

CHILD PROTECTION

POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL

2022-2023



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF RIGA

Child Protection at International School of Riga

Dear ISR Parents,

We would like to inform you that the International School of Riga (ISR) has revised and revamped its Child Protection Policy to guide our staff and families in matters related to the health, safety, and care of children in attendance at our school.

The ISR Child Protection Policy is based upon International and Latvian law and on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of which Latvia is a signatory. Of particular relevance are UNCRC Articles 19 and 34.

All of us at ISR want you to know that we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children. It is for this reason that ISR has endorsed a Child Protection Policy that defines the standards as to how all ISR students will be treated, that being with respect and dignity at all times.

As part of our overall educational programs and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children and ensure a safe environment in which all children can learn and grow, ISR will:

- provide age-appropriate lessons for certain Grades to help students understand personal safety, needs and rights;
- provide parent materials and information sessions to help you better understand our programs and policy;
 - annually train faculty and staff to report issues of abuse and neglect;
 - ensure that all staff read and internalize the policy and sign an agreement to abide by the Child Protection policy as part of their employment agreement.

It is a shared responsibility between school and home in ensuring that our children are safe and are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities with respect to themselves and to each other, all so they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment.

I thank you for your support of our efforts and invite you to contact our Child Protection Officer or myself if you have further questions or comments.

Sincerely;

Shane Kells Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shane Kells'.

Tony Rialland

Child Protection Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rialland'.



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF RIGA

ISR Mission Statement

We are a respectful learning-focused community where each student is inspired to achieve his or her potential and to become an ethical, confident, and internationally-minded citizen of tomorrow.

ISR Child Protection Statement of Intent

The primary responsibility for care and protection of children rests with parents. However, the school recognizes that the responsibility transfers to the school when the parents entrust the school with the child's care during school days, trips, and events.

ISR aims to provide a safe and positive environment for all of our students. This Child Protection Policy supports Article 3.1 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which states that, "in all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration". We are committed to preventing child abuse and protecting children within our community.

This Child Protection document outlines the actions that will be taken to ensure that students are protected from all forms of abuse.

Aims

We believe that all children have the right to:

- Grow up in a safe, secure and caring environment
- Be protected from harm – including neglect, abuse and exploitation
- Be listened to, and heard
- Be valued in terms of their language, culture, religion, sex and ethnicity
- Be treated as an individual

There is a collective responsibility of all adults in our community to:

- Ensure that children are protected
- Provide a safe, secure and positive environment
- Provide support, encouragement and stimulation to enable each child to reach his/her full potential

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1. Child Protection Policy

Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. ISR endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which our host country, Latvia, is a signatory.

Schools fill a special institutional role in society as protectors of children. Schools need to ensure that all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop, both at school and away. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who are in need of help and protection. As such, 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 child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed at ISR must report immediately suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate employer, to the respective consulate in Riga, Latvia, to the appropriate child protection agency in the home country, and/or to local authorities.

ISR seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. As such, ISR will distribute this policy annually to all parents and applicants, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide training for all staff, and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. Each ISR staff member will have to undergo a background check before they start working at ISR or every third year working at ISR. The background checks will be conducted in collaboration with the Local Authorities and/or the company EE Voices that specializes in that branch. <https://www.eevoices.com/>

In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, ISR will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process, keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

For detailed information on the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of Child see the following link:

http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html

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2. How are abuse and neglect defined?

2.1 Abuse

Definitions of abuse are complex and based in various cultures of child-rearing behaviors, as well as gender and role responsibilities and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the needs of the more powerful person, such as a member of the family, a teacher, or a friend.

Procedural guidelines in the event of a disclosure or clear indications of abuse

In recent years, Latvia has made progress in the protection of children, reforming legislation and providing services for the most vulnerable children. However, important challenges remain particularly with regards to resource allocation. Bearing in mind that resources are stretched and awareness of child protection legislation within Latvia by our students may be limited, it is likely that our students will turn to us as trusted adults.

2.2 Physical Abuse

- Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, loss or impairment of any bodily function, death
- 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 experience of pain and/or mental suffering
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code of Latvia 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

2.3 Possible indicators of physical abuse

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body;
- Bruises of different ages (various colors);
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, stick, 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;

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- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line;
- Unexplained lacerations, abrasions, or fractures.

2.4 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 (Latvia) or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact including: assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts (such as masturbating, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing). It may also include non-contact activities such as: watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, involving children looking at or in the production of sexual images, grooming a child in the preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse has some different characteristics to child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse generally involves planning with results that are more insidious. However, sexual abuse may be opportunistic and although most often adult on child, it may also be child on child. 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, so is more difficult to report. Some victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that the sex is a form of 'love', may tend to love their offender and present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved. Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counselors.

2.5 Possible indicators of sexual abuse

- Sexual knowledge, behavior or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Venereal disease in a child of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anus areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into physical education (PE) clothes, fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaints
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting

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2.6 Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse also known as psychological abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child or any other person. It can take the form of humiliation, intimidation, deliberate isolation or any other treatment undermining dignity.

2.7 Possible indicators of emotional abuse

Preschool Children:

- be overly-affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- not appear to have a close relationship with their parents, e.g. when being taken to or collected from nursery etc.
- be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older Children:

- use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect them to know for their age
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/emotional-abuse/emotional-abuse-signs-symptoms-effects/>

2.8 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 – this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship, such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time.

Note: ISR requires one parent to be a full-time resident of Latvia. Should parents/guardians leave the country for any reason, the responsibility for informing the school of all appropriate contact details lies with the parents or guardians. Temporary Change of Guardian Forms are available from ISR. These are expected to be completed prior to parents/guardians leaving the country.

- Medical e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment

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- 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 a child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc. Emotional abuse may involve: rejecting or ignoring a child completely, using degrading language or behaviors towards them, responding to their attempts to interact with emotional detachment, humiliating, threatening, or encouraging them to develop behaviors that are self-destructive, preventing the child from interacting socially with other children or adults, a child seeing or hearing the ill treatment or serious bullying (including cyber bullying) of another, causing children to feel frequently frightened or in danger, the exploitation or corruption of children

2.9 Possible indicators of neglect

- Child is unwashed or hungry
- Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school
- Child does not want to go home
- Both parents or legal guardian are absent from Riga for any period of 24 hours or greater
- Parents do not respond to contacts by school in the case of concern



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3. What happens when a teacher has reasonable cause to believe abuse or neglect is taking place?

In the Republic of Latvia it is a legal requirement for all members of the ISR community either as individuals or members of the institution to report any incident or suspicion of child abuse to the local authorities.

Possible indicators of abuse and neglect (see pages 5, 6 and 7) will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting simultaneously to the School Director and to the Child Protection Officer, who will determine if the case needs further attention. To report the case please use the ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form ([ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form](#)). Behavioral indicators alone do not constitute abuse or neglect and other indicators may need to be considered before an official referral is made.

A report must be made when a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All reports are confidential.

3.1 Trusted Adults

All adults working regularly in the school are considered appropriate for that position. The adults who work directly with children are trusted adults for the children who may share any concerns or worries with these adults. The "trusted adults" should act appropriately in the company of children and not place themselves in situations that may be misunderstood. To this end, the school operates safe recruitment procedures, which include police clearance from countries where previously employed. The police clearance will be made by the company "EE Voices" that specializes in background checks. <https://www.eevoices.com/>

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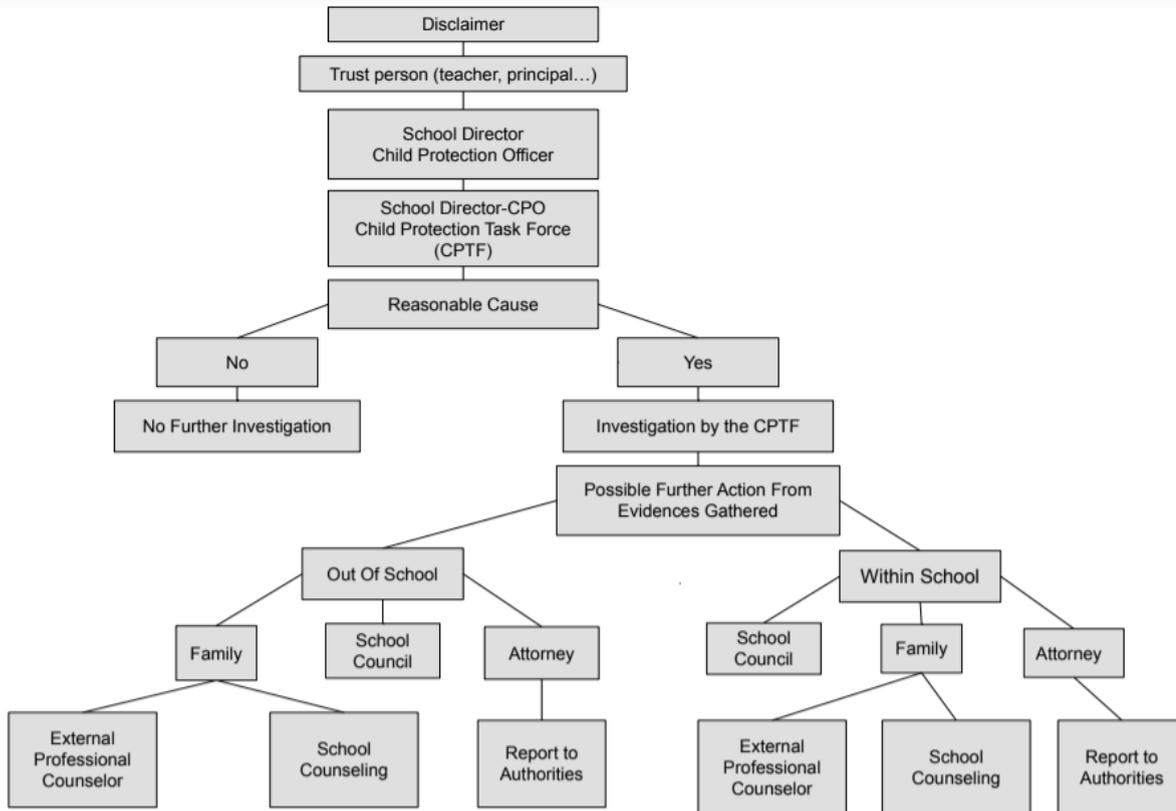
3.2 Action by trusted adult

Notification of abuse or neglect is required when a person suspects (on reasonable grounds) that a child has been or is being abused or neglected. A child may tell an adult directly and specifically what is going on, or s/he may hint indirectly at a situation. Sometimes the child will use "strings attached," such as asking the adult to promise not to tell anyone (a promise the person cannot keep), or, a student may claim the problem belongs to someone else and that s/he is only there about a friend. Adults should use judgment in deciding how much to discuss the situation with the child.

If a child makes a disclosure to you as a trusted adult, you should:

- Be welcoming, even if the time is not convenient. It may have taken a great deal of courage for the child to approach you as an adult and he/she may not do so again.
- Find a quiet place where the conversation won't be interrupted.
- Stay calm and listen very carefully. Trust your "gut" feelings.
- Allow the child to talk at his/her own pace.
- It is very important to ask questions for clarification only. Talk quietly with the child without leading them and do not ask probing questions. The child's sense of trust in the adult(s) is paramount in these situations; therefore, it is important to reassure the child that you believe his/her story.
- Reassure him/her. Tell him/her that you are sorry that this has happened to them and that you will do all you can to help them. Explain what may happen next.
- Make notes as soon as possible afterwards including date, time, place and exact words used. All reported concerns should be recorded by hand. Observations should be clearly outlined and substantiated. Sketches should be included as appropriate.
- Make the child aware that you cannot keep the information to yourself and will seek help from other appropriate adults.
- Inform the School director and the Child Protection Officer by filling and submitting immediately the ISR Suspected Child Abuse Form. Give the original notes to the relevant Counselor as soon as possible. [ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form](#)
- Respect the child's privacy by not discussing the situation out of school or with other staff in school.
- Under no circumstances contact the parents at this stage or investigate/verify the situation.
- After reporting, it is important to maintain a supportive presence for the child.

4. Child Protection Reporting Flowchart



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4.1 Procedures for reporting suspected cases of abuse or neglect by family

Step 1

When a child reports abuse, or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher and / or other trusted adult will seek advice from the School Director, the Child Protection Officer and the School Vice Director as quickly as possible using the Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form:

[ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form](#)

These persons will be informed simultaneously as soon as the teacher or trusted adult will send the filled Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form.

The Child Protection Officer will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and will form a school-based response team as needed to address the report. The response team will include the School Director, the Child Protection Officer and the School Vice Director and other individuals as needed.

In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

The following procedure will be used:

- Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.
- Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school.
- Report status of case to the Director.
- Determine the course of follow-up actions.

Step 2

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed by the School-Based Response Team to assist the child and family. Actions that may take place are:

- Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information. Techniques/methods that are age and situationally appropriate may be employed to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher, other individuals as needed.
- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.

In cases of severe abuse or where outside authority is deemed necessary, a request made to the School Based Response Team may result in further investigation and possible actions:

- Notification of the management of the sponsoring employer of the concern with the child/family, or to the welfare office at the home-of-record.
- Consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family.

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- Consultation with the school or another attorney.
- Informal consultation with local authorities.

Step 3

Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The counselor will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The counselor will provide the child's teachers with ongoing support.
- The counselor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- The counselor will maintain contact with outside therapists and multidisciplinary teams to update the progress of the child in school.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's confidential school records file.

Records sent to schools to which their student may transfer will be flagged to let the receiving school know there is a confidential file for the child. ISR will make every attempt to share this information to protect the child.

4.2 What happens when abuse occurring in families does not stop?

In extreme cases, when families do not stop the abuse, or concerns remain about the safety of the child, reports may be made to:

- The appropriate Latvian authorities
- The student's consulate
- The parent's employer
- The home-of-record welfare office

The ISR child protection policy is intended to work for the child, for the family, and for our community.

Research indicates that international communities are as prone to child abuse as communities in their home country. Child abuse is a multi-faceted issue that involves the interplay of dynamics between the child, the family, and the community.

Remember: If you have concerns about the safety of a child, doing nothing is not acceptable.

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4.3 If the suspected offender is a teacher/employee/volunteer the following procedures should be followed:

Step 1

- The suspected abuse is reported to the School Director, the Child Protection Officer (unless one of the Designated Persons is the object of the allegation in which case the suspected abuse is reported directly to the School Vice Director).
- The child's parents are informed immediately.
- Restrictions are placed on the teacher's access to the child, and possibly to all children.

Step 2

- The School Director sees the teacher concerned, with a witness (Child protection Officer)
- The teacher is isolated from the school, with no access allowed to the school, pending investigation.
- The School Director meets with the teacher, outside the school, if necessary, for further discussion.
- Appropriate disciplinary procedures may be invoked from the staff disciplinary policy.
- In light of evidence, the Vice Director decides the appropriate course of action.

4.4 If the suspected offender is the School Director, the following procedures should be followed:

Step 1

- The suspected abuse is reported directly to the Chairman of the Board of Directors without informing the School Director.
- The child's parents are informed immediately.
- Restrictions are placed on the School Director's access to the child, and possibly to all children.

Step 2

- The Chairman sees the School Director with a witness.
- The School Director is isolated from the school, with no access allowed to the school, pending investigation.
- The Chairman meets with the School Director, outside the school, if necessary, for further discussion.
- Appropriate disciplinary procedures may be invoked from the staff disciplinary policy.
- In light of evidence, the Chairman decides the appropriate course of action.

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5. Staff Training

- Every year, all staff should be made aware of the school's policies and procedures regarding child protection. The school will have regular, mandatory child protection training.
- The E.R.M will undergo training in safeguarding children not less than every two years.
- The School Vice Director and all staff will undergo training in safeguarding not less than every three years.
- Temporary and voluntary staff who work with children are to be made aware of the arrangements in this guidance.

The School shall not hold responsible or fault any school employee making a report of abuse that is later judged to be false, unless it can be demonstrated that the person willfully and intentionally falsified a report.

The school shall cover all legal fees for any staff named in legal action as a consequence of their having made a report of alleged child abuse in good faith.

Many cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled entirely by school counselors, for example, those involving:

- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Mental health issues such as depression, low self-esteem, grieving

Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example:

- Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, suicidal ideation

Cases reported for investigation and outside resources:

- Severe and ongoing physical abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and incest



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6. ISR Suspected Child Abuse Electronic Reporting Form

The ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form should be completed and sent IMMEDIATELY following any incident at ISR or associated with a student of ISR, which raises any concern about possible child abuse. It should be completed by any member of staff who has reason to be suspicious about or concerned about the wellbeing of a child. Care must be taken to report this information accurately and confidently. This form will be sent automatically to the School Director, to the Child Protection Officer and to the School Vice Director.

[ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form](#)

DETAILS OF YOUR CONCERN

Record in the ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form EXACTLY (it is very important that you do not embellish details) what you saw or heard including actual site of injury (e.g. upper right arm, size/color of bruising etc.) or an exact record, as far as possible, of anything said to you by the child. Record any relevant comments made by yourself. Avoid asking any more questions than are necessary to clarify any uncertainties.

A written statement will have to be submitted if the suspected child abuse case requires action.

Please fill this form immediately if you suspect a case of child abuse. Be as accurate and clear as possible.

This form will be sent automatically to the School Director, the Child Protection Officer and the School Vice Director. Appropriate action will be taken.

Please refer to the next 2 pages.

6.1 ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form (hard version)

Please see the ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form on pages 17, 18, 19 and 20.



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ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form (Hard Copy)

Please fill and sign the following form remaining as concrete and precise as possible.

Suspected child abuse reporter's name and surname:

Suspected child abuse reporter's position at school:

Suspected victim's name and surname:

Suspected victim's grade:

Suspected victim's homeroom teacher's name and surname:

Place of suspected abuse:

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Date of suspected abuse (dd.mm.yyyy):

Time of suspected abuse (hh.mm):

Nature of the suspected abuse(s):

Circle the appropriate answer(s):

- a) Emotional abuse
- b) Physical abuse
- c) Sexual abuse
- d) Neglect

Extend and cause of the suspected abuse:

Person(s) thought to be responsible of the suspected abuse and their relation to the suspected victim(s):



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Evidence(s) of suspected abuse:

Evidence(s) of previous abuse:



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Other pertinent information needed to conduct the assessment:

Child Abuse Reporter

Name & Surname: _____

Date (dd.mm.yyyy): _____

Signature:

Action taken:

School Director

Name & Surname: _____

Date (dd.mm.yyyy): _____

Signature:

Child Protection Officer

Name & Surname: _____

Date (dd.mm.yyyy): _____ Signature: _____



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7. Important Contacts

School Director

Shane Kells: shane.kells@isriga.lv

School Vice Director

Amanda Romey: amanda.romey@isriga.lv

Child Protection Officer

Tony Rialland: tony.rialland@isriga.lv

Preschool and Primary School Nurse

Sarmite Sekstina: sarmite.sekstina@isriga.lv

Secondary School Nurse

Anita Majauska: anita.majauska@isriga.lv

8. Important Resources

ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form: [ISR Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form](#)

Latvian Protection of the Rights of the Child Law: [Latvian Protection of the Rights of the Child Law](#)

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



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9. School Child Protection Curriculum Resources

The following links may be helpful in creating / implementing curriculum:

Australia:

http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/teachingandlearning/files/links/acnews_issue_11_web_final.pdf

<http://www.bbcactive.com/BBCActiveIdeasandResources/VideosResourcesforChildProtectionTraining.aspx>

Canada:

<https://www.protectchildren.ca/app/en/overview>

USA:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/educator>

<http://www.cfchildren.org/second-step>

Ireland:

http://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf

<http://staysafe.ie>

http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/child_welfare_protection/childfirst.htm

United Kingdom:

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>



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10. Use of Digital Images and Recordings of Students by the School

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cB7Iq3uWmgcthVq9GOgzPhudPOPwrV_D2XDj999tiZk/edit

International School of Riga, December 2017, Riga, Latvia
The ISR Child Protection Policy was reviewed on August 18th 2022.
The ISR Child Protection Policy will be reviewed in August 2023 at the latest.
However this policy may be amended/reviewed as needed according to the needs.

This document was created with the support of the Association of International schools in Africa.

