

# **Child Protection Policy 2018-2019**

## **Rotterdam International Secondary School**

[www.riss.wolfert.nl](http://www.riss.wolfert.nl)

Rotterdam International Secondary School (RISS) is an international secondary school located in Rotterdam in The Netherlands, offering Foundation Course, IGCSE and the IB programme. Our unique learning environment provides exceptional education for students who wish to receive an internationally-focused education, delivered in the English language. Students at RISS come from all over the world. Our outstanding student & faculty community is comprised of over 50 different nationalities, with diverse multicultural backgrounds. We are a school that supports the safety and well-being of our valued students. This child protection policy aims to address the unique concerns of international students and keep at the center of our environment the highest standards of safety and compliance with Dutch laws regarding child protection. At RISS, we believe that children have the right to learn in an environment that encourages well-being, safety & awareness and the highest level of child safeguarding.

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**Bi-Annual Review of the RISS Child Protection Policy**

Date Reviewed	Name of Reviewer	Subject changed/reason

**1. Introduction**

Child protection is defined as safeguarding the physical, emotional and mental well-being of children. This includes, but is not limited to, monitoring the behavioral and emotional development of students and helping to ensure they are sufficiently informed about their rights with regard to learning in a safe environment. As a school, we have a commitment to our student community to educate and bring continual awareness to students and staff that RISS is a safe and nurturing learning environment.

The RISS is an international school within the Wolfert van Borselen school group. We teach with the English language as the cornerstone of instruction, however, students at the RISS come from all corners of the globe. That said, we offer education that takes into consideration the multicultural considerations that accompany many in our student population, including language and cultural differences. This is an important aspect of the education we deliver and there is the potential for difference when enforcing the rules we are required to follow by Dutch child protection law. For instance, whereas corporal punishment may be permitted as a means to discipline a child in another country, in the Netherlands it is illegal to physically abuse a child. We have an special obligation as an international school to adequately educate and inform our students and their families that the school is committed to upholding the laws and regulations of the Netherlands. We are sensitive to the cultural differences that may present themselves when a child enters the school from a foreign country where child protection laws may differ and we are committed to help families learn and understand the rules and practices that exist in The Netherlands.

Particular to international schools, the International Task Force on Child Protection cited that, "one of the biggest barriers to reporting child endangerment or abuse is due to cultural barriers." As a school, we are committed to breaking down those barriers and operating in a way that encourages discussion, transparency and open dialogue both within our school

community and in cooperation with local, national and international experts on child protection.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the RISS child protection policy are to work as a source of information for students, parents and staff to refer to in the instance they feel child safety may be at risk. It also serves as a resource for policies, procedures and information as it relates to child safeguarding. This document was a collaborative effort by the School Counsellor & Student Protection Lead, as well as the Leadership Team at RISS. The contents of this document are subject to change in accordance to Dutch law and changes that occur within the realm of childhood development. We aim to stay at the forefront of social changes and identifying potentially threatening behavior/actions before it occurs.

## 3. Scope

The RISS is the international school within the Wolfert van Borselen group. We follow the child protection policies and procedures set forth by the Wolfert group, but as an added measure of due diligence to our international student population, we created this child protection policy unique to the RISS. It is important to note that this child protection policy is an evolving endeavor, meaning that we are including the most up-to-date information about child safeguarding that we are aware of at this time. This policy, while comprehensive, is subject to change as necessary to meet the needs of our student community and/or in response to changes made by the Wolfert van Borselen group.

## 4. Identifying Child Abuse, the types and definitions

At RISS, we are committed to identifying the signs of childhood abuse and following a course of due diligence to report such incidents according to Dutch law. Child abuse can comprise several categories, including physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

As required by Dutch law, educators and staff at RISS have a duty to report any instance where abuse or neglect is suspected. It is not only our duty to report instances or suspicion of abuse or neglect, we believe that we have an obligation and responsibility to our students to make provisions for learning in a safe atmosphere.

If any member of the RISS community at any time suspects that a child is being abused, it should be immediately reported to the School Counsellor, Principal or a member of the Leadership Team.

This can be done in a variety of ways: in person, via secure email, in writing or anonymously. Persons who make a report may do so to a trusted adult in the school, a member of the Leadership Team or Principal and the School Counsellor/Student Protection Lead. All reports will be ultimately be processed by the School Counsellor, but they do not have to originate there.

Furthermore, RISS employs a whistleblower policy whereas no student, teacher or person will be punished or "outed" for having reported an incidence or suspicion of child endangerment.

All reports are handled confidentially and will be processed according to the reporting code as indicated by Child Protection laws in The Netherlands.

### The signs of child abuse are:

1. **Physical abuse** - overt signs can include, but are not limited to: bruises, cuts, broken bones, scratches, burn marks or bald spots from pulled hair on the head. The

hidden or covert signs of physical child abuse can include crying, depression, dramatic changes in mood, anxiety, bed-wetting, sleeplessness, isolation, inability to concentrate, female genital mutilation, running away, abrupt changes in locker room comfort (sudden fearfulness to change in front of others) and low self-worth.

2. **Emotional & Psychological abuse** - Signs can include non-suicidal cutting or scratching, sleeplessness, crying, changes in mood, loss or increase in appetite, drastic changes in appearance, isolation, bed-wetting, suicidal ideation, poor concentration, decrease in self-esteem and poor decision making skills.
3. **Sexual abuse** - Signs can include soreness or injury to genital area of the body, redness or discoloration of the genital areas, pain associated with urination or bowel movements, drastic changes in clothing choices or appearance, isolation or particular fear being towards a certain person or gender, withdrawn or anxious, exposure to inappropriate material that is sexual in nature (child pornography), increase in risk-taking sexualized behaviors and receiving unexplained large amounts of money or gifts.
4. **Neglect** - Signs can include habitual absences or lateness, sleeplessness, insufficient parental support & guidance (absent parents/guardians), poor diet, poor hygiene, unkempt appearance and failure to thrive.

## **5. Bullying Types, Prevention and Policy**

Bullying is not tolerated at RISS and as a school, we are dedicated to preventing negative behavior before it starts. As a part of our pastoral programme, tutors work diligently to educate our students on the signs of bullying and we work together as a community to listen to the concerns of our students and create an honest and transparent dialogue about the challenges that can accompany the teenage years. The core values of our school: respect, responsibility, relationships and courage are key components integrating the school policy that bullying has no place at RISS. We are a community of acceptance, tolerance, inclusivity and curiosity. As a reminder to all students, this vision is shared throughout the school and is posted in areas that students frequent the most.

One of the biggest barriers to a student or bystanders reporting bullying is the fear of retaliation or loss of social status. Students who are at particular risk include those with learning challenges, minorities and LGBTQ youth. At RISS, we all have an obligation and responsibility to protect and ensure that students have the right to learn in a safe environment.

Broadly speaking, bullying is defined as the intimidation or purposeful harassment of a person or persons with the intent to cause physical or emotional harm. Bullying can take on a variety of forms and can take place in-person or online. Below are several bullying types.

### **Bullying types can include (but are not limited to):**

- Verbal or physical harassment which can include name-calling, biting, hitting, spitting pushing/shoving/tripping.
- Inappropriate use of social media and digital devices to incite fear or harm to another, also known as cyber-bullying.
- Threats of physical or emotional harm to an individual.
- Discriminatory behavior based upon a person's disability, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, appearance, religion or sexual orientation.
- Unsolicited or uninvited physical or sexual advances (sexting).
- Posting threatening or harmful images on social media with the intent to shame or embarrass someone (this includes photos and suggestions for the individual to die or harm oneself).
- Purposeful ignoring or discluding a person from groups.
- Lying or spreading rumors or gossip about a classmate.

- Written materials or graffiti/defacement of school/classmate property that is meant to incite harm or has derogatory/hurtful meaning.

Students, teachers, parents and staff may report incidences of bullying to a trusted adult at school, a member of the Leadership Team, the Tutor or the School Counsellor. Reports can be made in person, via secure email, anonymously or in writing. All reports will be considered confidential and persons involved should be made aware that RISS embodies a no-retaliation policy, whereas whistleblowers should not fear negative consequences for speaking up. Students who are experiencing bullying or students who witness bullying are encouraged to report such incidences without reservation or fear of retaliation.

If a student is experiencing bullying, he/she should approach their tutor for guidance. Incidences of bullying will not be tolerated and if necessary, disciplinary action will result if the behavior persists.

**Disciplinary measures include:** Contacting the parents of all children involved, in-school disciplinary action, suspension from school and notification of the police authorities. In The Netherlands, bullying can be considered illegal and in certain cases is punishable by law.

**It is important to note that when making a report or taking a report from a student, the following details should be considered:**

- The name of the persons involved, time of day & location at school should be noted.
- Document the incident: what happened, what action was taken, what witnesses were present and was anyone harmed?
- Who was notified and what course of action took place to remedy the situation?
- Include only the relevant details, meaning facts only. Opinions and personal judgments should be excluded from your report.
- What supporting documentation exists?

## **6. Drug and Alcohol Awareness**

The use of illicit substances and alcohol at RISS is not tolerated, regardless if the student has reached the legal consumption age as designated by Dutch law. Students are not permitted to bring these substances to either school campus and doing so will result in immediate notification of parents/guardians and possible suspension & notification of authorities.

In the Netherlands, the legal age of consumption for alcohol, tobacco or other substances such as marijuana, is separate from RISS school policy. This means that although a student may be of legal age to consume these products, it is the school's policy that they do not serve to positively impact their learning and brain development in any way.

RISS offers professional development training (YOUZ) for employees and parents to educate and inform the school community about the latest risks, concerns, trends and resources to help students make supportive and consciously aware choices pertaining to their use of tobacco, alcohol or illicit substances. Drug and alcohol awareness is also an integral aspect of the Pastoral Programme at RISS.

The RISS Student Handbook contains additional guidelines students should follow regarding the use of drugs, alcohol and smoking.

## **7. Internet, Social Media Safety & Cell Phone Policy**

The internet policy at RISS centers around ensuring that students engage in educationally meaningful and productive use of online activities. We believe that the internet is a tool that can provide immense learning opportunities, but it should be engaged in a responsible and safe manner.

While at school, internet searches should be limited to topics that pertain to subject learning and development. If it is found that a student is engaging in potentially harmful use of the internet, the student's tutor will be informed and if necessary the parents/guardians may be contacted.

Cell phone use is permitted and should be utilized in a safe and constructive manner. If a student is caught using his/her mobile device in a way that is harmful, they may be asked to leave the cell phone at home or have it stored in a cell phone locker that is on classroom doors. Using cell phones for the intent to harm another is strictly forbidden. Students are not permitted to take/post photos without consent and the use of recording devices on phones, video or audio, is not allowed.

As a part of the Pastoral Programme at RISS, tutors will engage with students on a consistent basis about safe internet practices and encourage dialogue and feedback about online trends, threats and safe practices. Some areas of discussion include: warning signs of cyberbullying and how to report it, prevention & awareness of online exploitation that assess the risks, damages and potential for harm to children, discussion about safe online searches and warning signs & ways to report online grooming.

An online safety workshop is hosted by the school for students, staff and parents so that they may be informed on the best practices to keep their online activities safe and protected.

#### **8. School Counsellor & Student Protection Lead**

The School Counsellor acts as the Student Protection Lead at school and is tasked with handling incidents of reported/suspected child abuse or neglect. The role of the Student Protection Lead is to work in a collaborative manner with the Principal & Leadership Team to provide comprehensive safety provisions for our student community.

Reports or concerns about student safety do not have to originate with the School Counsellor, but in an effort to ensure that each case is processed with due diligence and in accordance with Dutch law, it is required that the School Counsellor be notified so that the case may be documented and thoroughly investigated (which can include notifying authorities or engaging community stakeholders). Information obtained by the School Counsellor is only shared on a need-to-know basis and reports are kept confidential.\*

Students or parents can schedule meetings during free periods, breaks or as needed at either RISS campus. The School Counsellor has made provisions to equitably allocate time and resources at the senior school and the junior school, meaning that at least two days per week are spent at each campus.

\*In the case of child abuse, suicidal threat or the intent to harm another individual, the Student Protection Lead is required by Dutch law to report this to the authorities. In this case, identifying information about the student or persons involved may be shared.

#### **9. Duty to Report Code in The Netherlands**

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport in The Netherlands designates an action plan for schools to follow in the event of known or suspected child abuse or endangerment. It is the responsibility of the Student Protection Lead to engage in these steps when a report of child endangerment has been made.

The order in which the steps take place does not have to be followed on a step-by-step basis, meaning if a child is in immediate danger or an imminent threat exists, the staff member involved or Child Protection Lead must use his or her best judgment to keep a child

safe (for example, if a argument escalates and turns physical while in the presence of a staff member, the “Identifying the signs” of child abuse can be skipped).

#### The Reporting Code is as follows:

1. **Identifying the Signs:** This is the first step staff members should take when there is the suspicion of child abuse or neglect. A report with the relevant identifying information & facts should be immediately submitted to the tutor, Principal, Leadership Team or School Counsellor.
2. **Peer consultation and, if necessary, consultation with the Advice and Reporting Centre for Child Abuse and Neglect or Domestic Violence and Support Centre:** At this stage, the School Counsellor and Leadership Team carefully review the facts and details about the case and will determine whether outside agencies need to be involved or if Step 3 needs to follow. Additionally, the Child Protection Lead may engage the services of community agencies for extra support or professional guidance.
3. **Interview with the student and parents/guardians:** During this stage, we listen to the student and parents/guardians to obtain additional information and to determine if a formal case should be opened.
4. **Assessing violence and child abuse:** At this stage, the Child Protection Lead examines whether or not a current or potential threat exists that may harm the child. Here the level of risk is assessed and the likelihood of recurrence of abuse is considered. If it is determined that the child is in immediate danger, the appropriate authorities are immediately notified.
5. **Reaching a decision:** In this stage, the Child Protection Lead makes the determination if a formal report should be made or if the situation is better served by further monitoring of the child & his/her conditions and/or engaging the assistance of outside support agencies.

#### **10. Partnerships with External Agencies & Key Stakeholders**

In The Netherlands, child protection is a fully developed and well supported initiative that is adhered to on the local and national level. In this RISS Child Protection Manual, the Duty to Report Code is respective of national law, however, local agencies are available for 24/7 support.

#### **The Key Stakeholders and Agency Support RISS uses include:**

1. **[Veilig Thuis Rotterdam](#):** The Child Abuse & Neglect agency in Rotterdam that takes abuse/neglect reports and offers professional support & guidance.
2. **[Koers VO Rotterdam](#):** The Rotterdam education agency that provides support for at-risk youth.
3. **[Rotterdam Crisis Intervention Team](#):** 24/7 support in crisis situations.
4. **[112](#):** Emergency number for any type of life-threatening emergency.
5. **[113](#):** 24/7 Suicide prevention hotline in The Netherlands.
6. **[0800-0432](#):** Child Helpline (Kindertelefoon) for children who would like to talk to someone when they are having a problem at home. This site is in Dutch, but counsellors are available who can communicate in English.
7. **[0800-0188](#):** 24/7 support for sexual violence.
8. **[Government of The Netherlands Resources](#):** Online resource for more information about suspected child abuse.

#### **11. Pastoral Care Programme & Safety Issues Particular to International Schools**

RISS has initiated a comprehensive Pastoral Programme that focuses on wide-ranging issues that are particular to the developmental phases teens journey through. This includes bullying awareness & prevention, online safety, drug & alcohol awareness and awareness of potential threats in an international setting. Students in international schools are particularly vulnerable to child-trafficking, arranged marriage without consent, child pornography, online

grooming and recruitment into terrorist organizations. Although these topics may prove uncomfortable for discussion, we approach them with sensitivity and with the intent to inform & educate strong, globally-minded world citizens.

## **12. Medical Needs: School Nurse & Health Education**

RISS makes the provision for students the availability of a qualified nurse on-staff to provide treatment in the event of a medical need. If a student is feeling ill, he/she may be referred to the school nurse to be assessed and treated. All medical interventions are documented and communicated with the student's parents/guardian. If necessary, the parents/guardians will be contacted to ensure the students' needs are being met.

If a student is under the care of a physician and requires medication at school, this information should be provided to the school nurse. Additionally, if the student has a known allergy or history of disease/sickness, it should be communicated to the nurse. This information is kept confidential and is only used on a need-to-know basis.

Students at RISS also receive health education training as a part of the curriculum & Pastoral Programme at school. We deliver developmentally age-appropriate lessons in each grade that are tailored for the growth milestones that exist in these age groups.

All staff members at RISS are trained in CPR and as First Aid Responders.

## **13. Fire Drills, School Lock Down, Inclement Weather Advisories**

To prepare for the unlikely event of a fire or school lock down, the school engages in drills throughout the school year to inform students of the emergency exits and procedures that should be followed if an emergency were to occur during school hours. A record is kept by designated staff members to record the length of time and feedback is reported to students and staff so that they can be aware of areas that may need improvement.

In the event of inclement or severe weather, the school Principal will issue a school-wide email notification if school is suspended or if students may leave early. If severe weather occurs during school hours, an announcement will be made on the intercom system notifying student and staff what steps to take to stay safe.

## **14. Dedicated Emergency Response Team**

RISS has designated staff members to act as Emergency Response Team members in the case of an external/internal threat or emergency. These staff members have received specialized training to safely and calmly deal with potentially dangerous situations. Emergency Response Team members can be recognized as those staff members wearing yellow hazard vests during drills.

## **15. Safety Assessment & Policies**

- a. **New hires and enhanced recruiting practices:** RISS is dedicated to ensuring the safest hiring practices and engaging in a thorough national and international background check for incoming employees. This also includes a thorough examination of professional references by the school Principal.
- b. **VOG:** All new hires at RISS are required to obtain a VOG (certificate of conduct) once in The Netherlands.
- c. **Evaluation of existing employees:** Existing employees are required to notify the Principal of any changes in their legal status while employed at RISS.
- d. **Secure entrance to building entry/exits:** School entrances & exits are to remain locked during/after school hours. Entrance may be obtained by RISS students and staff who are in possession of a Entry Card ID. Students are

prohibited to letting people into the building without the appropriate identification.

- e. **School grounds:** School grounds are kept well-light, accessible and free of any materials that may be harmful to students.
- f. **Unscheduled visits or Guests:** Unscheduled visits are discouraged and all guests must check-in with the Concierge to obtain permission to access the building.
- g. **School cameras & monitoring:** RISS uses video surveillance to monitor and ensure safety throughout both school campuses.
- h. **Visitor lanyards:** Visitors are required to wear a RISS lanyard with the "Visitor" logo and may not be left unsupervised while in on school campus.
- i. **Evaluation of outside vendors:** Outside vendors, including but not limited to delivery persons, construction, canteen vendors, electrical, landscaping or any other person on school property for the purpose of working in/around RISS should make their presence known to the Concierge & Principal.
- j. **Duty to share information with designated family members:** RISS staff may only share student information with designated family members.
- k. **Data Protection policy:** RISS follows the [Wolfert van Borselen GDPR Policy](#).
- l. **School trip, ski trip & off-campus activities (CAS, MUN, University visits) safety assessment & permission slips:** Permission slips are obtained for students attending activities off-campus that contain emergency contact information and any medical concerns we need to know about.
- m. **Building safety:** The RISS school campuses are kept reasonably clear of debris or dangerous materials. Areas under construction or under repair receive adequate signage to indicate the area is off-limits to students & staff.
- n. **Risk assessment for off-site school activities:** The Physical Education department at RISS has created a comprehensive safety & risk assessment [that can be accessed here](#).
- o. **Confidentiality:** Academic, social, socio-economic, medical and personal/mental health information should be kept confidential and only shared on a need-to-know basis.
- p. **Staff policy & code of conduct:** A comprehensive [staff code of conduct](#) contains information particular to the expectations that should be met by RISS staff members.
- q. **Emergency Evacuation Procedures:** RISS Emergency Evacuation Procedures including how to handle school Lockdowns are [available here](#).

## 16. Staff Professional Development & Training

RISS staff are required to complete professional development coursework & training that pertains to child protection, identification of the signs of bullying and social media & online safety training. All staff members complete coursework on the training platform, Educare, which offers the current best practices for child safety standards in international school settings. The Leadership Team & School Counsellor regularly pursue continuous professional development opportunities and most recently completed the Child Protection Workshop for International Schools offered by CIS.

Staff who wish to seek additional professional development training are supported by the school and are encouraged to present their findings to staff, students and parents.

## 17. Student Well-being

Student-led activities and learning that center around well-being, increasing awareness, exchanging ideas & knowledge and encouraging open and honest dialogue are key components to the success of the student population at RISS. We aim for our school culture to reflect the values of diversity, open-mindedness, curiosity, collaboration and tolerance.

To enhance these values, the school performs many team-building functions and activities throughout the school year that help to embody and celebrate the multicultural differences and similarities that are weaved throughout our school community. Students are invited to reflect, share and connect with one another to foster the globally-minded ideals RISS predicated itself upon. We believe these activities help to foster a sense of well-being and see them as an essential component to successful learning.

Throughout the school year, RISS offers for following activities that encourage collaboration & well-being:

- Festival of Light
- International Language Day
- Lanterna Workshop
- Social Media Workshop for parents
- Futurewise Careers Workshop
- Chocolate Challenge Careers Investigator
- The Discipline Coach Workshop
- Sexual Education Workshop
- International Food Fair
- Science Fair
- Sports Day
- House Events
- Spirit of RISS awards for outstanding achievements
- RISS Core Values Workshop
- Outdoor Education
- Test Anxiety Workshop with Leiden University
- Anti-bullying Workshop
- Respect Workshop
- Explorer Program
- Mini Tedx Talks
- Student Council led social events (Valentines Disco, Halloween Disco)
- Human Rights Group
- Green Team
- Charity Race
- End of Year BBQ with proceeds donated to Doctors Without Borders

#### **18. Student Council, PTA and Human Rights Group**

The RISS Student Council, PTA and Human Rights Group are entities within the school community that work toward ensuring students' voices are being heard and understood. The views and suggestions of our community are carefully evaluated and considered and each team works to open the lines of communication with the school Leadership Team.

The achievements of the Student Council, PTA and Human Rights Group can be seen in the following activities or improvements:

- Coming Out Day hosted by the Human Rights Group
- Gender neutral bathrooms available for students
- Provision for handicapped accessible bathrooms & facilities
- Healthier options available now in the Canteen
- Green Team recycling bins located throughout school
- Diversity poster boards in & around school
- Anti-bullying posters located throughout school
- Student Charter located throughout school

### **19. Bi-Annual Review and Revision**

The Child Protection Manual will be updated and amended as needed, but at a minimum will be reviewed by members of the Leadership Team and School Counsellor on a bi-annual basis. As new tools for safeguarding children emerge, we will update this policy in accordance with local, national and international law.

### **20. Local, National and International Resources**

For more information about child protection, please access the following resources:

[International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children](#)

[UN Convention on the Rights of The Child](#)

[Child Protection in The Digital Age](#)

[Online Grooming of Children for Sexual Purposes](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Council of International Schools Child Protection](#)

[Youth Policy in The Netherlands](#)

[Managing Allegations of Child Abuse by Educators and Other Adults - CIS](#)

FOR CONSULTATION & MR APPROVAL