



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION POLICY

Policy Type: Administrative
Applies To: All Staff, Students
Approved By: Lead Principal
Policy Reviewed: Every 2 years
Adopted: 2009
Revisions: 2013, 2016, 2022

PURPOSE:

Maple Ridge Christian School is committed to the prevention of child abuse and the enhancement of the well-being and safety of the students entrusted to its care. It is the legal duty of all persons who have concern for a child over abuse or neglect to report to the appropriate authorities, who will conduct an investigation.

The purpose of this policy is to provide specific guidance to the employees in fulfilling this commitment to assist in child abuse prevention and in providing reporting protocols if child abuse is suspected or known to have occurred. This document provides MRCS guidelines and procedures that are both consistent with provincial laws and the principles of God's word.

Guiding Principles:

- The safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations
- Children are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect, harm or threat of harm
- Children will be supported through the process in a Christian manner
- The integrity of the school and its authority will be protected while upholding the honour and glory of the Lord
- The reporting of alleged cases of child abuse will be done according to the laws of British Columbia

DEFINITIONS:

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a deliberate physical assault or action by a person that results in, or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child. It includes the use of unreasonable force to discipline a child or prevent a child from harming him/herself or others. The injuries sustained by the child may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts or bite marks to major fractures of the bones or skull to, in the most extreme cases, death.



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION POLICY

Policy Type: Administrative
Applies To: All Staff, Students
Approved By: Lead Principal
Policy Reviewed: Every 2 years
Adopted: 2009
Revisions: 2013, 2016, 2022

2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used (or likely to be used) for the sexual gratification of another person. It includes:

- touching or invitation to touch for sexual purposes
- intercourse (vaginal, oral, or anal)
- menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, obscene communications or stalking
- sexual references to the child's behavior by words/gestures
- requests that the child expose his/her body for sexual purposes
- deliberate exposure of the child to sexual activity or material
- sexual aspects of organized or ritual abuse

3. Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that occurs when a child engages in a sexual activity, usually through manipulation or coercion, in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter or other considerations. Sexual activity includes:

- performing sexual acts
- sexually explicit activity for entertainment
- involvement with escort or massage parlour services
- appearing in pornographic images

4. Emotional Abuse

This is the most difficult type of abuse to define and recognize. It may range from ignoring to habitually humiliating the child to withholding life-sustaining nurturing. Generally, it involves acts of omissions by those in contact with a child that are likely to have serious, negative emotional impacts. Emotional abuse may occur separately from, or along with, other forms of abuse and neglect. It includes the emotional harm caused by witnessing domestic violence. Emotional abuse can include a pattern of:

- scapegoating
- rejection
- verbal attacks on the child



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION POLICY

Policy Type: Administrative
Applies To: All Staff, Students
Approved By: Lead Principal
Policy Reviewed: Every 2 years
Adopted: 2009
Revisions: 2013, 2016, 2022

-
- threats
 - insults
 - humiliation

5. Emotional Harm

When emotional abuse is chronic and persistent, it can result in emotional harm to the child. Under the Child, Family and Community Service Act, a child is defined as emotionally harmed if they demonstrate severe:

- anxiety
- depression
- withdrawal
- self-destructive or aggressive behavior

6. Neglect

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs. It involves an act of omission by the parent or guardian, resulting in (or likely to result in) harm to the child. Neglect may include failure to provide food, shelter, basic health care, supervision or protection from risks, to the extent that the child's physical health, development or safety is, or is likely to be, harmed.

PROCEDURES:

MRCS policies prohibit any form of child abuse, neglect or violence. The *Child, Family and Community Service Act* requires anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been, or is likely to be at risk, has a legal duty to make a report to a child welfare worker, or directly to the police, if a child is in immediate danger.

1. At the beginning of each school year, the principal will review with all school staff the following 3 documents:
 - a. "BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect" (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development)



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION POLICY

Policy Type: Administrative
Applies To: All Staff, Students
Approved By: Lead Principal
Policy Reviewed: Every 2 years
Adopted: 2009
Revisions: 2013, 2016, 2022

-
- b. *“Responding to Child Welfare Concerns: (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development)*
 - c. *“Support our Students: A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse” (Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools BC)*
 2. The lead principal is designated as the ‘*Appointed School Official (ASO)*’ and an alternate ASO is appointed by the principal to act as a back up in accordance with *Supporting Our Students: A Guide for Independent School Personnel Responding to Child Abuse (revised 2017)*.
 3. Schools will protect personal information regarding child abuse, neglect or violence against improper or unauthorized disclosure and use.
 4. School staff will report suspected child abuse, neglect or violence immediately. Everyone who has a reason to believe that a child has been, or is likely to be physically, harmed, sexually abused or exploited, or neglected by a parent, or otherwise in need of protection as set out in the Section 13 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* is legally responsible under section 14 of the Act to report promptly to a social worker. School staff, who are uncertain about their duty to report, will consult with a social worker who can discuss the options and course of action.
 5. School staff will inform the principal (or alternate school official in the event that the principal is the alleged offender) as soon as possible.
 6. School staff will co-operate with the resulting investigation.
 7. School staff will support student(s) who have experienced child abuse, neglect or violence.

Anyone who suspects a child is being abused or neglected has the legal duty to report the concern to a local child welfare worker (See *The BC Handbook for Action on Child abuse and Neglect.*) If a child is under 19 years of age and is being abused or neglected, it is the person’s legal duty to report the concern to a child welfare worker. **Phone 1 800 663-9122 at any time of the day or night.** If it is a child needing to talk to someone, they should call the Helpline for Children toll free at **310-1234**, (area code is not required) at any time of the day or night. The caller’s name is not required. **If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 or the local police.**



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION POLICY

Policy Type: Administrative
Applies To: All Staff, Students
Approved By: Lead Principal
Policy Reviewed: Every 2 years
Adopted: 2009
Revisions: 2013, 2016, 2022

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. The Lead Principal is the appointed school official.
2. In the absence of the Lead Principal, the alternate school official is the assistant or vice principal.
3. In fulfilling the role as a school's Appointed School Official, this person may be required to:
 - a. investigate where appropriate on behalf of the school authority;
 - b. ensure a safe school environment during investigations;
 - c. consult with the child welfare worker and/or police;
 - d. ensure that no school employee interferes with any investigations;
 - e. communicate with parents with respect to actions taken by the school authority;
 - f. report to the Commission for Teacher Regulation, Teacher Regulation Branch, Ministry of Education, when the School Authority dismisses, suspends or otherwise disciplines a certified teacher or school principal (Independent School Act section 7 and 7.2);
 - g. and, refer student(s) for counseling according to the school's policies.

REFERENCES:

The following legislation and resources are in place to protect the safety and well-being of children:

- The Child, Family and Community Service Act, available online at: www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/96046_01.htm
- The Criminal Code of Canada, available online at: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-46>
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act available online at: www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/f/96165_01.htm
- Youth Criminal Justice Act, available online at: www.justice.gc.ca
- The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect (2016) – For Service Providers, available online at: www.mct.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/handbook_action_child_abuse.pdf
- Infant's Act www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/I/96223_01.htm
- Victims of Crime Act www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/v/96478_01.htm