

CHILD PROTECTION



Dear Parents,

I am writing to inform you of a matter that is of utmost importance to all of us. I would like you to know that the Danube International School Vienna, in keeping with our vision, mission, values and aims, remains committed to the Child Protection Policy, which guides our staff and families in matters related to the health, safety and care of children in attendance at our school.

The DISV Child Protection Policy follows for your review. It has been adapted from the Shanghai American School and the work of Dennis Larkin and his experienced team. Please note, the DISV Child Protection policy is based in international law and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Austria is a signatory.

The two key articles we wish to draw your attention to are:

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 DISV, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by the policies adopted by the school. Of equal importance is that all of us at DISV, from our Leadership through our faculty and staff, want you to know that we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children. It is for this reason that Danube International School Vienna has endorsed a Child Protection Policy that defines the standards by which all DISV students should be treated (with respect and dignity at all times).

Working together at home and at school, we can ensure that our children are safe and are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities for themselves and each other, so that they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment. I thank you for your support and invite you to contact your principal regarding any specific questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Dr. Michelle Purghart
Director

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child abuse and neglect are of growing concern in schools 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 their physical, emotional, and spiritual development.

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. 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 are in need of 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 Danube International School Vienna must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy, to the state of Austria and the diplomatic status of the concerned families.

Danube International School Vienna endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which the host country, Austria, is a signatory and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. Danube International School Vienna will distribute this policy to all parents and applicants, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide annual training for all staff, and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to ensure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, Danube International School Vienna will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process.

Sources: Amnesty International Unofficial Summary of the UN Rights Convention of the Child: *
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/unofficial-summary/page.do?id=1101782&n1=3&n2=78&n3=1272> Actual Convention on the Rights of the Child: *
<http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/uncrc.asp#Nineteen>

HOW IS ABUSE AND NEGLECT DEFINED?

Definitions of abuse are complex and based in various cultures of child-rearing behaviors, gender and role responsibilities and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the need of the more powerful person, either a member of the family, a teacher, or a friend. Research guides much of the definitions that are based in understanding the impact of certain behaviors.

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 the criminal code; 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 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 own environment. Neglect may be:

- 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 any extended period of time. Note: Should parents/ guardian leave the country for any reason then the responsibility for informing the school of all appropriate contact details lies with the parent or guardian. The Temporary Change of Adult Supervision Form is available from DISV. These are expected to be completed prior to parents/guardians leaving the country); and/or
- 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 presence of child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc).

POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

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



Behavioral indicators do not constitute abuse or neglect. Together with other indicators, such as family dynamics, they may warrant a referral.

SEXUAL ABUSE is committing or allowing any sexual offense against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the Vienna or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care 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 not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious. 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 the 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.

The school cannot undertake support with any sexual offender.

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 anal areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Refusing to change into PE clothes
- Fear of bathrooms
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective parenting

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STAFF MEMBERS SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEGLECT OR HAVE REASONABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THIS IS SO?

Staff members will use these indicators of abuse and neglect as a guideline for reporting to a Well-Being Team member, who will determine if the case needs further attention. All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences and/or suspicion of abuse and neglect. All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the Well-Being Team member within 48 hours for immediate response. All reports are confidential.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT IS REPORTED?

In all cases, the principal will be notified. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform the Director of the suspected case of child abuse or neglect.

The school staff must then follow the process detailed in this policy.

PROCESS FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Step 1

When a child reports abuse or there is reason to believe that abuse is occurring, the staff member will seek advice from the grade level Social Emotional Support (SES) Teacher within 48 hours. The SES teacher along with the appropriate homeroom teacher will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and will form a school-based response team if needed to address the suspected abuse/neglect. This means the situation moves to Step 2 and both the Director and respective principal must be informed. If no reasonable cause is found then there is no further investigation.

The SES teacher must document the initial concern and all subsequent stages using the DISV Child Protection Process Form.



Please be aware that the age of sexual consent in Austria is 14 and for a conviction to take place there must be at least three years age difference between the individuals.

The age of sexual consent with a person in a position of authority is 18.

Step 2:

Following on from Step 1, when reasonable cause has been found then a response team led by the SES teacher and involving the respective homeroom teacher, vice-principal and principal will investigate the concern in more depth.

In all cases, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained. Based on acquiring information, a further investigation will take place to assist the response team in taking the appropriate action.

Investigations that may take place are:

- Consultation with school personnel to review the child's history in the school.
- Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case.
- Discussions between the child and well-being team member in order to gain more information.
- In-class observations of the child by the teacher, well-being team member, or administrator.

Consultation with anonymous support group MÖWE. Ensure verbal and written confirmation as appropriate.

If after more significant investigation the response team may decide that no further action is needed at this time.

Based on the acquired information, the response team may decide that a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. This is then covered in Step 3

Step 3:

In developing the plan of action the following actions that may take place are:

- RECOMMENDATION ALERT: Discussion meetings with the family to present the school's concerns should only take place if the source of the abuse or neglect is outside the immediate family.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.
- Consultation with the relevant diplomatic agency, if part of the agency procedures.
- Consultation with local authorities. Please note if the local authorities are contacted then a record is kept and this will become formalized. Please note a Principal or Director has the duty to report a crime to the police or a concern to the *Jugendamt*, which involves alleged child abuse.

The SES teacher will undertake the majority of the actions applicable, involving the homeroom teacher, vice-principal and principal, as appropriate.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by student well-being teams, such as those involving:

- Student relationships with peers
- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home
- Student-parent relationships
- Mental health issues such as low self-esteem, grieving.

Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example:

- Mental health issues such as depression, psychosis, dissociation, self-harm and suicide ideation.

Cases reported for investigation and outside resources:

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

In extreme cases when families do not stop the abuse or concerns remain about the safety of the child, reports could be made to:

- The consulate or agency in cases of diplomatic immunity.
- The employer must only be contacted by Austrian social services.

Step 4:

Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- The SES teacher will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The SES teacher will provide the child's teachers and the principal with ongoing support.
- The SES teacher will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- The SES teacher will maintain contact with outside therapists and/or government agencies to update the progress of the child in school.
- A summary meeting of the response team will be held.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the child's school 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. DISV will make every attempt to share this information to protect the child.

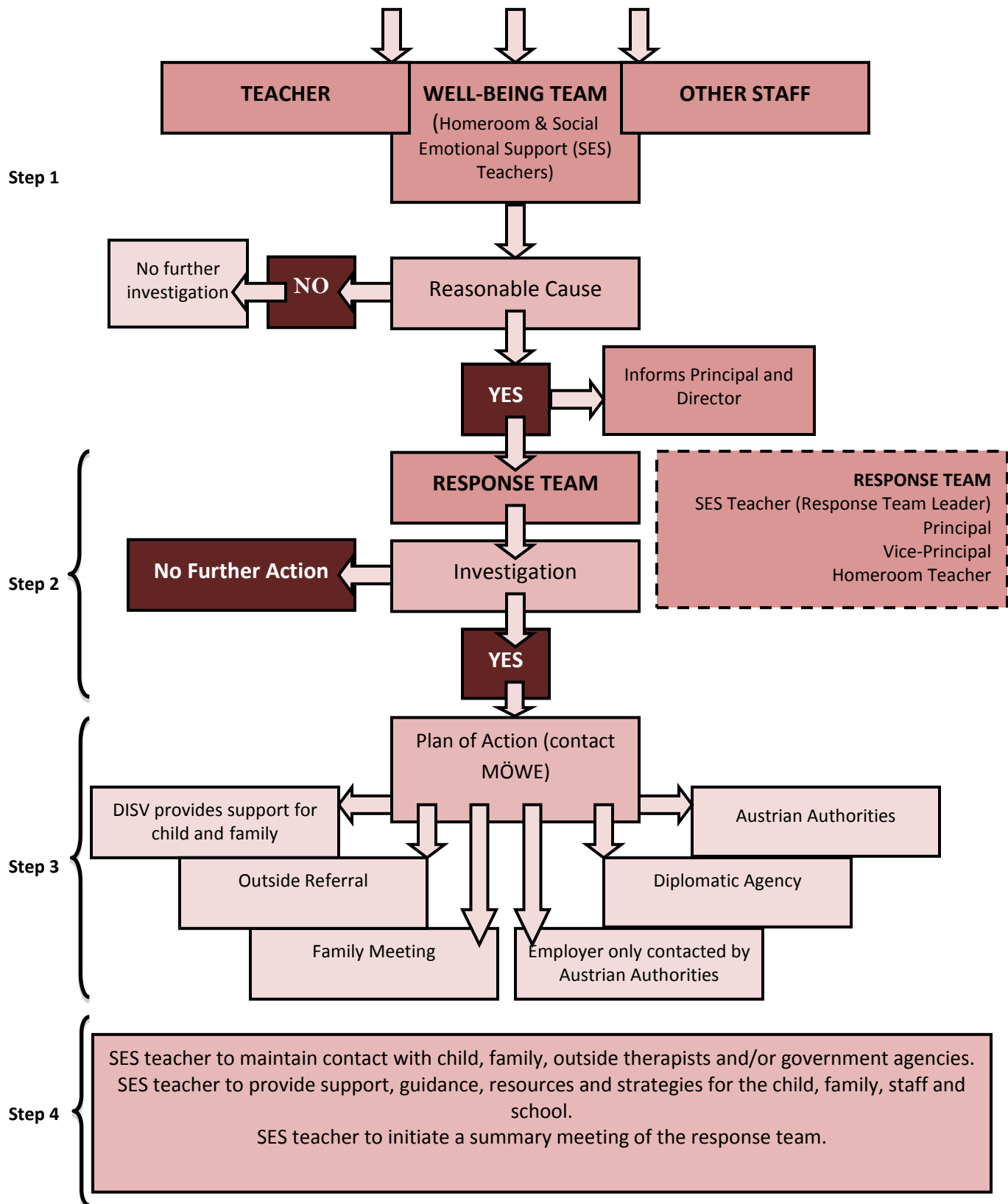
In the event that the abuse or neglect allegation involves a staff or faculty member of DISV, the principal will follow school policy pursuant to ethical professional behavior.

Confidentiality of Information:

Normally information regarding each case should be shared with all members of the response team. However, if the principals decide or the parents wish to keep the information fully confidential, then only the principal, director and SES teacher may have access to the full information regarding a student.



DISCLOSURE



DISV CHILD PROTECTION POLICY WORKS FOR THE CHILD, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Research indicates that international communities are as prone to child abuse as communities in their home country. Child abuse is a multi-faceted issue that involves dynamics of the child, the family, and the community. The DISV Child Protection Policy works to respond at all three levels.



WHAT DOES A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY MEAN FOR THE DISV COMMUNITY?

DISV is defining a standard for the treatment of all students - that they be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Students have legal and moral rights to their individuality. These rights when protected will enable them to develop their abilities to better meet the needs of the family, community, and global society. Child protection as defined by DISV encompasses all cultures and international law. When given reasonable cause to believe that these rights are violated, DISV will seek all available resources to restore those rights.



OTHER RESOURCES

www.jusline.at

www.kija.at

www.die.möwe.at

www.unicef.org