

VALE VERDE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

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At VVIS, we are committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and welfare of all students, both on and off the school premises. We recognise that safeguarding children and young people is an integral part of creating a nurturing and supportive environment. This policy outlines our approach to safeguarding and provides clear guidance on how we will protect students from harm, abuse, and neglect, as well as promoting their emotional and physical wellbeing.

1.1 KEY CONTACTS

Designated Safeguarding Lead Primary	Clarissa Conroy	Contact Details	c.conroy@vvis.org
Designated Safeguarding Lead Secondary	Brendan de Beer	Contact Details	b.debeer@vvis.org
Principal	Ben Riley	Contact Details	b.riley@vvis.org

1.2 ACRONYMS

CPCJ	Comissões de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
PSHE	Personal, Social, Health and Economic education
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SENCo	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
VVIS	Vale Verde International School

1.3 INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding is defined as:

- Protecting children’s health, wellbeing and human rights;
- Enabling children to live free from harm, abuse or neglect;
- Providing safe and effective care of all children.

This covers measures to provide the necessary protection of the children as well as preventive measures to incorporate health and safety, supporting students with medical conditions, school behaviour (for themselves and others), personal, health and social economic education and providing medical care and security of the school.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. This means anyone who comes into contact with children and their families is included in having a role to play in their safeguarding.

1.4 EXPECTATIONS

All staff at VVIS, whether teaching or non-teaching, are an integral part in safeguarding children. It is the responsibility of everyone in the school organisation to raise or highlight any concerns and act in the best interest of the children at all times. This document serves as a framework to keep all at VVIS safe. This policy applies to all on and off-site activities by students. All staff have a duty and responsibility to:

- Adopt a child-focused approach by prioritizing the best interests of the child in every decision, placing their needs above all other factors.
- Be familiar with the school's safeguarding systems, including understanding this policy and its procedures, as well as other relevant school policies and documents.
- Be aware of and knowledgeable about the various forms and signs of abuse and neglect, so that they can recognize children who may need help or protection, or who are experiencing or at risk of significant harm.
- Understand that abuse, neglect, and safeguarding concerns are rarely isolated incidents that can be defined by a single term or label; in most cases, multiple issues are interconnected.
- Recognize that a child is considered to be abused or at risk of abuse when their basic needs are not being met. Harm can manifest in various forms, including neglect, mistreatment, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, as well as damage to physical or mental health, or hindered physical, intellectual, emotional, or social development.
- Be able to reassure victims that their concerns are being taken seriously and that they will receive support and protection. A victim should never feel that they are causing a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment, nor should they feel ashamed for speaking out.
- Understand the legal obligation to follow mandatory reporting procedures if they suspect any safeguarding issues.
- Know the correct actions to take if a student discloses or alleges abuse or neglect.
- Understand the different types of child-on-child abuse and follow the specific procedures to report any disclosures or allegations to the EDSL/DSL(s) in line with this Policy.
- Know their responsibility to share safeguarding concerns while maintaining appropriate confidentiality, ensuring only those who need to know, such as the EDSL, DSL(s), or DDSL(s), are involved.
- Be aware of relevant data protection regulations (GDPR), but understand that information must be shared when necessary to protect a child's welfare and safety, and concerns about confidentiality should never prevent action to safeguard a child.

VVIS will:

- create an environment that encourages a nurturing school community and an open culture, where everyone feels comfortable expressing concerns about another person's well-being and safety, knowing that these concerns will be heard and addressed in a thoughtful and effective manner;

- foster a caring environment where class teachers, specialist teachers, and support staff build strong relationships with students, allowing them to quickly recognize when a child needs support or when changes in behavior may signal potential abuse or safeguarding issues;
- increase staff awareness of the importance of safeguarding students and their duty to identify and report any signs of abuse, neglect, or a child in need, through comprehensive guidance and training;
- establish a structured system to monitor children who are known to be at risk, have experienced harm, or may be in danger of harm;
- ensure that all vulnerable children receive the appropriate support within the school and that their needs are recognized and addressed promptly and effectively;
- develop and implement clear procedures for staff to follow when they suspect abuse or other child welfare concerns;
- build and maintain strong working relationships with external agencies, such as the Police, Children's Services, CPCJ, to support safeguarding efforts;
- collaborate with parents and carers in the best interests of the students, ensuring they understand how to report safeguarding concerns;
- verify that all adults working with children in the school have undergone appropriate background checks to ensure their suitability, in accordance with the safer recruitment policy;
- promote effective communication about safeguarding issues among all staff members;
- ensure all staff participate in regular training to maintain a vigilant safeguarding culture throughout the school, which underpins every aspect of school life.

1.5 EARLY HELP

Early help means identifying and providing support to a child as soon as the problem emerges. The school role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing can be summarised as:
PREVENTION & EDUCATION: creating a safe and supportive environment that reduces the likelihood of mental health issues, while promoting the mental health and wellbeing of all students. This approach will help students build resilience, enabling them to cope effectively with everyday stresses. It will involve incorporating mental wellbeing education into the curriculum and reinforcing these lessons through school activities and the overall school culture;

IDENTIFICATION: recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible;

ACCESS TO EARLY SPECIALIST SUPPORT: helping students to access evidence based early support and interventions by working effectively with external agencies to provide a swift access and referrals to specialist support and treatment.

All staff are required to be aware of the importance of potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific educational needs;
- is showing any signs of antisocial or criminal behaviour;
- is frequently missing or goes missing from care or from home;
- is misusing drugs or alcohol;
- is a privately fostered child;
- has a parent/guardian in custody;
- is self-harming;

- is in a family situation that may present challenges for the child.

1.6 PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

All staff should be aware that mental health issues can sometimes indicate that a child has experienced or is at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Only professionals with the appropriate training should attempt to diagnose a mental health condition. However, staff are in a unique position to observe students on a daily basis and identify those whose behavior may suggest they are dealing with a mental health issue or are at risk of developing one.

If staff have concerns about a child's mental health that also raise safeguarding issues, they must take immediate action and refer the matter to the designated safeguarding lead.

At VVIS, we actively promote the health, wellbeing, and resilience of both students and staff. This includes supporting the responsible use of social media and teaching students how to build positive relationships through a tailored PSHE curriculum.

2.1 TYPES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

2.1.1 What is abuse?

Abuse or neglect of a child is by causing harm, or failing to take steps to stop harm from occurring. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting by those that are known to them, or by others. Abuse can also take place online, or with the facilitation of technology for offline abuse. Abuse can be by an adult, or adults, or another child or children.

2.1.2 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can include actions such as hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or any other form of causing physical injury to a child. It can also occur when a parent or caregiver deliberately falsifies or causes symptoms of illness in a child.

2.1.3 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse refers to the ongoing emotional mistreatment of a child that leads to significant and lasting harm to their emotional development. It can involve telling a child that they are worthless, unloved, or only valued for meeting someone else's needs. This type of abuse can also include preventing a child from expressing their opinions, dismissing what they say, or mocking their way of communicating. It may involve placing unreasonable expectations on a child that are beyond their developmental abilities, such as demanding actions that are too advanced for their age, overly restricting their exploration and learning, or stopping them from engaging in typical social activities. Emotional abuse may also include witnessing or overhearing the mistreatment of others, severe bullying (including online bullying), or creating situations where a child regularly feels scared or unsafe, or is manipulated and exploited. While emotional abuse is often present in other forms of abuse, it can also happen on its own.

2.1.4 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves coercing or persuading a child or young person to participate in sexual activities, regardless of whether the child understands what is happening or not. These activities can include physical contact, such as assault involving penetration (e.g., rape or oral sex), or

non-penetrative acts like masturbation, kissing, rubbing, or touching over clothing. Non-contact activities may also be involved, such as making children view or create sexual images, watching sexual acts, encouraging sexually inappropriate behavior, or grooming a child for future abuse. Sexual abuse can also occur online, and technology may be used to facilitate abuse in person. It's important to note that sexual abuse is not limited to adult men; women and even other children can also be perpetrators.

2.1.5 Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to provide a child with their essential physical and/or emotional needs, which can lead to significant harm to the child's health or development. Neglect can begin during pregnancy, often due to maternal substance abuse. After birth, neglect may involve a parent or caregiver failing to:

- Provide sufficient food, clothing, and shelter, including situations where a child is excluded from the home or abandoned.
- Protect the child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure proper supervision, which includes not relying on inappropriate or insufficient caregivers.
- Ensure the child has access to necessary medical care or treatment.

Neglect can also involve failing to meet a child's basic emotional needs, or being unresponsive to their emotional wellbeing.

2.1.6 Domestic abuse

Cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or series of incidents involving controlling, coercive, threatening behavior, violence, or abuse between individuals aged 16 or older, who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This abuse can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional harm.

Children can be witnesses to domestic abuse in their home environment, where abuse takes place between family members, and this can have a negative impact on them.

Domestic abuse and violence can cause serious and lasting emotional and psychological effects on children. In some cases, a child may feel responsible for the abuse, or they may be forced to leave their home because of the violence.

2.1.7 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment refers to "unwanted behavior of a sexual nature" that can take place both online and offline. In the context of child-on-child sexual harassment, this behavior may: violate a child's dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated, and/or create a hostile, offensive, or sexualized environment.

While not exhaustive, sexual harassment can include:

- **Sexual comments**, such as telling explicit stories, making inappropriate remarks about someone's appearance or clothing, or using sexualized names.

- **Sexual “jokes” or teasing.**
- **Physical behavior**, such as deliberately brushing against someone, tampering with their clothes (it is important for schools and colleges to assess when this behavior crosses into sexual violence, and to consider the victim’s experience), or displaying sexually explicit images, photos, or drawings.
- **Online sexual harassment**, which can occur on its own or as part of a broader pattern of sexual harassment or violence. This can include:
 - Non-consensual sharing of sexual images or videos.
 - Sexualized online bullying.
 - Unwanted sexual comments or messages, including on social media.
 - Sexual exploitation, coercion, and threats.
 - Upskirting (taking or sharing explicit photos of someone without their consent).

2.2 WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT DISCLOSES ABUSE

If a *child discloses that he or she has been abused in some way*, the member of staff should:

- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief;
- accept what is being said;
- allow the child to talk freely;
- reassure the child, but not to make promises;
- not promise confidentiality;
- reassure the child that what has happened is not his or her fault;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing to tell;
- listen rather than ask direct or leading questions;
- not to criticise the alleged perpetrator;
- explain the next steps and who has to be told;
- raise the concern with the DSL without delay.

Staff members should respond to the child raising the concern by:

- showing acceptance of what the child says;
- staying calm and letting the child know you will need to let someone else know;
- being aware that the child may have been threatened, coached or bribed not to tell;
- not pushing for information and letting the child know that you are available to listen.

2.3 PROTOCOL TO FOLLOW WHEN MAKING A REPORT THAT A CHILD IS OR MAY BE AT RISK

1. Concern raised with the DSL.
2. DSL will review the concern with SMT immediately and decide if it is appropriate to speak with the student to make a decision on the next steps.
3. One of the following is done:

↓	↓	↓
Decision is made to monitor the concern.	Decision is made to discuss concern with parents/guardians.	Decision is made to refer the concern to social care and/or police.

All teachers will be asked to monitor the student and provide confidential feedback within an agreed timescale.	Following the discussion with parents/guardians, the SMT will decide to record concern, monitor or refer to social care.	SMT will discuss with the school director to agree on the referral to social care/ or police.
Concern recorded and maintained in the confidential file of the child.	Concern recorded and maintained in the confidential file of the child.	

2.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

Through staff safeguarding training, the importance of confidentiality has been thoroughly discussed and understood. It is clear that no member of staff should ever promise confidentiality regarding any safeguarding or child protection concerns (including those raised by parents, carers, or students), nor should they agree to keep secrets.

In line with legal requirements, any child protection concerns must be reported to the DSL, and may lead to further referral and investigation by the relevant authorities. Information about specific child protection cases may be shared by the DSL with other relevant staff members, but only on a "need-to-know" basis and when it is in the best interests of the child.

Appropriate and relevant information must be shared with professional agencies. Concerns about data protection or sharing information should never prevent action when it comes to ensuring the welfare and safety of children.

Staff must understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed after a disclosure is made. Everyone has a professional obligation to share information with other agencies to safeguard children.

3.1 SUPPORTING CHILDREN

VVIS understands that children who have experienced abuse or witnessed violence may struggle with developing self-worth and seeing the world in a positive light.

For some children, school may be the only stable, secure, and predictable aspect of their lives. Therefore, the school acknowledges that these children might display challenging or defiant behavior, and will consider the context of such behavior carefully.

The school also recognizes that children can harm their peers. Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, and any concerns will be thoroughly investigated and addressed as part of the school's zero-tolerance policy towards unacceptable behavior. No form of child-on-child abuse will be tolerated or minimized as part of growing up, and all involved children will receive the appropriate level of support. We understand that children who have been abused themselves may, in turn, hurt others, and this requires a thoughtful and sensitive approach to ensure they receive the right help and support.

To support all students, VVIS will:

- **Provide a curriculum** that encourages self-esteem, self-motivation, and self-protection.
- Promote a **school ethos** that fosters a positive, supportive, and secure environment where everyone feels respected and valued.
- Support approaches that help students develop critical thinking, literacy, and digital literacy skills.
- Deliver a curriculum that explores **human rights, equality, democracy, and tolerance**, preparing students for life.
- Offer a curriculum where students build **personal resilience**, learn how to take safe risks, and have strategies in place to manage their safety both online and offline. This includes topics like Relationships and Health Education, Fundamental Human Values, harm, abuse, healthy relationships, and crime prevention.

Online safety is a key part of the school's approach, addressing the four areas of risk:

1. **Content** – Exposure to harmful or inappropriate material (e.g., pornography, fake news, racism, self-harm, suicide, extremism).
2. **Contact** – Harmful online interactions (e.g., peer pressure, commercial advertising, grooming or exploitation).
3. **Conduct** – Personal online behavior that may cause harm, such as sending explicit images, online bullying, and sharing inappropriate content.
4. **Commerce** – Risks related to online gambling, advertising, phishing, and financial scams.

Additionally, the school has a clear **Behavior Policy and Procedures**, including the appropriate use of reasonable force, and works with other professionals and agencies to support children and parents. VVIS is committed to building positive, supportive relationships with parents whenever it benefits the child.

The school also recognizes the particular vulnerability of children with behavioral difficulties and disabilities, who are statistically more likely to experience abuse. Staff working with children with profound disabilities, sensory impairments, or emotional and behavioral challenges must be especially alert to signs of abuse.

Children with special educational needs (SEN) or medical conditions may have safeguarding issues that are overlooked or misattributed to their condition. Changes in behavior, mood, or physical appearance should always be considered in the context of the individual child's circumstances and not dismissed. These children may also be more susceptible to isolation and bullying, often without visible signs, so extra care must be taken to ensure their needs are fully understood, and their voices heard.

VVIS also understands that children living in environments affected by domestic violence, substance misuse, or mental health issues are at increased risk and may require additional support and protection.

3.2 STAFF BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Vale Verde International is committed to providing all children with a positive, academic, social and emotional experience underpinned by a strong nurturing and safeguarding of all.

VVIS is equally committed to the protection and welfare of our staff who are expected to adhere to the highest of standards in their professional behaviour. The Staff Code of Conduct outlines the expected professional behaviour and those that should be avoided.

3.3 CURRICULUM AND TEACHING ABOUT SAFEGUARDING

Included in the curriculum of academics, all students are provided with access to a curriculum that promotes personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) in addition to the many opportunities for the students to develop skills, concepts, attitudes and knowledge that promote their safety and well-being.

3.4 CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION

VVIS has an Attendance Policy to identify students who are absent from their education, specifically on repeat occasions, to help identify any abuse or neglect and provide preventive risks of future absence from education.

3.5 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

If any concerns are raised to include self-harm, eating disorders or suicidal thoughts, it should be brought to the attention of the Senior Management Team immediately. The above protocol will be followed in making the professional judgement to best support the student.

3.6 SCHOOL TRIPS

All off-site school trips require a risk assessment form to be completed two weeks prior to the trip, for approval by SMT, that includes all specific roles and responsibilities of the designated adults accompanying the children.

3.7 BULLYING AND CYBER-BULLYING

Referring to the Restorative Justice Programme(RJP), any reports of abuse are to be directed to the SMT; with the direction of Mr Rita to follow protocol.

3.8 PASTORAL CARE

All students are made aware that the school endorses pastoral care. Students are encouraged to speak to the teacher allocated to discuss any concerns they may have about a colleague or peer, teacher or parent with their tutor, who acts in a position of pastoral carer. Tutors have a duty to report any child who may be at risk to the senior management team.

3.9 REASONABLE FORCE

The school recognizes that there are situations where staff may need to physically intervene if a child poses a risk to themselves or others.

All staff members have the legal authority to use reasonable force when necessary. In these situations, staff must always explain to the student the reasons for their actions and why they were necessary.

Reasonable force might be needed in extreme situations, such as when guiding a student to safety or restraining them.

At all times, staff must ensure that any physical intervention is carried out in a way that minimizes the risk of injury to the student. However, the school understands that in some critical situations, such as when immediate action is required to prevent more serious harm, injury may not be avoidable.

Reasonable force may be used in the following situations:

- When a disruptive student must be removed from the classroom after refusing to leave.
- To control disruptive students during school trips or similar events.
- To prevent a student from leaving a classroom if doing so would put their safety at risk.
- If a student is attacking a staff member or another student.
- To intervene if a student is at serious risk of harming themselves.

Any use of reasonable force will be reported to the Principal.

4.1 FINAL NOTES

4.1.1 GOVERNANCE OF POLICY

VVIS SMT (Senior management team) will:

- review this policy and its effectiveness annually;
- nominate safeguarding contacts to lead the governance of child protection and safeguarding issues in the school;
- ensure that staff are updated regularly with safeguarding training and development;
- ensure that the safeguarding lead team will liaise with the relevant agencies in the event of allegation or safeguarding concern;
- ensure that students are taught about safeguarding (including on-line safety);
- remedy any deficiencies or weaknesses that are brought to attention without any delays.

4.1.2 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

[Lei de proteção de crianças e jovens em perigo leinº 147/99](#) (1999)

[CPCJ: Executive Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations](#) (2022)

[UNESCO: The Convention of the Rights of the Child](#) (1995)

[UNESCO: Safe Learning Environments](#) (2024)