict guidelines and have vigilance throughout the recruitment and selection process of all 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.

Parents

The school will alert parents in recognizing signs and symptoms of abuse. ARIS will facilitate involvement of parents or caretakers in the work and make the child protection policy available to them. When appropriate, ARIS will educate parents about the disadvantages of and harm caused by corporal punishment, and encourage age appropriate discipline. Parents will also be educated about potential online dangers, and how to safeguard their children while in the home environment. If an accusation should be made against a parent, they will be notified through a parent meeting to discuss the potential harm being brought onto the child in question.

Staff & Volunteers

The Child Protection Team will communicate to all staff and volunteers their legal and moral responsibility to protect children from harm and abuse; and train them to recognize abuse and neglect by its indicators. [ARIS will ensure that all members of staff recognize their duty to report concerns of abuse that arise.](#) Faculty will also

have the duty of teaching their students, in an age appropriate manner, about child abuse, neglect, and child protection.

Support

ARIS provides various mental health programs, counseling, and support opportunities for students, parents, and staff.

Counselling and Support- ARIS has a fully functional Counseling and Support Department available to all students, staff, and parents for all academic and emotional wellbeing support. The Counseling and Support department plays an integral role in all developments within the ARIS Community by collaborating and cooperating with School leadership, administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and other professionals to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to thrive at ARIS.

Wellbeing Program- ARIS's Personal Wellbeing Program aims at helping students build resilience, contribute to their global awareness, and have a holistic understanding of their health, body, and relationships with others. This program, spearheaded by the Wellbeing Manager, collaborates with all departments to prioritize student and staff wellbeing, through workshops, socio-emotional counseling, talks, and podcasts.

Staff Training- Staff are required to undertake an inperson training led by the Child Protection Team, as well as completing a 7 module online training which covers Why safeguarding is important, The categories of abuse and their impact, Recognising and responding to concerns, Professional conduct and boundaries for

child safety, Building a safeguarding culture and raising awareness, Whole-school approach and leadership responsibilities, and Reflection, top tips, and final thoughts. Staff are assessed accordingly to test their comprehension in these areas. The Child Protection Team is available to support staff in regards to questions or concerns in the area of child protection.

Signposting

ARIS will ensure that staff and others are clear about what steps to take when concerns arise regarding the safety of children. ARIS will also ensure that all students, parents, and staff members are aware of the mental health and wellbeing support that is available in our school. This includes information about accessing further support both inside and outside of school hours.

Abuse & Indicators

Child abuse can be manifested in various forms such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Some children and families have a higher risk of experiencing abuse than others. ARIS acknowledges these high risk characteristics and responds to them by considering them while creating procedures and policies, and implementing safeguards.

Children with a higher risk of abuse often have health issues, social and academic difficulties, a defiant or difficult temperament, and are unaware of their rights to protection. ARIS promotes respect and ensures a teaching method that educates children of their rights, their protection, healthy relationships, and support systems.

Families with a higher risk of abuse often have little community or family support, are unaware of available resources, have high expectations of children, have parents under extreme stress, and are unavailable due to travel. ARIS works with parents to help them understand the need for discipline to build networks with the school community, and to teach them about child protection practices. ARIS provides support to parents through workshops, trainings, and general availability.

Communities at risk are often countries with limited outside resources in regards to child protection, and a culture that is generally more tolerant of physical abuse in regards to children. ARIS aims to be firm about the child protection policy implementation. It aims to train teachers, counselors, and parents to support and protect their children, and build networks with services and external agencies such as social welfare or DOVVSU.

Definitions

- **Child-** A child is a person below the age of eighteen years.²
- **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, social, and/or emotional wellbeing.
- **Child Abuse-** Any physical, sexual, and/or emotional act of others on a child that causes harm to the child.

Forms of Child Abuse

² UN Convention on the Rights of Children, Article 1; 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Chapter 28, Article 5

Abusive behavior can emerge in many different relationships, including but not limited to: parental or caregiver against student, teacher or staff member against student, community member against student, online entity against student, or student against student. The following are various forms of the abusive behaviors that can emerge, and some indicators that such abuse has happened

Physical Abuse- Occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child. This may take the form of, but is not limited to, slapping, pinching, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures. Some indicators of child physical abuse include:

- Child's inability to explain injuries; explanations that are vague and inconsistent
- An injury reflecting the shape of the article used; e.g. belt, buckle, etc.
- Rope marks or unexplained lacerations, abrasions, or fractures
- Delay in seeking medical attention for injuries
- Child's increased fear, guilt, and self-shame
- Parents or caregivers showing little interest in the wellbeing of their child
- Parents or caregivers showing little concern about treatment and care of their child's injuries

Emotional Abuse- A chronic attack on a child or young person's self-esteem, and/or emotional, or social development. This can take the form of hostility, ridicule, threats, intimidation, or isolating the child. Some indicators of child emotional abuse

include:

- Child's severe anxiety and fear
- Child showing signs of depression
- Child's lack of trust in people
- Child's feeling of worthlessness about life and/or themselves
- A parent, caregiver, worker, or classmate constantly criticizing, threatening, or rejecting the child

Sexual Abuse- When a child is used by any stronger child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation, gratification, or economic gain. This can take the form of exposing a sexual body part to a child, having sexual exploitations with the child, fondling the child, rape, or incest. Indicators of child sexual abuse include:

- Child's greater sexual knowledge than what is expected for their age level
- Child's use of sexual language
- Child's unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Child's inappropriate sexual play with other children, dolls, and/or toys
- Child's refusal to change into gym clothes
- Child's fear of bathrooms
- Bruising, bleeding, swelling, or cuts on the genital or anus of the child
- Child's torn, stained, or bloody clothing; especially underwear
- Child's fear of being alone with a particular person
- Extremely protective parenting

Neglect- The failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life (where such necessities are available), such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision; to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk. Child neglect can be physical, medical, or emotional.

Physical neglect is the failure to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter, and supervision/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, then it is their responsibility to inform the school and provide the details of other appropriate contacts.

Medical Neglect is the failure to provide basic or necessary medical or mental health treatments.

Emotional Neglect is the failure to provide emotional and/or psychological care to the child through various means such as refusing to acknowledge the presence of the child, verbal humiliation, invasion of privacy, threats, or permitting the child to indulge in age inappropriate activities.

Indicators of child neglect may include:

- Child's poor hygiene, e.g. matted hair, dirty skin, or body odor
- Unattended physical or medical problems
- Child being left unsupervised for long periods
- Child's malnutrition and/or begging, stealing, or hoarding food

- Parents uninterested in child's performance
- Child does not want to go home
- Parents can not be reached in case of emergency

Bullying & Peer on Peer Abuse- The misuse of power in relationships between two individuals in which one person is repeatedly put down either verbally, physically, emotionally, sexually, or mentally. Acts may be seen by the perpetrator as being funny, but are determined as abusive if they compromise the wellbeing of a student.

In the case of sexual acts between students, ARIS recognizes the sexual age of consent between students as 18 years old, meaning sexual acts between students below this age are explicitly non-consensual. ARIS also recognizes the potential for a power imbalance between students in romantic and sexual relationships that could lead to the victimization of a student. This includes spreading rumors of a sexual nature, or sharing sexually inappropriate images of peers. This is considered child abuse, and in many instances could fall under a criminal act; and should be reported as such.

Indicators of bullying or peer on peer abuse may include:

- Child not wanting to attend school
- Child making excuses to avoid attendance
- Child displaying depression, anxiety, or fear in and out of the school setting
- Child's strained or isolated interpersonal relationships at school
- Child's unexplained marks or bruises

Online Considerations

In our ever growing and advancing world, ARIS acknowledges that an increased amount of our time is spent online. Verbal and emotional abuse, sexual advances, and bullying that occur online are equally considered a threat to our students.

Allegations of inappropriate online behaviour from any online platform and from any party against our student will be investigated using regular protocol.

Virtual Learning Teacher Expectations- On the occasions that school activities must be conducted online, teachers are obliged to communicate to children professionally. Communication must be done using only school approved platforms including, Toddle, Google Classroom, and Zoom. If a teacher has an extenuating circumstance, this should be communicated to the Head of School for approval. Teachers are encouraged to set professional boundaries with students. This includes refraining from sending or receiving personal messages and pictures, communication outside the knowledge of the caregiver about non-educational items, and/or communicating at inappropriate times outside of school hours. Teachers should refrain from virtual 1:1 meetings with students, unless supported by a third party staff member. Virtual classroom recordings will be kept safe in a designated online folder, and are to be private unless otherwise requested by a senior staff member. Teachers are to be trained on how to block screen sharing, limit individual chats, and mute students that might be attempting to share inappropriate content with other students. Teachers are not to leave virtual class sessions unsupervised.

Virtual Learning Student Expectations- Students are meant to be present for online classes in appropriate attire (following school dress code) in appropriate posture (sitting straight in a chair, preferably) and are strongly encouraged to engage in online learning in a public space within their home within the earshot of their caregivers (not in their bedroom or a bathroom). Should a student be found to engage in inappropriate online behaviours, such as the sharing of inappropriate content or online bullying, they will be disciplined using the current policy.

Monitoring Students of Concern- During times of online learning, the counseling department is responsible for identifying families and students at risk, through appropriate observation of student attendance, student performance, peer reporting, or knowledge of students with previous underlying mental health concerns. The counseling department will continue to monitor students of concern through weekly check-ins and meetings with caregivers.

Disclosure Procedures

Step 1: Reporting- It is mandatory for any allegation, belief, or suspicion of child abuse or neglect (both past and/or present) held by an ARIS employee, sponsor, donor, Board member, or other person to be reported immediately to a Child Protection Officer, or Director via CPOMS.

If a child reports an incident, the child must be taken seriously and listened to carefully. Once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimization. ARIS will also

investigate the possibility of multiple student victims, thus safeguarding the student community. When appropriate, the family of the child should be informed of the allegation and actions taken that follow the incident reporting process. This process will be guided by the Director and the Child Protection Lead. ARIS has a Child Protection reporting procedure that takes into account the local context of Ghana and the culture of the child involved.

If an allegation is made or suspected during a time of online, virtual, or home bound learning, the allegation will be handled with equal concern. The case will be investigated virtually using secure online platforms, and all steps will be followed in the same way, as if the concern or allegation was made in person.

ARIS will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal, or retaliation against any employee who reports any form of abuse or exploitation, provides any information, or other assistance in the information gathering process.

Step 2: Documenting- Within 24 hours of disclosure, the staff member receiving the disclosure must have fully documented the allegation utilizing the CPOMS incident form, making sure to include the time, place, exact incident, and any witnesses. This report must be actioned to Child Protection Leads (DSLs), who will discuss the case with the Child Protection Team. If additional information is deemed necessary the Child Protection Response Team will be notified via CPOMS. These reports may be used in court if charges are forthcoming. All reports and documents will be confidential and kept within school records.

Step 3: Responding- ARIS is required to notify authorities when there are reasonable grounds for reporting Criminal abuse. 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) as well as the child (e.g., child victimization, criminalized, forced to undergo medical checks).

Once a student, teacher, or other person discloses the incident to the Child Protection Officer, it will be assessed on whether it will be considered a reasonable concern or not. Here, reasonable concern means any action, behaviour, or incident that has violated any of the guidelines given in the ARIS Child Protection Policy. If there is no reasonable concern, no further action will be needed. If there is a reasonable concern, the process will continue on, while being steered and guided by the Child Protection Team.

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 Child Protection Response Team will consult with legal counsel and all appropriate bodies (e.g. police, Human Services, etc.), to ascertain due process and guide participants accordingly, subject to the nature of the incident reported. If the incident involves an international staff member, then the appropriate embassies, diplomatic missions and

bodies (e.g. police, Immigration, etc.) will also be contacted and consulted.

Internal information gathering will involve a confidential, thorough, impartial, and prompt process. The information gathering process may consist of interviews with witnesses and others as appropriate, collection of information about the alleged conduct, gathering of documentation, viewing of CCTV footage, and/or other procedures as appropriate.

Child Abuse and Neglect Cases to be handled within the Inner Circle Include:

- Child's relationships with parents (unhealthy relationships, discipline issues, absence of parents, lack of enough food, lack of hygiene, etc.)
- Child's relationships with teachers (relationships lacking in professional boundaries)
- Child's relationships and conflicts with other students (fights, bullying, etc.)
- Child's depression, anxiety, self-confidence issues, and other mental health issues.

Child Abuse and Neglect Cases to be handled by reaching out to the Outer Circle:

- Child's clinical depression, affecting their relationships and academics. This may include suicidal thoughts or dissociation.
- Physical abuse or consistent neglect.
- Any kind of sexual advancements, abuse, or incest.

Step 4: Support and Monitor- The Child Protection Lead and counselors 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 the fear of alienation. The school will provide necessary help and resources 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.

The best interests of the child may warrant the standing down of a staff member while an investigation commences. Staff members who stand down will receive full pay and will be entitled to a just process that does not assume guilt or innocence. The allegations should not be discussed or communicated to other people until such have been considered and a decision has been made by the school's Disciplinary Committee. The decision made must be documented and filed for school records.

A summary of the ARIS Disclosure Procedure is as follows:

1. Disclosure must be reported to the Child Protection Team via CPOMS. The Child Protection Lead must then inform the Child Protection Response Team. Outside of school hours, or during virtual learning periods, the Child Protection Officer must be contacted by school email childprotection@aris.edu.gh.
2. The Child Protection Team will carefully document the disclosure and assess it to decide whether it is a genuine concern or not. If not, then no further investigation is needed.

3. If the incident is a genuine concern, it can either be handled within the Inner Circle of Care (parents, teachers, Child Protection Team) or the Outer Circle (Social Welfare Office, outside counselling services, higher authorities).
4. If the incident can be handled within the Inner Circle, the Child Protection Lead calls families of the child/children involved and works with them to support them.
5. If the incident needs to be handled with an Outer Circle intervention, the school will contact any member of the Outer Circle to handle the incident more professionally and swiftly.
6. The Child Protection Team will continue to monitor and support the child and the family, and continue to take preventive measures to eliminate child abuse in the future such as offering training, education, support, and well-being programs.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective child protection policy and its reporting procedure. Divulging concerns of child abuse and/or abusers to others, rather than following through the formal disclosure process, is unacceptable and potentially defamatory. All participants must understand the importance of following the prescribed reporting procedures when concerns arise. The right to confidentiality protects the child, the notifier, the respondent, and the school; and it ensures a fair and proper process.

Whistleblowing

Safeguarding children is our utmost priority at ARIS. We understand that sometimes it can feel uncomfortable to make a report against a staff member or a child's family. Please rest assured that the source of the complaint is to be kept confidential in sensitive cases, and concerns can be made anonymously through whatever avenue the reporter chooses. The Child Protection Team will always protect the anonymity of reporters to prevent any retaliation or strained relationships amongst our community.

Supporting Peers

We understand that, when a student is navigating abuse, maltreatment, or other mental health concerns, it can be a difficult time for their peers as well. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

Staff 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. This code of conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following information:

- [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 without proper protection and understanding of their use. Moreover, any images of children will not be accompanied by detailed

information.

- **Personal Relationships-** Personal relationships or friendships with students outside of school, regardless of student age, are prohibited by staff and volunteers unless there are extenuating circumstances; such as the student being a family friend or community member. Communication with students should be used through approved means only.
- **Physical Contact-** Physical Contact, punitive, sexual, or otherwise inappropriate in nature between staff and children is strictly prohibited and will be disclosed and considered abuse. ARIS notes that corporal punishment is illegal in the country of Ghana, and will not be tolerated.
- **Online Communication-** Staff is to use ARIS approved communication with students at all times. This includes school email, Zoom, Toddle, and Google Classroom. Any other form of communication, including social media, must be approved by the Head of School.
- **Verbal Communication-** Verbal communication should be professional at all times. Teachers are to refrain from insulting and using terse or offensive language in the classroom. Teachers should strive to treat all students equally regardless of race, gender, religion, or nationality.

Police Checks

All personnel who work with children will be asked to sign an authorisation 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.

Policy Review

As an institution, we believe in growth through reflection and continuous improvement, and we recognise our role as life-long learners. We are therefore committed to reviewing this policy on a yearly basis during the months of October-November, with the aim of ensuring that our policies are aligned with that of the International Baccalaureate.

Footnotes

The Al-Rayan Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is linked to the following local, national, and international child protection laws that have been noted

throughout this document:

- [UN Convention on the Rights of Children](#)
 - [Article 1](#): For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years.
 - [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.
- [1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Chapter 28](#)
 - [Article 1d](#): Children and young persons receive special protection against exposure to physical and moral hazards.
 - [Article 3](#): A child shall not be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
 - [Article 5](#): For the purpose of this article, "child" means a person below the age of eighteen years.
- [The Children's Act, 1998 ACT 560](#)
 - An act to reform and consolidate the law relating to children, to provide for the rights of the child, maintenance and adoption, regulate child labour and apprenticeship, for ancillary matters concerning

children generally and to provide for related matters.

- The full PDF of this document can be found online at:

<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/56216/101251/F514833765/GHA56216.pdf>

Instructions: After carefully reading the ARIS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, sign and date this page.

Acknowledgement/Agreement

I have received, carefully read, and fully understand the Al-Rayan International School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

- I am aware of my role and responsibilities as a teacher, staff member, parent, volunteer, intern, consultant, Board member, or other employee in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- I am aware that it is mandatory for me to report any allegation, belief, or suspicion that I have about any past or present child abuse or neglect.
- If I have any further questions or concerns, I know how to reach out to the Child Protection Team and the key staff members who have been outlined in this policy.

Print Name:_____

Signature:_____ Date:_____