

Child Protection and Safety In Schools:

Recommendations and Mechanisms For Implementation



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01. A Case for the Integration of Art in our Schools
02. School Leadership Recruitment and Training
03. Working with Parents as Co Educators
04. Building 21st century skills and Leadership in students
05. Empowering Teachers through Teacher Development Program: Recommendations for National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education
06. Cultivating Teacher Growth
07. Blended Learning Practices
08. Repurposing Curriculum and Assessments for deep learning
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Purpose

India has prioritised the availability of high-quality and equitable education across the country. This is reflected through a series of actions and policy initiatives undertaken by multiple governments over the last thirty years. However, this commitment to quality learning outcomes notwithstanding, there appears to be limited focus on child protection.

The purpose of this document is to help bridge this gap and put forward a viable Child Protection Mechanism that can be implemented across schools in India and supplement the government's efforts to make high quality education affordable and accessible in the country. To this end, we have attempted to divide this paper into three parts:

- 1. The Current Reality:** The state of child safety and protection in our country today
- 2. Policy Design:** The tools that have helped us and that we believe will help you in policy design
- 3. Policy Implementation:** Suggestions on how you might roll out your policy



Part 1: Current Reality

The state of child safety and protection in our country today

Given children spend a significant portion of their time in school, the responsibility to keep them safe within the school premises is a top priority for school administrations.

In our work over the years we have seen both the harsh truths on the ground and the hope and the vision for a brighter future.

The Truth

According to the '[Choking Childhood](#)' Report by Agrasar on corporal punishment, at least 65% of students experience some form of physical punishment at school, and almost all students undergo some form of corporal punishment, which includes both physical punishment and mental harassment.

The '[Play It Safe](#)' Report by UNICEF also highlights child safety and protection statistics in Maharashtra, and includes information on in school and out of school instances of violence and/or abuse. According to the study, over **58% of children that report psychological abuse say that it comes from their teachers**, with instances including humiliation, being threatened with bodily harm, verbal abuse and

more. It also notes that while over 50% of all students report abuse, a large majority of violations are unreported out of fear, shame or observation of no action being taken.

At least 65% of students experience some form of physical punishment at school, and almost all students undergo some form of corporal punishment, which includes both physical punishment and mental harassment.

Students have also expressed the effects of an unsafe environment on their wellbeing and performance specifically:

“ The impact of an unstable school environment on me was that I was not able to express myself. At that time I was unaware that I had a voice because I knew it didn't matter and my feelings or thoughts were not appreciated at the school. I used to feel very uncomfortable because the staff of my school was narrow minded (judging my outfit, I used to cover my head with a hijab). As a result, I used to take a lot of holidays (2-3 months) and I was least interested in school and studies.”

16 year old student from Pune

“ For 8 years, I had a teacher who would put chilli powder in my eyes and make me take off my clothes and stand naked in the community.”

17 year old student from Pune

“ I was used to teachers being on the phone, not teaching students and using very bad consequences for small things. The culture I saw around me made me lose focus on studies, made me scared of elders and also made me feel that I am not smart enough. For a long time, I felt that nobody understands me because nobody cared about me. I used to think that this is how all schools are. That poor students cannot really succeed in their life, because my teacher told me that almost every day.”

14 year old student from Pune

“ The biggest problem of my life is I am physically disabled. I did not feel supported in school and that is why I used to be by myself. I was weak in studies but could not ask for help. This physical and academic disability made me feel that my life was full of only weaknesses. I had no talent in life.”

17 year old student from Pune

The Hope

Despite this harsh truth, we have begun to make progress as a nation and must celebrate some of the key decisions our governments have taken. Multiple State Governments have created a child protection policy and have implemented mechanisms to safeguard their wellbeing, and have formed the basis of this document.

Over the last thirty years, India has affirmed its commitment to universal, sustainable and safe education by signing up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 28 of this convention states that “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity....”.

India is also a signatory to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has implemented a number of policies aimed towards the achievement of **SDGs 4 and 5**, which are focused on **quality education and gender equality**. The recently introduced National Education Policy (2020) further underlines India’s commitment to the SDGs.

The Importance of a Child Protection and Safety Mechanism

The NEP represents a step-change in education policy approach. We believe that it is critical to complement this with a mechanism that addresses the child protection challenges in India’s schools and are thus sharing the learnings from our organisations with the hope that we can together put in place a universal child protection mechanism.

The Five Cornerstones of The Child Protection and Safety Mechanisms In School Systems:

1. Mandatory constitution of Child Protection Policy to deal with child protection concerns and violations
2. Awareness, Sensitization and Capacity Building of Child Protection Committees, Teachers and School Staff
3. Awareness, Sensitization and Empowerment of Students, Parents and Community
4. Clear grievance redressal mechanisms in case of any child protection concerns or violations
5. Partnerships with child protection organizations for cases of high risk and severity

Parts 2 and 3 of this document will now take you through some details based on our journey and learnings. The table below gives a brief overview of what you can expect:

<p style="text-align: center;">Part 2: Policy Design (3 months prior to start of Academic Year)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Part 3: Policy Implementation and Monitoring (Within 3 months of beginning of Academic Year and ongoing)</p>
<p>Drafting of Child Protection Policy (By City/ State Education Department), with the following elements:</p> <p><u>Definitions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indicative Signs of Child Abuse 2. Expected and Prohibited Conduct 3. Scope of the Child Protection Policy 4. Standard Operating Procedures <p>Annexures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child Protection Violation Investigation Protocol and Process 2. Reporting Format 3. Online Child Safety Guidelines 	<p style="text-align: center;">Constitution Of Child Protection Committees (CPCs)</p>
<p>Establish Partnerships With Expert Child Safety Organizations, in the following domains:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention 2. Mental Health and Counseling Support 3. Drug and Substance Abuse Prevention 4. Suicide Prevention 5. Legal Support 	<p>Child Protection Policy Compliance and Sign Off/Declaration</p> <hr/> <p>Child Protection and Safety Awareness, Sensitization and Capacity Building For Stakeholders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CPCs and Staff Directly Involved in Policy and Process 2. School Staff 3. Parents and Community 4. Students <p>Based on Topics For Sensitization and Capacity Building Of Stakeholders</p>
<p>Installation of Complaint Boxes and Child Friendly awareness materials/posters</p>	<p>Post Case Integration Support For Children</p> <hr/> <p>Case Documentation Suggested Template</p> <hr/> <p>Quarterly Reviews Suggested Template</p> <hr/> <p>Need Based Support and Capacity Building</p> <hr/> <p>Impact Assessment</p>



Part 2: Policy Design

The tools that have helped us and that we believe will help you in policy design
Our observations as we were designing our own policies

While some Indian states have introduced child protection policies and mechanisms in schools, the country still needs a universal child protection policy. Across schools throughout the country, there are numerous examples of students confiding in their teachers about protection risks that they perceive, or actual abuse that they suffer. However, in the absence of a structured policy or mechanism, school authorities lack the guidance to appropriately deal with these situations.

The Indian government is aware of the issue as evidenced by the Draft National Child Protection Policy, 2018. While this policy represents a step in the right direction and has a number of important provisions, including the designation of one or more school staff members as the person(s) responsible to oversee the protection of its children, it needs detailed redressal mechanisms. The following are some of the provisions that the government may consider including in its final draft in order to address this gap and make the policy more efficient:

- Define and elaborate child-friendly zones based on the principles of easy access for all children, non-discrimination and other child friendly indicators
- Maintain Child confidentiality in all settings, particularly for organizations that engage with children directly
- The concerns of children may be addressed via four important approaches: (a) Prevention, (b) Protection, (c) Redressal and (d) Rehabilitation
- The policy adopts a gender mainstreaming lens, which can be mandated for all the organizations that work directly with children. This will help develop age appropriate and gender appropriate modules and materials for orienting children on child abuse, online safety and services available for them

In the absence of a structured policy or mechanism, school authorities lack the guidance to appropriately deal with situations of abuse.

- The scope of the child protection offenses listed in Annexure 2 of the draft policy should extend beyond current laws. The scope may be widened to include any future legislation concerning wrongful behaviour towards children
- The current draft may be amended to include children with disability in the context of Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016
- The current draft may also be amended to include the Bonded Labour Abolition Act, 1976 and Mental Healthcare Act, 2017

Our Recommendations

Governments at the Municipal and State Level (or) private school administration bodies should create a robust Child Protection Policy that outlines clear principles around child safety, mechanisms in case of violations, and guidelines for schools to promote child safety and wellbeing to ensure a safe and conducive environment for all children.

Purpose of the Child Protection Policy: The Child Protection Policy must clearly state the purpose, which should include:

- Enabling and/or guiding organizations to evolve a foolproof child protection policy, which is instrumental in preventing child abuse and able to protect children in the course of the work of the Government body/organization;
- Protecting against situations in due course of the work of any Government body/organization, which might cause concerns of child protection;
- Providing the staff and partners of Government bodies with clear guidelines on what to do in the case of suspected child abuse.

Scope of the Child Protection Policy: The policy document must clearly define its scope. It should provide clarity on:

- The kind of organizations/institutions need to develop a child protection policy
- Who the policy is applicable to. Clarity on whether the policy applies to only the staff/employees of a Government organisation or also include consultants/vendors of any service provider that is working with the government
- Whether there be any exclusions/exceptions to this Policy

Definitions: It is important for the policy to clearly. In particular, policy must define the terms child protection and child well-being.

Core Principles/Guiding Principles and Values: The Child Protection Policy must find its basis in certain guiding principles, which are holistic in nature and are non negotiable in any circumstance. Government bodies/organizations cannot refuse treatment or discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, disability, caste, religion, tribe, language, marital status, occupation, political belief or other status; these such non-negotiables need to be spelt out distinctly. The Child Protection Policy should also its guiding principles, which should include following elements:

- Rights based approach
- Best Interest of Child
- Non-discrimination
- Inclusion
- Equality and Equity
- Participation
- Confidentiality
- Transparency
- Sensitivity
- Zero Tolerance of Child Abuse
- Individual and collective responsibility for child protection
- Consent of a child

Definitions To Include In Your Policy

Who is a child?

Any individual under the age of 18 years is considered a child.

What constitutes Child Abuse?

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of **physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation**, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse:	Emotional abuse:	Neglect and negligent treatment:	Sexual abuse:
Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries by way of a bodily contact.	Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. It is sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development.	<p>Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment that children experience and has consequences that are just as serious as physical abuse. It is sometimes called the 'passive' form of abuse in that it relates to the failure to carry out actions that result in significant impairment of the child's health or development including a failure to thrive emotionally and socially.</p> <p>Exploitation: Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.</p>	Sexual abuse is defined as inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child. It is an act of using a child for the sexual gratification of the more powerful person. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 has defined sexual offences against children.

What constitutes Child Abuse?

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Violations under Physical Abuse	Violations under Emotional Abuse	Violations under Neglect	Violations under Sexual Abuse
<p>(Includes but not limited to) Slapping, Hitting, Beating, Kicking, Shaking, Biting, Strangling, Burning, Poisoning, and/or Suffocating.</p>	<p>Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them. It includes humiliating and degrading treatment such as the use of foul language, name calling, constant criticism, belittling or insulting, persistent shaming, humiliating, ridiculing, ostracizing, and any verbal violence such as shouting and/or threatening.</p>	<p>In school, this includes denying the child's basic needs, including medical attention, not making referrals to other professionals when needed or communicating with parents/caregivers, as well as ignoring or overlooking the social, emotional and educational needs of children. This also refers to inaction when a child is exposed to risky/threatening material or situations, and/or leaving them unsupervised.</p> <p>Violations under Exploitation</p> <p>This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution</p>	<p>These offences include penetrative sexual assault and sexual assault (Section 3 and 7), aggravated penetrative sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault (Section 5 and 9), sexual harassment (Section 11) and pornography (Section 13). It involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts such as fondling a child's genitals and making the child fondle the adult's genitals. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of the pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual abuse may be committed by an adult or another child. This may be committed by another child when that person is either significantly older than the complainant or when the respondent is in a position of power or control over the child.</p>

List out the Indicative Signs of Child Abuse

Signs of Physical Abuse	Signs of Emotional abuse	Signs of Neglect and Exploitation	Signs of Sexual Abuse
Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts	Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed	Medical needs unattended	Social Withdrawal
Improbable excuses are given to explain injuries	Highly anxious	Lack of supervision	Increased hostility or aggression
Injuries which have not received medical attention	Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder	Consistent hunger	Over pleasing behaviour
Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.	Fear of new situations	Inappropriate dress	Drastic change in achievement patterns
Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains	Low self-esteem	Poor hygiene	Sexualized behaviour
Refusal to discuss injuries	Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations	Inadequate nutrition	Early sexual activity
Withdrawal from physical contact	Extremes of passivity or aggression	Fatigue or listlessness	Use of abusive sexual language
Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather	Drug or alcohol abuse	Self-destructive	Psychosomatic illnesses
Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted	Chronic running away	Extreme loneliness	Pain or swelling in the genital area
Showing wariness or distrust of adults	Compulsive stealing	Extreme need for affection	Repeated urinary infections
Self-destructive tendencies	Obsessions or phobias	Failure to grow	Sexually Transmitted Infections
Being aggressive towards others	Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration	Poor personal hygiene	Eating/sleep disturbances
Being very passive and compliant	Attention-seeking behaviour	Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school	Anxiety or Indifference
Chronic running away	Persistent tiredness	Low self-esteem	Depression
	Lying	Poor social relationships	Suicidal ideation/ attempts
		Compulsive stealing	
		Drug or alcohol abuse	

Signs of Physical Abuse	Signs of Emotional abuse
<p>Signs of Corporal Punishment</p> <p>Unexplained injuries</p> <p>Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed</p> <p>Highly anxious, fear of going to school</p> <p>Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder</p> <p>Fear of new situations</p> <p>Low self-esteem</p> <p>Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations</p> <p>Extremes of passivity or aggression</p> <p>A sense of worthlessness, anger, resentment, and confusion.</p> <p>Causing children to have trouble forming close relationships</p> <p>Drug or alcohol abuse</p> <p>Chronic running away</p> <p>Compulsive stealing</p> <p>Obsessions or phobias</p> <p>Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration</p> <p>Attention-seeking behaviour</p> <p>Persistent tiredness</p> <p>Lying</p>	<p>Signs of Bullying</p> <p>Unexplainable injuries</p> <p>Afraid to go to school or other activities</p> <p>Complains of feeling unwell (headaches and stomach aches)</p> <p>Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewellery</p> <p>Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness</p> <p>Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.</p> <p>Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares</p> <p>Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork,</p> <p>Sudden loss of friends, isolated from the peer group or avoidance of social situations</p> <p>Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem</p> <p>Self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide</p>

Clearly Articulate Expected and Prohibited Conduct

Expected Behaviour and Actions	Prohibited Behaviour and Actions
Treat every Child with empathy and respect, regardless of his/her race, colour, gender, sexuality, language, religion, religious belief, heritage, political/other opinion, national/ethnic/social origin or property/disability/birth/other status.	Do not use language or behaviour towards Children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, intimidating, offensive, discriminatory or culturally insensitive.
Listen to Children and respect their views.	
Ensure that physical contact with a Child is respectful, culturally appropriate and essential to the purpose of your interaction with the Child.	Do not use any form of corporal punishment on Children.
Establish an atmosphere that fosters the development of Children through your actions and words.	Do not place a Child at risk of harm or abuse and do not harm or abuse any Child physically, emotionally or sexually.
Always take permission from Children before taking their photos or videos.	Do not share with or show Children (electronically or in any other form) inappropriate content including pornographic material or material encouraging crime, violence, terrorism, racism, sexism, self-harm, suicide, cruelty and gambling. Ensure that audiovisual content shared as part of classroom learning is also age, context and culturally appropriate.
Keep all personal information about Children or their parents/guardians confidential and secure and ensure that such information is dispensed to only those individuals who are legitimately entitled to it (School Staff, Government Staff, Administrative Staff).	
	Do not develop, induce or support physical or sexual relationships with Children, in any way.

Expected Behaviour and Actions	Prohibited Behaviour and Actions
	Do not use or encourage the use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes or other intoxicating substances while interacting with Children and from providing such intoxicating substances to Children.
	Do not develop any form of relationship or arrangement (financial or otherwise) with children which could in any way be deemed to be exploitative or abusive. Do not use Child labour in any form.
Attend all the applicable training sessions and workshops on the CPP and Child-related laws conducted by the Organization. Ensure you implement the lessons learned from such sessions and workshops.	

Define Scope of The Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy will apply to all persons within the school ecosystem who come into direct or indirect contact with children. This is defined as follows:

- Direct Contact with Children:** With and in close physical proximity to the child or involved in school work in the short, medium or long term. Examples - Teachers, Headmasters, Administrative Staff, Contractual Teachers, Visiting Teachers, Security Staff
- Indirect Contact with Children:** Not in close physical proximity to the child or involved in school work but may have access to personal information, data or on a contractual basis with the school body. Examples - Vendors, Service Providers, External Organization Representatives, Visitors

Set Up Clear Standard Operating Procedures to Ensure Consistency

Category 1: In School (Low Severity)	
Accountable Personnel: School CPO Timeline: 7 days from Complaint Registration	
<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporal punishment of a Child: Smacking, hitting, punching, kicking • Using language or behaviour that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, demeaning, intimidating, offensive, discriminatory or culturally insensitive • Discrimination or other offences against a Child with disabilities • Discrimination of any kind against a child (Examples: Race, gender, ethnicity, minority) • Punishment in the form of humiliation: Duck-walking, touching toes, removal of shirts, holding ears in the corner or outside of class • Ignoring a child in class • Disrespectful or abusive language with a child • Humiliating in the form of comparison (Examples: Taunting a child for struggling in class or publicly labeling him/her as a lower order child) 	<p>Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students can report the case to School CPO or any adult in the school who is then responsible to report the case to School CPO after ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child (this may include a risk assessment or immediate mental/physical healthcare attention) 2. The complaint is registered with the School CPO and School CPO to give acknowledgment of this to the student and parent/guardian 3. School CPO will inform the School CPC 4. School CPO will investigate and take necessary steps to change the behavior of the accused in collaboration with the School CPC 5. Consequences range from, but are not limited to, awareness-building, conversations with School CPO/School CPC members, counseling under a formal support plan to a verbal/written warning and probation for repeat offences or cases of higher severity. If there is a violation of the support plan, this will result in formal warning show cause notice for the accused 6. The case to be documented and shared with District CPC at the month end

Category 1: In School (Low Severity)

Indicative Signs:

- **Physical abuse and corporal punishment**
Bruises, light injuries, anxiety, fear of going to school, speech disorder, low self-esteem, Extremes of passivity or aggression, compulsive stealing, lack of concentration
- **Emotional Abuse**
Afraid to go to school, anxiety, speech disorder, complaints of feeling unwell, Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness, losing personal items, changes in eating habits, declining grades, sudden isolation, self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide
- **Neglect**
Medical needs unattended, Lack of supervision, Consistent hunger, Inappropriate dress, Poor hygiene, Inadequate nutrition, Fatigue or listlessness, Self-destructive, Extreme loneliness, Extreme need for affection, Failure to grow, Poor personal hygiene, Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school, Low self-esteem, Poor social relationships, Compulsive stealing, Drug or alcohol abuse

Category 2: In School (High Severity)

Accountable Personnel: School CPO and District/Zone/Ward CPO
 Timeline: 7 days from Complaint Registration

Actions:

- Corporal punishment of a Child: Severe or repeated beating
- Illegal adoption of a Child or facilitating or promoting such adoption
- Employing or using a Child for begging
- Encouraging/Giving a Child intoxicating liquor, narcotic drugs, tobacco products or psychotropic substances or using a Child for vending, peddling, carrying, supplying or smuggling such liquor, drugs or substances
- Abandoning a child under care or neglecting a Child or committing other forms of cruelty towards a Child
- Employing a Child below fourteen years of age in any occupation or employing a Child between fourteen and eighteen years of age in any hazardous occupation
- Marrying a Child or promoting or solemnizing a Child marriage
- Use of a Child by militant groups
- Assaulting, Kidnapping, abduction, trafficking, murder, sale and procurement for any purpose, abetment of suicide of a Child and other offences affecting the body of a Child

Procedure:

1. Students can report the case to School CPO or any adult in the school who is then responsible to report the case to School CPO after ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child (this may include a risk assessment or immediate mental/ physical healthcare attention)
2. The complaint is registered with the School CPO and School CPO to give acknowledgment of this to the student and parent/guardian
3. School CPO will inform the School CPC and District/Zone/Ward CPC
4. School CPO will investigate and share report with District/Zone/Ward CPC for formal action and/or reporting depending on actions
5. Consequences range from, but are not limited to warning letter, termination and/or formal police complaint, depending on severity of offence (may be direct police complaint in cases of high severity like assault, kidnap, abduction, murder or similar offences)
6. The case to be documented and shared with District CPC and City CPC at the month end

Category 2: In School (High Severity)

<p>Indicative Signs:</p> <p>In addition to signs from Category 1: In School (Low Severity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Abuse Severe bruises, severe blood loss, losing body part, physical damage, loss of life • Neglect and Exploitation Child labor, prostitution, intoxication, illegal activities 	
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Category 3: Outside School (Low or High Severity)

<p>Accountable Personnel: School CPO and District/Zone/Ward CPO Timeline: 7 days from Complaint Registration</p>	
<p>Actions:</p> <p>Either low or high severity actions from Categories 1 and 2 above</p>	<p>Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students can report the case to School CPO or any adult in the school who is then responsible to report the case to School CPO after ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child (this may include a risk assessment or immediate mental/physical healthcare attention) 2. The complaint is registered with the School CPO and School CPO to give acknowledgment of this to the student and parent/guardian 3. School CPO will inform the School CPC and District/Zone/Ward CPC 4. School CPO will investigate and share report with District/Zone/Ward CPC for formal action and/or reporting depending on actions 5. Consequences range from, but are not limited to counseling, warning letter, termination and/or formal police complaint based on severity 6. The case to be documented and shared with District CPC and City CPC at the month end
<p>Indicative Signs:</p> <p>Either low or high severity indicative signs from Categories 1 and 2 above</p>	

Category 4: Sexual Abuse

Accountable Personnel: School CPO and District/Zone/Ward CPO
 Timeline: 7 days from Complaint Registration (Complaint Within 24 Hours of Reporting)

Actions:

Any sexual misconduct or behavior by internal or external stakeholders

Indicative Signs:

In addition to signs from Category 1: In School (Low Severity) and Category 2: In School (High Severity)
 Social Withdrawal, Increased hostility or aggression, Over pleasing behaviour, Drastic change in achievement patterns, Sexualized behaviour, Early sexual activity, Use of abusive sexual language, Psychosomatic illnesses, Pain or swelling in the genital area, Repeated urinary infections, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Eating/sleep disturbances, Anxiety or Indifference, Depression, Suicidal ideation/ attempts

Procedure:

1. Students can report the case to School CPO or any adult in the school who is then responsible to report the case to School CPO after ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the child (this may include a risk assessment or immediate mental/ physical healthcare attention)
2. The complaint is registered with the School CPO and School CPO to give acknowledgment of this to the student and parent/guardian
3. School CPO will inform the School CPC and District/Zone/Ward CPC
4. School CPO will collect additional background information and share report with District/Zone/Ward CPC for formal action and reporting
5. District CPO to lodge formal complaint on Childline (1098) after ensuring safety and wellbeing of child mentally and physically
6. School and District CPC to support child in process and formal investigation, in support with NGO partner
7. The case to be documented and shared with District CPC and City CPC at the month end



Part 3: Policy Implementation and Monitoring

Suggestions on how to roll out your policy post Policy Design

Constitute a Child Protection Committee (CPC)

School CPC	District/Zone/Ward CPC	City CPC
<p>Composition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson - Headmaster • Child Protection Officer - Senior Teacher • Teacher Representatives - At least 2, equal gender distribution • Parent/School Management Committee Representatives - At least 2, equal gender distribution • Social Worker or NGO Representative - Must work in education or child rights 	<p>Composition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson - District/Zone/Ward Officer • Child Protection Officer - Senior Headmaster • Headmaster Representatives - At least 2, equal gender distribution • Parent/School Management Committee Representatives - At least 2, equal gender distribution • Social Worker or NGO Representative - Must work in education or child rights 	<p>Composition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson - Education Officer or equivalent • Child Protection Officer - Deputy Education Officer or equivalent • Senior Headmaster Representatives - At least 2, equal gender distribution • Parent/School Management Committee Representatives - At least 2, equal gender distribution • Social Worker or NGO Representative - Must work in education or child rights

School CPC	District/Zone/Ward CPC	City CPC
<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for school staff capacity building • Maintain partnerships with expert organizations for high risk case support • Support and redressal in case of reported child protection violations • Documentation and monitoring of cases • Reporting of cases to appropriate authorities • Enforcement of CPP in school 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and redressal in case of escalated child protection violations • Documentation and monitoring of district/zone/ward cases • Enforcement of CPP compliance for all district/zone/ward schools 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and redressal in case of escalated child protection violations • Documentation and monitoring of city cases • Enforcement of CPP compliance in government and private schools • Central partnerships with expert organizations for high risk case support

Definitions:

1. Child Protection Officer (CPO) - The nodal person responsible to ensure Child Protection Policy compliance and support/redressal in case of complaints.
2. Child Protection Committee (CPC) - The committee as defined above who will support the CPO in their duties, conduct reviews and implement any additional measures to strengthen the Child Protection Policy.

Chairperson Responsibilities:

1. Ensure draft and enforcement of Child Protection Policy in their domain (School, District/Zone/Ward or City)
2. Plan and rollout of support and capacity building programs for staff in their domain along with the CPO and NGO partners
3. Ensure confidentiality and adherence to process and policy for case support in their domain
4. Follow legal and reporting guidelines, even if complaints are against Child Protection Officer or Head of Institution
5. Conduct appropriate timed quarterly reviews and reporting to higher level CPC

Child Protection Officer Responsibilities:

1. Receive and record all child protection violation complaints in their domain (School, District/Zone/Ward or City)
2. Plan and coordinate of support and capacity building programs for staff in their domain along with Chairperson and NGO partners
3. Ensure confidentiality and adhere to policy and process for case support
4. Follow legal and reporting guidelines, even if complaints are against Chairperson or Head of Institution
5. Communicate with relevant stakeholders

Recommended Topics For Sensitization and Capacity Building Of Stakeholders

District/Zone/Ward/City Representatives	School Headmasters/Head Teachers and CPOs	Teachers
<p>Sensitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of child safety • The need for a Child Protection Policy <p>Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Protection Policy 	<p>Sensitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of child safety • The need for a Child Protection Policy • The role the Headmaster/ Head Teacher/CPO plays in creating a safe environment in school that promotes child safety <p>Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Protection Policy • Conducting sensitization sessions with teachers, School Management Committee, parents and students • How to conduct an investigation • Writing the investigation report 	<p>Sensitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of child safety • The need for a Child Protection Policy • The role the teacher plays in creating a safe environment in the class and school that promotes child safety <p>Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Protection Policy • Conducting sensitization sessions with parents and students

School Management Committee	Parents	Students
<p>Sensitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of child safety. The need for a Child Protection Policy <p>Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Child Protection Policy Steps to be taken if the SMC gets information about a child safety violation case Conducting sensitization sessions with parents 	<p>Sensitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of child safety The need for a Child Protection Policy The role of parents in creating a safe space for the child <p>Capacity Building</p> <p>Steps to be taken if they are aware of a child safety violation case</p>	<p>Sensitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child rights and the importance of child safety The need for a Child Protection Policy The role students play in ensuring the safety of their peers <p>Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps to take if they have been harmed Steps to take if somebody else is harmed

Notes:

1. All CPCs must ensure policy compliance and declaration from staff at their level
2. There must be at minimum, yearly refreshers of the policy and process in addition to capacity building sessions

Post Case Integration Support For Children

Trauma caused by instances of physical, sexual or emotional abuse affects a child deeply, and needs to be understood by all stakeholders around him/her. In almost all cases, the child finds it difficult to process their experience and needs additional support from the environment to do so, which also demands care and sensitivity from the stakeholders around them.

Key stakeholders such as Headmasters, Teachers, school staff, counselors, peers and parents play an important role in integrating the child back into school after a traumatic experience, and must function with the utmost sensitivity and care.

To ensure that children are not ostracized, labeled or experience any further trauma, it is highly recommended that the following focus areas are kept at the forefront of child support:

- Confidentiality - No information about the case of physical, sexual or emotional abuse should be shared with anyone other than professionals, the CPC or anyone directly involved in the case, also only with consent of the child
- Empathy - The child may have a completely different context or perspective, and this needs to be accounted for and empathized with
- Positive reinforcement - The child must be given unconditional positive reinforcement, care and affection through verbal and non verbal communication; and a non-judgemental support system must be created
- Sense of security and calm - There should be frequent and calming communication with the child to help them feel safe and secure
- Age and context appropriate communication - Any verbal and non verbal communication should be age and context appropriate
- Monitoring the environment - Care must be taken for the child to feel physically and emotionally safe, which can include zero tolerance for bullying, gossip or any kind of trauma inducing communication
- Sensitization of stakeholders - All staff in school must be appropriately upskilled on stereotypes, prejudice, stigma and taboos to ensure they do not communicate anything that may further harm the child
- Encouraging active participation - School staff must ensure that the student is encouraged to participate in school activities and does so at a pace they feel comfortable with; if necessary, they may also need to facilitate this transition
- Monitoring academic and non-academic performance - The child's progress in school across academic and non-academic activities must be monitored to ensure that they are not facing any challenges with integrating back into school; this is critical to decide on further support
- Expert support - In many cases, the child may require expert mental health support in case they are showing signs of emotional distress after monitoring, and this can be extended to parents if required as well

Conclusion

It has been empirically proven ([Source 1](#), [Source 2](#) and [Source 3](#)) that creating a physically, emotionally and socially safe learning environment has major effects on student learning outcomes. The organizations involved in this white paper emphasize the importance of safe learning environments operationally, and have seen shifts in learning outcomes in the public and private schools they work with. Hearing from students directly:

“ When I go to school I feel very happy because in school I feel nice and I feel safe. My friends and my didis make me feel safe. My didis always tell me that the school is for you to ask questions. When I ask questions my Didi listens to me. Again and again Didis keep telling us and asking us: Did you understand? Explain what you understood. We discuss with our friends in class. Even if those questions are not about studies, my Didi explains and gets the class to discuss and talk so I feel I can share my questions and also share my feelings. My Didis make me feel that they trust me and whatever I tell they will keep it to themselves. My Didi also talks about what I can do to keep myself safe. When I feel something is not right sometimes I feel scared to share with my parents but I feel free to share with my didis.”
12 year old student from Mumbai

“ I was able to do all things which I want when our classes started I was shy but because of my teacher counselling I can express my opinion in front of everyone, I was very happy that I am a strong enough for myself I don't need any support, and I was able to raise my voice, and talk with Everyone I want, I felt very supportive, and very happy, that because of safe school environment I was able to do want I want.”
16 year old student from Pune

“ A safe school environment means a lot to me. Suddenly I got some people who actually were interested to hear me out. It took awhile for me to understand how to exercise my voice correctly. Diversity was appreciated here. As a result, even I became tolerant and started encouraging diversity. I felt so relaxed. At that time I understood how it feels to be ourselves.”
16 year old student from Pune

“ I felt very glad to have a place where I can share my view without any restriction. Safe school environment is not restricted to school only but also with parents who also show their interest in my academic and holistic development. The most important thing for me, a safe school is a place where we learn moral values and understand the emotions of others. Compassion is what I have developed through my school journey. The holistic development always helps to enhance myself, I was not strong in academics but the value sports teaches that helped me in academics too. To be honest, when you get an opportunity to explore new things and places then you learn the value of life.”

16 year old student from Pune

“ In my safe school environment my teachers made me realise that disability is not my fault but blaming self for it was a fault. My teachers encouraged me to study and take part in different activities. I found my talent in art and drawing. They made me realise nothing is impossible and the word itself has “I’m possible”.”

17 year old student from Pune

“ I feel I am safe in school. When it is time to go home my Didi never would let me go till my grandmother came to take me from school. Sometimes after extra class or activities my grandmother would not come my Didi would drop me home. She will not leave me alone in school or she will not let me go alone home. I feel very safe. In class also didis ask again and again that if you do not understand anything ask and then Didi explains or sometimes my friends in class also explain to me. I can share with my mother, father and my didis if I feel somebody is touching my private parts. In school also our didis told us about how we can keep ourselves safe and what can I do, whom can I talk to.”

12 year old student from Mumbai

While the focus on child safety and protection is the collective responsibility of the entire ecosystem and can be implemented through multiple approaches; a focus on defining and creating principles, processes, structures and mechanisms for redressal has been successful in creating the base for a learning environment where students are supported by a protective framework and have adequate measures in case of violations.

Key aspects in creating this foundation for safe learning environments are reinforcement and consistency. This is most pertinent in a sociocultural context that normalizes harsh consequences for student behavior that is characteristic of students in certain stages of development or coming from difficult socioeconomic backgrounds. The combination of raising awareness on the detrimental effects of unsafe learning environments and then following up with regular capacity building to respond to difficult student behavior, supported by a robust framework is a simple process that can equip teachers to deliver to the best of their ability.

A marked shift in the narrative around the importance of child safety and protection will require Government bodies, schools and civil society organizations to come together with an integrated approach. Through this white paper and the NEP 2020, we hope to spark the conversation around creating safe and conducive learning environments for all students across the country, to reach the vision of educational equity.

Annexures

Annexure 1 - Child Protection Violation Investigation Protocol and Process

- 1. Ensure complete confidentiality** to both the alleged offender and the child. The CPO should explain to the students and all individuals involved in the investigation that all information gathered will remain confidential to the extent possible for a thorough investigation. It should also be explained that to conduct an effective investigation, some information will be revealed to the accused and potential witnesses, but that information will be shared only on a “need to know” basis.
- 2. Provide Protection to the alleged complainant:** One of the first considerations may be the need to take immediate measures for the protection of the complainant. Separating the alleged complainant from the respondent may be necessary to guard against continued harassment or retaliation. The alleged respondent should be asked to not go to school till the investigation is completed in cases of Category 2 or 4. In all cases (of all categories), the respondent should not have direct or indirect contact with the complainant.
- 3. Select the Investigation Committee:** The appropriate investigator should possess all the following:
 - An ability to investigate objectively without bias
 - No stake in the outcome. The investigator should not have a personal relationship with the involved parties. The outcome should not directly affect the investigator’s position within the organization
 - Strong interpersonal skills to build a rapport with the parties involved and to be perceived as neutral and fair
 - Attention to detail
 - The right temperament to conduct interviews. Maturity and ability to maintain confidentiality
- 4. Create a plan for investigation:** An investigation must be planned to be effective and properly executed. A complete plan should include an outline of the issue, the list of people that should be spoken to, sources for information and evidence, interview questions targeted to elicit crucial information and details (CPC should weigh in on the questions), and a process for retention of documentation (e.g., interview notes and emails that could be treated as evidence).

5. Develop Interview Questions and Conduct Interviews: Questions should be developed ahead of time in the planning stage, although additional questions will be added throughout the investigation as more evidence and information are shared. Good questions are relevant and designed to draw out facts without leading the interviewee; they should be open-ended to elicit as much information as possible.

The Four Types of Questions are given in the table below. **Try and ask only open ended questions.** The protocol for investigation is detailed below:

Open Ended Questions	Focused Questions	Closed Ended Questions	Leading Questions
Prompting a free narrative: "Tell me what happened", "What happened next?", or "What else happened?" Questions aiming to clarify/elaborate the answer: "You mentioned XYZ, tell me more about that" and so on.	What? – e.g. "What color was the shirt he was wearing?" (if the child mentioned a shirt) Who? – e.g. "Who was with him?" Where? – e.g. "Where did he touch you?" (if the child mentioned that they were touched) When? – e.g. "When did this happen?" How? – e.g. "How did you get away?"	Yes/No questions – e.g. "Did he threaten you?" Multiple choice questions – e.g. "Was he standing up or sitting down?"	For Example: "He pinched you, isn't that so?", "This is what happened, isn't it?"

Investigation Protocol:

(Ensure that the investigation is conducted in the language the child is most comfortable with, and thus also select the appropriate investigator)

Introduction

Introductions, the process, code of conduct.

Rapport Building

"I want to get to know you better. Tell me your hobbies. What do you like most about school?"

Setting Context

"I've come to talk to you about an incident that might have made you feel bad/uncomfortable/unsafe and want to know how you're doing, can we talk about it?"

The Substantive Part of the Interview

- Open-ended questions on what happened, how it made them feel, confirming details and if they can recount what happened (without going into too much detail)
- Investigating the event(s) – open-ended questions: how did it start/what exactly happened/how it ended
- Differentiating the event(s) – "Did this happen just once, or more?", "What happened at the end/at the beginning/other time?", whenever they can remember best

Eliciting Information That Has Not Been Mentioned by the Child

Ask if they want to share more about a detail or incident you know they haven't specifically mentioned if:

- You know that a conversation took place during which the child revealed some information or mentioned some details
- The child has/had traumas and physical signs of abuse
- The information was given in someone else's presence

Information About the Disclosure

Who knows about what happened? How did they find out? Who was the first to find out? Is there anyone else who knows?

Repeat for every event described by the child.

Closing

Express gratitude for their help.

"Is there anything else that you think I should know?"

"Is there anything that you want to tell me?"

"Is there anything that you want to ask me?"

Hand out a card with your name, surname and telephone number.

Neutral Topic

Spend a couple of minutes talking about a neutral topic:

"What are you going to do today after you leave here?"

Do Nots:

- Starting the questioning/interview without establishing the rules of behaviour and by skipping the 'introduction' step
- Asking a question using the word 'why'
- Asking suggestive/leading questions
- Influencing behavior
- Hurrying the child
- Asking unclear or difficult questions
- Asking the child to imagine or to guess

Do's:

- Following the protocol structure
- Explaining the aim and significance of the questioning/interview
- Establishing contact
- Prompting a free narrative
- Using open-ended questions to their fullest and in an adequate manner
- Highlighting the specific piece of information mentioned by the child in order to specify some details

Post Investigation Process:

Charges Substantiated/Not Substantiated and Recorded: Through the investigation, the investigator must be careful not to arrive at any conclusions before all the facts are available. Once the interviews are conducted, other necessary procedures, such as evidence collection, should be completed. The investigator will evaluate all the information for a formal recommendation. The CPC should make the final determination of any actions that are warranted based on the investigative report. The CPC must consider all the parties involved as well as organizational processes, not just whether the accused is guilty, in the final determination.

Close the Investigation: Once a decision is made, the CPO should update the Salesforce record, add the appropriate information and check the box 'Investigation Completed'. Post support rollout or action depending on the case, they must then check 'Action Completed and Case Closed' for automatic mails to go out to the complainant. It is also important to let the complainant know that the organization took the complaint seriously and took appropriate action. The CPC must ensure the complainant agrees that he or she has been properly heard and understood, even if he or she is not in agreement with the results. The investigator should set a time frame to follow up with the complainant to ensure there are no other issues and that he or she is settling back into the work environment. The CPC should encourage communication and follow-up until the complainant is comfortable again. Finally, the investigator should remind all parties to preserve confidentiality as appropriate.

Develop Written Summary Investigation Results: If operating on the premise that every investigation of a serious nature could potentially be heard and reviewed by a court, the CPC/CPO should prepare a final investigative report as per the template. The CPO should keep a clear paper trail of the evidence, such as examining documentation of previous employee behavior and incidents. The investigator should have a clear record of everything done and any findings as well as other steps taken during the investigation. CPC should also document interviews with the accused, the accuser and witnesses. Investigators should ensure their notes from interviews are as factual as possible, contain as much relevant information as possible, are dated and indicate the duration and time of the interviews.

The final report should summarize the following:

- The incident or issues investigated, including dates
- Parties involved
- Key factual and credibility findings, including sources referenced
- Employer policies or guidelines and their applicability to the investigation
- Specific conclusions
- Party (or parties) responsible for making the final determination
- Issues that could not be resolved and reasons for lack of resolution
- Reasons for extension beyond stipulated time for case closure
- Actions taken

The goal of the document is to ensure that if a court, jury or government agency were to review it, the reviewers would conclude that the CPC took the situation seriously, responded immediately and appropriately, and had a documented good-faith basis for any actions taken during or as a result of the investigation.

Annexure 2 - Reporting Format

1. Details of the person filing the complaint
 - Name:
 - Phone number:
 - Email ID:
 - Designation:
 - Place of work:
 - Nature of association or relationship with the alleged complainant:

2. Details of the alleged complainant(s)
 - Name:
 - Gender:
 - Age:
 - City:
 - Educational Institute:
 - Class/Grade:
 - Names of the parents/guardians of the alleged complainant:
 - Address of the parents/guardians of the alleged complainant:
 - Phone numbers of the parents/guardians of the alleged complainant:

3. Details of the Incident
 - Nature of the Incident:
 - Description of the Incident:
 - Frequency of the Incident:
 - Date of the Incident:
 - Location of the Incident:
 - Name of the alleged offender:
 - Names of the witnesses to the Incident:

4. Signature of the person filing the complaint
 - Signature:
 - Date:
 - Place:

Annexure 3 - Online Child Safety Guidelines

With the rise in online learning during the pandemic lockdown and increasing access to virtual learning platforms across India, there is a marked shift in the learning environment and ways in which students and Fellows interact. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students in an online learning environment.

The objectives of these guidelines are to **reinforce child safety measures in the virtual space as an extension of the Child Protection Policy** and to **model professional conduct online as role models for students**.

Since working together online means students and teacher are interacting in a more informal setting, here are a few guidelines to follow:

Guidelines For Teachers:

1. Continue to abide by the recommendations and guidelines as outlined in the Child Protection Policy to set clear professional standards.
2. In case of suspected or observed child abuse of any kind, follow the reporting process outlined in the Child Protection Policy. Proactively check on the wellbeing of your students.
3. Maintain communication channels on appropriate platforms, do not interact with students over Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok or Twitter.
4. Ensure that your broadcasting location, clothing, surrounding environment, language, behavior, and body language is professional, appropriate, and culturally sensitive.
5. Use your full name as a display name in virtual spaces that you interact with students, do not use abbreviations, nicknames or characters that resemble alphabets.
6. Set up norms with your students about what can be shared on the group, and appropriate timings to do so.
7. Avoid sharing personal details, contact information, and details of your day to day life unless in the context of a learning session.
8. Check that the online learning platform you are using is secure and whether you have control over any intrusions, screen sharing or unwanted attendees.
9. Advise your students to engage in the learning session from a common space within

earshot of parents/guardians wherever possible or in a space known to parents/guardians.

10. Engage with parents/guardians by sharing a digital learning plan and schedule to inform them of times of interaction.
11. Ensure that the content you are creating, using, or sharing is age-appropriate and culturally sensitive.
12. Do not schedule sessions beyond 7PM unless absolutely otherwise not possible, and only do so after informing the student(s) and parent(s) about any upcoming session at least 48 hours in advance.
13. Do not share student work/data/opinions or images/videos from online learning sessions without taking consent from the student(s) involved.

Guidelines For Students:

1. Students must use their full name and an appropriate profile picture on any platform they're interacting with other students and teachers.
2. Students must not share personal information about themselves or anyone else on any platforms.
3. Students must not share images, videos or audio clips with personal or inappropriate content of themselves or anyone else.
4. Students must inform their parents/guardians about any and all online sessions and interactions.

Access to online learning also presents risks to student safety that you as a teacher or caregiver will need to be cognizant of. These may include, but are not limited to:

1. Cyberbullying, harassment, blackmail or intimidation.
2. Sharing inappropriate content of a sexual or violent nature, or content that can harm, instigate, target or otherwise spread misinformation.
3. Impersonation or identity theft.
4. Sharing of fake news.
5. Sharing personal information and media.

If you suspect or have noticed signs of any of the above risks, or have seen/heard about violation(s) of the guidelines, please contact your **Child Protection Officer**.

References

1. [STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, Child Care Institutions - Union Territory Child Protection Society Under The Aegis of Department of Social Welfare, Women & Child Development, Chandigarh Administration](#)
2. [Policy on Child Safeguarding \(“Child Safeguarding Policy” or CSP\)](#)
3. [Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection](#)
4. [KARNATAKA STATE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – 2016](#)
5. [AN ADVISORY FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN SCHOOLS](#)
6. [National Disaster Management Guidelines - School Safety Policy](#)

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