

**Verdala International School  
Policy Manual 2020  
B5 Student Well-being**

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## 5. Board Policies – Student Well-being

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### 5.1 Safeguarding Students at VIS (Child Protection Policy)

#### Essential Beliefs

We recognise that:

- We are all responsible for the safeguarding of children.
- We all have a duty of care.
- There are children who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect.
- In Malta a child is considered such until they are 18 years old.

We are committed to the safeguarding of children who may be vulnerable to:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional Abuse

We aim to:

- **Prevent** damage to a child's wellbeing.
- **Provide** a safe environment for all our students.
- **Protect** our students through education on safeguarding.
- **Promote** the safeguarding of children through regular training and information for all members of our community.

We follow a clear protocol of:

- Recognising
- Responding
- Reporting

All our staff are required to:

- Present an up to date police check.
- Sign VIS Code of Conduct.
- Report any concerns regarding the protection of a child.

- Fully cooperate with the relevant authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
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### **Child Protection Policy Principles**

Verdala International School (VIS) believes that child protection is an essential element of the school's responsibilities towards children and young people's protection. VIS' priority is to prevent any form of child abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect and to recognize that such acts are a breach of children's human rights. Therefore, ensuring the protection of young people's physical and emotional wellbeing is the school's commitment.

This is reached by our obligation to comply with the Maltese Child Protection Laws together with adherence to Article 19 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child to be protected in and out of the home (UNCRC, 1989) of which Malta 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. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection. We therefore recognize that a liaison will be formed with young people, parents / legal guardians and in certain cases, following a preliminary process, relevant agencies will be involved to promote children's welfare. Outside references to such agencies include, Child Protection Services, Appogg, Domestic Violence Unit, Vice Squad and also when necessary will include Consulates in Malta or/and any other agency as deemed fit for the case. Moreover as educators, we acknowledge the responsibility to protect and take the necessary steps to ensure safety and resolve any form of abuse identified with the aim to support prevention and response to protection related risks. This includes support with referring families to available services as declared in the 2017 Maltese Guidelines.

VIS Students' welfare will always be given foremost consideration. Children have the right to be listened to whilst always considering their age, and in cases of disability, the required assistance will be sought. Students will be made aware of the process should they wish to discuss issues concerning their safety. As such, VIS will distribute this policy annually to all parents and legal guardians, and will communicate the interpretation of this policy annually to students within the PSHE and/or Advisory lesson at a student appropriate level.

Any adult who will work unsupervised with students must be police checked. The possession of a clean conduct for employment at VIS is a prerogative for. CAS mentors and community partner organizations, parent volunteers, host families and after school activities' tutors will be vetted before the running of the activities. When outside agencies are involved, it is expected that the vetting takes place from the part of the agency.

All staff employed at VIS will receive professional development on child protection at the start of each scholastic year and this policy will be distributed. Staff 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. All procedures will be in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy.

To further safeguard our students, all visitors are requested to report to the reception/office (Secondary/Elementary School Sections) to sign in and receive a visitor's pass. Unauthorised visitors and parents are prohibited to take photos of students during school events, assemblies and around the campus.

### **Definitions of Types of Abuse**

According to the **World Health Organization**, child abuse constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." (WHO, 1999, pp 14)

A person may abuse a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional (e.g. school) or community setting. Children may be abused by individuals known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Often children may experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously, further complicating the problem.

**Child abuse** is defined in four categories; Neglect, Emotional abuse, Physical abuse and Sexual Abuse. The following are definitions as defined by DfE (2016) *and* NSPCC (2017)

*Physical abuse* is when a child is deliberately hurt and presents injuries such as bruises, burns, cuts or broken bones. It cannot be excused. In most cases physical abuse can cause serious and long-lasting harm and in extreme cases it can lead to death.

*Emotional abuse* is when a child is continuously maltreated. Emotional abuse can harm a child's development and mental health which often involves humiliation, fear, isolation and neglect. Generally, children who experience emotional abuse tend to also be going through another form of abuse though one can't assume that this is always the case.

*Sexual abuse* is when a child is forced and enticed to participate in sexual activities which may involve violence. Sexual Abuse can also take place through non-contact activities such as forcing a child to look at sexual images or activities, or grooming a child in inappropriate ways often in preparation for abuse.

When there is a constant failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, this is considered as *neglect*. Neglect occurs when the primary caregiver fails to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care and protection from physical or emotional harm. Neglect also takes place when there is lack of response to a child's emotional needs.

*Grooming* takes place when a stranger or someone they know attempts to connect emotionally with a child to obtain their trust. This usually is intended for sexual exploitation or abuse. Grooming can occur online or face to face and often children are not aware that they are being groomed and therefore abused.

*Online abuse* is any type of abuse that occurs on the internet through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse. Online abuse can be instigated by strangers but also by people they know. Their images and videos can be shared and stored with other people. The abuser can contact them any time and in their safe places such as their homes. Cyber bullying is often considered as a form of abuse which happens on social media, online games, phones and any other means of electronic devices. Cyber bullying can lead children and young people to self-harm, pressuring them into hate and sexual conversations.

Above are examples of abuse, however, possible other types of abuse will be investigated.

## **Educating our Community**

### **Students**

Within the PSHE Curriculum in Elementary and Middle School, topics related to safeguarding and Child Protection are addressed. One can gain further information regarding this from the SSS Handbook.

Furthermore, throughout the year, external agencies provide additional sessions to reinforce the PSHE curriculum. Such sessions include but are not limited to the B.A.B.E.S programme, Sedqa prevention services, Besmart online and the Malta Police Cyber crime Unit etc.

It is worth noting that whenever there is a class that addresses such issues, the correct terminology and child friendly language will be used. If outside agencies are presenting on these topics, parents will be informed.

### **Parents**

When possible speakers are invited to raise awareness with our parent community regarding topics that relate to safeguarding issues. Parent evening and Parent Information Meetings from members of the SSS Department throughout the year will also address specific topics related to the above content.

### **Staff**

This Policy will be circulated and discussed with staff members at the beginning of the scholastic year. A whole school meeting will also be set up specifically to make the staff aware of the Response Protocol but also to address any queries, staff members may have.

The SSS team is available for reference and support when a particular situation or case arises. This will be addressed on a case by case basis whilst respecting the Response Protocol.

## **Response Protocol**

VIS is legally required to respond to issues where child welfare is affected.

## **Procedures**

The following procedures need to be followed when abuse or neglect is suspected or disclosed.

1. Any member of the community who identifies a student as suffering from potential harm/abuse/neglect should report with immediate effect to the Principal and/or Counsellor. This will then be reported to the Head of Student Support Services (SSS), who will then coordinate the Response Management team.

2. In line with VIS Child Protection Policy and the Maltese Child Protection Procedures for Schools, the Response Management Team involves:

- The Head of SSS
- Section Counsellor and Principal and HoS
- Other outsourced personnel depending on the specific case
- Nurse or any other member of staff if applicable

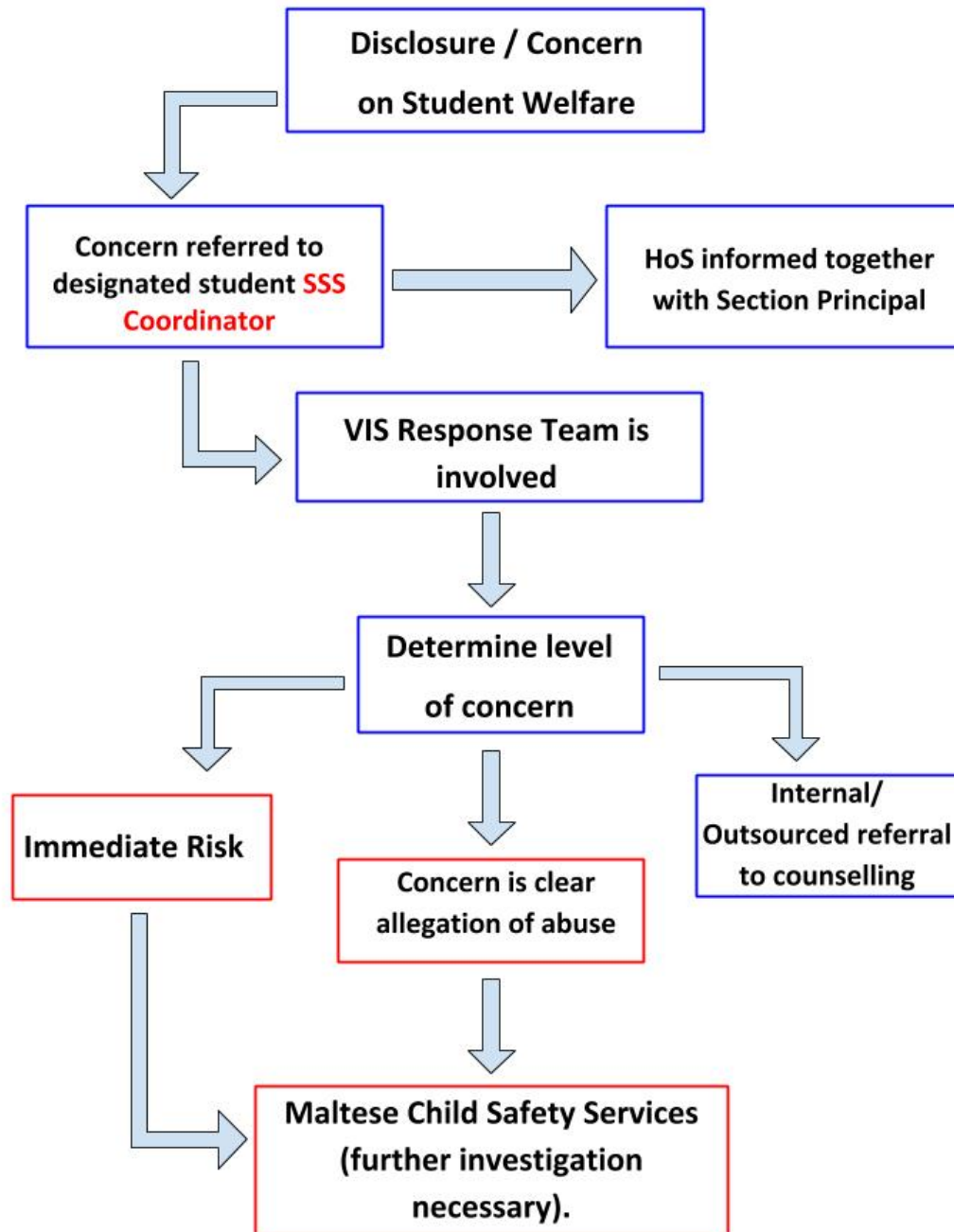
3. All suspicions and/or observations of abuse towards child welfare should be referred to the Counsellor/ Section Principal as soon as possible, ideally within hours (Refer to flowchart)

4. In cases of suspected neglect, an observation period will ensue whilst simultaneously being addressed by members of the SSS team.

5. For those cases where the Child Safety Services (CSS) need to be consulted or involved, the protocol from the Child Protection Procedures for Schools and Referral system will be followed (See Referral Form).

6. When necessary the HoS / Head of SSS shall inform any other outside agencies and include consulates for embassy families.

## Response Flowchart



### **Responding to a Student's Disclosure**

Any member of staff, when dealing with a student's disclosure, must:

- Respect and establish the confidentiality parameters with the young person clarifying that such confidentiality will be broken if the practitioner thinks the student is in danger or harm.
- Offer to accompany the student to Counsellor / Principal for further support.
- Whilst reassuring the child, if appropriate the need to involve external agencies is explained.
- The student's testimony will be shared with the Response Management Team.

All documentation pertaining to each case will be locked in a secure filing cabinet. Such documentation will be kept as part of the school records 2 years beyond the student's school finishing age of 16 years.

### **School Investigation Guidelines**

The Head of SSS and Counsellor or any staff member designated by the HoS may:

- Interview the student in the presence of another professional / staff member or outsourced local authoritative representative such as police officer or CSS representative.
- Hold thoughtful interaction and communication with parents and other members of staff as deemed necessary for the student's well being, as guided by the Maltese Child Protection Policy.
- Submit a required referral / report to a local authority for further investigations to take place as determined by the Maltese Child Protection Services.

It is imperative to note that parents cannot request a staff member to present evidence or witness in court procedures unless this is formally requested by a local entity.

### **Staff Guidelines**

Members of staff are expected to be aware of and adhere to the VIS Code of Conduct. Of pertinent information, members of staff need to be aware of the following:

- Maintain professional boundaries with students whilst in school and out of school. Improper physical contact and inappropriate communication via any form of media as well as inappropriate relationships with students has to be avoided. The members of the teaching profession are duty bound and are ultimately responsible to maintain a professional distance. Teachers are in a position of trust and should avoid circumstances or behavior that could be misinterpreted. Any form of communication will need to



adhere to the GDPR guidelines. When specific circumstances call for the need of a member of staff to request students' mobile phones, the HoS's approval will be sought.

- Physical contact should be respectful of boundaries, personal space and cultural sensitivity.
- Any member of staff may only physically restrain a student when that would protect the student from behaviour that can be harmful to the student or any other person. Where possible restraining happens in the presence of a colleague.
- Staff should be aware that infatuations may happen, in such cases the infatuation should be disclosed as early as possible so that appropriate action can take place. Under such circumstances actions/words can be easily misinterpreted.
- Staff should not use personal emails or chat (including but not limited to whatsapp/snapchat/facebook/hangouts) to communicate with students and should only use the school gmail for any communication with students. Specific circumstances such as a field trip abroad or for counselling use, need to be discussed with the HoS.
- Staff working in one-to-one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers should aim to conduct meetings where every attempt is made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and students are met. Examples of this may include arranging for the installation of glass doors or where not possible, leaving the door ajar. If a member of staff is working after school on their own with a child they should invite in another student, or inform another member of staff, leaving the door open.
- Pre-arranged meetings with students away from the school premises should not be permitted unless approval is obtained from their Parent and the Principal. When home tutoring is concerned, it is recommended that the tutoring happens with a parent or relative present in the home setting.
- All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required (for example assisting with toileting or removing wet/soiled clothing).
- When students are using the showers, such as after a PE lesson, the teacher will stand outside the door and communicate from an external position.
- Children should be encouraged to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as is practicable. When assistance is required, staff should ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the task to be undertaken.
- Curriculum may tackle topics of a sensitive nature. For further guidance refer to the PSHE section / handbook.

- Teachers cannot promise confidentiality and certain parameters apply when this is breached. Such parameters will be explained at the beginning of the session to the student.

In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, VIS will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process, keeping the safety of the child at the highest priority.

### **Grief Protocol**

At VIS, we do our best to provide support for grief in a social, pedagogical manner. It is imperative to point out that cultural sensitivity will be respected on a case by case basis. The following procedures will be implemented:

- A designated staff member trained on grief and bereavement will be assigned to support the student.
- Training and awareness on grief will be implemented with whole school staff members or grade teachers as deemed necessary.
- Implement Coping with Grief workshop with students either through small group approach or grade cohort through PSHE classes.
- When necessary include outside professionals / specialists on Grieving.

The family will be informed of the the steps taken and documentation kept.

### **References**

1. Dfe, (2016) *Keeping children safe in Education and the NSPCC the NSPCC document*, retrieved from <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse/>
2. *Health Service Executive, (2016). Child Protection and Welfare Policy. HSE, UK*
3. National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, (2011). The HSE Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/children/childprotectionandwelfarepracticehandbook.html>
4. *NSPCC document*, retrieved from <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse/>
5. World Health Organisation , Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, World Health Organization, Social Change and Mental Health, Violence and Injury Prevention pp. 13-17.

### **Resources**

#### **National School Support Services**

**Education Psycho-Social Services**

Triq Fra Gaetano Pace Forno  
Il-Hamrun  
HMR 1100  
2122 6361 / 2122 5943

**The Office of the Commissioner for Children**

16/18, Tower Promenade  
St. Lucia.  
21485180

**Sedqa**

Agency against drug & alcohol abuse  
Triq Braille  
Sta Venera 441014

**Child Web Alert**

Protecting Children Online  
<https://fsws.gov.mt/en/onlineabuse>

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## 5.2 Student Mental Health and Well-being

### **Guiding Principles**

At VIS, we value the emotional health and well-being of our students. Our ethos respects the individual and provides support and care conveyed through a respectful and kind approach. We believe that positive mental health is everybody's responsibility in alignment with our Vision and Mission statement which emphasises that all our students become knowledgeable, ethical contributors to our world. We aim to offer a caring, inclusive community based upon building student's self worth and developing a profound respect for others.

The Maltese government defines mental health as our 'emotional, psychological and social well-being' (mentalhealth.gov). What's important to understand about mental health is that it has an impact on numerous areas of our lives, including at school.

### **Aims of the Policy**

This policy delineates roles and responsibilities with regards to well-being and the commitment towards helping students attain their better self. It should be read in line with and is supported by other relevant VIS policies.

- We aim to be able to provide the right support and services to safeguard and take care of our students.
- We recognise that a student's state of mental health may influence how he/she handles stress, how he/she relates to others and the decisions he/she takes both at school and outside of school.
- We aim to provide a supportive network that values the students' mental health, providing services to support any student experiencing difficulties that are affecting them mentally, emotionally, psychologically and/or socially.
- We aim to support our students to develop resilience and ways of coping with life's adversities.

### **Mental Health Education**

All staff members are responsible for promoting student well-being. Notwithstanding, specific staff members are assigned capacities that enhance this aspect. These are:

- The Student Support Services Team which includes Counsellors, School Nurse, Inclusion Coordinator.
- Homeroom teachers.
- Learning Support Educators and Teaching Assistants.

If any faculty member is concerned about a student's mental health and well-being, then primarily they should consult the referral process. ([Student Referral Form](#))

In Early Years students' well-being is delivered to by the classroom teacher as part of their IEYC curriculum and personal goals.

As part of the IPC curriculum, KG to Grade 5 on an annual basis will begin with a Healthy Brain, Healthy Body unit.

In KG-G10, the Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) Curriculum has dedicated teaching time, the programme addresses skills, coping mechanisms to support well-being. The programme aims to enhance skills in students such as resilience, self-confidence, critical thinking and other attributes that prepare our students to face the outer world beyond school. The PSHE programme of study works around three main themes:

- Health and well-being
- Relationships
- Living in the wider world.

Further information on the PSHE Curriculum could be obtained from the VIS PSHE Handbook.

In G11 & 12, guest speakers are invited for sessions. Such sessions address topics related to mental health, exam anxiety, careers and any other related issues that need addressing throughout the scholastic year.

The school is currently reviewing the pastoral provision within the grade 11 and 12 time table. When required the counsellor will run sessions with grade 11 and 12.

### **The Role of the Counsellor**

VIS counsellors play an important role in supporting a safe learning environment and work to promote the students' well-being. One way this is done is through collaborating with VIS stakeholders to enhance student achievement, whilst addressing the needs of *all* students through prevention and intervention programs. Counsellors at VIS provide services to students, parents, school staff and the community in the following areas:

- Deliver PSHE classes throughout the whole school.
- Listen to students' concerns about academic, emotional or social problems.
- When necessary individual student mentoring as well as engaging peer helping to assist students to establish and maintain goals related to personal and interpersonal skills.
- Responsive services to address emotional and mental health needs which may include the following: individual or group counselling, collaboration with parents, teachers and other educators, referrals to external support services,
- School counsellors support teachers in providing useful information about students' safety and well-being.
- In HS, guidance is provided with the crafting of university applications.
- We aim to promote a positive school culture on mental well-being.

- From time to time, counsellors deliver Parent Information Meetings covering mental well-being topics.
- Counselling sessions take place throughout the school day; when necessary these happen during lesson time.

### **Trust and Confidentiality**

Trust is a critical part of the counsellor-student relationship. It is at the professional discretion of the school counsellor as to how student-revealed information is shared with teachers, student's parents and administrators.

Confidentiality within counselling can be defined as an agreement based on the understanding that the counsellor is committed to keeping the information being shared with him/her confidential. At VIS, the counsellor is also committed to keeping personal information confidential, although it may sometimes be necessary to share such information about the student's needs with the Head of Student Support Services and/ or Principal in order to best coordinate the services to be delivered.

The agreed upon conditions in which confidential information must be disclosed are when the student's behaviour presents a clear and imminent danger to themselves or others. During counselling sessions, students will be reminded about the limits of confidentiality.

School counselling is considered a regular educational service provided at Verdala, therefore the counsellor can see a minor student without parental consent. As such, the counsellor will check-in with individual students when needed.

Should any student require further intervention with the counsellor in which multiple sessions are necessary, parents or legal guardians will be contacted and informed.

A standard Student Referral Form which staff at VIS have access to via the School Intranet, used to pass on information with regards to a student's well-being to the Student Support Services. See link above.

Employees at VIS will not be breaching confidentiality if the information disclosed by students is shared with other professionals within VIS or even outsourced departments or institutions.

### **Suicide Protocol**

VIS has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in looking into suicide ideation or any other warning signs and preventing suicide attempts.

VIS acknowledges that comprehensive prevention steps include prevention, intervention, and postvention components which include the following:

1. Once a concern is brought to Counsellor's attention, Section Counsellor and Head of SSS conduct an internal risk assessment

2. If the concern is legitimate, the Section Principal and HoS are informed.
3. Parents are then informed and called for a meeting with the Counsellor, Head of SSS and/or Principal.
4. The student is referred to Mater Dei, Child Adolescent Psychiatric Emergency Services [CAPES] or Crisis Resolution Center [a private entity].
5. The student will be deemed fit to return to school upon presentation of a psychiatric certificate.
6. Ongoing monitoring and support by the Counsellor will be provided to the student together with outsourced professional help.

### **Grief Protocol**

At VIS, we do our best to provide support for grief in a social, pedagogical manner. It is imperative to point out that cultural sensitivity will be respected on a case by case basis. The following procedures will be implemented:

- A designated staff member, most likely a section Counsellor, trained on grief and bereavement will be assigned to support the student/s or anyone affected.
- Training and awareness on grief will be implemented with whole school staff members or grade teachers.
- Implement Coping with Grief workshop with students either through small group approach or grade cohort through PSHE classes and/or pastoral / advisory sessions.
- When necessary outsourcing crisis intervention professionals.

The family will be informed of the steps taken and documentation kept.

### **References**

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

## 5.3 VIS Behaviour Policy

### **Guiding Principles**

Appropriate and respectful behaviour is significant to school life as this promotes a safe school environment where good learning can take place therefore enabling the success of the education programmes VIS offers. Behaviour management strategies employed will be consistent and based on raising awareness of social values with the student. Moreover, maintaining a high standard of student behaviour is the basis that supports this policy.

This policy is aligned with the Student and Parents' Handbooks, Code of Conduct and Anti-Bullying Policy as well as the IB Learner Profile and IMYC/IPC/IEYC Personal Goals.

- The VIS community aims to promote a safe, pleasant, respectful and kind learning environment.
- VIS promotes positive behavior strategies amongst VIS students.
- Students are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others when a situation requires so.
- This policy will be applied consistently, and without prejudice, when incidents of poor behaviour arise within our student community.

### **Roles and Responsibility**

All members of staff are responsible for maintaining and modelling acceptable standards of behaviour at VIS in line with the school ethos.

#### **The role of the Teacher**

All teachers are responsible for reinforcing school rules at all times, whether during class time, around the school, on a field trip, or at any other time when students are present.

Incidents will normally be dealt with by the teacher, in the first instance, in a fair and consistent manner, and recorded as appropriate and in accordance with section-specific expectations.

Where necessary, the teacher is expected to seek additional support from any of the following: Homeroom teacher, Programme Coordinator, Counsellor, Inclusion Coordinator and / or Principal.

#### **The Role of the Principal**

The Principal's role is to make sure that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently within their section.



The Principal documents all reported significant behavioural incidents (for example: repeated behaviours, bullying, fighting, or any other problematic behavioural issue)

### **The Role of Parents**

Promoting positive behaviour is a responsibility that VIS shares with parents.

VIS expects parents to collaborate with the school in an effort to send consistent messages to our students. Parents are pivotal in a child's life and they are legally obliged to cooperate with the Head of School, Principals, teachers and LSEs to address behavioural concerns.

The VIS Parent handbooks delineate expectations so that parents can support good behaviour throughout the school community.

Parents will be informed of reported significant behavioural incidents if there are any concerns regarding a student's behaviour or wellbeing.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

Regulations and procedures will be communicated to students in a manner appropriate for their age.

#### **ELEMENTARY**

#### **Elementary Code Of Conduct**

In order to ensure the welfare of all children in the Elementary school, we have compiled a set of standards of behavior, referred to as the Student's Code of Conduct. Students, staff and parents all share the responsibility for ensuring these common sense behaviours are met at all times.

The students are regarded as representing Verdala from the moment they either arrive on campus or arrive at their bus stop. Behaviour at these times must reflect that expected of a Verdala member, which is the following:

- **RESPECT** towards learning, oneself, peers, school employees, school property, environment and host country
- **HONESTY** academic / interpersonal / sports
- **COLLEGIALITY** and fostering solid interpersonal skills
- **SAFE** environment: conducive to learning

#### **1. RESPECT**

- (a) Respect towards learning is shown through:
- Growth mindset (learn from our mistakes)
  - Integrity (doing the right thing, even when no one is looking)
  - Coming prepared to learn and giving your best
- (b) Respect towards oneself is defined by:

- personal health and hygiene
- keeping safe (reporting promptly bullying, harassment, unfair treatment)
- adhering to the dress code
- (c) Respect towards peers is shown through:
  - being polite, and active listening
  - acknowledging cultural / social differences
  - keeping others safe (reporting promptly bullying, harassment, unfair treatment)
- (d) Respect towards school employees is shown through:
  - being polite, and active listening
- (e) Respect for the host country is shown through:
  - being polite
  - acknowledging cultural / social differences
  - abiding by the laws of the host country
  - adhering to the dress code
- (f) Respect for school property/environment
  - appreciate what we have and help take care of our environment
  - help keep our environment safe, clean and tidy
  - recycling as much as possible

2. **HONESTY** academic / interpersonal / sport

- be truthful
- be kind, or say nothing
- 'win gracefully, lose with dignity' Michelle Obama

3. **COLLEGIALITY** and fostering solid interpersonal skills

- show team spirit – and value it!
- include others
- offer to help others, when appropriate
- be kind to each other

Invitations to events outside of the school will not be delivered in school unless all children in the class are invited, such as birthday parties

4. **SAFE** environment, conducive to learning

- look out for one another
- be gentle with your words and actions
- use your words such as, *"Stop it, I don't like it. If you don't stop I'm going to ask a teacher for help."*
- make safe choices i.e. *use pedestrian crossing. cross with an adult*

Bullying of any kind – physical, verbal, social, cyber – is not tolerated at Verdala International School

Reported incidents of Bullying will result in thorough investigations and appropriate interventions.

### **Student Contract**

Students in Kindergarten to Grade 5 will be asked to sign the following to indicate that they have understood the behaviour guidelines for all Elementary students:

*I shall:*

- *be polite*
- *be honest*
- *be kind to my classmates and other students*
- *listen to my teachers*
- *follow the school rules*
- *come to school prepared to learn*
- *always try my best*

### **Elementary School Discipline**

The philosophy in Elementary is to foster a safe learning environment where behaviour expectations are clearly outlined for students with positive reinforcement.

However, there may be occasions when a child's actions require teacher intervention. Generally, this would begin with speaking quietly to the student, explaining the appropriate behaviour for the situation and perhaps some reflection/ thinking time. If a child causes a problem, they will be asked to solve it. If they cannot solve the problem or choose not to, the teacher or principal will intervene, depending on the situation and the persons involved. If something appears to be unfair, the child is encouraged to whisper, "I'm not sure that's fair." and they will talk about it.

It is the policy in Elementary to keep parents informed of any discipline issues. Should a parent have any questions, the classroom teacher is their first point of contact. If the situation needs to be taken further, they should contact the Elementary Principal.

### **SECONDARY**

*The Codes of Conduct outlines the expectations of all Secondary students. Students and parents are required to sign this on an annual basis as a reminder of the code they are expected to adhere to.*

As a community, Verdala International School, like all groups, has expectations for its members. These expectations help all members be successful, protect their rights, foster mutual trust and respect, and create a positive and safe learning environment where students can maximize their learning. These expectations are built on the foundation of our mission, vision, and student profile.

Secondary School students have the right to:

- be in a safe school environment, conducive to learning, and that promotes a healthy lifestyle (including healthy snacks, food, and drinks available for sale on school premises);
- be treated fairly, equitably, and with respect by teachers and other school employees;
- be protected from physical, verbal, and emotional abuse whilst on school premises or at school events;
- have enthusiastic, motivating, well-qualified, and dynamic teachers, always prepared for their lessons and constantly striving to help each child to achieve his or her full potential;
- be graded fairly;
- have a reasonable choice of subjects, at the appropriate levels in Secondary School, but within the constraints of VIS's capacity to provide them;
- receive extra help from their teachers, within the school day, if requested and/or as needed;
- have supervised access to the outdoor sports facilities during the lunch break;
- receive education including, but not limited to, sexual education, healthy eating, and physical fitness;
- be involved in all aspects of the life of the school community and to seek positions of responsibility in the school;
- approach any member of staff regarding the conduct of another teacher and to be listened to in a non-judgemental way (staff will deal with the complaint as they see appropriate);
- be properly prepared for examinations;
- have a Student Council that acts as a representative voice for the students and which can represent the student body's issues without fear of retribution; and
- have clear procedures for filing complaints and/or grievances and to appeal a decision.

### **Middle School Code of Conduct**

*The code of conduct will be reviewed Aug 2020.*

#### **Respect**

1. Respect toward **learning** is shown through:
  - academic integrity (see VIS Academic Honesty Policy);
  - arriving to school prepared to learn;
  - engaging fully in lessons and extracurricular activities;
  - allowing others to engage in their learning without distraction (e.g., supporting a bully-free environment, including others, etc.); and
  - staying free from using or supplying mind-altering substances that may impair performance in school, on school premises, or at school events.
2. Respect towards **oneself** is shown through:
  - maintaining proper hygiene and following the VIS dress code;
  - keeping a safe environment (e.g., by avoiding the use of mind-altering substances);
  - reporting any instances of bullying, harassment, and/or unfair treatment, whether you or another community member is the victim; &
  - recognizing when help & advice from others is needed and asking for it.
3. Respect towards **peers** is shown through:

- listening and being polite;
  - acknowledgement of social and cultural differences;
  - disallowing bullying, harassment, cliques, and/or discrimination (on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, age, language, or different needs/abilities) in our community; &
  - maintaining a safe environment by keeping others out of danger.
4. Respect towards **school employees** is shown through:
    - listening when being spoken to;
    - remaining polite (including refraining from chewing gum);
    - disallowing any form of discrimination (on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, age, language, or different needs/abilities).
  5. Respect for the **host country** is shown through:
    - adherence to local laws and regulations; and
    - engagement in the host culture; &
    - listening and being polite when engaging with members of the local community.
  6. Respect for the **school property and environment** is shown through:
    - the avoidance and immediate reporting of vandalism, destruction, and/or disregard of school property and the environment;
    - picking up and throwing litter left by you and others;
    - reducing, reusing, and/or recycling materials when appropriate; and
    - respecting all learning environments inside and outside of school.

## Honesty

1. **Academic** honesty is shown through:
  - full acceptance and adherence to the VIS Academic Honesty Policy;
  - reporting any violation of the academic honesty policy, whether by you or another person;
  - contributing fairly and equally to team projects when marks are awarded for the whole team.
2. **Interpersonal** honesty is shown through:
  - full inclusion of all members of the VIS community; and
  - reporting any form of hurtful gossip, lying, or wilful omissions of truth, whether by you or another person.
3. **Sporting** honesty is shown through:
  - good team spirit whether playing competitively or for fun;
  - winning gracefully and/or losing with dignity; and
  - playing fairly at all times.

## Collegiality

1. Be open to helping others, when help is requested by your peers.
2. Abide by and enforce amongst peers the *VIS Academic Honesty Policy* at all times.
3. Remain kind to others and listen carefully (“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” –S. Covey).
4. Encourage the inclusion of fellow students in gatherings/celebrations.
5. Value teamwork, both academically and during sporting events.

6. Spend time at school interacting directly with your peers be it through sports, games, or conversations.
7. Personal music systems, mobile phones, and laptops are allowed during lessons at the teacher's discretion; the use of these devices during lessons must always be in support of learning. While they are also permitted during some breaks, Middle School students are encouraged to socialize with one another and avoid exclusively interacting with mobile electronic devices.

### **Safety**

1. Students are required to support and maintain an environment free of mind-altering substances that can impair performance in school or during school events.
2. Outside of class time football, and throwing games are allowed in supervised areas as long as students are sensible and considerate of others using the same space. Dangerous behaviour will result in such games being stopped.
3. Students must keep the school environment free of the following items: skateboards, rollerblades, shoes with built-in wheels, pets, glass objects, dangerous objects or substances, and/or weapons of any kind.
4. Inform the Principal and/or Head of School immediately if you notice or are aware of any person (peer or non-VIS student) who appears to be or is advertising and/or supplying mind-altering substances or ones that can impair performance in school or at school-sponsored events.
5. Inform the Principal and/or Head of School immediately if you are aware of somebody bringing dangerous and/or prohibited items to the VIS campus or to VIS-sponsored events.

### **High School Student Code of Conduct**

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Our VIS High School Student Code of Conduct sets out expected standards of behaviour which align with our School Vision, Mission, Educational Philosophy, Student Profile, and other statements and policies which guide our community. At VIS we strive to ensure that all of our students become knowledgeable, inquisitive and ethical contributors to our world. The HS Student Code of Conduct specifically focuses on ethical behaviour and positive contributions to our school community.

In general, the aim of this Code is to ensure that the school is a safe and pleasant place in which learning takes place, that the property and reputation of the school is protected, and that students develop self-discipline and consideration for others.

The HS Student Code of Conduct holds individuals and groups responsible for the consequences of their actions. Failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in the withdrawal of privileges or the imposition of sanctions, which can in serious cases include suspension or expulsion from school.

HS students are required to read and sign this Code of Conduct on an annual basis, and will be held to the promises of behaviour they make in doing so.

*HS students at VIS have a responsibility to:*

- accept school policies regarding behaviour
- act and work cooperatively with other students and teachers
- respect the learning needs of other students
- be mindful of their use of resources and their impact on the local and wider environment
- take progressive responsibility for their own learning
- proactively engage with the diverse nature of the school community and demonstrate caring, inclusive behaviour at all times, in accordance with the School's Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Policy
- be punctual and regular in attendance
- uphold the reputation of the school by observing an appropriate standard of behaviour
- behave in a manner which ensures the health and safety of themselves and others
- behave with courtesy and consideration for others
- use technology appropriately, in line with the Technology Acceptable Use Agreement and with classroom expectations
- use appropriate and respectful language at all times (this includes avoiding swearing or derogatory terminology)
- refrain from behaviour which would interrupt the work of any class or hinder the learning opportunities of other students
- respect school property and the property of staff and other students
- remain on the school grounds during the school day, unless specific permission to be absent has been granted by the HS Principal
- complete work set by teachers promptly and to the best of their ability and to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered at the school
- dress neatly and appropriately with due regard for health, hygiene and safety, in accordance with the school's Dress Code.
- avoid any Prohibited Conduct.

*Prohibited conduct includes but is not limited to:*

- any form of bullying whether verbal, emotional, physical, cyber, or in any other form. This includes, but is not limited to: assaulting, harassing, intimidating, threatening, or excluding another individual or group
- stealing, misusing, destroying, defacing, or damaging School property or property belonging to someone else
- academic dishonesty as outlined in the VIS Academic Honesty Policy
- disrupting school activities
- using school facilities, equipment, services, or technological resources without authorisation
- making false accusations against any member of the school community
- supplying false information to the School or forging, altering, or misusing any School document or record
- storing, possessing, or using real or replica firearms, knives, or other weapons, explosives (including fireworks), ammunition, or toxic or otherwise dangerous materials on School premises

- using, possessing, or distributing illegal drugs, alcohol, or nicotine-related products (including vaping), or using, possessing, or distributing any related paraphernalia (e.g. lighters, matches, vape refills, etc)
- accessing, possessing, or distributing indecent material such as pornographic websites, magazines, etc.
- encouraging, aiding, or conspiring in any prohibited conduct
- failing to comply with a disciplinary consequence or disciplinary consequences imposed under the procedures of this Code

### *When does the Code apply?*

The VIS HS Student Code of Conduct applies to any student enrolled in Grades 9-12 at VIS. The Code applies to conduct that occurs on or near the premises of the school, at any time. It also applies to conduct that occurs elsewhere if it is related to school-sponsored programmes or activities (such as off-campus PE lessons or field trips) or if it occurs in the context of a relationship between the student and a third party that involves the student's standing, status, or record at VIS.

The VIS HS Student Code of Conduct also applies to behaviour in the online world where that behaviour in some way relates to the School or the school community, regardless of when and where this takes place. Further clarification can be found in the Technology Acceptable Use Agreement.

### **Disciplinary Consequences**

Disciplinary Consequences that may arise as a result of a breach of the VIS HS Student Code of Conduct include, but are not limited to:

- written warning or reprimand
- detention
- meeting with parents
- being placed on a behavioural report card for one or more weeks
- probation, during which certain conditions must be fulfilled and good behaviour must be demonstrated
- payment of costs or compensation for any loss, damage, or injury caused by the conduct
- issuance of an apology, made publicly or privately
- loss of certain privileges
- restriction or prohibition of access to, or use of, School facilities, services, activities or programmes
- suspension
- expulsion

Most breaches of the Code of Conduct may be dealt with by a member of the HS teaching faculty, a Programme Coordinator, or the HS Principal. Incidents involving prohibited conduct will usually result in suspension or expulsion.



Serious breaches, especially where suspension or expulsion may be considered, will require the student(s) concerned to appear before a Disciplinary Review Committee which will include the Head of School. The Disciplinary Review Committee process is outlined in the Behaviour Management section of the HS Student-Parent Handbook.

The Code of Conduct is signed annually by students and their parents, and kept on file for the duration of that school year.

### **Issues for which disciplinary measures may be taken in Secondary School**

These include, but are not limited to:

Dress Code, Sportsmanship, willful or reckless regard for rules & instructions, academic malpractice, bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation (see Anti-bullying policy), misuse or abuse of school's IT system, misuse of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs or other substances, theft, vandalism, violent behaviour, possession of weapons, searches connected to the above, behaviour on school trips (overnight or abroad), school transport, disrespect towards a staff member.

In Secondary, disciplinary Consequences that may arise as a result of a breach of the VIS Student Code of Conduct include, but are not limited to:

- written warning or reprimand
- detention
- meeting with parents
- being placed on a behavioural report card for one or more weeks
- probation, during which certain conditions must be fulfilled and good behaviour must be demonstrated
- payment of costs or compensation for any loss, damage, or injury caused by the conduct
- issuance of an apology, made publicly or privately
- loss of certain privileges
- restriction or prohibition of access to, or use of, School facilities, services, activities or programmes
- suspension
- expulsion

### **Report Card System**

In Secondary, we operate a Report Card monitoring system for students as an aid to help them reflect on the appropriateness of their actions. The card usually focuses their attention on two or three aspects for improvement, linked to the VIS student profile and guiding statements.

There are two systems

- Yellow, Orange, Red – for disciplinary issues. These are assigned by the Principal.
- Blue – for attitudes towards learning. These can be assigned by the homeroom teacher or by a Programme Coordinator. The goal here is to help students focus on the improvement of certain skills or dispositions which are having a negative impact on their

learning. This card will usually be assigned once a student has failed to respond to intervention by one or more teachers.

### **Recording of Disciplinary Issues**

Disciplinary issues are recorded using the Behaviour module within ManageBac, which automatically informs the homeroom teacher.

### **Disciplinary Review Committee**

Most breaches of the Code of Conduct may be dealt with by a member of the Secondary teaching faculty, a Programme Coordinator, or the relevant Principal. Incidents involving prohibited conduct will usually result in suspension or expulsion. Serious breaches, especially where suspension or expulsion may be considered, will require the student(s) concerned to appear before a Disciplinary Review Committee which will include the Head of School.

A Disciplinary Review Committee is convened whenever an extremely serious issue arises and potentially appropriate consequences include suspension or expulsion. Parents will be informed as soon as the decision to convene this committee has been taken. The process of the committee will be explained carefully to the student in advance of the meeting.

The committee is made up of 5 members: Head of School, Principal, Head of Student Support Services, Programme Coordinator, and the student's Homeroom Teacher. The student involved is encouraged to bring along an adult observer. This is often a trusted member of staff but should not be a parent/guardian. The observer may not participate in the discussion, but should help the student debrief and process the experience after the meeting. The committee will review the facts of the case, and hear the student's perspective and reflection regarding the issue. The committee will then determine appropriate sanctions for the incident taking into consideration the student's history at the school, which may include suspension, expulsion, conditional enrolment, community service, or a range of other consequences.

The resulting sanction will be communicated in writing to the student(s) parent(s)/guardian(s), and permanently stored both on ManageBac and in the student's hardcopy file held by the school.

If a student has achieved a clean disciplinary record of no less than 12 months, they may request that the incident be removed from their record. This request will be considered by the Principal together with the Head of School, and the decision communicated to the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing.

### **Bag and Locker Search Protocol**

The Head of School (HoS) or Principal may carry out a bag or locker search for prohibited items as deemed necessary. In addition to the person carrying out the search, there must also be at least one additional member of staff acting as witness. Ideally the staff members involved are a male and female.

### ***Bag Searches***

1. School personnel must not come into contact with the bag or any of its contents.
2. The student will be required to remove all contents from their bag and lay them out on a flat surface in the presence of the two staff members
3. Any suspect items must be explained by the student.
4. If there is any suspicion of illegal activity (e.g. illegal drugs, weapons, theft, etc)
  - the room in which the search is taking place is to be locked,
  - the student is to be kept under strict observation in a separate secure location
  - the police and the student's parents/guardians are to be called.
5. If there are prohibited/inappropriate items but no illegality (e.g. tobacco, pornographic material, etc), the above procedure will also be followed except that the police will not be called.
6. If the police are called, only when both the police and the parents/guardians are both present, may they have access to the student and/or the suspect items.
7. Should the police deem the matter worthy of further police investigation, the issue becomes their responsibility and the school will provide its full cooperation. For other issues, the matter will be dealt with as a disciplinary issue in accordance with the school's code of conduct, behaviour management, and other related policies and practices.

If the student refuses to empty their bag as required, the bag must be locked away by the person carrying out the search, and the student kept under observation while the parents/guardians are contacted. The parents/guardians will be required to come to school, at which point the bag search will be expected to continue. Failure to permit the bag search by both student and parent/guardians may result in the police being called, or internal disciplinary steps being taken.

### ***Locker searches***

Lockers remain the property of VIS and therefore the school can search students' lockers as required at any time. VIS is under no obligation to inform parents or students or seek their consent before a search is conducted. If a prohibited item is found, the locker will be sealed off, the student will be isolated under strict observation, and the parents/guardians (and police where necessary) will be called as per steps 6 and 7 above.

Where the school has to damage student property in order to access the locker (e.g. the lock is cut), and there is no evidence of prohibited or illegal items, the school will reimburse the student for the cost of the lost property or replace the lock.

### **Behavioural Restraint**

Behavioural restraint may be used by members of staff to prevent a student from committing harm to him/herself or others. Behavioural Restraint will be used only in special circumstances and as deemed necessary by the staff member.

When applying behavioural restraint, minimal force will be used. Moreover, the duration of the restraint will last until the danger has passed.

Reasonable judgements needs to be made for students with identified disorders or disabilities where expectations are fair and do not end in an escalating disciplinary situation.

### **Appeal to Procedures**

If the student feels that the procedures have not been fully or fairly handled, an appeal can be made in the first instance to the Head of School.

As per the School's Grievance Policy, following that a further appeal may be made to the Board of Directors

*Review: 2021*

## **5.4 VIS Anti-bullying Policy**

This policy is written using the Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy compiled by the Ministry of Education (2014) and applies to all VIS students.

### **Guiding Principles**

- As per our anti-discrimination policy, VIS will not tolerate any form of bullying, harrasment or forms of prejudice.
- Violence, harassment and bullying are human rights issues that profoundly affect the lives of children (UNCRC, 1989).
- We believe that all students have a right to a safe and supportive educational environment.
- We aim to support and protect our students within our school environment and community.
- We aim to be proactive in raising awareness whilst actively encouraging positive behaviour.
- All staff are required to take any form of bullying seriously and where necessary, the school will take advice from the National School Support services.
- This policy is also applicable to after school activities when VIS students are not supervised by members of staff. Members running the activities will abide to the same protocol.
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### **Definition of Bullying**

Behaviour is considered as bullying when it is intentional and/or repeated over time. This behaviour could be acted out by an individual or group and against any member of the VIS community over a short or long span of time (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014).

### *Types of Bullying*

- Direct Bullying including physical and verbal bullying
- Indirect Bullying such as lies, false rumours and gossiping amongst others
- Cyber Bullying
- Harassment
- Mobbing or any form of violence
- Being socially excluded or isolated
- Being bullied through lies and false rumors
- Having money or other things taken or damaged
- Being threatened or forced to do things
- Discriminatory taunting, comments or gestures
- Sexual or any unwanted physical contact

### **Vulnerable Students**

Some students may be more prone to bullying than other students. Students coming from an ethnic minority or religious faiths, LGBTIQ, students with particular physical attributes or gifted and talented, as well as those students with identified conditions may be more susceptible to forms of bullying.

Moreover, students identified with Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties [SEBD] and/or Learning Difficulties are exposed to greater vulnerability as they do not always read social cues appropriately and may have difficulties communicating. Furthermore, there may be students with complex and diverse needs who find it difficult to comprehend friendship and boundaries, while others may not make the right judgement regarding when it is safe to share information. Often, students as described above are often rejected or ridiculed and teased by their peers.

We are committed to monitoring these students and ensuring they are not bullied by their peers.

### **Education and raising awareness**

At VIS, the curriculum and the Student Profile emphasise awareness on bullying and the effects on the individual. The inquiry based approach adopted at VIS ensures a deep level of understanding of what respect means whilst the students are well aware of the school's intolerance towards any forms of bullying and the channels needed to take, if one is being bullied or witnessing acts of bullying.

- All students are expected to abide by the student's code of conduct as per section handbooks. This document is revisited on an annual basis and essential agreements established.
- All members of staff are aware of the anti-bullying policy and how matters need to be reported.
- Students and parents are educated on the anti-bullying policy and are given guidance on what to do if bullying occurs.

- The Personal Social Health Education [PSHE] curriculum in Elementary and Middle School operates around three core themes: Relationships, Health and Wellbeing, and Living in the wider world. All of these address various aspects of bullying. In High School, we facilitate pastoral sessions through homeroom time in which we discuss issues related to personal development and emotional intelligence, within which students discuss and consider the implications and impact of bullying behaviour.
- An annual Anti-bullying week informs all students of the collective responsibility to put a stop to bullying. This is carried out by various activities and classes within PSHE and beyond which are all geared towards raising awareness and empowering students.
- Outside speakers are regularly invited to VIS to address students on anti-bullying behaviour and constructing healthy relationships. Furthermore, VIS students participate in campaigns and productions related to the topic.

### **Support**

At VIS, support will be provided for the student/s who were bullied and for the student bullying. No occurrence of suspected bullying will be taken lightly and every effort will be taken to understand and deal with the incident.

For the student/s who experienced bullying, every opportunity to talk through the incident with the class teacher or section counsellor [or any member of staff the student feels comfortable with] will be given. Continuous monitoring of the student/s and reassurance will be provided. Liaison and support to the parents / legal guardians will also be given. Strategies and steps to prevent future bullying will be discussed and taken.

Where necessary, the Anti-Bullying section from the national school support services will be contacted and brought in to work with the student/s involved.

### **Disciplinary Action**

#### **Elementary Section**

Decisions regarding intervention is on a case by case basis and depends on the age of the children involved. Immediate action will at minimal be teacher intervention which includes talking with the students involved. Further steps may include: time-out, loss of play time, written reflections, and a meeting with the ES counsellor. Should there be a repetition of the bullying incident, then the Principal will become involved with the possible result being suspension. Parents are informed throughout the process and the incident, along with the actions taken, will be documented.

#### **Secondary Section**

The philosophy of behaviour management in the Secondary School begins with respect and an understanding that students will make mistakes which are an integral and important part of growing up. However, examples of unacceptable behaviour will always be addressed and

parents informed as appropriate. The MS and HS Socio-Emotional Advisor play a critical role in tackling these issues. The counsellor will work closely with the student/s involved in order to reach a resolution and re-establish school safety for school learning and stability.

Where appropriate the Behavior Management system will be implemented, in serious cases this may lead to a disciplinary hearing which may result in suspension or possible expulsion (refer to the Disciplinary Policy for details of these systems).

## References

1. Ministry for Education and Employment, (2014). Respect for All Framework. Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools.
2. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Convention on the rights of the child. Obtained from: (Oct 2019) [https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC\\_united\\_nations\\_convention\\_on\\_the\\_rights\\_of\\_the\\_child.pdf?\\_ga=2.30177279.115802112.1571642922-1661601952.1571642922](https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.30177279.115802112.1571642922-1661601952.1571642922)

*review: Nov 2021*

## B5 Appendix 1 - HR Document Control Information Sheet

(All dates written year/ month/ day)

Document references	Document Control	Authorisation	Modification History
<i>Title/no.</i>	<i>BOD approval</i>	<i>Person making change</i>	<i>With effect from</i>