



# Child Protection Policy



Review frequency: Annual  
Policy written by: Student Wellbeing Services  
Policy written in: September 2016.  
Last review date: November 2021  
Last reviewed by: Student Wellbeing Services

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### **Our Mission**

The European School provides an exceptional education in a nurturing and academically challenging environment, inspiring each student to achieve their personal best and become an influential and socially responsible global citizen.

### **Our Values**

Our values-driven international education is expressed through core values that are woven into every academic and extracurricular activity at the European School. We actively promote four values that form the basis of everything we do. They include:

- ◆ Leading through innovation
- ◆ Pursuing excellence
- ◆ Growing by learning
- ◆ Global citizenship

With these values at our core, we encourage independent learning and empower students to embrace responsibility. Students at ES learn to celebrate diversity in a spirit of understanding and tolerance that helps them become citizens of the world.

### **We are committed to:**

Offer inclusive, diverse, and innovative learning communities.

Develop, support, and empower our students intellectually, creatively, socially, physically, and ethically in harmony with Georgian culture.

Focus on academic excellence and integrity.

Creating lifelong learners.

**Dear Parents,**

I am writing to inform you of a matter that is of sincere personal interest to our school and is one that I hope is of utmost importance to all of you. I would like you to know that the European School has adopted a Child Protection Policy to guide our staff and families in matters related to the health, safety, and care of children in attendance at our school. In fact, I am required by this policy to send this letter to parents at the beginning of each school year. Thus, with this letter, not only am I fulfilling my assigned duties, but I also have the opportunity to write to you about this important aspect of our school program.

The European School Child Protection Policy is based on Georgian law and on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of which Georgia is a signatory. These two key articles from the U.N Conventional on the Rights of the Child are important, and we wish to draw your attention to them:

**Article 19.** Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

**Article 34.** Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

By enrolling your child at European School, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by the European School Board. All of us at European School want you to know that we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children. That is why European School has endorsed a Child Protection Policy that defines the standards by which all European School students should be always treated with respect and dignity.

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

- ◆ Provide age-appropriate lessons for all grade levels to help students understand personal safety, needs, and rights
- ◆ Provide parent materials and information sessions to help you better understand our programs and policy
- ◆ Annually train faculty to recognize and report issues of abuse and neglect.

Let us work together at home and school to ensure that our children are safe and knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and each other, so they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment. I thank you for your support for our efforts, and I invite you to contact your school Child Protection Officer regarding any further questions you may have.

**Sophio Bazadze, Director**

# Child Protection Policy

Child abuse and neglect are concerns throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. The European School endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Georgia is a signatory.

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

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

Notification of all suspected cases of violence against children and its further control will be carried out under the present policy, Resolution N437 of the Government of Georgia of September 12, 2016 "On Protection of Child Protection Referral (Referral) Procedures" and the requirements of the legislation. In addition, alleged cases of child abuse will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

The European School seeks to be a haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. As such, The European School shares this policy document via email with the parents / legal guardians of all students enrolled in the school. This document is also available on the school's official website. The European School introduces this policy document to students, conducts workshops for the whole school team and seeks to implement safe recruitment practices to ensure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, European School will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process, keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

The European School child protection policy works for the child, for the family, and our community.

## How are abuse and neglect defined?

Definitions of abuse are complex and based on various cultures of child-rearing behaviors, gender and role responsibilities, and expectations. Child abuse is an action (or failure to act) that results in harm to a child or puts a child at risk of harm.

More specifically, violence is a violation of the constitutional rights and freedoms of a child involving neglect and/or physical, psychological, economic, sexual violence, or coercion, regardless of whether the act was/is intentional and/or unintentional.

**Violence is considered:**

**Physical violence** - beatings, torture, damage to health, unlawful deprivation of liberty, or any other act, including the act of corporal punishment of a child, that causes physical pain or suffering. Failure to comply with health requirements, resulting in injury or death to the child.

**Sexual abuse** - sexual intercourse with a child through violence, threats of violence, or victim helplessness, as well as sexual intercourse with a child without violence with the prior knowledge of an adult under 16 years of age, other sexual acts, or fornication.

**Psychological violence** - abuse, blackmail, humiliation, threats, or other such acts, including those committed by a family member / against a child under Article 111 of the Criminal Code (and liability for the domestic crime) and/or under Article 1261 (domestic violence). Emotional stress that causes or violates a child's honor and dignity.

**Economic violence** - an act that results in the restriction of the right to food, housing, and other conditions of normal development, the exercise of property and labor rights, as well as the use of the co-owned property and the right to dispose of one's share.

**Coercion** - the physical or psychological coercion of a child to perform or not to perform an action for which he or she has the right to refrain or/or to refrain from acting against his or her will. These include forced marriage, engaging in and/or engaging in anti-social activities, substance abuse, begging, and child labor, including petty trafficking, which restricts his or her basic rights (education, healthy physical and mental development). Complete and/or partial misappropriation of child labor earnings will be considered forced.

**Neglect** - failure of a parent/parents, other legal representatives, and/or another responsible person to meet the child's physical (including food, hygiene, housing), psychological needs, restriction of basic education, safety hazards, birth registration, and/or child identification documents, failure to take the necessary actions for the settlement, as well as for the use of medical and other services, in case if the parent (s), other legal representative and/or other responsible person has (have) appropriate information, opportunity and has access to the relevant services.

**Examples of the violation of the rights of the child**

**Physical abuse is:**

- ◆ Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function, death; and/or
- ◆ Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or

- ◆ Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering; and/or
- ◆ Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy; and/or
- ◆ Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child; and/or
- ◆ Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above

**Possible indicators of physical abuse**

Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body  
 Bruises of different ages (various colors)  
 Injuries reflecting the shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand)  
 Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation  
 Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks  
 Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette  
 Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso  
 Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child  
 Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line  
 Unexplained laceration, abrasions, or fractures

**Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs within their environment.**

- ◆ Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision – this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship, such as leaving children unsupervised at home for an extended period
- ◆ Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment); and/or
- ◆ Emotional (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs, specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge the presence of the child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.)

**Possible indicators of neglect**

The child is unwashed or hungry  
 Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance  
 Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school  
 The child does not want to go home  
 Both parents or legal guardians are absent for any period of 24 hours or greater  
 Parents cannot be reached in the case of an emergency

**Sexual abuse** is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the host country or school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or childcare purposes. Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and is not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with more insidious results.

The planning referred to as grooming, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt, and shame for the sexual behavior of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so is more difficult to report.

Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that sex is a form of love, so tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

**Possible indicators of sexual abuse**

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

**Responding to an alleged case of violence**

**Alleged child abuse may be indicated by one or more of the following:**

- A) The presence of signs of bodily injury on the child (bruises of different colors, wounds, and scratches of different degrees, yaws, difficulty walking, swollen parts of the body, fractures, burn marks, bruises, and other injuries).
- B) The child becomes suspicious (the child is agitated, depressed, has fears, does not want to return home, has changed his character radically, etc.).
- C) The child does not come and/or comes irregularly to school.
- D) The child is not registered, or the child does not have a birth certificate, nor is he/she under the supervision of a pediatrician/doctor.
- E) The child is neglected, significantly retarded in physical development, the child has a suspicious appearance - unclean face and body, wears dirty and/or seasonally unsuitable clothes, is fed with food waste.
- F) Spends time unsupervised, his/her environment contains threats to the child's health and development, lives with other members of the group of children.

- G) Is engaged in labor activities, including petty trade, which leads to the violation of his / her basic rights (education, healthy physical and mental development).
- H) The child is used and involved in work unsuitable for his / her age and/or anti-social activities (asks for mercy/begs, spends an unreasonably long time on the street).
- I) the child often moves with a stranger/person without a relative or is under the constant supervision of strangers and/or provides them with services.
- J) any other factors that may indicate child abuse.

**Step 1.** In case of suspicion of child abuse, the teacher / any other school staff member should immediately notify the relevant head of the program (in the case of international programs), the program coordinator (in the case of the Georgian program), or the program psychologist.

This information must be provided to the Program Officers / Program Coordinator and to the Child Protection Officer no later than 24 hours. An investigation/fact study is initiated with the participation of the school doctor, psychologist, and child rights officer to determine whether the suspicion is well-founded.

**Procedures to be implemented:**

- Interview with the student.
- If necessary, interview employees regarding the case.
- Interview with school staff to find out more about the student and find out other work-related circumstances.
- Informing the school principal about the progress of the case.
- Planning next steps.

In case of reasonable suspicion of child abuse, the Child Rights Protection Officer prepares/completes a document provided by law (Child Protection Application Card), which is sent to the relevant territorial unit of the legal entity of public care and victims of trafficking, the relevant territorial unit by mail, fax or, with an electronic document management system, if available. In case of emergency, the information about child abuse is immediately reported to the police, the ambulance brigade is called and the hotline for victims of state care and trafficking is notified to the hotline and/or in writing.

For the purposes of this policy and the purposes of child protection referral (referral) procedures provided for in the Resolution N437 of the Government of Georgia of 12 September 2016 on the Protection of Child Protection Referral Procedures, a reasonable doubt may arise if the following circumstances exist:

- A) a statement by a child that he or she has been or has been abused.
- B) Inability of the child to explain the causes of the injury.
- C) A witness statement that he witnessed the fact of violence.
- D) Inadequate behavior of the parent / legal representative / other responsible person, such as:
  - Da) Inconsistency of the severity of the child's injury with the parent / legal guardian / other responsible person about the injury.

Db) the inconsistency of the severity of the child's injury between the stories of different people about receiving the injury.

Dc) Permanent change of the narrative details of the parent / legal representative / other responsible person.

Dd) Inadequate response of the parent / legal representative / other responsible person to the child's injury.

D.e) Explaining the cause of the injury to the child.

E) other circumstances that are more likely to give rise to the suspicion that the child was abused.

**All suspicious cases will be documented, with full confidentiality.**

**Stage 2.** Based on the information obtained, the Student Wellbeing Service will develop an action plan to support the student and family:

Possible actions:

- Interview with the child's legal representatives.
- Interview the child with a school psychologist for more information.
- Further observation of the student in the learning environment by a school psychologist.
- Referral of the child / legal representative to the relevant authorized service.
- Other actions.

If allegations of child abuse relate to a European School staff member or teacher, the school principal acts in accordance with the school code of ethics and bylaws.

**Stage 3.** In case of suspicion / reasonable suspicion of violence against a child or in a justified case:

. The Student Wellbeing Service under the guidance of the Child Protection Officer will continue to work with the child and family to provide appropriate assistance.

. The child protection officer / school psychologist informs the child teachers and the school principal about the support measures taken.

. The child protection officer / school psychologist will provide teachers with the necessary materials and behavioral strategies.

. The school principal will have communication with the relevant government agencies about the further achievements and development of the child in the school.

**Confidentiality:**

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's confidential records file. Records sent to schools to which their student may transfer will be flagged to let the receiving school know there is a confidential file for the child.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by CPO and the Student Wellbeing Service staff. Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example: Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicide ideation. Cases reported for investigation and outside resources:

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

Inappropriate / unacceptable behaviors / actions and recommendations in dealing with students

Behaviours Inappropriate to the Teacher-Student Relationship

Actions that are inappropriate and not tolerated by the school include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ unwanted physical contact (e.g., hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing) or the threat of the same.
- ◆ sexual harassment (including romantic relationships between teachers and students) or harassment based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
- ◆ loss of personal civility including shouting, personal attacks, or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects).
- ◆ discrimination of any form including in teaching and assessment based upon age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

Recommendations Regarding Touching Students

Teachers and other adults working in the school must exercise conscious judgment in determining whether to touch students and under what circumstances.

**To exercise good judgment regarding touching, teachers and other school staff must consider a range of factors:**

1. Age of the child:

It is very difficult to avoid touching kindergarten and younger primary school students in a classroom. However, as students grow older, the acceptability of touching and hugging decreases. Middle school female students, for instance, are extremely conscious of their sexuality. Very little touching is acceptable with students in grades nine and above.

2. Educator's gender:

Male educators must review their behavior very carefully to be certain it cannot be misinterpreted. However, females are not immune.

3. Cultural/Personal factors:

Educators need to be sensitive to students' individual and cultural preferences. If a student indicates by word or action that he/she is not comfortable with touching, the educator should avoid physical contact with that student unless such contact is necessary for safety reasons.

Keep in mind that children who have previously been sexually abused may misperceive a neutral touch as sexual touch.

4. Common problem areas – to be avoided when possible:

- a) Repeated one-to-one contact with an individual student.
- b) social activities with students (off-campus).
- c) Driving students in cars.
- d) Giving gifts to students.

e) Writing cards, notes, or letters to students.

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