



# **HIS Child Protection Policy**

**(PYP, MYP & DP)**

**Hiroshima International School**



## Our mission

HIS will provide an international education that promotes integrity, excellence, cultural sensitivity and a lifelong commitment to peace and a sustainable planet.

広島インターナショナルスクールは、誠実と卓越の精神を重んじ、多様な文化への理解を促し、恒久平和そして持続可能な世界に貢献することのできる、国際的な教育を提供します。

## Our vision

HIS will cultivate young people who are prepared for lifelong learning, meeting challenges and outstanding citizenship anywhere in the world.

広島インターナショナルスクールは、生涯を通じて学び、また挑戦をし続け、世界の一員として貢献をする若者を育成します。

## Introduction and background

The HIS Child Protection policy has brought together a number of different policies and procedures already in place as well as new components necessary to ensure that all children at HIS enjoy a safe and secure learning environment. A range of policy documents were reviewed during the 2018/2019 school year by HIS teachers to draft this policy which will continue to develop over time as we strive to ensure a safe environment.

## Alignment with mission & vision

Central to a commitment to a more peaceful planet is the commitment to the safety and security of the learners within the school community. The HIS Child Protection Policy outlines the ways in which we, as a community, commit to the ongoing protection of our children.

## We believe...

- All children have a right to be safeguarded and protected.
- All members of the community should know their rights and responsibilities.
- All members of the community should be treated with respect and dignity.
- HIS should be a safe space for children, a place for tolerance.
- Children should know how they can access help and support.
- All staff are accountable for safeguarding and child protection by following policies and procedures outlined in this document.
- It is the responsibility of each staff member to put the needs of the child first at all times, to be vigilant and act on/report any concerns.
- A clear code of conduct should be in place to guide interactions within the community.
- All members of the community are role models.
- Ongoing training in child-protection for all community members is a necessary part of providing a safe environment.
- The school community should be informed about local child protection laws and procedures and the HIS Child Protection policy.
- Connections should be maintained with social services, local counselors and medical groups supports access to these services.
- When the school community works together as a whole, we produce better results for everyone involved.

## We recognise...

- Developmentally appropriate interactions differ with age.
- The difficulty of the conversations.
- Cultural differences impact perceptions.
- The balance between the rights to privacy and protection.
- Strong emotions are generated during the process affecting all stakeholders
- Off-campus, overnight and before/after school events need special consideration.
- The need for teachers to understand the signs of abuse and neglect as well as vulnerable times.
- The importance of children understanding when their rights are not being met and how to report.
- The vulnerability of the younger children as well as young adults.
- The parents' responsibility to ensure the child's entitlement to receiving education, ensuring that the child can attend school and gain enough support for learning.
- The needs for teachers to understand the background of each family and their unique situations.
- Children's difficulty communicating in English (in school) or Japanese (outside).
- The need for training is ongoing.

# We will:

- We will create a safe environment for the whole community
- Commit to the HIS Safeguarding Code
- Provide ongoing training to the school community in safeguarding and child protection.
- Develop a strong relationship with the local community in order to access support.
- Identify shifts in local laws, procedures and agencies associated with this Child Protection policy.
- Follow procedures related to discovery of abuse and/or neglect, reporting and action identified in this policy when a staff member has concerns.
- Incorporate learning associated with promoting child protection within the units of inquiry across the school.
- Address issues of online safety within the scope of learning to promote child protection.
- Follow procedures related to safe hiring practices outlined in this policy.

## Introduction

All students at HIS have a right to safety and wellbeing. This right exists in the home, in their daily lives, while at school and while on any school-related activity. All HIS staff have a contractual obligation and duty to defend and uphold this right.

This policy serves to protect students from abuse or neglect and empowers teachers and other adults with a 'safeguarding code' that will support them in maintaining healthy and positive student-developmental relationships with students.

## 1. Definitions

**Disclosure** is the action of making something known by revealing or uncovering.

**Abuse** is defined as a stronger/more powerful individual engaging in a pattern of behaviour in order to make personal gain at the expense of a weaker/less powerful person. Abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual. Neglect is also a specific type of abuse.

**Emotional Abuse** is the routine and harmful shaming, demeaning, belittling, ostracising or otherwise harming of a child's sense of self-worth and self esteem

**Physical Abuse** is the routine anger-motivated and unpredictable causing of physical harm or injury to students (hitting, scratching, cutting, punching, etc.) with the result of causing the child to be fearful of the abuser.

**Sexual Abuse** is the exploitation of a student for sexual purposes. It may or may not involve physical contact and can include sexual imagery or language and the exposure of a student to any manner of sexual contexts.

**Neglect** is a specific type of abuse defined as the failure of responsible adult to provide adequate care to a child. Care can include food, clothing, shelter and supervision, emotional or medical care.

## 2. HIS Safeguarding Code of Behaviour

All HIS employees and any other adult working with HIS students (including volunteers) are expected to adhere to the HIS Safeguarding Code. The code provides guideposts for adults to support healthy relationships and the development of student independence.

**The code is established to protect both adults and children and is built upon 4 ‘guideposts’ (Wolowitz, 2013) as follows:**

<p><b>1. Roles</b></p> <p>Adults should engage in behaviors associated with their professional roles (teacher, mentor, coach, advisor) and avoid behaviours which are associated with personal roles (friend, parent/family, peer, romantic partner).</p>	<p><b>Aim for:</b> Professional, contextually appropriate and clear</p> <p><b>Avoid:</b> Personalised and ambiguous</p>
<p><b>2. Boundaries</b></p> <p>Boundary violations occur when a person in a position of power (e.g. an adult) crosses a boundary with a person who is vulnerable (e.g. a child). Students will also try to set and test boundaries. It is the adult’s responsibility to establish, set and maintain boundaries, for example, by making healthy, role-appropriate choices concerning space, time and language.</p>	<p><b>Aim for:</b> Establishing and reinforcing clear boundaries; crossing boundaries only when it is clearly in the best interest of the student and in consultation with the designated person for safeguarding.</p> <p><b>Avoid:</b> Blurred boundaries between personal and professional roles; repeated or serious boundary violations which do not serve the students’ best interests</p>
<p><b>3. Power</b></p> <p>Adults in schools are in a position of power over students. Adults are responsible for ensuring that there is no abuse of this power. Rather, the role of the (more powerful) adult is to support the (less powerful) student in developing autonomy and independence rather than to create power-based dependency or an otherwise unhealthy attachment.</p>	<p><b>Aim for:</b> Use your power to develop autonomy and independence in students; Make student interests paramount when exercising power</p> <p><b>Avoid:</b> Actions which contribute to unhealthy attachments or dependency. Using power to meet the adult’s needs</p>
<p><b>4. Accountability</b></p> <p>Adults are accountable for their actions. As a school, HIS is collectively accountable for the welfare of its students. Adults need to take reasonable safeguards to ensure that their actions cannot lead to (or be misinterpreted as) violations of the HIS safeguarding code. Collective accountability for the safety of students means that all adults are required to internally report suspicions of abuse (including neglect) using the process outlined in this policy.</p>	<p><b>Aim for:</b> Acting transparently and unambiguously; ensuring that all reasonable steps* are taken to avoid actual or mistaken violations of the HIS safeguarding code; reporting any suspicion of abuse or neglect immediately</p> <p><b>Avoid:</b> Conduct which can be inferred as being opaque or secretive and/or which lead to student isolation and regression; failing to immediately report any suspicion of abuse or neglect;</p>

*\*Examples of ‘reasonable steps’ include leaving your door open when meeting with students, ensuring the window to your room is never covered, ensuring any additional sessions with students are well advertised and approved by the administration, avoiding ‘favoritism’ in working with students, avoiding ‘friending’ students on social media and locking down personal social media so students don’t have access, sharing with the [child safety officer] or an administrator whenever there is potential for a breach of the safeguarding code)*

### 3. Prevention and Training

HIS shall ensure adequate preventative measures are taken to prevent abuse and support reporting.

These steps shall include:

- **Student education:** the curriculum and pastoral program shall support students in developing healthy independence and teach them how to respond when facing behaviors which are (or which may potentially lead to) unhealthy relationships. Students will receive training in the HIS Child Protection Policy to help them understand the role that ‘roles’, ‘boundaries’, ‘power’ and ‘accountability’ have to play in their personal safety, and the safety of their peers.
- **Staff education:** all new staff shall receive training in the HIS Child Protection Policy. All returning staff shall receive annual refresher courses in the HIS Child Protection Policy.
- **Safe Recruitment and Screening:** The HIS Staff Handbook contains details of safer recruiting practices at HIS. Some of the practices designed to create safe environments for children and young people procedures for the following aspects of recruiting:
  - References
  - Interviews
  - Conditional Offer of Appointment: Pre Appointment Checks
  - Post Appointment Induction
  - Supply Staff and Contractors
  - Retention of records
  - Pre-employment checklist
  - Verification of identity

### 4. Discovery of Child Abuse or Neglect

All adults at HIS are asked to remain alert for signs of abuse and neglect. There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of a legitimate concern in which case the adults are mandated to report her/his observations to the designated person for safeguarding in accordance with the steps indicated under ‘Reporting and Action’, below.

**Signs of neglect and abuse include the following:**

#### **Warning signs of emotional abuse in children**

1. Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
2. Shows extremes in behaviour (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive).
3. Doesn’t seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
4. Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, throwing tantrums).

#### **Warning signs of physical abuse in children**

1. Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
2. Is always watchful and “on alert,” as if waiting for something bad to happen.
3. Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt.
4. Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home.

5. Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.

### **Warning signs of neglect in children**

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

### **Warning signs of sexual abuse in children**

1. Trouble walking or sitting.
2. Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behaviour.
3. Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.
4. Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.
5. An STD or pregnancy.
6. Runs away from home.

### **Child Self-Reporting**

In many cases, abuse or neglect is discovered via child self-reporting. In the case that a child confides in an adult staff member or adult volunteer/visitor that they are the victim of abuse/neglect that adult should:

1. Believe the child
2. Tell them that you will help them by contacting the designated person for safeguarding who will make sure that their voice is heard, valued, respected and acted upon
3. Contact the designated person for safeguarding immediately (as explained below) and stay involved as much as is deemed appropriate and as much as you are comfortable

Under NO circumstances should the adult attempt to resolve the issue him/herself or promise confidentiality.

## **5. Reporting and Action**

At HIS, internal reporting of suspected abuse is mandatory.

### **Mandatory Reporting Step One: Making an Initial Report**

All staff at HIS are required to report to the designated person for safeguarding in the case of reasonable grounds for concern that a student may be in danger from abuse from any adult, including parents, carers, other staff or community members. The report should be made to the designated person for safeguarding prior to any contact with the adult(s) who may be subject to an investigative process.

At HIS the designated person for safeguarding is the principal. In the case that the principal cannot be contacted a report can also be made to the Vice Principals.

The act of making a report does not assume 'guilt', rather the report should simply be made in good faith based upon a **reasonable** presumption that there is a situation which is worthy of investigation.

*Notes:*

**The term ‘abuse’** includes, but is not necessarily limited to: neglect, medical neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or dangerous home environment (e.g. violent household).

**The term ‘reasonable grounds for concern’** includes, but is not limited to, evidence such as:

- Explicit reference to abuse verbally or in writing (e.g. the student reports that they or their friend is a victim of abuse)
- Implicit reference to abuse verbally or in writing (e.g. artwork, poetry)
- Signs of physical abuse (frequent/repeated unexplained marks, bruises, etc.)
- Erratic and/or unhealthy behavioural patterns (overly familiar or excessively nervous around adults, excessive risk taking, excessively introverted, tardy/attendance problems, excessive tiredness, self-harming, etc.)
- Age-inappropriate behaviours (e.g. sexually explicit behaviours)

### **Mandatory Reporting Step Two: Initial Investigation:**

The designated person for safeguarding should then immediately arrange for a Disclosure Response Team made up of administration and teaching staff to meet and start conducting a reasonable small-scale investigation into the case. In the case that the parent/carers are NOT the subject of the investigation they should be contacted at this time and included fully in the process. However, in the case that the parents/carers are the subject of the investigation they should not be involved at this stage.

The purpose of this investigation is to determine whether or not there is a legitimate cause for concern for child safety. Consequently, the investigation may include a combination of the following:

- Conversation with the reporting teacher and examination of any documentary/supporting evidence
- Conversation with the child (to include any involved siblings)
- Conversation with members of staff as appropriate
- Conversation with any other significant adults (with the exception of those who are named as being potentially culpable)

### **Mandatory Reporting Step Three: Decision for Action**

Following this small-scale investigation the designated person for safeguarding, together with Disclosure Response Team will evaluate the evidence presented and make a decision as to the next steps which will be formulated into an Action Plan.

The decision will be taken as follows:

1. In the case that there remains reasonable grounds for concern that a student may be in danger from abuse from any adult, including parents, carers, other staff or community members:
  - o The local child protection office will be contacted for advice with the aim that this advice will be followed.
    - <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1110261911364/> 児童相談所  
Jido-sodan sho

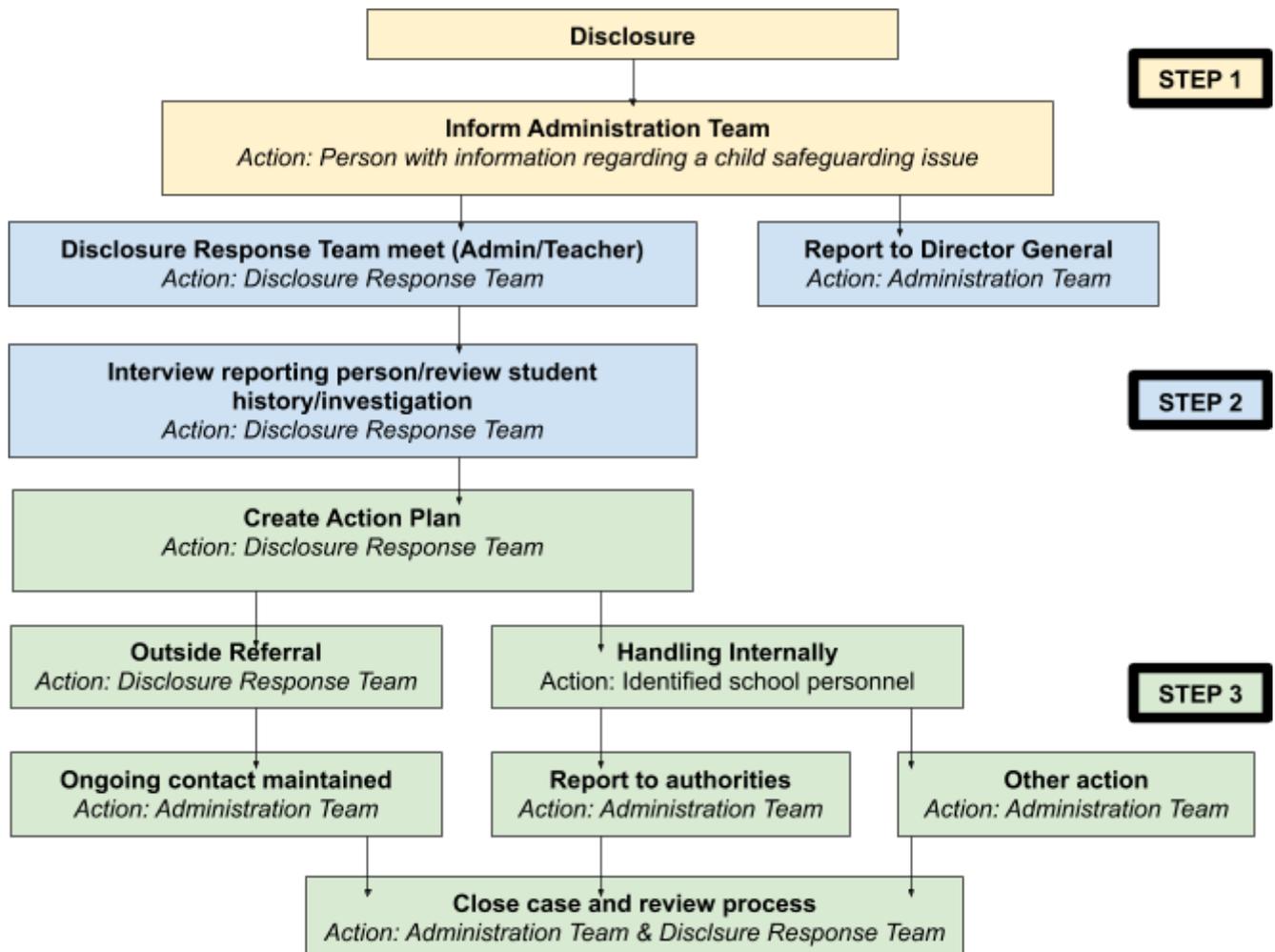
- <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?id=2221&vm=04&re=02>  
Japanese law of prevention of child abuse 児童虐待の防止等に関する法律

- o Parents/carers will be contacted prior to contacting the child guidance centre in the case that the alleged perpetrator is NOT a parent/carer. In the case that the parent/carer is the alleged perpetrator contact will be made as soon as possible as authorised/guided by the child welfare office (Hiroshima City).

2. In the case that there is no longer **reasonable grounds for concern** that a student **may** be in danger from abuse from any adult, including parents, carers, other staff or community members:

- o The child welfare office (Hiroshima City) will not be contacted and no further action will be taken
- o Parents/Guardians will be contacted for a debrief of the situation as appropriate

### Flowchart for post-disclosure process



### Sources

With gratitude, HIS acknowledges the following sources used in the construction of this document:

1. Setting Behavioral Expectations Based on 4 Guideposts, David Wolowitz
2. Helpguide.org (nonprofit guide to mental health and well-being)
3. Nagoya International School, Child Safety Policy
4. British School of Tokyo, Safer Recruiting resource from CIS Child Protection Workshop
5. American British Academy, Oman