



## **Le Bocage International School (LBIS) 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. Le Bocage International School endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which our host country, Mauritius, 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 are in need of 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 insure 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 Le Bocage International School 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 significant 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.

Le Bocage International School seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. As such, LBIS will distribute this policy annually to all parents and applicants, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide training for all staff, and will make every effort to implement hiring practices to insure the safety of children. In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, LBIS will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process, keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

For detailed information on the Convention on the Rights of Child see the following link:  
[http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30160.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html)

## 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 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.

**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. 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.
- 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).

**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 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 sex is a form of love, so tend to love their offender and often present themselves as happy and well adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

## Procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect

### Step 1

When a child reports abuse or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher will seek advice from the FC/Principal and/or the counsellor. The counsellor will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and will form a school-based response team as needed to address the report. The response team will include the counsellor, FC, and other individuals as the principal sees fit. 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. The following procedure will be used:

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

### Step 2

Based on acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Actions that may take place are:

1. Discussions between the child and counselor in order to gain more information.
2. In-class observations of the child by the teacher, counsellor, or administrator.
3. Meetings with the family to present the School's concerns.
4. Referral of the student and family to external professional counselling.
5. Consultation with the consulate of the country of the involved family.
6. Consultation with the school lawyer.
7. Informal consultation with local authorities.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by school counsellors, such as those involving:

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

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.

### Step 3

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

- The counsellor will maintain contact with the child and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- The counsellor will provide the child's teachers and the FC with ongoing support.
- The counsellor will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- The counsellor will maintain contact with outside therapists to update the progress of the child in school.

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. LBIS will make every attempt to share this information to protect the child.



Safe Environment Staff Agreement

Le Bocage International School requires that all adults engage in safe, supportive, and respectful interactions with children at all times. The following outlines appropriate and expected conduct for physical behavior, verbal and digital communication, and general conduct.

Physical Behavior

All adults interacting with children must do so in open, public spaces. If one-on-one meetings are necessary for educational or emergency purposes, they should also be conducted in a public area, in a room where the interaction can be (or is being) observed, or in a room with the door left open and another adult is notified about the meeting. The child should always be given the option of having another adult present. Adults must not give a child a ride home alone unless they have the written permission of the child’s parents or in the case of an emergency.

Appropriate physical behavior includes contact that maintains physical boundaries at all times and only consists of public and nonsexual touches, such as:

- Pats on the back or shoulder
• Child-initiated hugs

Inappropriate physical behavior is any contact that abuses, exploits, or harasses the child, such as:

- Slapping, shaking, pinching, hitting, punching, pushing, grabbing, kicking
• Patting the buttocks
• Touching private body parts
• Intimate/romantic/sexual contact
• Showing pornography or involving children in pornographic activities

Communication

All communication between adults and children should be transparent and about school or programme activities. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate verbal and digital communication.

Verbal

Appropriate

- Praise and/or positive reinforcement with a pedagogical purpose when used consistently and equally for all children

Inappropriate

- Profanity, sexual innuendo, or risqué jokes
• Yelling, threatening, ridiculing, or degrading comments

Digital

Appropriate

- Emails and/or text messages with pedagogical purpose and subject to periodic monitoring

Inappropriate

- Private messaging via social media and/or online gaming communities
• Allowing access to electronic devices that may expose children to inappropriate content

General Conduct

Adults will:

- Treat all children with respect and provide safe and supportive interactions that foster children’s social, emotional, and academic development
• Comply with all programme-level mandatory reporting procedures
• Cooperate fully with any investigation of misconduct or abuse of children

Adults will not:

- Engage in bullying (as defined in the anti-bullying policy)
• Use or be under the influence of tobacco, or other drugs in the presence of children
• Give individual children gifts without the knowledge of the children’s caregivers

Safe Environment Statement of Receipt and Agreement

I understand that as a person working with and/or providing services to children at Le Bocage International School I am subject to a criminal background/morality check. My signature confirms that I have read and understood the Safe Environment Agreement, and that I agree to comply with the standards contained therein. I understand that any action that violates these policies may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from Le Bocage International School.

Date:

Name:

Signature: