



St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai – Muhaisnah

# CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Written by:	Child Protection Officer Guidance Counselor	Reviewed:	September 2021
Endorsed by:	SLT	Next Review:	September 2022
Approved by:	Board of Governors		

## **Child Protection Policy**

The Governors and staff of St Mary's School Muhaisnah fully recognise the contribution they make to safeguarding children. SMM believes that our school should provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual student.

Our school fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect students and support them in school. The policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers as all adults who come into contact with children in their work have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare.

### **Aims of the Policy**

- to ensure that the welfare and safety of students are paramount and there is a climate of trust, where disclosures are taken seriously and acted upon quickly
- to support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence
- to raise the awareness of both teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse, bullying and stigmatization
- to ensure that there are clear procedures for reporting Child Protection concerns, which are known to everyone
- to provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm
- to emphasise the need for good levels of communication between all members of staff
- to develop a structured procedure within the school which will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse
- to develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies
- to ensure that all adults within our school who have access to children have been checked as to their suitability
- to provide effective training and support for staff.

There are three main elements to our Child Protection Policy:

- **PREVENTION:** Positive school atmosphere, teaching and pastoral support to students equipping them with the skills needed to keep them safe. Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.
- **PROTECTION:** By developing and following agreed procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases of abuse, stigmatized ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to Safeguarding concerns.
- **SUPPORT** To pupils and school staff and to children who have been abused.

## **PREVENTION: Our School Commitment**

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our students by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection. The school community will therefore commit to:

- establish and maintain an ethos where students feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to. For example through their relationship with their Class Teacher; Small Group work; Class Time lessons; Activity Lessons
- ensure that all students know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty
- include in the curriculum opportunities which equip students with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to know to whom they should turn for help. (For example in the PSHE Programme of Study)
- ensure that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from other agencies.
- ensure that all staff and governors have access to regular training opportunities.

## **PROTECTION**

All adults working with children have a responsibility to protect the students. Some adults have specific responsibilities. These members of staff must receive additional appropriate training and support for their role.

Designated Person for Child Protection: School Counselor

Designated Governor for Child Protection: Chairperson

All members of staff, including supply or temporary staff, volunteers and governors should know who the Designated Person for Child Protection is within school. They should also know and understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse. Any member of staff with an issue or concern relating to Child Protection should raise these immediately with the Designated Person. The Designated Person will liaise with the appropriate statutory authority, parents and other relevant agencies as appropriate.

## THE SMM CHILD

### Definition of Terms

**Child Protection-** refers to the processes undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

**Safeguarding-** refers to the process of protecting children from abuse or neglect to ensure that they thrive in an environment that promotes their development and welfare and accepts full responsibility in fulfilling the role in the school community.

**Staff** refers to all those working for or on behalf of the school, full time or part time, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

**Child** refers to all young people who are enrolled in the school, age ranging from 3 to 17 years old.

**Parent** refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

**Abuse-** refers to a single act or a series of acts committed by any adult against child which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm, threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. It includes the following acts:

1. **Physical abuse:** a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child
2. **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Manifestations of emotional abuse include: low self-esteem; sudden speech problems; fear of approaching parents and self-harm.
3. **Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Manifestations include drawing explicit picture; suicidal attempts and inappropriate sexual knowledge.
4. **Neglect-** a form of abuse characterized by persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs resulting in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It involves a parent or a care giver failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter and unresponsiveness to a child's emotional needs.

**Bullying** refers to wilful aggressive behaviour that is directed towards a particular victim who may be outnumbered, younger, weak, with disability, less confident, or otherwise vulnerable.

**Safeguarding Committee** – a specialized group of professionals or individuals in the school created to help identify, investigate; collaborate and prevent cases any forms of abuse through awareness program, activities and preventive measures as stated in the policy.

### Safeguarding Children in our School

1. School staff should be mindful of the following indicators:
  - has special educational needs;
  - is showing signs of being drawn in to antisocial or criminal behaviour,
  - is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home;
  - is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as adult mental health problems or domestic abuse;
  - is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect;
  - is always hungry and shows physical signs of neglect
2. Prevention Strategies are conducted such as orientation and training for students, teachers and parents regarding child protection.
3. Conducts ocular inspection and appropriate record-keeping of children who will be joining an out-of-school activities such as field trips, camping and visits.
4. Encouraging the development of self-esteem and resilience in every aspect of life.
5. Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment.
6. Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.

## I. Safeguarding Committee (SGC)

The Safeguarding Committee of our school undertakes the regular review of child protection and safeguarding-related policies and procedures implemented in the school and they have a have a crucial role in monitoring and challenging staff on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

### A. Members

Child Protection Officer-designate: Ms. Diane  
Child Protection Governor: Mr. Jaime Roth , School Principal

Members of the Safeguarding Committee: Head of Pastoral Care  
Vice-Principals

### B. Responsibilities of the SGC

The Safeguarding Committee will ensure that:

- A Child Protection Officer, with training in child protection and safeguarding, is always accessible to attend to all Child Protection concerns and ensures that arrangements for safeguarding are in place;
- The Child Protection Officer conducts a course and clear plan of actions in handling child protection cases and decisions shall always be made for the best interest of the child;
- A training strategy that ensures all staff receive child protection training;
- Regular update sessions for staff regarding safeguarding. Keeping staff up to date with any changes and ensuring that safeguarding remains a priority within the setting;
- Conducts monitoring, review and follow-up on the implementation of positive measures in providing the appropriate interventions for students;
- Ensures that proper record-keeping and confidentiality is upheld in relation to investigation and deliberation of related cases.
- Collaborates with the Academic Department to ensure that safeguarding concerns are also addressed in the curriculum;
- Conduct trainings and orientations among parents and liaise with them on urgent matters concerning child protection and safeguarding.
- Refers cases of suspected abuse to Dubai Foundation for Women and Children and to authorities in accordance with this guidance and procedures.

## II. Referral of cases to the SGC

1. Any concerned school teaching and non-teaching staff documents any form of disclosure through a written document coming from the child or a victim of a suspected abuse maintaining the trust and ensuring the child that proper and immediate help shall be given;
2. The staff shall immediately inform the Child Protection Officer of the information and the records gathered from the disclosure.
3. The Child Protection Officer shall assist the child to the school doctor for physical examination and body mapping for an alleged physical abuse.

## III. Procedures in Handling Child Protection Case

1. Upon referral of the case to the Child Protection Officer, all information gathered shall be kept confidential and an investigation shall be conducted within 24 hours.
2. A physical examination shall be conducted by the school doctor if the case involves alleged physical abuse.
3. The body mapping form should be used by the clinic staff and child protection officer.
4. In cases where the abuse happens at home, the parents shall be called immediately to the school for an engagement. The SGC shall not allow the child to go home unless fetch by the parents.
5. The parents will be informed through a meeting with the SGC and the Child Protection Governor about the incident and an undertaking with relevant information about the case and the commitment of the parents to assuring the school authorities that the incident will not happen again. If the same incident occurs, the school will be reporting the parents involved to the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children and/or the police immediately.
6. Consistent monitoring, follow-up and counselling sessions will be provided to the child by the school counsellors.

### **A. What the SGC should do if a child is in danger or at risk of harm**

If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to Dubai Foundation for Women and Children and/or the police immediately.

### **B. Allegations against staff**

1. All staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child.
2. We understand that a child or young person may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform by the Principal.

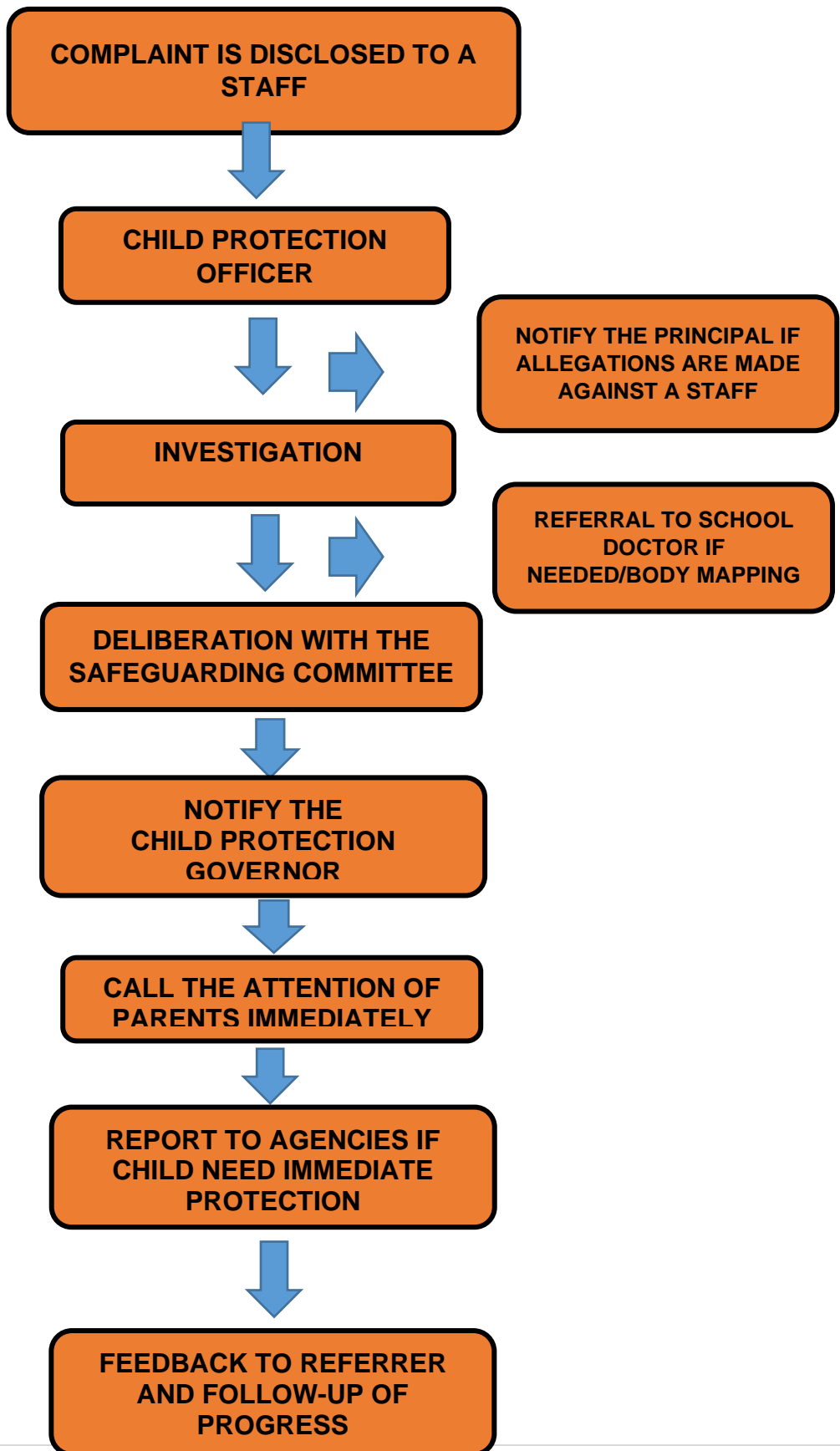
3. The Principal should consider where there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant an investigation. In any case, the Principal should seek advise from teh Chair of Governors and Managing Director.
4. A probable suspension will be taken if allegations are proven. Administrative procedures and policies shall apply in this case.
5. Parents shall be called for a conference.

**C. Allegations of abuse made against other children (Peer on Peer abuse)**

1. Our staff recognise that some children are vulnerable in peer abuse where others are capable of abusing their peers. In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, our child protection procedures shall be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser; this means it should be considered as a child care and protection issue for both children.
2. School policies in dealing with consequences shall apply.
3. Parents will be notified of the incident by the Safeguarding committee.



IV. Action Flowchart in Reporting Child Protection Cases



## V. Dealing With Disclosure

A disclosure of a child to a staff in the school is an indicator that a child trusts the adult. Thus, it is important to assure the child of his safety even after the disclosure takes place.

### 1. Receive

Listen to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or any suspicions of abuse. Assure privacy of the disclosure in a quiet and private space when needed.

### 2. Reassure

It is important not to make any judgements and give reassurance that only those who need to know will be told. Explain your next steps to the student.

### 3. Record

Make brief notes about what they are telling you at the time. Record what was actually said by the student rather than your interpretation of what they are telling you, be factual at all times. Record the date, time, place and any noticeable nonverbal behaviour.

### 4. Report

Report the incident to the child protection officer and make sure that you do not disclose any information with others.

## The Role of the Designated Person

The Designated Person has a specific responsibility to:

- Ensure all staff know who is responsible for Child Protection issues
- Ensure all staff have read the Child Protection Policy and procedures are being followed appropriately
- Ensure parents understand the responsibility put on school staff with regard to safeguarding
- Develop and review the whole-school policy for Child Protection
- Organise regular Child Protection training for staff and governors
- Coordinate action where child abuse is suspected
- Liaise and discuss issues with parent
- Attend all meetings as required
- Keep Child Protection information and children's records in a secure confidential file and share information on a "need to know basis".

## Dealing with a Disclosure

There are a number of things staff should do to support a child who chooses to make a disclosure:

- Stay calm.
- Listen carefully to what the child is saying noting the main points.
- Talk normally without applying any pressure on the child and do not put words into the child's mouth.
- Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault and that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Tell the child who you have to tell and explain why to the Designated Person.
- Keep a full record (date, time, what the child said/did etc.) in the designated filing cabinet
- Allegations of child abuse should be given the highest priority and referred immediately to the Designated Person.

## Records and Monitoring

It is crucial to keep accurate records where there are concerns about the welfare of a child. These records are confidential and are therefore to be kept separately from the child's educational records.

All staff are made aware of the need to record and report concerns about a student or students within the school. The Designated Child Protection Officer is responsible for such records and at what time they should be released.

Confidentiality is essential and all Child Protection files are kept in a secure location in the Designated Child Protection Officer's office.

## Categories of Possible Abuse

There are four main categories of potential abuse of which all members of staff should be aware.

These are:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse

Signs of physical abuse are the actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. Signs of physical abuse may include:

- unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- refusal to discuss injuries

- untreated injuries
- admission of punishment which appears excessive
- bald patches
- withdrawal from physical contact
- fear of returning home
- fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- aggression towards others
- running away.

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. Possible signs of sexual abuse may include:

- sudden changes in behaviour or school performance
- displays of affection in a sexual way inappropriate to age
- tendency to cling or need constant reassurance
- tendency to cry easily
- regression to younger behaviour, such as thumb-sucking, playing with discarded toys or acting like a baby
- complaints of genital itching or pain
- distrust of a familiar adult, or anxiety about being left with a relative, baby-sitter or lodger
- unexplained gifts or money
- depression and withdrawal.

Neglect is the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger – resulting in significant impairment of the child’s health or development including non-organic failure to thrive. Signs of neglect may include:

- constant hunger
- poor personal hygiene
- constant tiredness
- poor state of clothing
- emaciation
- frequent lateness or non-attendance
- untreated medical problems
- destructive tendencies
- low self esteem
- neurotic behavior
- no social relationships
- running away
- compulsive stealing or scavenging.

Emotional abuse can be thought of as the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse. Signs of emotional abuse will include:

- physical, mental and emotional development lags
- admission of punishment which appears excessive
- over-reaction to mistakes
- continual self-depreciation
- sudden speech disorders
- fear of new situations
- inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- neurotic behaviour (for example, rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- fear of parents being contacted
- extremes of passivity or aggression
- drug/solvent abuse
- running away
- compulsive stealing or scavenging.

***It is important to note that these signs are not proof but can give rise to suspicion and these suspicions must be reported and logged.***

## **SUPPORT**

### **Supporting the Child**

At Saint Mary's School, we understand and recognise that a child student who is abused or has been witness to abuse may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and may not view the world in a positive way. School may be the student's only secure and stable environment. This may result in them communicating their feelings through challenging or defiant behaviour or they may become withdrawn from situations. They may feel worthless, humiliated or helpless and have a sense of blame.

It is also recognised that some students who have experienced abuse may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered and sensitive approach in order that the student receives the support and appropriate help they require.

School staff can support all children through:

- Curriculum content
- The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment which gives all pupils a sense of being valued and respected
- The school behaviour policy. Ensuring the pupil knows their behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not blamed for any abuse which has occurred
- A consistent approach from all staff
- Liaison with outside agencies to support the pupil and their families
- A commitment to develop productive and supportive relationships with parents in order to get the best outcomes for the student
- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness whilst not condoning aggression or bullying

- Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.

### **Supporting School Staff**

School staff must protect themselves especially when meeting on a one-to-one basis with students. Staff should bear in mind that even innocent actions can be misconstrued. It is advised that any discussions with a child take place in a room with a window or the door should be left open.

Physical contact with pupils should be avoided but where it is necessary, it must be careful and appropriate at all times. There are occasions where a child may need to be touched e.g. following an accident, needing to be changed etc. This should be with two adults present.

#### **Use of devices:**

No pictures or videos should be taken on personal devices of school activities or students. The school camera or tablets will be used for recording activities and sharing with the IT team for posting on the website or social media.

Staff must not have phone numbers of students or personal conversations on any social media site e.g. facebook, instagram, whatsapp etc on their personal devices.

### **Concerns Against Members of Staff**

If a colleague's activities are causing concern, staff should discuss them confidentially with the Principal who will discuss this with the designated person for Child Protection.

- All staff will be subject to a rigorous recruitment and selection procedure designed to recruit the best people for the job and deter unsuitable applicants.
- All members of staff are subject to police criminal background check prior to employment.
- Should a student accuse a member of staff of physically or sexually abusing them, the matter should be referred immediately to the Principal who will immediately seek advice from the Designated person for Child Protection Should the allegation be made against the Principal, the Designated person for Child Protection, the Chair of Governors and the Managing Director of the Vicariate's schools should be immediately informed.
- The Principal should consider whether there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant an investigation. In any case, the Principal should seek advice from the Chair of Governors and the Managing Director.
- The Managing Director will advise the Principal of the procedure to follow dependent on the allegation or incident. The member of staff should be kept informed of the procedure. The member of staff should be told not to discuss the allegation or incident with any other member of staff or students.
- The Principal will follow the Managing Director's advice and keep detailed notes of discussions with relevant staff.

## **Visitors to the School**

All visitors must be asked to sign in and out and read to the person the Child Protection Documentation by the Reception Area.

- All members of staff are responsible for asking visitors why they are on site, and ensuring they are not left alone with students.
- Care must be taken that visitors are not left unsupervised when students and young people are present. This includes visitors to school, parents, contractors etc.
- All parents/carers who volunteer in school should have attended an induction session.
- Visitors, who have no legitimate reason to be on site when students are present, must be asked to leave.
- A person should not be visiting regularly when students are present (other than to drop off or collect) as this could give them access to other students.

### **Staff Training**

Training will take place every two years as part of the programme at the start of the academic year. It will be facilitated by the Designated Child Protection Officer. The purpose behind staff training is to ensure that everyone in the school is aware of procedures to be followed and the signs of possible child abuse. All members of staff will develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse. All members of staff will know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse. All new members of staff will be given a copy of the Child Protection procedures as part of their induction into the school and be briefed by the Child Protection Officer.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Principal together with the Senior Management Team will monitor and evaluate this policy by:

- reviewing practice against the procedures outlined
- reviewing this policy in line with current guidance and research
- listening to children, staff and families and considering their views and comments

### **Processing Cases of Disclosure whilst in Investigation**

1. Children's disclosure during the investigation of the case recorded as verbatim as possible.
2. The case must be reported to the child protection officer and the matter be consulted with the principal as the chairperson.
3. The meeting with parents must be facilitated on the same day once they are called. If the carers are not available on the same day, an email be sent reminding them to deal with the matter at home considering child safety as paramount.
4. In the meeting, a clear message will have to be made by the school reminding the parents to be careful not to correct the behaviour using any form of further harm. The school will mention the concern and if there is any risk to the student as a result or because of this, the school will escalate the matter to Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC) as a partner institute on child protection and safeguarding.





