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SAFEGUARDING/CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Review Date:December, 2024	Next Review Date: December, 2025
Related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines: ● Management of students' behaviour ● Physical intervention policy ● Anti – Bullying policy ● Health and safety policy. ● Child's Right Act 2003	Policy Superseded by this Policy: ● **Child Protection 2022**

Application.

This policy has been authorised by the Advisory Board and is available to parents and pupils on request.

1 AIMS

This policy document aims to provide all members of staff, students, parents and the entire school community with a clean framework for ensuring that every student is safe and secure while in College and outside during trips or excursions. It is important that every member of staff reads this Policy Document and adopts the procedures herein.

1.1 Bridge House College takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care. "The welfare of the child is paramount" (Child Rights Act).

1.2 The Child Rights Act (2003) places a statutory responsibility on the governing body to have in place policies and procedures which safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students of the College.

1.3 There are three main elements to our Child Protection Policy;

a) Prevention through the creation of a positive school atmosphere and the teaching, and pastoral support offered to students.

b) Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns.

c) Support to students who may have been abused.

1.4 This policy applies to all students, staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to Bridge House College

1.5 This College recognises it is an agent of referral and not of investigation.

2 PURPOSE

An effective whole-school child protection policy is one, which provides clear direction to staff and others about expected behaviour when dealing with child protection issues. An effective policy also makes explicit the College's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. This ensures that child protection concerns, referrals and monitoring may be handled sensitively, professionally and in ways, which support the needs of the child.

3. COLLEGE POLICY

We recognise that for our students, high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult help to prevent abuse.

Our College will therefore:

a) Establish and maintain an environment where students feel safe and secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.

b) Ensure that students know that there are adults within the College who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty.

c) Ensure that wherever possible every effort is made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from partner agencies.

4. FRAMEWORK

Child Protection is the responsibility of all adults and especially those working with children. The development of appropriate procedures and the monitoring of good practice are stated in the Child Right Act 2003.

5. SAFEGUARDING

5.1. The Advisory Board shall appoint an independent Designated Governor for Safeguarding (DGS) for Bridge House College;

5.2. The role of the DGS is to ensure that School's child safeguarding measures are robust, facilitate workshops with staff, support them in conducting risk assessments and develop strategies that reduce risk. The DGS will also help with auditing current child safeguarding measures, as well as developing and strengthening child safeguarding policies and procedures.

5.3. The DGS shall work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Assistant Designated Safeguarding lead (ADSL) (hereinafter known as the Safeguarding Team) duly appointed from the Advisory Board of the College to assist and ensure full compliance with safeguarding procedures and protocols;

5.4. The DSL, ADSL & DGS shall maintain at all times, high-level training and certifications in accordance with international standards required for the performance of their respective roles in the College;

5.5. The Safeguarding Team shall ensure that all Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy are adhered to by the students, staff and management of the College;

5.6. The Safeguarding Team shall report primarily to the Health & Safety committee of the Advisory Board;

5.7. The Safeguarding Team shall meet at least twice every term or as such other times as may be required.

5.8. The Safeguarding team shall report cases of child abuse and neglect to our liason local authorities (DSVA,Police Unit,Alagbon and Mirabel centre, Ikeja) whom we have relationship with.

6.ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them. There are, however, key people within schools and the Lagos State Ministry of Education who have specific responsibilities under Child Protection Procedures. Names of such persons for the current year are listed on the cover sheet of this document.

It is the role of the Designated Child Protection Coordinator or Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that stipulated protection procedures are followed within the College. Appropriate, timely referrals to the Ministry in accordance with school procedures should be made. If for any reason the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** is unavailable, an Assistant **Designated Safeguarding Lead** has been identified who will act in the absence of the Senior Co-ordinator. Additionally, it is the role of the Designated Child Protection Coordinator to ensure all staff employed, including temporary staff and volunteers, are aware of the College's internal procedures, to advise staff, and offer support to those requiring this.

The Advisory Board and College Senior Leadership Team are responsible for ensuring that the College follows safe recruitment processes. As part of the recruitment and vetting process, enhanced criminal background checks and other referrals will be sought on all staff that have substantial and unsupervised access to students.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Principal provide an annual report for the Board of Directors detailing any changes to the policy and procedures; training undertaken by all staff and governors, and other relevant issues.

TYPES AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

1. **Physical Abuse**

Physical Abuse is actual or potential harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. Examples include Corporal Punishment, Physical Attack, Assault etc.

Indicators of Physical Abuse:

1. Unexplained or Untreated Injuries,
2. Bruising
3. Burn Marks
4. Injuries not consistent with story told about them.

2. **Sexual Abuse**

Child Sexual Abuse is any sexual act with a child performed by an adult or older child. Child Sexual Abuse can be both Contact and Non Contact.

Indicators of sexual abuse:

1. Pregnancy
2. Injury to genital or anal area.
3. Sexualised Drawings/Games/Play
4. Having unexplained sums of money.

3. **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional maltreatment,which negatively affects a child's emotional development. It occurs when a person in a position of power, authority, or trust repeatedly attacks a person's self-esteem verbally or non-verbally. Emotional abuse can occur directly (in person) or indirectly (through the Internet).

Indicators of emotional abuse

1. Physical and or Mental Development Delays
2. Underweight or Lethargic.
3. Withdrawn or Attention Seeking Behaviour.
4. Self Harm.

4. **NEGLECT AND NEGLIGENT TREATMENT**

Child neglect refers to the failure to provide for a child's basic needs and can include: lack of provision of food, clothes, warmth, hygiene, medical care and education.

Indicators of neglect

1. Poor Personal Hygiene
2. Inappropriate Clothing
3. Compulsive Stealing/Scavenging
4. Underweight/Hunger.

7.PROCEDURES

1. The school will follow the procedure provided by the Child Right Act (2003)

Staffs are kept informed about Child Protection responsibilities and procedures through induction, briefings and awareness training. There may be other adults in the College who rarely work unsupervised, or usually working alongside other members of the staff.

However the Principal will ensure they are aware of the College's policy and the identity of the Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor who receives a disclosure of abuse, an allegation or suspects that abuse may have occurred, must report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or in their absence, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. In the absence of either, the matter should be brought to the attention of the most senior member of staff available at the time.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Assiatant will immediately refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the Principal and the Board of Directors who will take steps outlined in the Child's Right Act (2003).

A statement in the College brochure will inform parents and carer/givers about our College's duties and responsibilities under child protection procedures.

Parents can obtain a copy of the school child protection policy on request.

8.TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The Principal and all other staff who work with students will undertake appropriate Child Protection awareness training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for Child Protection programmes effectively are kept up to date by refresher training at three yearly intervals

The College will ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead also undertakes training with Inter-Agency network which is provided by registered NGOs, and refresher training on at two yearly intervals to keep knowledge and skill up to date. Temporary staff and volunteers who work with students in the College will be made aware of the College's arrangements for child protection and their responsibilities.

Support will be available for staff from the Principal in the first instance, and from members of the College's Senior Leadership Team, where there are concerns and queries about Child Protection.

All staff will have access to advice and guidance on the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are referred to in the Staff Handbook.

9.PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an issue, which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of Child Protection. The only purpose of confidentiality in this respect is to benefit the child. A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to a student nor should they agree with a student to keep a secret, as where there is a Child Protection concern this must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and may require further investigation by appropriate authorities.

Staff will be informed of relevant information in respect of individual cases regarding Child Protection on a "need to know basis" only. Any information shared with a member of staff in this way, must be held confidentially to themselves.

10.RECORDS AND MONITORING

Well-kept records are essential in good Child Protection practice. Our College is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children, within our College, the status of such records and when these records should be passed over to other relevant agencies.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, must make an accurate record as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen, putting the event in context, and giving the date, time and location. All records must be dated and signed and will include the action taken.

These notes are kept in a Confidential File, which is separate to other files, and stored in the Designated Lead's Office. In the same way, notes must be kept of any student who is being monitored for Child protection reasons.

If a student transfers from the school, these files will be copied for the new establishment, and forwarded to the student's new school, marked "confidential" and for the attention of the receiving Designated Safeguarding Lead.

11.ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES & CORE GROUPS

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that the College is represented or a report is submitted to any Child Protection Conference called for students on their school roll, or previously known to them. Whoever attends, should be fully briefed on any issue or concerns the College has and be prepared to make decisions on registration at the end of the Conference.

When a student is placed on the Child Protection Register and is, therefore, a child with a plan, it is the Designated Safeguarding Lead's responsibility, to ensure that the student is monitored regarding their school attendance, welfare and presentation. If the College is part of the core group, then the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure that the school is represented at these meetings; that there is a record of attendance and issues discussed.

All concerns about the Child Protection Plan and / or the child's welfare should be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting unless the child is at further risk of significant harm. In this case the Designated Safeguarding Lead, must inform the child's key worker immediately and then record that they have done so and the actions agreed.

12. SUPPORTING STUDENTS AT RISK

12.1 Our College recognises that children who are abused, or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth or view the world as a positive place.

12.2 School/College may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the life of children at risk. Nevertheless, whilst at College their behaviour may still be challenging and defiant, or they may be withdrawn.

12.3 This College will endeavour to support students through:

a) The curriculum to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation.

b) The College ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all students and adults a sense of being respected and valued.

c) The implementation of the school's behaviour management policies.

d) A consistent approach agreed to by all staff, which will endeavour to ensure the student knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but s/he is valued.

e) Regular liaison with other professionals and agencies, which support the students and their families.

f) A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents, whenever it is in the student's best interest to do so.

g) The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff group, trained to respond appropriately in Child Protection situations.

h) Recognition that statistically children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities are most vulnerable to abuse, hence staff who work in any capacity with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and / or emotional and behavioural problems will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse.

i) Recognition that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, children may also be vulnerable and in need of support or protection.

12.4 This policy should be considered alongside other related policies in College. These are the policy for the teaching of Physical Health and Social Education (PSHE), the policy for the management of students' behaviour (including our policy on physical intervention and our policy on bullying) and our health and safety policy.

13. SAFE COLLEGE, SAFE STAFF

13.1 It is essential that the high standards of concern and professional responsibility adopted with regard to alleged child abuse by parents are similarly displayed when members of staff are accused of abuse.

13.2 Only authorised agencies may investigate child abuse allegations (Social Care Services and the Police. Whilst it is permissible to ask the student simple, non-leading questions to ascertain the facts of the allegation, formal interviews and the taking of statements are not necessary.

13.3 Where allegations are made against a staff member such should be immediately referred to the Board of Directors who shall take appropriate action by informing the relevant agency for further investigation and action.

13.4 If for any reason it is decided that a referral to an External entity is not appropriate, it will be necessary to address matters in accordance with the College's Disciplinary Procedures.

14. USE OF THE COLLEGE PREMISES BY EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

14.1 Where services or activities are provided separately by another body, using the College premises, the Governing Body will seek assurance that the body concerned has appropriate policies and procedures in place in regard to safeguarding children and for child protection.

15. WHISTLE BLOWING

15.1 We recognise that students cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

15.2 All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary they should speak to the nominated 'Whistle blowing' Governor or the Education Safeguarding Service.

16. POLICY REVIEW

a) The Advisory Board is responsible for ensuring the annual review of this policy.

b) Ensuring that the list of key contacts on the cover sheet is kept up to date.