



# **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

## **DEFINING SAFEGUARDING**

Safeguarding in schools is defined as the prevention of harm to children. Schools have a responsibility to create a safe environment for children, and a safeguarding policy is put in place to ensure the safety of children. Examples of safeguarding issues include bullying, sexual harassment, grooming, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, allegations against a teacher, and abuse.

Schools and the people who work in them are held to a higher standard legally as duty bearers to the rights of the child and it is their duty to assist children to gain their agency and realize these rights. Certain of these rights are inalienable (Article 28 Bill of Rights). An example of these rights is the right to safety at school.

Safeguarding is what we do to prevent harm, while child protection is the way in which we respond to harm.

For the purposes of this policy, children include everyone under the age of 18.

## **SAFEGUARDING AT GROWING IN GRACE CHRISTIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Growing in Grace Christian Primary School is committed to safeguarding the children and young people in our care and we expect everyone working in the school to share this commitment.

Safeguarding at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School is underpinned by four key principles. These follow.

- All who work at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School have a role to play in safeguarding our children. We must identify concerns, share information appropriately, and take prompt action.
- In working with children at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School, adults take their concerns seriously and encourage them to talk about any concerns they have.
- All who work at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School must maintain an attitude of “it could happen here” where safeguarding is concerned.
- When concerned about a child’s welfare, all who work at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School will always act in the best interests of the child.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- protect children at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School.
- safeguard the children at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School.
- foster an understanding and appreciation in the community of what constitutes abuse and inappropriate behavior towards children.
- Make sure that everyone involved in the school including, but not limited to, members of the Board, school management, teachers, administrative staff, support staff, and

children take every possible measure to ensure that our children are protected and safeguarded.

- ensure that suspicions in the area of safeguarding, concerns, or allegations are dealt with sensitively, actively, respectfully, and in a timely manner in the knowledge that we have a duty to notify the statutory authorities of concerns or allegations, where such duty arises.
- set out the process for an investigation where there are allegations and/or concerns regarding such behavior;
- set out guidelines for the reporting requirements to the Child Protection authorities and other law enforcement agencies and professional bodies;
- follow up with those who may have suffered abuse in a compassionate and appropriate manner, providing appropriate pastoral care, counselling, and support.
- ensure that Growing in Grace Christian Primary School complies with its legal and ethical obligations in dealing with incidents which may undermine the safeguarding of children in the care of the school; and/or
- prevent unsuitable people working with children and young people through a rigorous process at the point of employment – this being for all who are employed as full-time or part-time members of staff or as members of staff for service-providers.

This policy reflects the principles of:

- **prevention** through a safe environment, teaching and pastoral support, and safe recruitment procedures.
- **protection and safeguarding** through following agreed procedures in all areas.
- **support** to students and staff; and
- **working with parents** to ensure appropriate communication and actions are undertaken.

## **SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS**

The school is committed to maintaining a safe school environment by promoting a culture of safety and preventing or reducing the risk of harm to children.

The school will do this through:

- diligent and comprehensive recruitment processes;
- careful observation and implementation of the Code of Conduct for Employees and the way in which this policy relates to the Safeguarding Policy;
- maintaining a safe environment and creating a safe space for children to raise concerns and fears; and
- implementing a framework that manages these incidents and works to resolve them.

### ***Diligent and comprehensive recruitment processes***

- The school follows effective recruitment and selection procedures including procuring references from previous workplaces, writing safeguarding requirements into recruitment advertising, and checking safeguarding knowledge in the interview process.

- The school ensures that Police Clearance (and other legally required clearance in accordance with National Registers) for all employees and volunteers are sought and regularly updated.
- The school insists on membership of the South African Council of Educators and, in appropriate circumstances submits evidence for exclusion from that body.

***Careful observation and implementation of the Code of conduct for Employees and the way in which this policy relates to the Safeguarding Policy***

- The school has a responsibility to ensure that all who work with children agree to follow effective safeguarding practices and annually and electronically to the Code of Conduct for Employees and the Safeguarding Policy.
- The school has a clear and concise policy regarding positive and acceptable behavior and practice for adults working with children.

***The school maintains a safe environment and creates a safe space for children to raise concerns and fears.***

- The Pastoral Care system has clear lines of communication for children.
  - In the Preparatory School, students speak to their form teacher first and then they may be referred to the Director of Pastoral Care who may refer to the school counsellor. Any report of abuse should be facilitated by the counsellor.
  - In the School, students may speak to their mentor, a teacher, or the school counsellor who may refer to a Deputy Head, the Head of School, or an external psychologist. Any report of abuse should be facilitated by the counsellor.
  - It is understood that a student may choose to speak to any member of staff, and it is the duty of that member of staff to refer to the concern in an appropriate manner.
- The school explains and implements effective policies and practice for the appropriate use of information technology, including social media use by staff and children.
- The school ensures that ground rules are in place for adult one-to-one contact with children, to ensure that they take place in certain defined circumstances and for a specific and legitimate purpose. This includes communication on WhatsApp (see 'Definitions and Understanding' below).
- The school uses CCTV footage and other technological advances effectively in and around the school environment, wherever this is possible.
- The school applies strict safety standards in the use of technology. This includes, but is not limited to, use of the internet, texting, email, Teams, WhatsApp, photography, CCTV, and social media.
- A Designated Safeguarding Leader, who has a clearly defined role and responsibility for safeguarding children, is appointed. This is currently Mrs Venter, the Deputy Head: Foundation Phase.
- Service providers are trained in safeguarding policy and practice. These may include but are not limited to external coaches, external music and dance teachers.

***The school implements a framework that manages and reviews safeguarding and child protection policies and works to improve these as follows:***

- The school Executive Committee, the Management Committees, and the Pastoral Care Team regularly review safeguarding policy and procedures, with the review taking place at least annually.

- The school ensures that regular consultation with safeguarding experts takes place to ensure updated policy and legal frameworks.
- The school ensures that training of all staff, including outsourced staff, occurs and that any amendments to this policy are communicated appropriately.
- The school included the legal principles related to the reporting of incidents and the impact of the Child Protection Act and the Sexual Offences Amendment Act.
- The school ensures that students and parents understand the legal principles related to the reporting of incidents and the impact of the Child Protection Act and the Sexual Offences Amendment Act.

### ***Responding to known, suspected, or alleged abuse of children***

The school follows legally compliant and clear procedures and guidelines on what to do when knowledge, suspicions, concerns, or allegations arise regarding a child's safety or welfare.

The school implements the following:

- clear legally compliant safeguarding procedures at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School which provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there is knowledge of or if there are allegations or suspicions of the abuse of a child.
- mechanisms for the reporting of suspected incidents and concerns raised by children, teachers, parents, and other members of the school community;
- immediate and effective response to allegations in compliance with the requirements of the school.
- ensuring official forms for recording details of safeguarding incidents are available (see appendices 2 and 3 in this document);
- The Code of Conduct for Students explains to children how to lodge complaints about unacceptable or unethical conduct by others towards them (see appendix 3 in this document);
- supporting and assisting staff members to raise concerns about possible dangerous or unethical conduct by others towards children; and
- Ensuring that staff members understand the obligations to report any suspected case of abuse.

### ***Members of School Management know how to raise their concerns utilizing appropriate channels***

- There is a clear understanding of what constitutes abuse.
- There is a designated person with a clearly defined role and responsibility to handle cases of abuse, whether historical or otherwise.
- The name, duties and contact details of those people with responsibility for safeguarding (designated person/people) are known as follows:
  - Pastor Fielding, Deputy Head of Pastoral Care in Senior Preparatory, Foundation Phase and Early Years Centre and Wellness of staff.
- All staff members and students know who the designated people are.

- Safeguarding procedures are available to the school community, including children, parents, staff, and volunteers and are actively promoted.
- Registers of workshops attended by staff are kept and are current.

Mechanisms for investigating and addressing the suspected incidents and concerns raised in a sensitive and confidential manner, respecting and balancing the rights of the children and people involved, are in place. These follow.

- The Executive Head or Head of School will appoint a person to investigate the allegations. The designated person must be well informed about procedures. The student affected should be supported immediately through counselling with the school counsellor, who may choose to refer the child/children to a psychologist.
- The counsellor/Executive Head/Head of School may also make a report to the relevant authorities.
- The Executive Head or Head of School will inform the parents and/or legal guardian of the child/ren concerned and explain the proposed course of action.
- Interviews may take place with the affected people and any witnesses or people involved in the incident. Statements must be made at these interviews. Statements must be taken by a person trusted by the affected student, and it is advisable that the school counsellor/directors of Pastoral Care/Deputy of Pastoral Care are present when statements are taken.
- The investigator will prepare a report documenting their findings and set out recommendations on any further action necessary.
- This report will be submitted to the Executive Head or Head of School, who will then determine any further reporting compliance and disciplinary action and ensure that same is then complied with.

Mechanisms for reporting suspected incidents and concerns in accordance with the school's legal and ethical obligations. These include:

- compliance with the legislative requirements on reporting safeguarding concerns to external authorities in appropriate measure and at the appropriate time, appreciating the sensitive and confidential nature and impact of such allegations.
- reporting any safeguarding concerns to the relevant professional bodies where appropriate.
- ensuring that record-keeping is accurate and all records of investigations and outcomes are retained and securely stored in a private and confidential space;
- ensuring all documentation of the process followed by the School in dealing with an incident, including any decision not to report the incident, is retained and securely stored; and
- An incident file recording every incident, allegation, referral, and report is retained and securely stored.

## **ACCESS TO SUPPORT AND INFORMATION**

Growing in Grace Christian Primary School will ensure access to support and information to anyone who discloses abuse, who alleges that abuse has taken place, or who is alleged to have perpetrated abuse. The school is aware of how distressing abuse is and the difficulties associated there with, and the school will ensure that anyone affected by abuse will know where they can go to receive help and advice.

Such support mechanisms include but are not limited to:

- the availability of appropriate pastoral care and information about sources of support.
- procedures for responding to safeguarding suspicion, concerns, knowledge of allegations, and a timeframe for dealing with them.
- support by the school management, as appropriate, for anyone who discloses abuse or who alleges that abuse has taken place; and
- Support of someone who is alleged to have perpetrated abuse involves informing the potential abuser that they have a right to seek legal advice.

## **TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

Those who work with children in the sphere of safeguarding are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to safeguard children.

These measures include:

- staff induction and training in the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and how this aligns with the School Code of Conduct.
- annual electronic agreement to have “read and understood” and, thus, acknowledged an understanding of and an agreement to the Safeguarding Policy.
- appropriate training to ensure an understanding of the legal obligations and legislation addressing child protection issues and sexual offences.
- staff training to learn about how to recognize and respond to concerns about abuse.
- a clear record of staff training, outlining the topic of the training, when it was attended, and by whom.
- An annual school budget that allows for regular training; and
- Education initiatives aimed at educating children in an age-appropriate manner, with child protection issues and safeguarding measures available within the school and support structures and avenues for children to raise their concerns and report these.

## **COMMUNICATING THE SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

All members of the community must be made aware of the Safeguarding Policy.

The measures that follow will be put in place.

- This Safeguarding Policy will be displayed in suitable places in the school.
- The name, duties and contact details of those people with responsibility for safeguarding (designated person/people) are displayed and known as follows:
  - Pastor Fielding, Deputy Head of Pastoral Care in Senior Preparatory, Foundation Phase and Early Years Centre and Wellness of staff.
- The School communicates the Safeguarding Policy to children annually in a manner that is accessible and appropriate.

### **WhatsApp regulations for staff (teachers, coaches, adults who work at the school)**

- An adult must always be the administrator of a WhatsApp group, and the purpose of the group must be clearly stated e.g., class group, sporting team, mentor group.
- The administrator/adult must be an active member of the group and keep all communication professional and focused on the purpose of the group.
- The administrator may not share details of individuals on the group with anyone without their express permission (POPIA, 2021).
- The administrator/adult should never send private messages to individual students or receive private messages from individual students.
- If an adult receives a private message from a student individually, the adult must send the message to the parent and explain that they may not privately message or receive private messages from a student individually.
- The Cybercrimes Act and amended Films and Publications Act of 2022 regulations set out rules governing online content distribution in South Africa. Administrators of communication groups (such as WhatsApp and Telegram) are legally responsible for the content where they could remove it but chose not to do so.

### **Social Media regulations for staff (teachers, coaches, adults who work at the school)**

- Never befriend a current student on social media and ensure personal social media has privacy settings.
- Never befriend an ex-student who is still a child on social media.
- Never post pictures of students on social media unless with the express permission of the school.
- Never privately message a student on social media or accept a private message from a student. Should a private message be received, the adult should send the message to the parent of the child and explain that they may not privately message or receive private messages from individual students.

## **APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS AND UNDERSTANDING**

Note: All abuse traumatizes children. There are no better or worse violations. Adults may not assume the level of or deny the impact of trauma on children from abuse, harassment, grooming, and the like.

### **School obligations**

- Schools are duty bearers to the rights of the Child. Teachers and adults who work with children are held to a higher standard legally and morally.
- Schools must empower children to gain agency to report misconduct, abuse, grooming, sexual harassment, and the like.
- Certain rights of children are inalienable (Article 28 Bill Of Rights) and protection is one of these.
- The first duty of the school is a positive one, as follows:
  - ensure a safe environment.
  - health and safety.
  - line of sight where possible i.e., cameras; and
  - all who work at Growing in Grace Christian Primary School must have gone through the required safeguarding checks.
- The second duty of the school is a negative one as follows:
  - Ensure systems are in place when abuse occurs.

### **Four Preconditions for child abuse to occur follow.**

- The motive of the offender to abuse a child – (pedophilia – sex or fantasies of sex with children; hebephilia – erotic preference for pre-pubescent children).
- The offender overcomes internal inhibitors, knowing the wrongfulness and ensuring that the secret is kept. Forcing the child to be complicit.
- The offender overcomes external inhibitors – a systems approach. Offenders must groom the adults as well. The duty of the school is to set clear boundaries and ensure policies are in place and in use.
- The offender overcomes the resistance of the child through force or, most commonly, grooming.

### **Grooming and Gaslighting**

Grooming is a process where adults use their position of power to entice children through:

- favoritism;
- trust.
- isolation.
- boundary violations.
- taboo violations, where an adult participates in and facilitates students drinking alcohol, smoking, drugs, and/or pornography.
- testing abuse; and/or
- control through the power of abuse and keeping the Secret

Gaslighting: The system and the people in the system doubt the allegations based on their relationships with the abuser. There may be a 'sense' that something is wrong but nobody acts on this because the abuser grooms all who are part of the system.



### **Hosting visiting students**

The school may not take responsibility for allowing parents of students at the school to host visiting/touring students from other schools. There may be instances where arrangements are facilitated between parents from the School and parents from the visiting/touring school but the School does not take responsibility for this. Similarly, where Growing in Grace Christian Primary School students tour, the expectation is that the students' parents or guardians will arrange for appropriate accommodation.

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### **REFERENCES**

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**Reviewed on 20 January 2025. This document will be reviewed by the Executive Committee of Growing in Grace Christian Primary School on an annual basis or whenever required.**