

Child Protection-Safeguarding Policy

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Child Protection-Safeguarding Policy

1. FRAMEWORK FOR SAFEGUARDING IST

IST takes our values and legal responsibility to safeguard the welfare of our students. We have committed to rigorous systems, practices, and policies to prevent and respond to student harm that arises. Our Child Protection Policy is based on [International and Estonian Law for the safeguarding of children](#), including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ([UNCRC](#)) of which Estonia is a signatory. This policy defines the standards that we support in terms of how we want students to be treated, that being with respect and dignity at all times.

Our commitment is to provide a safe and caring environment for our students. In order to promote the welfare of students, we have implemented a comprehensive Child Protection Policy which defines our standards for how we want students to be treated.

This Policy particularly supports and gives importance to articles 3, 19, 34, and 39 of the *UNCRC* :

- In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (article 3).
- We must do all we can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and bad treatment (article 19).
- Undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (article 34).
- Take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of abuse or neglect (article 39).

1. PREVENTION OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Safeguarding Leads - Roles and Responsibilities

In order to prevent abuse and neglect, different filters have been implemented in IST including recruitment, risk management, study planning, strategic planning, student support, employee performance standards, partner agreements, and communications and behaviour.

IST has multiple agents serving as the main manager and contact persons for all aspects of the Safeguarding Program, which have the duty to report directly to the Director or Deputy, who directly handle the contacts with the different child protection entities in Estonia.

In addition, IST has specifically trained members of divisional response teams which include the Director, Deputy director, IB Coordinators, and Counsellors. Details of additional roles holding specific responsibilities for the job can be found in their respective job descriptions.

Risk Assessment Safeguarding and Training For Staff

IST provides training to all of its staff, regardless of whether they work with students or not, these include teachers, support teachers, shadow teachers, coordinators, managers, and other administrative staff. Each of the training is adapted to the positions of the staff members. This is a vital component in order to implement a good Safeguarding program for our students at IST.

These training take place every year and include:

Fire Drills

- _ Fire drills are held occasionally during the school year as part of the school's disaster/emergency plan.
- _ Fire evacuation charts are posted throughout the school building. It is of utmost importance to clear the building in a silent, quick, and orderly manner.

Safety Drills – the responsibilities of the crisis team are defined in the Emergency Plan.

First Aid – provided annually to most of pedagogical and administrative staff.

Safeguarding Lessons for Students

This is one of the essential components of good security, our training includes all PK-12 students, aftercare, and extracurricular activities. Safety lessons are structured with the student's age and grade in mind. During the lesson, we include and strengthen our school values which highlight that our students are Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-Minded, Caring, Risk-Takers, Balanced, and Reflective. These releases are essential for harm prevention.

Primary years and Elementary School Safeguarding Lessons

At IST we provide our students with teaching that encompasses privacy, personal space, bullying prevention, and emergency events which are adapted to the age and grade of each student. The lessons are taught by the homeroom teacher with the guidance of the school counsellor.

Middle Years School Safeguarding Lessons

At the MYP levels, we have focused on teaching our students digital safety content, how to recognize abuse and how to report it, types of relationships, how to communicate, and how our body works. These contents are focused on the different problems that our students could face in their day to day. Lessons are taught by the classroom teacher with the guidance of the school counsellor and IT management.

Diploma Programme Safeguarding Lessons

Our diploma program students have a very similar safeguarding program to the MYP, working deeper into topics, these include healthy relationships, good decision-making, sex education, and social media behavior. Which are taught throughout the school year. Lessons are taught by the classroom teacher, and DP coordinator, with the guidance of the school counselor and IT management.

2. SAFE RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

Our hiring practices are characterized by a comprehensive series of steps beginning with the posting of faculty positions or other positions necessary for our smooth operation. For this, we use the official portals of our school and other means for these reasons.

We establish a period for reviewing the objectives and performance of each of the candidates. Followed by a thorough interview process where we focus on collecting all the necessary information for each position, gathering professional references, academic references, previous places of employment, criminal references, or police records.

We make sure to hire only the best professionals to ensure the well-being and a good academic experience of our students. As conditions of employment, our teachers follow our code of conduct reflected in our [Human Resources policy](#).

3. Online safety

At IST we believe that the safe use of technology requires a proper technology orientation for our students, with specific online and offline behavior that should model IST's core values. The students are learning about the Appropriate Use of technology and Technology Leadership in which the educators teach the students about the following types of behaviors that demonstrate the following:

- _ Principal: We act responsibly and with integrity. We are honest and respectful.
- _ Risk takers: We take risks and learn from failure. We are resilient.
- _ Caring: We act with empathy, caring for our communities and the world. We are kind and thoughtful.

The IST Appropriate Use agreement is based on these values and students are expected to behave accordingly. Great effort has been made to provide students with quality equipment (computers, tablets) and easy-to-use software. The following guidelines have been established to ensure that students who are using technology at IST are safe, legal, proud, and kind. Students and families must understand that they have a great opportunity to:

- _ Have access to information at any time and become critical users of that information.
- _ Organize information and tasks more effectively and consistently.

- _ Have seamless integration between school and home learning.
- _ Develop skills that encourage personal productivity, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.
- _ Develop a high level of responsibility for the care and use of the laptop.
- _ Take advantage of interacting with others through global connections.
- _ Interact with others to build their understanding of a topic.
- _ Apply skills, concepts, and ideas related to technology in all classes.
- _ Have the privilege of access to the IST wireless network.

General Guidelines

- _ The use of laptops/iPads and the wireless network at school is for the purpose of learning the IST curriculum.
- _ All regulations are in effect before, during, and after school hours.
- _ Headphones are prohibited in class unless requested by faculty.
- _ Students may not play games on their computers while at school.

4. DATA PROTECTION AND SAFE COMMUNICATION

At IST we limit ourselves to using non-official social networks as a means of communication with parents, students, or other institutions.

Our team is obligated to use the official means of communication of our institution, such as Toddle, phone calls, school emails, photos, and videos.

The following guidelines are set in place to respect the data protection

1. Under any circumstances should use phone calls, text messages, social media, email, Google chat, or similar technology to communicate with students in ways that are outside of your professional relationship and responsibilities with students.
2. Never upload or post defamatory, obscene, abusive, harmful content or content that may affect the image of the school community.
3. All members of IST have the responsibility to notify if they have noticed another member using the communication networks to publish defamatory or harmful content.
4. It is completely prohibited to disclose information about our students to third parties.
5. It is prohibited the use of applications or any technology that violates legal recommendations or the terms and conditions of the service with our students.

Other communication and data protection guidelines are reflected in our [communication policy](#) and Data Protection policy.

4. CONCEPTUALISING CHILD SAFEGUARDING

It is important to be clear about the meaning of the terms safeguards and protection of children, which can be confusing.

Safeguarding is the actions that are implemented in order to prevent and respond to ensure the well-being of students and provide them with a safe environment. However, child protection treats each child individually, considering their vulnerability or whether their rights have been violated.

Childing maltreatment:

- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation

Peers on peers' harms:

- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Sexual Misconduct
- Youth involved Sexual images
- Hostile Environment
- Harassment

Adult Behavioral Violations with Students:

- Violation of behavior management expectations
- Violation of physical contact expectations
- Violation of safe photo, videos, other images/media expectations
- Breach of confidentiality
- Poor professional judgment
- Abuse of power, the position of trust, and/or authority
- Violation of professional behavior standards

5. SAFEGUARDING REPORTING PROCESS

Filing a Complaint

Students and staff members are mandated to report any incident of abuse or neglect to the child protection officer (*CPO – currently, our learning support coordinator in this role*), any staff member (*Trusted Adult*), the respective agency, or local authorities. Except the students' right to file a complaint, all staff members are obliged to report regularly on pupils' well-being, any abuse or other incidents to the CPO at the IST (Counselor, Coordinators, Director).

These reports come from a variety of different adult or student sources and are reported in-person or through an email. That is, IST considers it to be a collective responsibility to ensure that children are protected in a safe, secure, and positive environment. After thoroughly evaluating the report, the CPO (or Trusted Adults) determines whether the incident needs further attention. After the reasonable cause is defined, the report is referred to the director of IST.

The school shall not hold responsible or fault any school employee making a report of abuse that is later judged to be false unless it can be demonstrated that the person wilfully and intentionally falsified a report. If the suspected offender is a staff member of IST, the report is submitted to the CPO or director of IST, and the parents of the student are informed. The employee can be either completely suspended or temporarily isolated from the kid, all children, or the school upon the decision of the director.

Reporting Suspected Family Childing Maltreatment and Response Process

Students are mandated to report any incident of abuse or neglect that occurs at home. A trusted Adult (any staff member) communicates the incident with CPO and fills in *Suspected Childing maltreatment*. A person must report or act "as soon as reasonably practicable." CPO builds a school-based response team to investigate the case and address the report. All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's confidential school records file. The *response team* may:

- Discuss the incident with the child to get more information.
- In-class observations and information from other teachers.
- Meet with the family to present school concerns.
- Refer the student and family to other professional counseling.

During the resettlement of the incident (if the parents are found guilty), the parents receive a *notice* which they have to sign. The notice would include:

- The parents had agreed on the school conditions and understood our concerns.
- The parents agree to work on avoiding similar incidents and look on behalf of the child's well-being.

If the incidents of family abuse or neglect *continue*, and the school cannot ensure that a child is safe to return home after a concern is raised, the school will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency to take action on the matter. If after all interventions are exercised and safety concerns around the child's well-being remain, *the school reserves the right to disenroll the family* based on a committed partnership between home and school. In such cases, IST compromised to communicate confidentially with the accepting school to ensure that ongoing safety protections are maintained for the child.

Peer-on-Peer Harm and Response Process

This type of conflict happens when children may exhibit behaviors that can be harmful to themselves and those around them. These types of behavior can occur at school, off-campus, or online.

Such behaviors may include bullying and cyberbullying, sexual misconduct, sexual images involving youth, a hostile environment, harassment, incidents between peers such as physical or verbal fights, and disruptive or hateful behavior. For such behaviors, action will be taken in accordance with our behavior policy and code of conduct.

In cases where bullying or harassment behavior involves electronic images of a non-sexual nature, considerations similar to the ones stated below involving sexual images should be used to help assess context.

In cases of concern around peer-on-peer harm, the objectives of a school response are:

- to ensure the physical and psychological safety and well-being of all students.
- to ensure the student(s) take(s) responsibility for and realize the seriousness of their behavior.
- to demonstrate such behavior will not be tolerated.

All individuals involved in the incident may be subject to discipline. Additionally, consequences for violating school rules will result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from IST, and any previous or subsequent violation of school safeguarding rules and behavior policy may result in more serious disciplinary action. In conjunction with the discipline philosophy and other policies, outcomes of a school response may include one or all of the following.

- Parents' phone calls or meetings with school safeguarding leads, counselor, and coordinator.
- The provision and/or mandate of supportive external resources (behavior specialist, psychologist, social pedagogue) for the student/family.
- Temporary or permanent adjustments on the academic schedule to ensure a safe environment.
- Behavioral contract signed by the student(s) and parent(s).
- Restorative peer relationship and school environment practices.
- Suspension of school days, school activities, and/or school transportation with the help of a support person.
- Expulsion from school.

Adult Behavioral Violations with Students and Response Process

Any complaint that involves the violation of the code of behavior of an adult with a student. You will have an immediate response from the coordinator, Counselor, and Director. Employee

protection concerns will be documented and an investigation will have been conducted. All adults under investigation have the right to be fully informed about the allegations and the investigation process.

Components of an investigation may include the following:

- Interviews with students, colleagues, and other relevant stakeholders
- Review of personnel and human resource records by investigators
- Interview of employees.

If the accusations result in findings of a violation, the consequences may include one or more of the following:

- Paid or unpaid days off the pending investigation
- Reassignment of role (temporary or permanent)
- Initiation of the Intensive Assistance program or probationary status
- Increased professional observations
- The mandate for external support, counseling, or professional development
- Dismissal for cause

Documentation and Case Management

The Office manager is responsible for secure documentation and case management of safeguarding records with the guidance of the data protection policy.

IST Abuse and Neglect Forms

When you report child abuse or neglect, your name is confidential and cannot be disclosed.

Reports can be made anonymously. The report must contain, if obtainable:

- Name, address, age, and sex of the child
- Name and address of the child's parent or other person who is responsible for their care
- The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect of the child
- Any evidence of previously known or suspected abuse or neglect of the child or child's siblings
- The name, address, and relationship, if known, of the person who is alleged to have abused or neglected the child
- Any other information known to the person making the report.

The IST will ensure to communicate this policy to the staff and students and provide related training every year.