

Child Protection Policy

INTRODUCTION

Hebron School believes that children have the right to protection from harm and abuse.

Adults working with children at Hebron School are encouraged to provide a warm, supportive, nurturing environment and be guided in their conduct by Biblical standards of morality, ethics and prudence. Normal healthy human relationships between adults and children include expressions of proper care and affection.

Hebron School also believes that its staff members need to be protected from false accusations and misunderstandings.

DEFINITIONS

1. Child abuse is a general term to describe inappropriate, immoral and/or unethical behaviour by an adult toward a minor under 18 years of age, or of one child to another child where there is a difference in power based on age, or physical, intellectual or emotional capacity (e.g. bullying). Bullying is a broad 'spectrum' term, but is basically understood as the abuse of the difference in power. At Hebron School, all students (regardless of age) are considered to be children for the purposes of this policy. Child Abuse is recognised under four categories: Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Neglect. Child Abuse can be perpetrated with or without the consent of the victim. It can occur in a one-to-one encounter or in a group setting.

a) **Physical Abuse:** The inflicting of physical trauma either by direct or indirect contact, such as through the use of an instrument, with the conscious or subconscious intention of hurting, controlling or subduing a person(s) for purposes other than prescribed medical needs or commonly accepted social discipline. Manhandling of students in anger is unacceptable.

b) **Emotional Abuse:** The use of threats, intimidation, acts of injustice or indignity by verbal and/or physical means (contact or non-contact) against a person(s).

c) **Sexual Abuse:** The employment of physical and/or emotional sexual stimuli or acts in the presence (visual, auditory or physical) of an individual or upon an individual, with or without consent, when that person is considered to be outside the limits of normal sexual rapport.

There are two categories of sexual abuse: touching and non-touching:

- Touching offences include repeated touching; fondling, oral, genital or anal stimulation; violent and non-violent intercourse; incest; rape; assault.

- Non-touching offences include verbal sexual innuendo or stimulation; indecent exposure; peeping; causing or allowing a child to witness adult sexual relations; reading or showing explicit pornographic material.

d) **Neglect:** The failure, refusal or inability of a parent, guardian, legal custodian or another person exercising temporary or permanent control over a child, for reasons other than poverty or war, to provide care, instruction, food, clothing, basic medical service, and shelter so as to seriously endanger the well-being of the individual.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Procedures for Policy Implementation

All Hebron School adults are responsible not only to adhere personally to the standards of this policy, but also to protect potential and actual victims from abuse. All Hebron School personnel are responsible to follow these procedures for the discovery and report of violations.

Plans for Prevention

Hebron School will actively work to see that the following steps are taken:

1. There will be careful screening and selection of staff members and employees applying to serve at Hebron School.
2. Staff will be required to sign this statement of policy, which will be kept on file.
3. Staff are required to follow specific policy on 'discovery' of situations. (See below.)
4. A specific plan for reporting and investigation will be used by everyone involved. (*See below*)
5. A respected adult/s to be nominated as 'contact person' who knows the school but who is not on staff. This person to speak in assembly once a semester, be available at particular times and have his/ her phone number available.

General Guidelines

Hebron School will maintain strict guidelines for its staff members, students, employees and IGs in order to reduce the risk of potential child abuse situations. These guidelines include:

1. A teacher, boarding parent, staff member or employee should only be alone with a child in a situation which is open to public view.
2. All children enrolled at Hebron School will receive age-appropriate instruction concerning protection.

3. Staff should have first aid training and know who to call in cases of medical emergency.
4. Staff will promote an atmosphere where children and young people are comfortable in approaching an adult if they have any concerns about any aspect of safety. (Children will be encouraged to approach any member of DPD or dorm parents or any other staff).
5. Workers who experience temptation, or feel they have been placed in over-stressful situations know that they can ask for help without fear of judgement.
6. Any member of staff concerned about the conduct of a colleague should share the concern with the colleague or confidentially contact Senior Management.
7. Careful selection and training of Prefects is required.

General Guidelines on Verbal and Written Interactions

1. All public reprimands (of students and colleagues) should be kept to a minimum that is necessary to stop inappropriate, unacceptable or dangerous behaviour, and should respect the dignity of the other.
2. Detailed reprimands or corrective comments should generally be made in private.
3. Sarcasm is, at best, easily misunderstood, and at worst destructive of dignity. Staff should avoid sarcasm to students and be wary of irony that may be misunderstood, especially by those whose first language is not English. Students should not be shamed publicly or in private.
4. Personal comments on an individual's ethnic or social background, and racial or gender-based insults are unacceptable. Students should not be shamed publicly or in private.
5. Verbal confrontations that begin to escalate into anger should be terminated and the issue taken up later or by a senior colleague.
6. Conversations or discussions about issues related to sex and sexual behaviour should normally take place only in the context of health education, in dorms or appropriate Biology lessons. Staff members should not make sexual jokes or innuendoes to, or in the presence of students.
7. The use of the internet/ social media as a means to perpetrate abuse of any form is unacceptable and regarded as child abuse. Staff and IGs must not interact with current students by SMS or on any social network forums such as Facebook. Privacy of students' names and identities should be respected on the Hebron website and other public media.

Discovery – What do you do?

1. Any adult receiving information about, witnessing or having reason to suspect child abuse must report it to a member of Senior Management within 24 hours. If the case warrants special handling, the report should go to a person of greater authority (Principal or Council Chairman). If you are reporting a case to an outside body, you must let the Principal or Council Chairman know.
2. Anyone who receives information about an allegation of child abuse by a child or an adult must treat the allegations with an attitude of respect and belief.
3. Even if there is reason to doubt an allegation, the person receiving the allegation must communicate the information accurately, completely, and immediately to a member of Senior Management.
4. Sometimes children will tell an adult they trust that they are being abused, but they will ask that no one else is told. If this happens, you must explain that you can help them only by telling a member of Senior Management. You must report.

Reporting – How do you report?

1. All reports of allegations or discovery of abuse must be made to a member of SMT within 24 hours of discovery and documented in writing.
2. Reports should include the following information:
 - Name of person reporting
 - Alleged victim's name and parent's name(s)
 - Alleged perpetrator's name
 - How the information was obtained
 - Details of what was reported or suspected (dates, times, places, specifics of what happened)
 - Use quotes of the spoken words as much as possible

- Date
- Who has been contacted and when

During this reporting process, care must be exercised to protect both the victim and the alleged perpetrator by restricting information access to those who need and have the authority to know.

Investigation – What happens next?

The member of Senior Management that receives the report will then proceed to one of the following courses of action.

Investigation – of Staff (including IGs)

1. All reports that involve a staff member as the perpetrator will be referred to the Principal.
2. The Principal will appoint an investigation team that may include a member of Senior Management, Head of the Department, a staff member chosen by the accused if he/she wishes (if not, by the school) and a member of DPD to ensure an objective enquiry. The team should include at least one man and one woman. The Principal will also appoint a person to oversee the well-being of the victim/s during the investigation and assess the need for on-going care.
3. The investigation team will immediately look into all allegations, reports, acts, and/or suspicions in consultation with the Principal.
4. The investigation team will submit its findings to the Principal.
5. The Principal, in consultation with the Senior Management (and legal counsel when appropriate) will decide when information will be communicated to parents and appropriate authorities and what action to take

Investigation – of Students

1. The member of Senior Management will conduct an investigation that may involve a team if the student denies the allegation. Any team will be made up of members of staff that are appropriate to the level of abuse and the student(s) being investigated.
2. The member of Senior Management will ensure that all students involved in the investigation are being cared for (this includes victims and abusers).
3. The member of Senior Management will present their findings as appropriate. (E.g. Only Dorm Parents may be informed or a note may be made in the students' file).
4. The member of Senior Management in consultation with the Principal (and legal counsel when appropriate) will decide if/ when information will be communicated to parents.

Ruby Mangaldoss,
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(4/2000; revised by Council June 2005; June 2012; June 2015)

