Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

This policy recognizes the right of every member of our school community to feel safe at all times. Our school, along with parents and guardians, is responsible for protecting the physical and emotional welfare of every child. This policy is in place to safeguard our students from physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse and neglect and aligns with the principles and standards set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which Singapore acceded to in October 1995.

Definitions

- **Child Protection:** These are measures and actions taken to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Child protection means to safeguard children from harm such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- **Child:** Under the [Singapore Children and Young Persons Act](#) (amended 2001), a child is below the age of 14 years, and a young person is aged 14-16 years. However, the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy applies to all students in our care, regardless of age
- **Types of Abuse**
  - **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse involves the deliberate use of force against a child that results in injury or causes harm. These are non-accidental actions such as forceful shaking, slapping, and hitting. This also includes excessive discipline or physical punishment.
  - **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse involves exploitation or any sexual activities including both contact and non-contact activities. This can occur between an adult and a child, as well as between children particularly when there is a significant age difference or when one child uses coercion or manipulation. This includes sexual contact, exposure to sexually explicit material, and inappropriate conversations about sexual acts.
  - **Emotional/Psychological Abuse:** Psychological abuse involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child causing adverse effects on the child's emotional development. These actions such as hostility or rejecting behaviors, isolation, coercion, blaming, and overall conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate can cause impairment of social, emotional, cognitive, and intellectual development.
  - **Neglect:** Neglect involves the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. This is likely to result in the impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect can include failing to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and supervision.

Please refer to the Glossary in the Sector-Specific Screening Guide ([SSSG](#)) and the Child Abuse Reporting Guide ([CARG](#)) for other definitions.

Safeguarding Roles

Core Safeguarding Team

- **Headmaster** (alex@5steps.academy)
    - Ensures policy implementation and documentation of safeguarding responsibilities.
    - Acts as the **primary contact** for safeguarding concerns and liaises with external agencies.
    - Oversees **annual reviews and audits** of safeguarding policies.
- **Student Welfare Officer (SWO)**: (swo@5steps.academy)
    - Monitors and supports student welfare, providing direct support as needed.
    - Leads the implementation and evaluation of Individual Support Plans (ISPs) for at-risk students.
    - Manages the recording and maintenance of safeguarding records
- **Board of Directors**:
    - Oversees the quality of child protection policies and procedures.
    - Ensures safeguarding procedures are comprehensive, up-to-date, and aligned with best practices.
    - Responsible for conducting **annual reviews and audits** of safeguarding policies.

Wider Safeguarding Team

- **Lead Teacher**:
    - Supervises Health Education and integrates Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).
    - Ensures staff receive regular safeguarding training
    - Guides teachers on maintaining a safe classroom environment.
- **Admin Officer**:
    - Supports the documentation and reporting of safeguarding issues.
    - Maintains hygiene standards and a safe environment.
    - Assists in secure storage of safeguarding records.
- **School Staff**:
    - Recognize, respond to, and report any student safety concerns,Foster a safe environment and comply with safeguarding policies.
    - Participate in training and follow safeguarding procedures.

Supporting Students and Reporting Issues

5 Steps Academy is committed to upholding the principles of the UNCRC, which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children. Key principles of the UNCRC that inform our policy include:

- **Best Interests of the Child**: All actions concerning children shall take full account of their best interests.
- **Right to Survival and Development**: Children have the right to survive and develop healthily.
- **Non-Discrimination**: All children have the same rights regardless of race, religion, or abilities.
- **Participation**: Children have the right to express their views in matters affecting them and have those views taken into account.

Reporters must focus on the impact of behavior on the child and ask, "Does this cause or threaten significant harm?" Cultural practices should not minimize or dismiss the significance of harm.

Every adult who learns of safeguarding issues, through disclosure by a student or through observation, must treat the matter seriously and follow the SSSG reporting and recording process. Staff are required to report any concerns relating to abuse to the Headmaster.

Whenever necessary, the Headmaster will use the SSSG to decide whether to report concerns to the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) Child Protective Service (CPS) or immediately report the incident to the police.

Training and Recognition

All faculty members in contact with students will receive training in both recognizing a student who is at risk and responding to a student's disclosure of abuse or neglect. Members of 5 Steps Academy are trained in the Sector-Specific Screening Guide (SSSG). The safeguarding leaders (the headmaster and student welfare officer) also undergo advanced training, Child Abuse Reporting Guide (CARG), through the Singapore Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

Regular refresher sessions are conducted in the Professional Development Schedule to keep staff updated on policies and procedures.

Processes, Recording, and Reporting

- A system is in place for recording initial concerns and reporting to the Headmaster (see 5 Steps Academy Staff Safeguarding Recording Form and SSSG)
- The Headmaster will inform the Singapore Child Protection Service and liaise with their officers, according to CARG.
- Clear and comprehensive safeguarding records will be maintained by the Student Welfare Officer and should include notes of the allegations, decisions reached, and the outcome.

Annual Audits and Reviews:

In addition to regular training, 5 Steps Academy conducts **annual audits and reviews** of all safeguarding policies and practices. These audits are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of our training programs, the implementation of safeguarding procedures, and the overall safety and well-being of our students. The findings from these audits are used to inform continuous improvement in safeguarding practices and to ensure that all staff remain compliant with the latest standards and regulations.

Regular refresher sessions are conducted as part of the Professional Development Schedule to keep staff updated on policies and procedures.

Safeguarding Education for Students

- Students receive instruction from the Headmaster and Student Welfare Officer as well as Student Handbook in complaint procedures against either peers or adults.
- Cyber safety is taught through coding classes and other age-appropriate course content.
- Monthly Health Education Days serve to educate students at age-appropriate levels on how to keep themselves and others safe. These topics include:
    - Healthy and respectful relationships
    - Boundaries and consent
    - Self-esteem and self-confidence
    - Safety and accident prevention
- In addition, students are expected to follow the School's Code of Conduct

Professional Conduct and Online Safety

At 5 Steps Academy, all staff members are expected to maintain a high standard of professional conduct in both their in-person and online interactions with students, colleagues, and parents. This section outlines the expectations for behavior and communication, ensuring a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

Teacher-Student Relationships

- **Professional Boundaries**: Teachers are expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students at all times. This includes refraining from using materials or language that may be offensive or biased and avoiding personal relationships with students.
- **Communication**: Teachers should only use school-approved platforms for communication with students. Personal contact details should not be shared. If recording any audio or video conference, all participants must be informed beforehand.
- **Confidentiality**: Teachers must maintain the confidentiality of student information in all forms of communication, both in-person and online.

Teacher-Colleague-Administrator Relationships

- **Respect and Collaboration**: Teachers are expected to maintain professional and respectful working relationships with colleagues and administrators. Online communications and social media profiles should be managed carefully to uphold the confidence and respect of the school community.
- **Work-Related Communication**: Work-related matters should be conducted through 5 Steps Academy email and Chat wherever possible. The use of other platforms should be limited to urgent matters and confined to working hours to respect others' privacy and work-life balance.

Teacher-Parent Relationships

- **Conflict of Interest**: Staff members who are also parents of students at 5 Steps Academy must avoid any conflict of interest. They must maintain professional conduct and confidentiality in all exchanges with other parents.
- **Confidentiality**: All communications with parents, whether through email, phone, or in person, must maintain the confidentiality of school, staff, and student matters.

Student-Student Relationships

- **Preventing Peer Abuse**: All staff members should be vigilant in recognizing and addressing child-to-child abuse, including bullying, physical abuse, and sexual harassment. It is crucial to approach peer abuse immediately and sensitively,

ensuring that students are educated on how to file a complaint against another student.

Reporting Concerns

- **Procedure**: When a teacher has concerns about a student's academic progress, they should communicate with the parents and collaborate in support of the child, keeping the Headmaster informed. If the concern relates to student welfare or safeguarding, the teacher must report it using the 5 Steps Academy Reporting Form available in the Staff Handbook on Google Spaces.
- **Raising Concerns About Colleagues**: Staff members are responsible for bringing any concerns regarding a colleague or administrator who is seen to be adversely affecting the welfare or safety of any student to the attention of the Headmaster.

Allegations Against an Adult in Our Community

Staff have the responsibility to provide a safe environment for the children of our school. Safeguarding our students begins with hiring safe teaching and non-teaching staff. The Headmaster will ensure that background checks are thorough and confidential references are obtained from school-based referees. Specific attention must be paid to previous employers' responses to any cause for concern when working with children.

Staff must sign a self-declaration during their onboarding saying: they are not and have never been under criminal investigation and if they have ever been known under a different name.

All staff are responsible for bringing to the attention of the Headmaster any concern regarding a colleague or manager who is seen to be adversely affecting the welfare or safety of any student.

The Headmaster will examine the evidence provided and act accordingly and in relation to the Staff Code of Conduct for teachers and provisions for dismissal in the staff contract, should that be warranted.

Interactions with non-5 Steps Academy Personnel

- All visitors to 5 Steps Academy must be approved by the Headmaster. The visitor must be chaperoned by a 5 Steps Academy staff member at all times.
- All third-party providers will sign the School Code of Conduct

Security at School

A range of procedures are well-established at the school to ensure the physical safety of all our community, including:
- Monitoring of transportation under the supervision of the Admin Officer
- CCTV monitoring of classrooms, lift lobbies, and other key areas.
- Annual evacuation drills and reviews of efficiency and effectiveness.
- Safeguarding and child protection training (SSSG) for all staff members including updates through emails and professional development staff meetings.

Security Off-Site

All trips off campus such as clubs, service, sports, competitions and subject-related field trips must ensure the safety of all those attending in compliance with the following guidelines:
- staff ratio (max 1:20)
- risk assessment for all the elements of the planned activities
- parental permission
- participants' medical information and first aid supplies
- no unauthorized change to approved destination(s)

Policy Communication

At 5 Steps Academy, ensuring that our safeguarding and child protection policies are accessible and well-understood by all members of our school community is a priority. The following channels are used to communicate these policies effectively:

1. **Student and Staff Handbooks**: The comprehensive details of our safeguarding and child protection policies are included in the Student and Staff Handbooks. These handbooks are updated regularly and are accessible through the Parent and Staff Portals.
2. **School Website**: Key aspects of our safeguarding and child protection policies, including the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, are made available on the 5 Steps Academy website. This ensures that parents, guardians, and the broader school community can easily access and review our commitment to student welfare.
3. **Parent and Staff Portals**: The Parent and Staff Portals serve as central hubs for all policy-related documents. These portals ensure that parents and staff have continuous access to the latest versions of all relevant policies, including safeguarding and child protection.

Safety and Hygiene

At 5 Steps Academy, the safety and hygiene of our students, staff, and community are paramount. We have established comprehensive measures to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment.

Fire and Safety Drills

- **Regular Drills**: We conduct fire and safety drills twice a year to ensure that all students and staff are familiar with emergency procedures. These drills are overseen by the Student Welfare Officer, who ensures that they are carried out efficiently and effectively.
- **Supervision**: During these drills and at all times on campus, our staff is vigilant in supervising students to maintain their safety. No student is permitted to leave the campus without explicit permission from their parents or guardians.

Hygiene Standards

- **Monitoring and Responsibility**: Our administrative team closely monitors the hygiene standards at 5 Steps Academy. The Admin Officer is responsible for ensuring that all hygiene protocols are strictly followed, maintaining a clean and safe environment throughout the school.
- **Environmental Sanitation**: Our Environmental Sanitation Policy and Procedure document outlines the specific standards and practices we adhere to. This includes regular cleaning and sanitization of classrooms, common areas, and bathrooms.
- **Safe Use of Cleaning Supplies**: All cleaning supplies and chemicals are stored securely, away from students, to prevent any accidental exposure or harm.

These measures reflect our commitment to creating a secure and healthy environment where students can learn and thrive.

Appendix A

Safeguarding Responsibilities

1. All teaching and non-teaching staff are responsible for students' safety. Staff are required to attend SSSG training and refresher sessions in safeguarding procedures, in order to
   - recognize emerging problems
   - respond reassuringly to disclosure
   - understand the flowchart of responsibilities in their school
   - report to the appropriate person
2. Staff will use the Safeguarding Recording Form and SSSG to document concerns and pass this directly and promptly to the designated school administrator. Staff members will maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality by only involving designated safeguarding leads.
3. The initial Safeguarding Recording Form is not an investigation by the staff member. It documents observations and information from empathetic listening to the child.
4. The Admin Officer is responsible for documenting all subsequent actions within his/her school. All concerns, discussions and decisions made should be recorded in writing and stored securely.
5. The Admin Officer will keep the Headmaster informed of the immediate concern and proposed response.
6. The Headmaster will review the information with a selected team of senior administrators and decide upon the approaches best suited to the child, their family, and culture according to CARG
7. The Headmaster will be informed of the outcomes and will escalate the matter to relevant authorities if necessary according to CARG

Appendix B

5 Steps Academy Teachers: Professional Conduct In-Person and Online

All staff are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner, in their personal, work, and online presence.

A. Teacher - Student

Teachers are expected to maintain a professional relationship with students at all times, including when building vital rapport with students. Every teacher must:

- avoid the use of materials or language that may be offensive or biased
- take responsibility for maintaining teacher-student boundaries
- ensure the teacher-student relationship does not move to a personal level, e.g. revealing personal problems to the student or inviting them to social events (either in person or online)
- never attempt to establish an inappropriate relationship with a student
- never share personal contact details; use the only school-approved platforms (see Internal and external stakeholder communication policy and procedures)
- if recording any audio or video conference, all participants must be informed beforehand that they are being recorded

Teacher-Student: Maintain professional relationships and boundaries, use only school-approved communication platforms.

Teacher-Colleague-Administrator: Maintain professional working relationships, manage online communications carefully, and report concerns to the Safeguarding Lead.

Teacher-Parent: Maintain confidentiality and professional conduct in all communications.

Student-Student: Address peer abuse immediately and sensitively, educate students on filing complaints.

Reporting

When a teacher has concerns about a student's academic progress, they should email the parents with their concerns and seek to collaborate in support of the child. The teacher must copy the Headmaster in these emails. If the communication is by phone, the teacher must write a follow-up email to the Headmaster, as a record of key points discussed.

When a teacher has concerns about a student's welfare, the teacher must use the 5 Steps Academy email to inform the Headmaster.

When a teacher has safeguarding concerns for a student, the teacher must use the [5 Steps Academy Reporting Form](#) (available in the Staff Handbook on Google Spaces in "All Academy") to inform the Headmaster.

All staff are responsible for bringing to the attention of the Headmaster any concern regarding a colleague or administrator who is seen to be adversely affecting the welfare or safety of any student.

B. Teacher - Colleague - Administrator

- All staff are expected to maintain a professional working relationship with colleagues and administrators at all times.
- In-person and online communications must remain courteous and constructive.
- Online communications/social media profiles must be managed carefully in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the school community.
- If recording any audio or video conference, all participants must be informed beforehand that they are being recorded.
- Work-related matters should be conducted via 5 Steps Academy email and Chat wherever possible, to protect the sender and recipient(s).
- Use of other platforms for work-related matters should be limited to matters requiring rapid or urgent response and confined to working hours, out of respect for others' privacy and work-life balance.

Reporting

A staff member may raise a concern about inappropriate behaviour, language, harassment or bullying by a colleague by contacting the Headmaster. If the concern is against an administrator, the staff member may contact the Headmaster.

C. Teacher - Parent

A staff member who is also a 5 Steps Academy parent must avoid any conflict of interests, by maintaining professional conduct and confidentiality in all exchanges with other parents.

All staff members must maintain professional conduct and ensure that all school, staff and student matters remain confidential when in contact with parents. This includes contact through 5 Steps Academy email, Chat and other school applications, phone or in a social situation.

D. Student - Student

All staff members should be aware that children can abuse other children in school, outside school, and online. It is important to approach peer abuse immediately and sensitively. Staff members must be aware of the signs of child-on-child abuse and consider the seriousness of the case to make quick decisions on in-school actions. Additionally, students are to receive appropriate instruction on how to file a complaint against another student.. Child-to-child abuse may include:

- Bullying including cyber bullying
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, or otherwise causing harm
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Appendix C

Staff members are responsible for identifying concerns early, following safeguarding procedures by reporting concerns to the administration and/or Headmaster, providing help for children, promoting children's wellbeing, and preventing concerns from escalating. Children with the following concerns may be in need of early help:

- Is disabled or has certain health conditions
- Has special education needs
- Has a mental health need
- Is showing signs of being drawn to antisocial or criminal behaviour
- Is frequently missing from home or persistently absent from school
- Has a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child (can include drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues, and domestic abuse)

Staff members should also be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect. If staff members are unsure, they should always consult with the Safeguarding Lead.

Appendix D: Reporting Steps

1. **Step 1**: Identify and document concerns.
2. **Step 2**: Consult with internal expert using SSSG and CARG.
3. **Step 3**: Determine action (report, alternative action, no action).
4. **Step 4**: Follow up and provide ongoing support.

Last Update: 23 August 2024