

# **SARASWAT EDUCATION SOCIETY**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **1. Vision and Mission Statement :**

The vision of Saraswat Education Society is to create a safe, nurturing, supportive and responsive environment that upholds rights and dignity of every child in the schools operated by it.

We strive towards a conducive and child sensitive learning environment where we engage with children to ensure safe environments for those entrusted to our care. This we achieve by establishing effective measures on prevention, early intervention and strengthening response mechanisms, support services and building partnerships with concerned agencies and child protection mechanisms.

Our schools strives towards zero tolerance to child abuse and safety violations in any form.

### **2. Statement of Commitment:**

The State of Karnataka is committed to the protection and safeguard of every child. As an organization based in Karnataka, we too are committed to uphold the rights and development of all children in our care, uphold equity and equality and practice non-discrimination, as outlined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We oppose all forms of child safety violations including child abuse such as physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, emotional abuse, corporal punishment, and neglect. We ensure the protection and welfare of children as our responsibility and shall be at the core of all activities.

### **3. Statement on recognizing all forms of child safety violations including child abuse**

We recognize that child abuse includes physical, emotional or psychological, sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment, discrimination and described below.

- A. Harm** - An act or behavior, often intentional, that hurts, causes grievous injury, pain or trauma to the child. Most often this is physical and sometimes could also be self-inflicted, such as cutting, burning, misuse of substances etc.
- B. Neglect** - A condition where there is failure to protect the child from exposure to any kind of harm or danger that results in significant impairment in the health and development of the child. Neglect is often prolonged and includes starvation or not providing nutrition, not providing emotional support, leaving child un-supervised or not providing medical, educational, and other basic care such as shelter, clothing etc.

**C. Emotional Abuse-** Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

- a. Conveying to a child that she or he is worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as she or he meets the needs of another person
- b. Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations e.g. interactions beyond the child's developmental capability, overprotection, limitation of exploration and learning, preventing the child from participation in normal social interaction
- c. Causing a child to feel frightened or in danger e.g. witnessing violence, seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another
- d. Exploitation or corruption of a child
- e. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

**D. Physical abuse** - Physical assaults that would be serious criminal offenses if committed by one person against another - for instance, hitting, slapping, or striking with an object

**E. Sexual Abuse** -Acts or behavior that constitute an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) and/or the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

#### **4. Safety Measures:**

Our school strives to put in place system such as

- a. **Safe infrastructure:** The National Building Code, 2005, serves as a model code for adoption by all agencies involved in our school construction<sup>12</sup>. All new buildings shall be designed as per applicable laws and MHRD School Safety Notification dated Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In order to reduce risk of abuse of children by adults and among children themselves, ensure safety of children in all spaces, including areas such as toilets, bathrooms, laboratories, sports equipment rooms, art rooms, counseling rooms, etc. through safe practices such as adequate lighting, adult attendants, peer support groups, etc.

**b. Access control:**

Our school will have in place rules for those visitors such as visitors register, gates monitored for entry and exit of service providers, consultants, marketing personnel, etc. Also ensure which people outside of the School are allowed in and under what circumstances.

- b. **Off-site activity guidelines:** When trips outside the School are undertaken including excursions, picnics, educational tours, awareness processions / jaathas, etc., the following are to be mandatorily followed – written permission of parent/guardian, safety orientation to students prior to departure, contact numbers of parents/guardian for emergencies, student adult ratio for supervision, at least one adult trained in CPR, First Aid, handling of off-site bathroom breaks, use of public transportation, etc. In case of any specific event or program such as school day-trips, competitions, a particular person will have to be made responsible and accountable for the safety of the child. A ratio of 1:10 up to primary school and 1:20 for high school and above. Children ratio is prescribed for purposes of safety. Refer to MHRD Study Tour Guidelines dated July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014. A lady teacher must accompany the group on off-site trips if girl students are part of the group.
- c. **Guidance and Counseling Centers:** Guidance and Counseling Centers setup in all Schools to be operational and should be functioning effectively. It is also important that certified counselors are appointed in or accessible to Schools. Counseling Services to be provided through sessions as and when required. In case counselors are not available, a teacher can be trained in child counseling skills.

**5. Child Protection and monitoring Measures in the school:**

**5.1** Our school strives to take in account and ensure all the provisions of safety measures mentioned in the check list which is part of Child Protection Policy for Educational Institution and will be adhered to and reviewed periodically.

**5.2 . The Child Protection Committee (“CPC”)**

Every one of our schools shall have a Child Protection Committee with the following composition:

- Head of the Institution, as the Chairperson
- Two teachers, one of whom is designated as the Child Protection Officer
- Two parents one of which is a woman. One of the two will also be a parent member of the School Management Committee (SMC).
- Two students from 8<sup>th</sup> standard or higher classes, where applicable, one of whom is a girl

### **5.2.1 : Roles and Responsibilities of CPC**

1. CPC shall meet once in three months and whenever a violation is reported.
2. The quarterly meeting should have on its agenda review of the previous quarter, any threats/risks discovered during that period and additional measures to be taken to strengthen child protection measures in the institution
3. CPC shall focus only on the complaints/suggestions received on child safety violations/abuse and not on any administrative issues.
4. CPC shall discuss the concerns, record the same and give appropriate recommendations to the management for further action.
5. CPC shall ensure the concerns are addressed and closed within a specified time.
6. CPC shall maintain all registers, files and folders and documents related to child safety and protection.
7. CPC shall seek external expert help as and when required.
8. The tenure of the CPC shall be two academic years. Vacancies if any should be filled within one month of vacancy or start of academic year, whichever is earlier.
9. CPC will follow all guidelines prescribed in this Child Protection Policy.

### **The CPC will undertake following steps when cases of violation are reported such as ;**

1. CPC will convene as soon as an incident is reported with periodic follow-up until closure of case. The detailed review procedures are given in Section 5.
2. The CPC and the Society's Management shall cooperate with the police, judiciary and local administration in investigation of the reported incident, to the extent applicable by law, while keeping in mind the safety, security, right to privacy and confidentiality in the best interest of the child.
3. The CPC shall also assess and address the impact of the incident on other children, adults working there and on the school as a whole.
4. The CPC shall perform a lessons-learnt analysis to understand the factors that contributed to the abuse and recommend, in its wisdom, refresher training for the institution (adults, students, children, Board/management team, service providers).

### **5.2.2 : Roles and responsibility of the Chairperson and CPO**

1. **Chairperson:** The Principal/Headmaster/Head of Institution shall be the Chairperson of the CPC and shall ensure:

- That the School has a Child Protection Policy compliant with the Karnataka State CPP and these guidelines and ensure adherence to the same.
  - Documentation of safety violations including child abuse in the prescribed manner, by providing support and guidance to all School's personnel.
  - Planning and roll-out of all capacity building programs related to the CPP.
  - Conducting an annual review of the implementation of the CPP with the Society's Management, the Child Protection Committee (CPC) and other applicable staff or bodies, with the CPP reviewed once in three years.
2. **Child Protection Officer (CPO):** The Chairperson shall be assisted by a CPO, who may be selected from amongst the teaching staff of the school. The CPO should be a permanent employee, preferably a woman, with at least 5 years' service.

The roles and the responsibilities of the CPO include:

- To receive all complaints of child safety violation including child abuse, whether verbal or written and ensure confidentiality and record it in a register.
- To maintain case files and records pertaining to the complaints/incident.
- To follow mandatory reporting in case of safety violation including child abuse wherever legally mandated and coordinate with the police and local authorities and ensure that there is no attempt to cover up the incident, or influence the child's parents/guardian or other authorities.
- To follow procedures where there are allegations of child safety violations or child abuse including against the Head of the institution/Chairperson of CPC.
- To coordinate capacity building related to School's CPP.

### **5.2.3. School Management Committee (SMC)**

- An SMC shall be set up as per guidelines prescribed by the appropriate authority at every School of the Society.
- In the context of child protection, the SMC shall conduct periodic meetings to discuss all safety and protection aspects, behavior and attitude of staff and other personnel, other safety concerns of the students and parents.

## **6. Children's / Suggestion Box**

A Suggestion Box will be placed at a point in school premises where the children can access the Box in privacy.

- The box should preferably be made from transparent and non-breakable material.

- The box shall have 2 locks; key to one shall be with the CPO and the other key with a student representative elected by the students for the purpose.
  - In case the child representative, who is entrusted with the second key to the Suggestion Box, does not carry out their responsibility diligently, the students will have a right to recall and to re-elect their representatives in a democratically transparent manner.
  - The box should be opened and contents read in the presence of both, the student representative and member of the CPC
  - The box should be opened at least once a week to enable speedy response and the CPC should respond to the issues reported/raised.
- a. Responding to the suggestion/complaints in the box
- Suggestions/complaints to be read and sorted by the CPO in the presence of the child representative into safety violation and non-safety violation for appropriate action.
  - In case of any child safety violation including child abuse issues, the CPO shall follow the process stated in the School's CPP.
  - A Suggestion Book shall be maintained by the CPO and the suggestions together with complaints and action taken report shall be shared with the children and reviewed once in three months by the CPC.

## **7. Professional Counseling Services**

Children who are affected by abuse and violence should be referred for professional counseling sessions.

Group counseling will be provided if more than one child is affected by an incident.

## **8. Code of Professional Ethics for Staff of the Schools of the Society;**

1. This Code of Conduct is to provide guidance on the standards of behavior & conduct that all teaching and non-teaching staff and out-sourced personnel of our schools and they are bound and guided by this code of conduct.
2. We do recognize that our Staff are in an unique position to be a reference model and influence attitude and behavior of students and members of the community. Hence they shall practice and promote behaviour that sets the right example. As a member of the education community, each of our Staff has an individual responsibility to maintain their dignity, credibility and reputation as an individual and as representative of our Society and its schools, in every interaction within and outside - related to the context of the Schools.

3. The Society has both unaided as well as aided educational institutions Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary( Pre- University/ Junior College). The Code of conduct and of the Society and as defined by the DoE is read by all staff and the Code of Conduct shall be abided by the teachers and all non teaching staff and other staff connected with this Society and its schools.
4. We do hereby undertake that failure to comply with Code of conduct could result in disciplinary action as defined in the Service Rules of the Government of Karnataka for educational Institutions and of the Society.
5. We do recognize that All Staff and personnel contracted from outsourcing agencies shall be governed by existing legislation including IPC.

**We strive to setting a positive example on 'Child Protection':**

- Our Staff will set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be emulated by children in our schools.
- Communication, both verbal and non-verbal, with or related to children shall be child-sensitive, age appropriate and in no manner intimidating, offensive, humiliating or degrading to their self-respect and dignity. Communication shall also not demean or undermine their parents or guardians.
- All Staff will avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.
- All our Staff shall ensure there is no discrimination of any child, children or community by other children or adults in the school setting on the basis of age, gender, caste, class, region, disability etc. Staff shall also ensure that no preferential treatment is provided to particular child/children, except when situation requires.
- Any suspicion/knowledge of violation of Code of Conduct by a colleague or contract personnel from an outsourcing agency shall be reported to the Child Protection Officer immediately.

**We strive to safeguard children:**

- Our Staff will take care of pupils/students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and well-being.
- Staff have a duty and responsibility to protect children at the school from safety violations including child abuse while on the premises and in the extended environment of the school. This includes the duty to report any concerns to the School's CPO or Head of the School.
- Our Staff will refrain from subjecting any child to fear, trauma, anxiety, physical punishment, sexual abuse, and mental and emotional harassment.
- Our Staff will protect the confidentiality of incident or information shared by the child or pertaining to the child.

- Our Staff shall have zero-tolerance towards abuse of all forms (physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect), harassment and misuse of power. This shall include bullying and teasing, either by students or adults.
- Staff will refrain from any form of corporal punishment and will adopt guidelines of positive engagement with children as defined in "Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools", issued by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights ( NCPCR).
- All adult interaction with children shall always be in visible settings (a door/window open or room with transparent doors) and with at least one other adult or child present. Closed door meetings/discussions with a child shall always be in the presence of an authorised staff/parent/guardian.
- Physical contact shall only be need-based and contextual, and shall take into account the situation, gender, age, ability, stage of development and background of the child. Contact should be respectful and not be of a nature that the child experiences as uncomfortable, threatening, probing, or sexual.
- Privacy of the child shall be ensured during any personal/private activity such as bathing, changing, use of toilet, etc., and only contact to assist the child in medical emergencies or in situations as required.
- No school Staff shall have any contact with a child outside school hours or on holidays without approval of the School authority and knowledge of parents.
- All school Staff shall refrain from taking unauthorised photos, videos of child/children under any circumstances.
- School Staff will exercise caution and follow the Cyber Safety norms when using information technology. School Staff shall refrain from divulging any information or CCTV footage to any person without authorisation. Interaction or communication with children and parents/guardians using mobile applications, should be only through applications approved by the School management.

**Confidentiality:**

- All our Staff and contract personnel who have access to confidential information about children or their parents/guardians, shall ensure that such information is dispensed only to those who are legitimately entitled to it.
- In cases where Staff observe inappropriate behaviour by another child, for example, where a child is bullied by another child; the School Staff will report this in accordance with the appropriate procedure, and the CPO/CPC will deal with it as prescribed in the School's CPP. School Staff shall not disclose this to any staff of the School.



## **9. Safe Recruitment & Selection Guidelines**

We adhere to the Safe recruitment & selection guidelines as prescribed by the Government and we identify people who might put the students' safety and well-being at risk or are otherwise unsuited to engage with children in the school.

### **Screening:**

- a. Screen all applicants for all positions including Head of Institution, teaching, non-teaching staff, contract staff, outsourced agencies and obtain reference/clearance certificate from the last two employers. Reference checks from previous employers /reference providers should be oral and written, and include suitability of the applicant to engage /work with children.
- b. Selection should be based on written application and personal interview. Screen the applicant to gauge attitudes towards children, safety and abuse.
- c. Seek information from the police department regarding any pending - criminal case against this person. . If such a case is registered we do not recruit the applicant for any job that involves direct contact with children.
- d. All documents/records of staff including vetting checks and interview report should be available with the School and the management until retirement.

### **For Outsourced Personnel:**

Where the institution is outsourcing personnel, ensure that the agency providing the personnel has recruitment guidelines that encompass the above.

## **10. Human Resource Policy and Service Rules**

The Society's Child Protection Policy shall be incorporated into the staff policy service rules. The same will apply to grant-in-aid service rules for aided and unaided educational institutions.

### **On appointment and during service:**

- a. On recruitment, ensure acceptance of the Code of Conduct through a signature of the recruited employee.

- b. In case of those personnel recruited before the notification of the KSCPP, criminal background checks must be done. Every such employee must accept the Code of Conduct and declare adherence to the School's CPP and acceptance must be recorded in writing. In case of non-compliance by any personnel, appropriate action should be taken as per existing legislation or as defined in Human Resource Policy or Government Service Rules.
- c. Any teaching or non-teaching staff when under investigation for safety violation or abuse in School must be placed under suspension, pending inquiry.
- d. If any teaching or non-teaching staff is proven guilty of child abuse/safety violation in a court, s/he must be terminated immediately, with a notation on the dismissal letter recording the reason for such termination.
- e. Annual appraisal should include compliance with School's CPP.

### **11. Procedures for reporting Safety violation/child abuse**

The Society has laid out procedures to be followed in the event of any complaint received. The flow chart is provided in the Guidelines and Procedures.

### **12. Procedures for reporting of child sexual abuse**

Refer POCSO Act, Rules and Guidelines.

### **13. Responses to allegations of staff offences**

As per procedures spelt out by the Service rules and within the purview of Education Act and other laws that is binding. As per POCSO Act and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 and Rules have procedures that can be adopted for school context.

### **14. Communication about and to children**

As per Guidelines that includes - Age and class appropriate communication to children about the CPP, through Notice Board, school website, addressing in Assembly, Every child, parent and staff/personnel should be aware of the CPP. Ignorance of the Policy will not absolve a person of the offence committed.

### **15. Training plan for management /teaching and non-teaching staff**

Our Society is committed to build the capacity of the teaching and non-teaching staff and is a priority area. Training calendar/Schedule drawn up for the academic year will cover child safety issues, policy/measures, and to organize periodic training workshops related to child safety and child rights protection.

**16. Procedures for parents. Visitors, Consultants, volunteers, service providers**

In order to ensure safety of children at all times, our schools will lay out clear rules and norms for parents, visitors, consultants, volunteers, service providers that are to be strictly adhered to. Violation of the same shall attract stringent penalty. ID cards for parents, visitors wherever possible, or accompanied into school by one school non-teaching staff. All circulars on this issue to be sent to all concerned for enforcement.

**17. Monitoring and evaluation procedures**

Specified protocol will be followed by our schools with regard to child safety. Information of the CP Mechanism within the schools and outside through government will be provided and made accessible. Periodic checks and review to be conducted to ensure child safety.

**18. Responses to allegations of nonteaching staff/community members /visitors /vendors/volunteers /family on contract employees/etc.**

As per GUIDELINES provided under KSCPP guidelines. Report to be prepared and documented.

**19. False complaints or allegations**

Our school will not tolerate misuse or abuse of the School CPP in the form of false allegations or complaints by any personnel, students, parents or others out of personal anger, vendetta etc, and will be dealt with severely. Will this not only be waste of precious time of the School teachers and others concerned but also set bad example among students.

The legal course of action along with disciplinary measures can be initiated.

**20. Declaration of commitment by the all Staff**

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct. I am aware of my obligations and responsibilities towards the safety, protection and well- being of children, and to abide by the professional conduct, both inside and outside of the School.

Staff Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Designation:\_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_Place: \_\_\_\_\_

**A copy will be kept on file in the office.**

## ANNEXURE : Child Abuse Reporting Form

1. Name of Child:
2. Age & Birth date:
3. Sex:
4. Address:
5. Class:
6. Name of Parent (s) or Guardian:
7. Parent's Address (if different):
8. Home Phone/Mobile:
9. Parent's Work Place:
10. Work Phone/Mobile:
11. Family Composition: (i.e., child lives with grandparents and the Cousin-Brother of Father)—nuclear family/joint family/extended family: Specify details--
12. Check below that apply and highlight:

Bruises, bleeding Dislocation/Sprains

Lack of Supervision

Emotional Neglect

Twisting/Shaking

Abandonment

Educational Neglect

Malnutrition Burns,

Scalds Physical

Neglect Exposure to

Elements Medical

Neglect Sexual Abuse

13. Description:

14. Briefly describe the reporter's concern for the child:
15. Describe the child's account of how the incident occurred and name possible witnesses:
16. Describe any previously known or suspected abuse or neglect to child or siblings:
17. Provide name(s), address(es), and relationship to child of person(s) responsible for suspected abuse or neglect (if known):

**Reporting to local Police/ Special Juvenile Unit of Police:**

1. Date:
2. Name of Person Reporting to Police:
3. Time:
4. Name of Person who prepared written School Report:
5. Designation: (i.e. teacher, parent, other)
6. School recommendation: