



NEW YORK
ACADEMY

NYA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

New York Academy believes that the school setting should provide a caring, safe and stimulating educational environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child. In its approach to child protection and safeguarding, and in its discharge of its duties and responsibilities, NYA commits to acting in the best interests of the child at all times.

NYA recognizes that all staff members and parents have a full and active part to play in protecting our students from harm, and that the child's welfare is our paramount concern.

NYA takes seriously its responsibility under The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm.

All staff members and support staff are trained on child protection norms and child sexual abuse prevention (POCSO Act). According to Sections 19(1) and 21 of the POCSO Act, 2012, teachers, management and all employees of institutions need to be made aware about the provisions of the Act, some of which cast a duty on them to report instance of child abuse. Failure to do the same is punishable with imprisonment, which may extend to six (6) months or fine, or both.

What is child abuse?

- Child abuse includes any form of maltreatment inflicted on a child including physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. (POCSO Act)
- Physical abuse means use of force and/or inflicting physical injury upon a child which includes burning, hitting, punching, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming a child physically.
- Sexual abuse includes penetrative sexual assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and use of a child for pornographic purposes defined in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) amended from time to time.
- Emotional abuse includes acts or omissions by parents or caretakers that have caused or could cause distress, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma to the child.

Indicators of Child Abuse

Unfortunately, it is sometimes the case that children attending school/institutions are victims of abuse. Oftentimes the victims do not share their experiences with adults and may not have the awareness that they are being abused. To support students who may be receiving abusive treatment, the school management and staff need to be trained often in recognizing the signs and symptoms of all the forms of child abuse. It is therefore imperative for NYA staff to keep a watch for any of the following signs:

Warning Signs of Emotional Abuse in Children

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
- Shows extremes in behavior (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive).
- Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
- Acts either inappropriately adult-like (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking,

Warning Signs of Physical Abuse in Children

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
- Is always watchful and "on alert" as if waiting for something bad to happen.
- Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt.
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home.
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.

Warning Signs of Neglect in Children

- Clothes are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather.
- Hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor).
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments.
- Is frequently late or missing from school.

Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse in Children

- Trouble walking or sitting.
- Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behavior.
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.
- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.
- A sexually transmitted disease (STD) or pregnancy.
- Runs away from home.

NYA takes the following measures to ensure the safety of all children as per the POCSO Act:

- 1 We conduct background check & police verification for all staff members including contract employees.
- 2 All employees sign a copy of the terms and conditions related to child protection after they join the school. They must be provided with ID cards.
- 3 Clear boundaries have been defined in interaction between staff and child. (e.g.:- No staff shall take the child to the bathroom alone without being accompanied by a helper, no teacher will lock the classrooms from inside). Staff members have separate washrooms.
- 4 CCTVs are installed in classrooms, buses and in school premises and their feed is monitored.
- 5 Policies and safe boundaries have been laid around photographing children, using photographs of children, internet and technology usage within the school premises.
- 6 We have a school counselor who takes regular sessions on personal safety with all children (this includes talking about body parts, online safety, protection from abuse, healthy boundaries, consent for physical affection from others, and respect for other cultural norms).
- 7 Staff members are oriented on detecting the warning signs of sexual abuse among children.
- 8 Engage in active dialogue with parents and help ensure that parents are aware of the issues faced by children.
- 9 We have a full-time counselor on the school campus.
- 10 Thorough monitoring of activities of all teachers and visiting faculty by their immediate supervisor and/or school administration and ownership; supervision of strangers on campus by security staff, teachers, and school administrators, and an internal vigilance committee is constituted to cover any issues that may arise.
- 11 We ensure children leave school only with parents or authorized personnel.
- 12 We ensure and promote a harmonious school/classroom environment and inclusive practices.
- 13 A student safety drop box is provided so that students can make written complaints. Any complaint of sexual abuse, whether received through the drop box or otherwise will be acted upon immediately.
- 14 Close monitoring of academic performance and psychological behavior particularly in cases of sudden decline in performance, lack of interest, depression and aloofness is monitored to give proper counseling to the children.
- 15 We teach the children the basic concepts of good touches, bad touches and confusing touches.

Constitution of School Complaints Committee:

We have a committee consisting of Principal/Vice - Principal, Coordinator, one male teacher, one female teacher, one non-teaching staff member, counselor, and school nurse who serve as complaints and redressal body to report cases of misbehavior.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Step 1: When a child reports abuse or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher or staff member will seek advice from the counselor and Principal within 48 hours.

Step 2: The counselor will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and in cases of suspected physical or sexual abuse or neglect, will immediately inform the Head of School and the School Complaints Committee to address the allegation.

Step 3: In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

Step 4: The following procedures will be used:

1. Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.
2. Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school.
3. Determine the course of follow-up actions.

a) Minor Cases -

Most minor cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by school counselor, such as those involving:

- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Mental health issues such as anger, depression, self-esteem, grief, anxiety.

Some cases will be referred to external counseling professionals: Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicidal thoughts. (Dr. Varu)

b) Serious Allegations - More serious allegations will involve reporting to outside resources:

- Severe and/or ongoing physical abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and/or incest.

Based on the acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Appropriate actions would include: Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information.

Depending upon the age of the child, these discussions may include:

- Art or play therapy to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counselor, or administrator.
- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling and/or experts in child psychology.

The following actions will be taken as appropriate:

- Reporting to the social services where the law requires it.
- Reporting to the police authorities where the law requires it.
- Potential consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family (where applicable).
- Consultation with the school's attorney or another attorney.

Parent Complaints of Child Abuse at School:

- Meet the parent in presence of another staff member (ideally administration or counselor).
- Ask the parent to write down the details of the complaint with time/date/description of any staff present or suspected involvement of any other student(s).
- If a parent is unwilling or unable to write down details, then ask the parent to speak to you or someone from your office to write down verbatim, and then take the parents signature on the notes taken.
- Reassure the parent that now you will conduct a formal inquiry to look into the matter.
Do not stop the parent if they want to go to the police.

- Go along with the parent and help file a complaint with authorities if requested by the family.

Child Self-Reports an Incident of Child Abuse:

- Write down or record what the child is saying in the presence of another staff member (if you are told something by a child when another adult is not near, be sure to immediately notify the counselor and/or Principal).
- If the child is reporting abuse at school, immediately call the parents and brief them about the complaint and then follow the steps given above.
- If the child is reporting abuse in the home, immediately contact the counselor and Principal for next steps, as a call may need to be made to authorities and/or experts in these situations before the child is sent home (to prevent further abuse).

Instances Where Suspected Abuser is Another Child:

- Ensure that you speak to each child in the presence of another staff (ideally a counselor)
- Maintain confidentiality to the Principal, Counselor, and only the staff directly aware of the situation. Do not discuss what happened with anyone else, respect that privacy is paramount to protect the child's safety.
- Call both the parents for a meeting to be held the same day with the teacher(s), the principal or a counselor present.
- Interview and brief both parents separately without directly stating the name of the other child involved. Reassure the parent that a full investigation is underway.
- Inform them not to handle it directly (parents may want to get into a verbal or physical fight) and not to meet with the family of the other child or get into verbal or physical fights until after a full investigation is complete.
- Ensure that you document all meetings.
- Do not ask any teacher to conduct an investigation unless someone senior is present to assist. When questioning other students do so with the support of the counselor who is trained in interviewing children who may be traumatized.
- Ensure that both the children's reputations are not dented due to gossip.
- If it is found that a student has violated school rules and has abused a peer physically or sexually (whether through harassment or direct physical contact), the Principal will follow up with any disciplinary actions which may include expulsion.

4.2.10 Toll Free Number and Child Helpline - Centralized Child helpline number 1098

This number must be displayed at prominent places in the school. School management and staff are expected to create awareness and participate in averting such offenses as part of their foremost duty.