

European Azerbaijan School



Child Protection Policy

European Azerbaijan School

Mission

The European Azerbaijan School provides each student with a diverse and vibrant education in a compassionate and supportive environment which promotes respect, innovation, creativity, intercultural understanding and critical thinking. This enables students to become reflective and respectful international citizens who, as empowered lifelong learners, can flourish globally and contribute fully and meaningfully to their community and create a more peaceful and inclusive society.

Policy Aims

To ensure that all members of the EAS community help keep children and young people safe by:

- contributing to the provision of safe learning environments for children and young people
- taking appropriate actions with the aim of making sure our students are kept safe at school
- identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- communicating to the school and wider community our commitment to safeguarding children
- ensuring that all involved are familiar and act in accordance with our rules regarding confidentiality

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the EAS community; all staff, students, parents, and visitors to the school.

Policy Statement

The European Azerbaijan School endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), of which our host country, Azerbaijan, 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 need 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 EAS must report 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.

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Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with 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. EAS seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives.

The Definition of Roles:

- **Child Protection Officer:**

Primary: Deputy Principal of Wellbeing

Secondary: Deputy Principal of Student Affairs

Wellbeing Team/Student Affairs Team

The Wellbeing Team in Primary and the Student Affairs Team in Secondary are responsible for the ongoing proactive support for and monitoring of wellbeing in the school.

Parent/Community Awareness

It is vital that the school's commitment to the highest possible standards of safeguarding and child protection for all students is communicated clearly to the variety of stakeholders who come into contact with the school.

- School safety goals and objectives are communicated regularly to all parents.
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures are available on request.
- The school's commitment to child protection is stated clearly on the school's marketing and communications materials
- New families receive specific information regarding the school's policies and procedures as part of the 'New Parent Orientation'.
- Guidance and resources on student safety issues and how parents can talk with their children are available from the Counselors in both Primary and Secondary.

Staff Recruitment

The school is committed to maintaining procedures to ensure the safe recruitment and selection of all teaching and nonteaching staff.

Screening and criminal background checks

All personnel, staff, teachers, volunteers, and other members of the community whose potential employment or volunteer service involves direct contact with, and/or the potential for unmonitored access to children (including any individuals who regularly provide transportation to children) are given thorough reference and criminal background checks.

Code of Conduct

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In addition to screening and background checks, all staff are required to adhere to the 'Code of Conduct', a copy of which is provided to them (in both Azerbaijani and English).

Facilities and Security

School leadership ensures that all facilities are secure and appropriate to respect the safety and wellbeing of students in accordance with Azerbaijani law. They conduct reviews and inspections every 5 years. Furthermore we have a HSE (Health, Safety, Environment) Officer who is responsible for promoting and maintaining the health and safety culture at EAS.

Staff Training

Regular staff training is conducted to ensure staff feel confident about all aspects of child protection: awareness, types, signs/symptoms, prevention, policies and laws, the reporting process, children's curricula, possible support agencies and resources available.

Specifically:

- New staff receive child protection training on these aspects as part of their 'New Staff Orientation'.
- The 'Staff Code of Conduct' is provided to all staff annually to give clear expectations and boundaries regarding child protection procedures. These procedures are also included, in summarized form, in the staff handbook.
- All staff, including board members, regularly receive training, presented by the child protection officers or visiting specialist(s), on identifying indicators of concern, and child protection procedures within the school.

Bullying

All students and parents/carers receive a copy of the 'Anti-bullying procedures' on joining the school and the subject of bullying is addressed at regular intervals in the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum.

E-Safety

The school's e-safety policy explains how we keep children safe in school. Cyber bullying by children, via texts and emails, will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures. Chat rooms and social networking sites are the more obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful behaviour and children are not allowed to access these sites whilst in school.

Photography and Images

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent, understandable and acceptable reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so, we must ensure that we have some safeguards in place.

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To protect children, we will:

- seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications)
- seek parental consent and use only the child's first name with an image
- ensure that children are appropriately dressed
- encourage children to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

Child Protection Procedures

Reporting

It is a legal obligation for faculty, staff, and administrators, either as individuals or members of the institution, to report incidents of, or concerns about, physical or psychological violence, aggression, harassment, physical or sexual abuse, or neglect.

The reporting of any concern should be done within the next school day, or at most within 48 hours, to the school Child Protection Officer (Deputy Principal for Student Wellbeing or Student Affairs). In his or her absence, or if the severity of the concern merits it, the concern must be reported to the Primary or Secondary Principal and/or The Director. Contact may be made at any time, and is not restricted to working hours.

- Primary School: Fidan Jafarova,
- Secondary School: Zohra Malikova

Disclosure

Responding to a Child's Disclosure

Step 1

Any member of staff who has reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring or has occurred, must report it to the Child Protection Officer (Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing/Student Affairs). They will then pass this on to the Primary/Secondary Principal who will convene the Incident Response Team.

Step 2

The Incident Response Team will gather information regarding the reported incident of suspected physical, emotional, sexual abuse and/or neglect.

Step 3

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 (see below). The following procedure will be used:

- Interview staff members as necessary and document information relative to the case
- Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in the school
- Determine the course of follow-up actions

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Step 4

During and after the process described above, there might be a need for emotional support for staff, students and families involved. This will be provided by the Wellbeing/Student Affairs Team (see below). All documentation of the investigation will be kept confidential and will be stored in a designated lockable space, under the supervision of the Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing/Student Affairs.

The standard reporting format used by the Incident Response Team will include the following:

- Historical context the background history of the reporting
- Child's name, date of birth, place of birth, gender, nationality, languages spoken, address, class, attendance details, siblings
- Information on parents/guardians name, nationality, professions, contact number
- Information about the specific report nature and extent of reported injuries/maltreatment; how reporter became aware (firsthand witness?)
- Description of action taken (if any)
- Other information that may be helpful

This will be written using a descriptive non-judgmental style, employing phrases such as ' X reported that...'; 'Y said that'. If determined that the case warrants making a report to external agencies, this report should be documented using applicable forms.

Confidentiality

When dealing with issues of a sensitive nature, it is important to have clear guidelines regarding confidentiality. We strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our students and staff, (ensuring there is an ethos of trust where students and staff can ask for help when they need it) and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information safeguarding procedures and models of good practice are followed.

The general rule is that all staff should make clear that there are limits to confidentiality, at the beginning of a conversation which may lead to disclosure, or as soon as the issue arises during a conversation. These limits relate to ensuring safety and wellbeing.

The principles we follow at EAS are that in all cases we will:

- Ensure the time and place are appropriate for discussions which may be sensitive; when they are not we reassure the child/staff member/parent that we understand they need to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy.
- For children: See the child, normally (and always in cases of neglect, or abuse) before the end of the school day. More serious concerns must be reported to the Child Protection Officer (Deputy Principal Wellbeing/Student Affairs) and also to the Primary/Secondary Principal. This should happen immediately to ensure

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that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible.

- For adults: See the person, normally before the end of the working day.
- Tell the child/adult that we cannot guarantee confidentiality if we think they

have or will:

- hurt themselves
- hurt someone else or if they tell us that someone is hurting them or others or if they have committed a criminal offense

We will:

- not interrogate the child/adult or ask leading questions
- not put children/adults in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people
- inform the child/adult first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this
- encourage a student, whenever possible to confide in his/her own parents/guardians

Guidance for school staff, visitors and non-teaching staff regarding confidentiality and disclosure:

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Students do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to his/her parents/guardians and they may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this school's staff can or should give such a promise. The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

At EAS, we expect all staff, non-teaching staff, to report any disclosures by students or parents/guardians, of a concerning personal nature, to the Child Protection Officer (Deputy Principal of Wellbeing/Student Affairs) and/or the Primary/Secondary Principal. This should be done as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. This is to ensure the safety, protection and well-being of all our students and staff. The Primary/Secondary Principal and the Director will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, both to ensure the student gets the help and support they need and that the member of staff also gets the support and supervision they need.

If the Primary/Secondary Principal and/or the Director issues instructions that s/he should be kept informed, all staff must comply. There is always a good reason for this, which may not be known by all.

Parents/Carers:

EAS believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and guardians and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at school,

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including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our students can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a student does discuss a difficult personal matter with staff at EAS they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent/carer themselves.

Maintaining confidentiality:

Staff should not discuss any details regarding a child-protection issue with any other person, apart from the Child Protection Officer (Deputy Principal Wellbeing/Student Affairs), Primary/Secondary Principal and the Director. Failure to follow this instruction will be a serious breach of our Code of Conduct and action will be taken accordingly.

Support for staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our students and/or parents/carers. At EAS we prefer staff to ask for help rather than to make a poor decision because they don't have all the facts or the necessary training, or take worries about students or other staff home with you. We all work together as part of a team to support our students and asking for help is a way we ensure EAS is a happy and safe learning environment.

Teaching staff should discuss any concerns about students with the appropriate Child Protection Officer, Primary/Secondary Principal and/or Director.

Child Protection Definition

In a one-to-one situation with a child or young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, EAS members try to make sure that another adult knows that the contact is taking place and why. If possible, they ensure another adult is in sight and that the child or young person knows another adult is around.

Child abuse

Child abuse is physical, emotional, sexual harm, neglect, or exploitation of a child by an adult or another child. Abusive behavior involves treating somebody with cruelty, discrimination, disrespect, and violence. At EAS we invoke very serious steps to prevent and address such cases.

Physical abuse is defined as using physical force against a child, such as hitting, beating, punching, or biting. Emotional abuse means mistreating a child through regular bullying, yelling, ignoring, and isolation. Sexual abuse (or exploitation) includes engaging a child in sexual activities with an adult or an elder child. Neglect as a form of child abuse is a failing to meet a child's key needs. Financial or material abuse includes theft, fraud, exploitation, as well as the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits.

How does the EAS Community protect children from abuse?

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We can proudly say that EAS staff receives training on child protection and safeguarding services.

- We have a child protection and safeguarding committee that supports and guides our students. They also receive reports of and address any suspected child abuse case.
- We review our child protection policy annually.
- We check each staff members' criminal background history before they work with children.
- Our school organizes assemblies and guidance lessons to teach students how to protect themselves, deal with peer pressure and bullying, identify risky and inappropriate behavior, and how to report such cases.
- In a one-to-one situation with a child/young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, EAS members try to make sure that another adult knows that the contact is taking place and why. If possible they ensure another adult is in sight and that the child/young person knows another adult is around.

EAS Community is always ready to listen to and work closely with parents to ensure children feel safe and secure in the school environment.