

Safeguarding Handbook

2023-24



Prince of Wales Island
International School®

SECTION 1: SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Safeguarding Statement

At POWIIS we are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students to develop academically, socially and emotionally. All adults are required to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of students is of paramount concern at all times and must seek advice and help where they believe a child's wellbeing is being harmed. In undertaking this responsibility, the best practices of child protection and safeguarding should be adhered to.

Safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of young people is defined as:

- Protecting them from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of their health or development
- Ensuring as much as possible that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Enabling them to have advantageous opportunities and enter adulthood successfully

Child abuse and neglect are a growing concern in schools throughout the world. They are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to children's education as well as their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. Schools fill an important role in society as protectors of children. At POWIIS, we ensure that all young people in our care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop. Educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection and to take steps to ensure that the families of vulnerable young people have the resources at hand to support them. This safeguarding handbook seeks to ensure our students are living and learning within the caring and respectful environment referred to in our mission statement, so that they may achieve their full potential as global citizens.

The purpose of this handbook is:

- To protect the children and adults within our school community.
- To provide families and staff with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.

We believe that:

- Children should never experience abuse of any kind.
- We have the responsibility to promote the welfare of the young people in our care and to act in ways that protect them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the young people in our care is paramount to everything we do.
- All children have the right to protection from harm or abuse.
- Some young people are especially vulnerable due to the impact of previous experiences, additional physical, social or developmental needs or other issues.
- Working together with young people, their families and external agencies or specialists is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing qualified designated and deputy safeguarding leads.
- Involving young people and their primary carers appropriately in finding and providing support.

- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have policies and procedures to help us deal effectively and consistently with any bullying that does arise.
- Sharing information about safeguarding and child protection best practice with our student and parent community.
- Applying safer recruitment standards for all staff who are employed by the school.
- Implementing a code of professional conduct for all staff.
- Providing training for all staff.
- Ensuring that we have clear and effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
- Ensuring that we are providing a safe environment for our school community by applying health and safety measures in accordance with and often beyond local regulations.
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely.

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

POWIS endorses the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), of which our host country, Malaysia, is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. There are a total of 54 articles defining the rights of the child, which can be found in the link above. The examples below are a summary of some of the key rights promoted at POWIS in order to protect all students from abuse and neglect:

Article	Summary
2	All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.
3	All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.
19	Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.
29	Education should help children use and develop their talents and abilities. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.
36	All children have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

Malaysian Law

Malaysia enacted the Child Act 2001 to fulfil its obligation under the 'Convention of the Rights of the Child', of which Malaysia is a signatory. It places us under a statutory duty to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Any person who is under the age of 18 is a child in the eyes of the law, as per the 'Child Act 2001'. POWIIS is committed to maintaining its child safeguarding procedures in accordance with our accrediting body, CIS. The National Child Protection Policy sets 7 key objectives as follows:

1. Increase awareness and commitment of various parties in their efforts to protect children as shared responsibility;
2. Create a safe and friendly environment for children;
3. Encourage organisations related directly and indirectly with children to establish child protection policies of their respective organisations;
4. Protect every child from all forms of neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation;
5. Specify only suitable individuals can deal directly with the children;
6. Improve support services to handle neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation of children; and
7. Increase research and development to improve the protection of children.

SECTION 2: GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH AND SAFEGUARDING YOUNG PEOPLE

When individuals accept a role that involves working with young people, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role. All staff are accountable for the ways in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and protect students from discrimination and avoidable harm. All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep students safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is in part exercised through the development of professional and caring relationships between staff and students, and through behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

All POWIS staff play an important part in protecting students from abuse and neglect by early identification of students who may be vulnerable or at risk of harm and by educating students about managing risks and improving their resilience through the curriculum.

Transparency as a Core Practice

It is not possible to provide a comprehensive checklist of what is or is not appropriate behaviour in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff and students have to make decisions in the best interests and welfare of the school and the children in their charge which could contravene this guidance or take place where no guidance exists. When this happens, transparency should be the default approach and the nature of the incident and response should be communicated to a school leader as soon as possible.

Staff Conduct with Students

Staff should always be mindful of their contact with students both inside and outside of the classroom. Whenever possible, staff should position themselves to be visible from the outside of any room when meeting with individual students. When such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the meeting is taking place. The exceptions to this, due to the nature of their roles, are school counsellors, the nurse, the DSL/DDSL and the Year Leaders.

Physical Contact with Students

A no-touch approach with students is ideal, but when physical contact is made with students, it should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration, and appropriate to professional role and the age of the young person. Physical contact may be misunderstood by a student, parent or observer. Touching students, including well-intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, may be misunderstood if repeated regularly. There may be occasions in which a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance, which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is perceived by others is normal and natural, and does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same student over a period of time.

Key expectations:

- Staff should use their professional judgement at all times about the appropriateness of any physical contact.
- Staff should always be prepared to explain actions and accept that physical contact is open to scrutiny.
- Staff should only use physical contact with students in a careful, sensitive and respectful manner that is appropriate to their role.

- Staff should not make gratuitous contact with students.
- Staff should avoid attributing touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to young people.
- Staff should not touch a student in a way which may be construed as inappropriate.

Behaviour Management

As a school we believe that natural or logical consequences are the most effective way to support learning. Staff should use positive reinforcement and constructive feedback rather than personal criticism or comparison when working with students. All students have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Any form of physical punishment of children is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. Restraint may be needed in situations where students pose an immediate physical threat to themselves or others. Staff should not use any form of humiliating, ridiculing, threatening or degrading treatment to manage student behaviour. It is particularly important that staff understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the school. Staff should aim to speak in a calm and objective way, even in the face of challenging circumstances.

Communication

CPOMS

All student safeguarding concerns must be reported and recorded using the CPOMS online platform. CPOMS allows us to record, collate and track a student's concern log. Every staff member with a POWIIS email account is able to use CPOMS to report any concern. Those staff members who do not have a school email account should report the concern to their line manager who will be able to report it on their behalf. CPOMS is the only way that concerns will be reported and recorded. Conversations may happen and emails may be sent, but these should also form part of a student's official record and be added to their CPOMS profile. The only people who have full access to student information are the Designated and Deputy Safeguarding Leads, Year Leaders, Counsellors and the Principal.

Confidentiality

All staff are likely at some point to witness actions or receive information which needs to be kept confidential. In such cases, these actions or information should not be discussed outside the school, including with a student's parent. They should also not be discussed with colleagues in the school, except with a member of SLT or Year Leader with the appropriate role to deal with the matter. Confidential information about students should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis.

Staff must not promise a student that they will not act on information that they are told if the information is connected to the wellbeing of that student or another student. Additionally, a student must never be promised confidentiality, as there will be times when information needs to be shared to protect the student or others; however, staff can assure the student that we can offer the utmost discretion in order to maintain the student's safety or welfare or in situations which might implicate others in serious misconduct.

Conversations of a Sensitive Nature

Most staff (and all teaching staff) have a pastoral responsibility for students, and in order to fulfil that role effectively there will be occasions when conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Where possible, staff are encouraged to act in the best pastoral interest of their students in the first instance and provide appropriate pastoral care. In these circumstances, staff must use their discretion

to ensure that, for example, any questioning or probing for details cannot be misconstrued. All students have a right to be heard, so the first response is always to acknowledge what a student is saying and support them. Staff should take seriously what students tell them and give students time to express themselves. If in doubt, staff should refer any conversations to the appropriate Year Leader, a school counsellor or a member of the safeguarding team.

Contact Outside of School and Sharing Personal Information

It is understood that staff whose own children attend POWIIS have a dual role as parents and teachers or employees. In this parenting role it is natural that staff will have contact with their children's friends and the children of colleagues outside of school. As parents and individuals, staff will also naturally attend social events where students are present. Where there is not the parent/teacher crossover, staff must be cautious about any meetings with students outside school and should only make contact with students out of school for professional reasons. Staff should not share their personal contact details with students, including email or home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior leadership and parents in connection to their professional role. Staff should also be cautious in their contact with ex-students, as there is still a professional relationship, and there may be contact through them with current students. Other than in their role as a parent, staff should not accept invitations to students' homes except when the invitation is by a parent and the parent is present; similarly, staff should not invite students to their homes. Any exceptions to this must be approved by SLT. Staff should not attend student social events unless these are connected to a school group and have been approved by SLT.

Social Media and Online Contact with Students

POWIIS supports the use of media and social media as powerful tools for learning and sharing information. However, connecting with a student socially via a personal social media account may confuse students about the role of the teacher. Therefore, teachers should only connect with students through approved POWIIS accounts and sites for the purposes of supporting students' learning in the school. Staff must not contact students at any time using social media or any other similar electronic platform. This includes, but is not limited to, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and other similar messaging services. The only exception to this regulation is for boarding tutors who may need immediate contact with students during their boarding duties.

- Emails should only be sent to students from official school accounts.
- Staff should not use their personal accounts in any capacity to contact students.

Staff who choose to make contact with former students on social media should be mindful of the fact that those students may have siblings or friends in the school.

Specific Contexts

Physical Intervention

Staff may intervene to prevent a student from injuring themselves or others. Whenever possible, staff should always try to defuse situations before they escalate and send for another adult if there is a concern that a situation will become physical. In all cases in which physical intervention is felt to be necessary, the incident and subsequent actions should be documented on CPOMS and reported to the Designated or Deputy Safeguarding Lead. In the rare cases in which physical intervention is used, the aim should be to use minimum force for the shortest period necessary.

Activities Requiring Physical Contact

Some staff, such as those who teach PE, Music, DT or Drama, will on occasion have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a student to perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument, or to assist them with an exercise. Staff should always explain to a student the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take unless their safety is at immediate risk. This should be done with the student's agreement and awareness of the student's level of comfort.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and should take place in a visible environment. Staff must remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed, verbally or nonverbally, by the student and should consider alternatives when it is anticipated that a student might misinterpret any such contact. This could be by involving another member of staff, or through asking a less vulnerable student to assist in the demonstration.

Toilets, Showers and Changing

All adults must use only the designated Adult Toilets. This includes all employees, parents and any visitors. Additionally, all staff are expected to be proactive and intercept any adult attempting to enter student only bathrooms. Staff should not enter toilets or changing rooms alone unless there is an emergency. When an emergency or urgent situation makes it necessary, clear audible warnings should be given.

One-to-One Situations

Staff must recognise that private meetings with individual students may give rise to concern. While the aim is to never be alone with a child, there will be occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary. When possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, with a door open, or in a room or area that is likely to be frequented by other people, such as the Year Leaders' office. When such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the meeting is taking place. The exceptions to this, due to the nature of their roles, are school counsellors, the nurse, the DSL/DDSL and the Year Leaders. Staff working in one-to-one situations with young people are more vulnerable to allegations. Every attempt should be made to ensure that safety and security needs of both staff and students are met.

If a staff member is meeting one-to-one with students online, it is the staff member's responsibility to take the necessary steps to protect themselves from allegations of misconduct.

Teaching Controversial Issues

Controversial issues can give rise to strong emotional responses from people. People's emotions are often barriers to resolving issues using reason. Outside of the classroom, parents may hold very firm views on what is taught and to what age group. Staff should consult the Teaching Controversial Issues - Guidance document for specific guidelines before including controversial issues in their teaching and learning plans.

In the event that a controversial issue comes up spontaneously through discussion with students, staff are reminded to be sensitive to the age and needs of the students and not promote views or opinions that contravene Malaysian law.

Staff Internet Use

At POWIIS we expect appropriate use of the internet or school network, whether using school provided or personal equipment. Each staff member, before commencing work at POWIIS, agrees to and signs the Staff ICT Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with the regulations set forth in this document may result in disciplinary action.

Student Internet Use

All students are required to sign and comply with the rules outlined in the Student ICT Code of Conduct. Access is a privilege, not a right, and entails responsibility. Students are expected to demonstrate responsible use of privileges of internet access. Failure to comply with the regulations outlined in the document may result in loss of access to school IT systems, including their school email account. Serious breaches of responsibility, whether at home or at school, can result in disciplinary action, and in the most extreme cases, permanent exclusion from the school and police involvement.

Sharing Concerns

Members of staff should feel able to discuss with their line manager any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with students so that appropriate support can be provided or action can be taken. All staff should be aware of the school's child protection procedures, including those for dealing with allegations against other staff. In the event of an incident, which may result in an action being misinterpreted and/or an allegation being made against a member of staff, the relevant information should be clearly and promptly recorded and reported to the Designated or Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

Visitors to the School

POWIIS is not a public area, so all visitors to the school must pass through security and are expected to adhere to the school's visiting procedures. All planned visits must be recorded on the Visitor Notification sheet at least 24 hours in advance so that the Principal is aware of any non-staff or students on site. If this is not possible, the Principal's office manager must be notified as soon as possible.

Specific guidance provided for visitors on campus includes:

1. On arrival, visitors must exchange an official ID card for a visitor card at the security office at the main entrance and sign the safeguarding statement at reception.]]=\\]
2. Visitors must wear the visitor badge all the time while on the school site.
3. Visitors can use only bathrooms designed for adults.
4. Visitors are not allowed to socialise with students unless they are entering the school in a capacity where this is expected (e.g., an educational visitor or a relative of an existing student). In this case the expectations around safeguarding apply to them in the same way as a member of staff.
5. Visitors must not take photos of students unless given explicit prior permission by a school leader.
6. Visitors must not bring in any weapons, alcohol, drugs and other illegal items into school.
7. Visitors should not loiter around campus; once they have completed the purpose for entering, should leave the premises.
8. Visitors should be escorted at all times unless specific permission has been granted for them to move about the school freely.

SECTION 3: REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN NEED

Individuals must always consider the safety and welfare of a child or young person when making decisions on whether to share information about them. When there is concern that a student may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the student's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration and staff have a professional duty to report any concerns regarding child protection. Individuals will need to use their own judgement, but suspicions must be reported if they include:

- Actions which endanger the health or safety of any individual, including risks to children or the public, as well as other workers;
- Sexual or physical abuse of children;
- Neglect or emotional abuse of children;
- Serious breach of POWIS or Malaysian regulations;
- Serious departure from professional standards; or,
- Neglect or emotional abuse of children in the school.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. It is important that all staff raise issues when they are just concerns rather than wait until they become more serious.

Concerns of a more pastoral nature should be reported to the relevant Year Leader. This can be done through CPOMS or through direct conversation. Child protection and safeguarding concerns should not be reported by email.

Responding to a disclosure

If a student discloses to you that they are suffering from abuse, then the following guidelines should be followed by any member of the community:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully and uncritically
- Do not promise to keep their disclosure a secret. Inform the student that you have a duty to tell someone who can help to keep them safe
- Take what is said seriously
- Continue at the student's pace
- Reassure the student that they have done the right thing by telling you
- Make a careful and precise record of what was said
- If the student seems willing to speak and you are comfortable to continue, ask questions that will collect information: What, Where, When, Who
- File an incident report on CPOMS as soon as possible and with as much detail as possible

DO NOT:

- Take photographs or examine an injury if it is on a sensitive area of the body (if possible, the photographs should be taken by the DSL, but never on a sensitive area of the body).
- Ask leading questions
- Make promises to students about confidentiality or keeping 'secrets'
- Assume that someone else will report the information (even if the student has disclosed to another staff member)
- React with shock, anger or outrage at what the child is saying
- Speculate or accuse anybody
- Confront another person allegedly involved (it is not your place to investigate)
- Offer opinions about what is being said
- Fail to pass on the information to the relevant person
- Ask the child to sign a written copy of the disclosure

- Be persistent in questioning the student
- Attempt to gather information from a student who makes a disclosure if you are comfortable doing so

Add an incident on CPOMS

All student concerns should be added as incident reports on CPOMS. You should aim to give as much information as possible in your incident report so that follow up is efficient and timely. You are also able to tag other students if the incident involves more than one person. When creating an incident report, you will be able to assign categories to it to create a record of the type of incident you are reporting. On CPOMS, the categories available to tag are named A. Balik Pulau and then the relevant category. Sub-categories also exist to allow for more specific naming of the nature of the incident. The DSL, DDSL, Counsellors and Year Leaders will be notified by email whenever a new incident has been created. They will then be able to action the concern in the most appropriate way, having been given a detailed and thorough report.

Email the DSL or DDSL

If you are unsure of what to do in a particular situation, you may send an email to the DSL or DDSL. The email must not contain any information about the student(s) or the concern. The DSL or DDSL will arrange a face to face meeting with you. You will almost certainly then be asked to file an incident report on CPOMS with the specific names and details.

Speak to the DSL or DDSL

You may also arrange a meeting to speak to the DSL or DDSL face to face about your concerns. After the discussion, you will very likely be asked to file an incident report on CPOMS with the specific names and details.

Untrue Allegations

When allegations are made in good faith but are not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the reporting person. If, however, allegations are made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the reporting individual.

Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff

Children can be the victims of abuse by those who work with them in any setting. All allegations of abuse of students in our care carried out by a staff member or volunteer should therefore be taken seriously and treated as such.

Allegations against staff members should not be reported on CPOMS.

An allegation against a staff member should be reported directly to the DSL and/or DDSL, who will then discuss with the Principal.

An allegation against the DSL or DDSL should be reported directly to the Principal.

An allegation against the Principal should be reported directly to the CEO.

The staff member reporting the allegation must act with the utmost confidentiality and refrain from discussing the matter with any other staff members in school.

The Principal or CEO shall review the concern and consider:

- Has the professional behaved in a way that has harmed the child or may have harmed the child?
- Has the professional possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to the child?
- Has the professional behaved in a way towards the child that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children?

Student Reports of Concern

Students may also report any safeguarding concerns they have via our [Student Report of Concern form](#). The DSL, DDSL and Principal are notified when a concern has been submitted. The DSL and/or DDSL will speak with the relevant Year Leader about the concern and report the concern as an incident on CPOMS. The identity of the student who reported the concern will remain confidential unless we are required by law to share this information.

Types of Abuse

Definitions of abuse are complex. There is not a single definition that encompasses the term abuse in its entirety due to the fact that there are so many different types of abuse and so many factors involved.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is:

- Purposely Inflicting physical injury on a child, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function, or death.
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning.
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline, demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering.
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child.
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
- Bruises of different ages (various colours)
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron or cigarette
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child
- Child giving different explanations for an injury to different people
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line
- Unexplained lacerations, abrasions or fractures
- A history of repeated injuries
- Sudden reaction when touched by others or an unusual wariness of touch
- Child being frightened of a parent or other adult
- Child not showing emotion when hurt
- High absenteeism without explanation
- Child regularly wearing long sleeves or pants in hot weather
- Child being overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative.
- Child being hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive and destructive toward self and others
- Running away
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Acting-out behaviours

2. NEGLECT

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs within their own environment. Neglect may be:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision, including leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time.) Note that should parents/guardians leave the country for any reason, then the responsibility for informing the school of all appropriate contact details lies with the parent or guardian.
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment).
- Emotional (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs. Specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge the presence of the child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.).

Possible Indicators of Neglect

- Child being unwashed or hungry
- Tiredness or listlessness
- Poor school attendance or frequent tardiness for school
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially in long stays at school (comes early, stays late)
- Failure to develop intellectually or socially
- Untreated illnesses/injuries
- Parents being uninterested in child's academic performance
- Parents not responding to repeated communications from the school
- Child not wanting to go home
- Being unable to reach parents in the case of emergency
- Poor impulse control
- Demanding constant attention or affection
- Unusually withdrawn
- Disengagement with school life
- Loneliness
- Embarrassment or shame

3. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may be:

- Humiliation/name calling
- Being made to feel worthless
- Withdrawal of love
- Scolding harshly
- Being used in a divorce
- Destroying a child's self esteem
- Pressure (academically or otherwise)
- Bullying
- Too much responsibility at home (e.g. looking after siblings)
- Overprotection; not allowing child to have other interests outside of the home/school

Possible indicators of emotional abuse

- Aggressive behaviour
- Nervous behaviour
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Flinching
- Sudden behaviour changes
- Lack of friends
- Fear of a specific individual
- Lack of engagement with regular social or school interactions
- Listless
- An exaggerated or startled response
- Embarrassment or shame
- Loneliness
- Inappropriate competitiveness

Note: These indicators on their own do not necessarily point towards abuse or neglect. Further investigation is always required in order to determine if any child protection referral or action is warranted.

4. SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the host country or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus or breasts of a child other than for any medical emergency. Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning, with results that are less obvious. The planning, referred to as grooming, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt and shame for the sexual behavior of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, making it more difficult to report.

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behavior or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Sexually transmitted infection in a child of any age
- Running away from home or not wanting to go home, and not giving any specific complaint
- Not wanting to be alone with a specific individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting
- Report of sexual abuse of “someone I know”
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Sudden inability to concentrate or deterioration in performance
- Self-injury
- Sudden reaction when touched by others or an unusual wariness of touch
- Change in ways of dressing
- Excessive body consciousness

Self-Harm

School professionals are often the first adults to learn of a student's self-harming behaviour. It is therefore important that all staff who work directly with students feel comfortable and confident to intervene should this behaviour come to their attention.

What Is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is defined as deliberate self-inflicted harm resulting in tissue damage without the conscious intent of suicide.

Behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- Cutting
- Burning
- Hitting, biting, or scratching oneself.

Despite the increase in self-harm among adolescents, there is still a stigma attached to the behaviour. It is important to recognise that self-harm, like substance abuse and eating disorders, is a coping strategy used by people who are in emotional distress. The act of self-harming induces a physical pain that provides temporary release from overwhelming emotional pain.

Why Do People Self-Harm?

Self-harm serves a variety of purposes. These purposes include, but are not limited to:

1. Easing the pain - after harming him/herself, a general sense of calm ensues.
2. Connecting body and mind - for students who feel distanced from reality, the sight of their own blood may jolt them back from a state of numbness to the reality of "being alive".
3. Control - one of the most common functions of self-injuring is to control one's emotional life by ridding oneself of uncomfortable and unwanted feeling states.
4. Cleansing - blood is the symbol for "toxic" feelings which are what the person is actually trying to purge.
5. Punishment - students may say they are trying to atone for past transgressions.
6. Words cannot express their pain - most self-injurers state that they felt neglected, "unheard" and misunderstood while growing up. They say their harmful acts show how much pain they are suffering, in a way language cannot.
7. Feeling visible - others respond strongly to self-harm with reactions ranging from deep concern and empathy to utter revulsion and disdain. It is most disturbing to someone who self-harms when others show no reaction as it confirms their worst fear, that they are invisible.
8. Rescue fantasy - self-injury often represents a desperate attempt to engage people's caring responses.
9. Vengeance - many self-injurers fantasise about vengeance on people who have caused them pain. Self-harm becomes an outlet for feelings of hurt and anger.

Acknowledging and Responding to Student Self-Harm

Self-harm is an attempt to cope with a problem and not the problem itself. It is a cry for help. One of the most important things to remember is that the tone of your response can be equally or even more important than your actual words. The goal is to respond in a calm, non-judgmental fashion.

- If you have a trusting relationship with the student, don't be afraid to state: "I've noticed cuts that appear to be self-inflicted. I care about why you might be doing that." or "It appears that you have hurt yourself, do you want to talk about it?" Please do this quietly, away from the ears of other students.
- Be empathetic.
- Do not address the issue in front of other students.
- Don't reprimand or send the student to an administrator as a behavioral problem.
- Remember to log the incident or interaction on CPOMS.

BULLYING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING

The key factors that define behaviour as bullying, as opposed to “having a laugh”, venting frustration or a one-off incident of physical or verbal violence/aggression include that the behaviour is:-

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation

All members of the school community need to be aware of the repetitive nature of bullying that can occur in one or more these guises:

- Physical - hitting, kicking, spitting, tripping someone up, stealing/damaging someone's belongings, etc.
- Verbal - name-calling, insulting a person's family, threats of physical violence, spreading rumours, constantly putting a person down.
- Emotional/Psychological - excluding someone from a group, humiliation.
- Racist - insulting language/gestures based on a person's actual or perceived ethnic origin or faith, name-calling, graffiti, racially motivated violence.
- Sexual - sexually insulting language/gestures, name-calling, graffiti, unwanted physical contact.
- Homophobic - insulting language/gestures based on a person's actual or perceived sexuality, name-calling, graffiti, homophobic violence.
- Electronic - bullying by text message, bullying on the internet (in chat rooms, on bulletin boards and through instant messaging services), hate websites.

All disclosures of bullying must be reported using CPOMS. This will alert the DSL, DDSL and Year Leader to the disclosure.

How to handle bullying at POWIIS

When bullying is reported it will be taken seriously and investigated. If an allegation is proven, a counsellor or member of staff in a trusting relationship will work with the student who is being bullied to help them feel safe and find proactive responses to bullying. Staff or counsellors will work with the student or students who are bullying to change the bullying behaviour.

Wherever possible, staff will work with the parents/guardians of any student who is being bullied to support and encourage the student to find solutions to the bullying.

Wherever possible, staff will work with the parents/guardians of any student who is bullying to support and encourage the student to find alternatives to the bullying behaviour.

POWIIS has an extensive support mechanism which provides the opportunity to address these behaviours: via our student counsellors, form tutors, Year Leaders and the DSL/DDSL. On occasion, staff may need to involve experts from outside agencies in supporting students who are experiencing bullying or who are bullying. Any decision to contact an outside agency will be made by the DSL and DDSL together, in discussion with the relevant Year Leaders, parents and potentially the Principal.

When Bullying is “reported”. The following actions should be completed: -

- Staff should report their concern using CPOMS.
- Upon receiving the incident report on CPOMS, the Year Leader will liaise with the form tutor responsible for the student to investigate the situation at hand. If deemed necessary, the Year Leader may decide that the matter will be addressed by any one or more of the following actions:
 - Reflection session with the perpetrator, with a clear understanding that no repetition will be tolerated, and such a repetition is likely to lead to an escalation of sanction.

- Communication made with subject teachers/ECA providers for awareness and support of the perpetrator and victim.
- Immediate referral to the DSL/DDSL when a student is believed to be in danger of on-going harm whether physically or emotionally.
- Parents will be contacted by the Year Leader (in the first case) if bullying is deemed to have occurred, whether the child is the perpetrator or the victim.

In any case of bullying, counselling will be offered to both perpetrators and victims in line with our Counselling Protocol. Counselling should never become part of any sanction; it must not be used as a punitive measure to discipline perpetrators.

Sanctions

Where bullying is clear, sanctions will be imposed by the Year Leader responsible for the year groups involved and should be applied consistently, across year groups, for similar behaviours.

Any case of bullying must result in ongoing monitoring of the students involved using one of the following actions outlined above.

Excluding students from school is a last resort. If particularly serious victimisation, abuse and intimidation, or physical bullying against any other person belonging to the school community is reported, those students who carried out the bullying will be suspended from school activities while the allegation is investigated and solutions are sought. If the solutions have no effect, or if the bullying was so severe that it would be harmful to the rest of the school community to allow the suspended student to return to the school, he/she may be permanently excluded. This will be discussed by the DP (Student and Community Development) and the Principal in accordance with the School Behaviour Policy.

SECTION 4: SAFER RECRUITMENT AND STAFF TRAINING

Recruitment

In order to ensure that children are protected whilst at our school, it is a requirement that our staff are carefully selected, screened, trained and supervised. We accept that it is our responsibility to request and thoroughly scrutinise a range of different background checks. At least one person on each recruitment team must have up to date safer recruitment training.

POWIS is responsible for obtaining the following documentation as part of these safer recruitment background checks:

1. References - written and verbal reference checks from current and past employers
2. Identity Checks - validation of the identity of potential candidates
3. Curriculum Vitae & Resumes - employment history and verification of any gaps in employment
4. Qualifications - proof of education and training credentials
5. Criminal Records Check - ensure no previous safeguarding or other convictions to cover at least the last 10 years
6. Medical Checks (as required by the local regulations)

A social media check is also recommended.

The Letter of Offer and Employment Contract must include a standard written condition that the final confirmation of all letters of offer and contracts are subject to obtaining safeguarding checks and other references listed in this document.

Confidentiality

All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially. With the exception of the selection panel, candidate CV and application information will not be circulated publicly, to either students, parents or staff not involved in the interview process. All documentation relating to the recruitment process will be stored confidentially or, if no longer required, destroyed.

Criminal Record Checks

All Candidates:

Before starting work, any member of staff coming to work at POWIIS must have an up to date police check from:

1. Their home country (i.e. as determined by their passport)
2. The country where they are registered as a teacher if different
3. All countries where the staff member has resided in the last 10 years

The criminal record checks are to be provided in advance of commencing employment.

POWIIS recognises the fact that some people may not be able to obtain the required criminal record checks from the relevant countries. However, a process to assess the reason for the missing paperwork should be undertaken and not accepted without further investigation.

Staff members unable to provide a criminal check as stated above, due to the country requirements or inability to obtain the check remotely, will need to provide evidence of this.

- If the Principal (or CEO/HR manager) is satisfied that a candidate cannot obtain these criminal record checks, then he/she may request an extra, relevant verbal reference.
- If satisfactory verbal references, in lieu of a criminal record check, cannot be obtained, the candidate cannot be offered employment at POWIIS.
- Once in the country (for expat staff), and for all Malaysian staff, local criminal record checks are completed every 3 years.

Staff Training

All staff are required to complete an externally recognised Child Protection and Safeguarding training course every 2 years. POWIIS maintains a subscription to an online training provider and all staff with POWIIS email addresses are enrolled in this training platform. Paper copies of Child Protection and Safeguarding certificates and records are held by the CPD Coordinator.

In addition, all staff attend a yearly safeguarding training in-house, led by our Designated and Deputy Designated Safeguarding leads.