

VIDYAGYAN SCHOOL- CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFE SCHOOL POLICY
POCSO 2026-27

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CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFE SCHOOL POLICY

INTRODUCTION

VidyaGyan School is a co-educational boarding School for underprivileged meritorious kids of rural Uttar Pradesh. It is rooted in a spirit of collaboration amongst all its stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, management and the local community. This collaborative spirit runs through every aspect of the School's life, whether it is decision making, the teaching-learning process or the formulation of the aims and objectives of the School. As an offshoot of this spirit, it is hoped that what will genuinely develop is a feeling of proprietorship at all levels. Put in the simplest possible form, it is the feeling that 'this School is mine and all that I do affects this School'. This is the spirit that it is hoped the teachers will be able to spread through every pore of the School, and indeed make it the spirit of the School's existence.

Vidyagyan endeavors to promote a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for pupils, where they feel valued, loved and cared for.

Sexual harassment and abuse of children is a violation of the law and thus of basic human rights and dignity. At VidyaGyan School we abide by the law strictly. The school has a stringent Child Protection and Safe School policy to protect children from acts of physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse. It is in keeping with the POCSO Act 2012.

POCSO ACT (2012)

According to the *Model Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development* "The POCSO Act, 2012 is a comprehensive law to provide for the protection of children from the offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography, while safeguarding the interests of the child at every stage of the judicial process by incorporating child-friendly mechanisms for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offences through designated Special Courts."

WHO IS A CHILD

Any person below the age of eighteen years is considered a child according to the POCSO Act (2012).

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

When an adult engages in any activity which is sexual in nature (such as touching, kissing, looking, showing pornographic material, etc.) with a child to satisfy his sexual needs, it amounts to child sexual abuse. It does not restrict itself to only penetration, force or pain.

TYPES OF ABUSE

I. ABUSE IN WHICH PHYSICAL CONTACT IS INVOLVED:

Touching/stroking/kissing/brushing/ touching a child's private parts for sexual gratification/Making the child touch someone's private parts, for sexual gratification/penetration/force/etc.

II. ABUSE WITHOUT PHYSICAL CONTACT

- Showing obscene/lewd pictures, videos, material to the child/pornography
- Exhibiting personal private parts to the child
- Taking photographs of the child in compromising position/child's private parts
- Watching a child undress/use washroom with malicious intention
- Making sounds which have implicit sexual connotation
- Asking a child for sexual favors in lieu of preferential treatment

WHAT IS CHILD PROTECTION

Protecting a child against acts of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, pornography, and trafficking constitutes child protection.

It is a common knowledge that children are often abused by the very people whom they know, love, care for and trust being with. They remain silent about being abused by these people because of fear, shame, humiliation, confusion and because they are under the control of the abusers. They feel they don't have a voice. Therefore, they suffer in silence.

The real damage of sexual abuse is not to their bodies but to their minds, how it impacts their psyche and affects their ability to live a meaningful life.

Child protection is thus the responsibility of not just the parents, but of every adult in the school and community and the society at large.

We must:

- Inculcate in our children, respect for their own as well as other people's bodies
- Encourage children to speak about abuse (suspected/actual)
- Teach children how to detect and fight against abuse
- Advocate for child protection policies and ensure that these policies are implemented in all organizations that work with children
- Be proactive, and report cases of abuse

(All of the above is not to say that one needs to be alarmist and proceed in a linear fashion upon receiving a complaint and not test the nature of the complaint (albeit with empathy and utmost sensitivity). One must make room for mistaken impressions and ensure that accusation of wrong doing is indeed genuine.)

PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

VidyaGyan School tries to ensure safety for children at all levels.

PROCESS OF REDRESSING COMPLAINTS

FLOW OF INTERNAL REPORTING

A) FOR INCIDENTS THAT HAPPEN IN THE SCHOOL

1. Any school personnel who has knowledge of a student having been abused shall bring the matter to the notice of the School Principal immediately.
2. The Principal will ask the child protection officer to meet the student and provide comfort to him/her as a first level of intervention.
3. The child protection officer will record the student's report and share it with members of the School's Child Abuse Monitoring Committee (CAMC).
4. The Principal will ask the Child Abuse Monitoring Committee for a thorough investigation of the incident.
5. The CAMC will gather all evidences such as CCTV footage, identify witnesses if any etc. within the shortest time possible, about 2-3 hours of the same day the incident has happened/reported.
6. The school must ensure that the student is not asked questions by anybody other than the child protection officer at this stage of enquiry. The officer's prime responsibility is to provide relief and safeguard the student against re-traumatization and victimization.
7. For the purpose of identifying the offender, the student will be shown only photographs of suspected people and not be made to identify in person.
8. Privacy is crucial to this procedure. The offender or anyone other than the victim should not be informed at this stage of investigation when the student is asked to identify the suspected person. The offender may try to influence/coerce/scare the student in an attempt to subvert the enquiry. Giving publicity to the names of the victim and the perpetrator will not only vitiate the atmosphere it will also interfere with a fair probe into the matter by the CAMC.

9. The CAMC will share its findings with the Principal after thorough investigation of the case and opine if in its view the complaint is prima facie correct and needs to be proceeded with or whether the complaint need not be pursued.
10. If the findings of the Child Abuse Monitoring Committee are in the affirmative, the principal will meet with the suspected employee in the presence of the CAMC chairperson and enquire about it.
11. The procedure to be followed for such an inquiry will be the same as followed by the CAMC in complaints of sexual harassment except that at no stage will the victim ever be made to come face to face with the alleged perpetrator. The proceedings shall follow principles of natural justice and give the perpetrator a fair hearing. However, questions by way of cross examination if any that the alleged perpetrator wishes to put to the victim and other witnesses will be handed over in writing to the CAMC which shall obtain the response of the victim and the witnesses on its own by transcribing them verbatim. During such an inquiry the victim and the perpetrator will be made to sit in separate rooms with no possibility of contact with each other. The location of other adult witnesses can be choice of the witness depending on how comfortable the witness is but no child witness shall be made to face the perpetrator.
12. If the suspect is found guilty then the school Principal will inform the Vice President HR and the trio together will take a decision on the nature of the punishment to be awarded to remove the employee including dismissal/removal from the school premises immediately.
13. The Principal will call for a meeting with the student's parents at the earliest possible and inform them about the incident.
14. The counsellor should be the one touch point to provide emotional support to the student. The Counsellor will provide support and counselling to the child throughout but the statement of the child will be noted in such inquiry by the CAMC itself.
15. The school must maintain background checks on all staff members and update their records yearly along with photographs of all its employees safeguarding their privacy.

B) FOR INCIDENTS THAT HAPPEN OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

For incidents suspected/reported by the student himself/herself which happen outside of school, the respective staff member with whom the student has shared the information will report the matter immediately to the Principal.

The Principal may ask a trusted member of the CAMC to verify facts from the student in a discreet, sensitive and respectable manner.

If the student verifies facts and confirms the incident, the Principal will immediately call for a meeting with the student's parents and share the information with them.

LEGAL ADVISOR

The legal advisor to school should immediately set up all required documentation and procedures as required under the POCSO Act 2012.

CHILD ABUSE MONITORING COMMITTEE (CAMC)

The Child Abuse Monitoring Committee at school level is constituted to address reported cases of child sexual abuse within the school campus. The members for the CAMC are nominated by the School's Senior Management team. The members of CAMC are to stay in power for a period of maximum three years post which the committee is dissolved for fresh nominations.

At least one member of the Committee shall be an independent person, with experience of Child Rights issues to ensure that the Committee works in an impartial manner. In case of a School, this could also be a parent on the School Management Committee.

In case of a School, the CAMC may also have two student representatives. In co-ed School, one boy and one girl student would be included.

The Child Abuse Monitoring Committee is expected to address all cases of reported child sexual abuse as an internal mechanism.

The Chairperson/Presiding Officer of the CAMC has to be any member other than the Trustees/Principal of the School.

The following members will constitute the Child Abuse Monitoring Committee:

- a. Ms. Kauser Begum -Chairperson & Child Protection Officer
- b. Ms. Madhu Srinivasan -Member
- c. Ms. Deepamaline -Member
- d. Mr. Samon Meetei -Member
- e. Ms. Nagalakshmi -Member
- f. Ms. Blessy Albin-Member
- g. Head Boy- Mr. Naveen
- h. Head Girl-Ms. Hanisthi

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CAMC

1. The CAMC will ensure that the redressal procedure of the Child Protection and Safe School Policy in the School is implemented in both letter and spirit.
2. The CAMC will conduct the first level inquiry after a case of child sexual abuse has been reported.
3. The CAMC will enquire into complaints of child sexual abuse within 2-3 hours on the same day as it has been reported and suggest adequate recommendations to protect the child from further harm.
4. Also, members of the CAMC will be consulted for strict disciplinary action against the perpetrator ranging from reprimand to termination of services. Generally, the corrective action/remedial measure must be commensurate with the severity and persistence of the misconduct.

The CAMC will try its best to provide immediate relief to the aggrieved student by way of referring the student to the school counsellor.

5. CAMC members are expected to maintain strict confidentiality of the process as well as of the information they are privy to. Any violation of this by way of any direct or indirect sharing of such information with persons not directly related to the complaint without good reason can result in disciplinary action against the concerned committee member.
6. CAMC will report on incidents at the School level, undertake appropriate analysis and apprise the core committee on Sexual Harassment of the same on a periodic/need basis.
7. The CAMC will conduct/organize training sessions for all staff members which will include even the support staff employees.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

VidyaGyan School takes serious view of offences of child sexual abuse within the campus. It will impose strict disciplinary action against any person who is even suspected to have indulged in such an unacceptable behaviour.

PROVISIONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION AT VIDYAGYAN SCHOOL:

a) COUNSELLING

VidyaGyan School offers counselling support to students who are emotionally disturbed and have behavioural challenges.

Counselling is an interpersonal process which gives students the opportunity to talk with a trained professional about particular concerns that worry them, and look at ways of resolving these issues. It enables students to gain an understanding of themselves, develop insight of their personal strengths and limitations, work through feelings of inner conflict, improve interpersonal relationships and develop coping skills to face challenges which cannot be altered.

b) **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS**

VidyaGyan School believes that all students have a right to a safe, clean and healthy environment which can be created if there is respect for school rules, and students exhibit positive behaviour and discipline of their own volition.

Consequences help to establish a cause and effect relationship between behaviour and its possible outcome. At VidyaGyan School we rely on positive approaches to discipline rather than resort to punitive measures which act as tools only to control undesired responses.

c) **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF**

At VidyaGyan School, we take pride in saying that our educators model the right behaviour for students and live by each value that VidyaGyan School upholds.

1. One of the core values of VidyaGyan School is to embrace diversity. Therefore, it expects its educators to be accepting of and accommodate differences arising from gender, civil status (socio-economic background), family status (single/adoptive/blended family), sexual orientation, religion, disability, ethnicity, colour etc.
2. Educators are expected to respect privacy and confidentiality of sensitive information shared with them by the student or the school counsellor.
3. Educators are strictly asked to refrain from subjecting students to fear, anxiety, physical punishment, sexual abuse, and mental and emotional harassment.
4. Educators must reflect on biases and understand how personal opinions may influence their behaviour towards a student.
5. Spill effect – The educator at VidyaGyan School is expected to disapprove inappropriate behaviours displayed by the student but not be disapproving of the student.

6. Educators are expected to avoid at all times, discussions about student(s) in corridors or staff lounges which can seriously impact the student's self-esteem. Also it is expected from the educators not to brand a child due to poor performance or any disciplinary issue of the past.

Physical Boundaries-Educators must maintain a respectable distance while interacting with students.

d) **STAFF TRAININGS AND SENSITIZATION**

Staff training and sensitization is one of the most critical requirements for schools to stay abuse and incident free. The School conducts regular, yearly trainings with all staff employees which also includes the third party staff employees, on aspects of child safety, POCSO Act, and Sexual Harassment at Workplace.

Staff is trained to recognize signs of abuse, create a safe environment for students, provide relief to a student who has undergone abuse as a first level of intervention, maintain confidentiality and observe process and protocol to report a case of abuse.

The abuse may not always happen at school. However, if any staff member feels that the student is disturbed and showing signs of distress/sexual abuse even outside of school he/she must have the discretion and sensitivity to report the matter to the school Principal immediately.

e) **EMPOWERING CHILDREN ON ASPECTS OF PERSONAL SAFETY**

- Sensitization on Good Touch, Bad touch
- Workshops on Adolescence/Sexuality with students
- No Touch Policy for all Staff
- Anti-Bullying Campaigns Across all School

f) **INFRASTRUCTURAL AND ADMINISTRATIONAL SUPPORT**

- VidyaGyan School is well designed to cover all aspects of child safety within its campus.
- The school has installed CCTV cameras at all strategic points within the campus such as corridors, dining areas, Hostels, etc.
- The school ensures close supervision of cleaning staff who are also trained on aspects of safety, decorum, communication and appropriate school behavior.

INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN CHILDREN

Disclaimer: (This Information given below is shared by School of Life, an initiative of the TSE Foundation that conducts safety-oriented programs on child sexual abuse (POCSO), harassment and bullying among children, teenagers and young adults)

BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL SIGNS OF ABUSE

- A Fear of Certain Places, People, or activities, especially being alone with certain people
- Loss of Appetite, or Trouble Eating or Swallowing
- Disturbed Sleep/Frequent Nightmares
- Sudden Mood Swings, Withdrawal, Rage, Fear, Anxiety, Anger
- Excessive Crying
- Drastic Change In School Performance
- Avoids Touch
- Drawing With Bizarre Themes
- Sexually acting out on younger Children
- Reluctance To Undress
- Explicit sexual behavior
- Sexual knowledge beyond their years
- Use of new words for Private Body Parts
- Reverting to outgrown behavior (bedwetting and thumb sucking)

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF ABUSE

- Difficulty Walking or Sitting
- Itching, swelling, redness or Pain In The Genital Areas
- Bleeding or Trauma In Oral, Genital or Anal Areas
- Excessive Bladder Infections
- Excessive Urinary Tract Infections
- Excessive Yeast Infections

Please note that these indicators may not be exclusive to child sexual abuse and some may be seen even if the child experiences another negative/traumatic event. Also, the presence of one indicator does not necessarily imply that the child is being sexually abused. Typically, one is likely to notice more than one indicator being presented. However, even one indicator should prompt the adult to understand more about why the child is behaving differently.

HOW TO HANDLE CHILD ABUSE DISCLOSURES

It is not uncommon for a small number of children to disclose abuse after a classroom presentation about child abuse or personal safety. As your child will have the opportunity to participate in the Speak Up Be Safe program that address personal safety and child abuse,

it is important to know what to do if your, or another child, tells you about an abusive experience. Remember, as an adult you have the responsibility to keep children safe.

TYPES OF DISCLOSURE

Disclosures can be direct or indirect. Most likely a disclosure will be indirect, which can mean the child does not share the details of the abuse without being prompted, or does so in a round-about way. An example of this is, “Sometimes my step-dad keeps me up at night.” A disclosure can also be disguised, for example: “I have a cousin who is being abused.” In other cases the disclosure can be through hints or gestures, or even through another child “My friend told me...” The child is hoping that a caring parent or caregiver will get the “hint” they are offering.

RECOGNIZE THE CLUES

It is important to recognize the possible clues so that further questions are asked. Most children who disclose want the abuse to stop. When the disclosure is “missed” they may continue with additional hints, or not. For many abused children, a class presentation on child abuse prevention is the first time they realize that what happens to them does not happen to everyone. Some children may try to protect the abuser, especially when the abuser is someone they love.

SUPPORT THE CHILD

If a child does disclose abuse never forget how hard it is for him or her to tell someone about abuse. It is hard to hear your child has been abused, and your initial reactions may be to not believe or show shock or horror, but it is important to support the child and help him/her to disclose. Acknowledge his/her courage in speaking out. Have a plan for supporting a child who discloses to you through the reporting period and in the days that follow. Regardless of how the child discloses, recognizing the possibility the child is being abused, believing the child, and discussing the situation with him or her further will, in most cases, bring out further details.

DURING THE DISCLOSURE

1. AVOID DENIAL

A common reaction to a child’s disclosure is denial. Respect your child by listening to what he/she has to say and taking what your child says seriously. Believe what your child is telling you.

2. PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Make sure the setting is confidential and comfortable. Avoid communicating with shock, horror, or fear about anything said, even though what you are hearing is likely

shocking and horrifying. Your child may interpret your reaction as your being shocked and horrified by him or her and shut down. The child needs you to be confident and supportive. Speak slowly and maintain a calm demeanor. Tell your child he/she is doing the right thing and that you will do what you can to help them.

3. REASSURE YOUR CHILD

Reassure your child that he/she did nothing wrong and that you believe him/her.

4. LISTEN AND DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Listen more than you talk and avoid advice giving or problem solving. Don't put words in your child's mouth or assume you know what he/she means is going to say. Let your child use language they are comfortable with. Let your child set the pace, don't rush them.

5. DO NOT INTERROGATE

Don't ask the child a lot of questions, especially leading questions, which means a question in which you provide a possible answer - Did this or that happen? Were you at school? Did your uncle hit you on the leg? This can be confusing for your child and he/she might shut down. Don't ask your child for details. This can make it harder for your child to tell you about the abuse.

6. LISTEN TO THE CHILD

Let them explain what happened in his or her own words. Don't stop your child in the middle of the story to go get someone or do something else. Limit questioning to only the following four questions if the child has not already provided you with the information:

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Who did it?
- How do you know them? (If the relationship of the abuser is unclear)

7. MAKE NO PROMISES

Don't tell your child that you won't tell anyone what they tell you. Your child will have fears about what will happen next, so tell your child what you are going to do, what is going to happen next, and who else they will need to talk to. This will help your child to feel some control over what happens next within the boundaries of the law.

8. DOCUMENT EXACT QUOTES

It may be helpful to write down exact quotes of what your child said in case of the involvement of other parties, such as school or child protective services.

9. BE SUPPORTIVE, NOT JUDGMENTAL

Don't talk negatively. Even though your child may be disclosing terrible things that may have happened at the hands of a family member or friend, the child may still loves that person and may only just be beginning to recognize that he/she was being abused. Reassure the child that he/she is not at fault and have done nothing wrong.

10. DON'T ASK QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT IMPLY THE CHILD WAS AT FAULT

- Why didn't you tell me before?
- What were you doing there?
- Why didn't you stop it?
- What did you do to make this happen?
- Are you telling the truth?

11. HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING ABOUT ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Know the four kinds of child abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. For more information on abuse and neglect.

12. REPORT ANY SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

If you suspect that your child or another child is being abused, report it to the proper authorities. When reporting child abuse to the appropriate authorities, it is important to have the following information: what happened, when it happened, where it happened, who did it and their relationship to the child. You will be asked for some identifying information such as your name, address, where you work, and how the child disclosed. All of your identifying information will be kept confidential.

13. REMEMBER, IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ADULTS TO TAKE ACTION AND KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

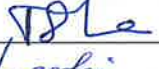
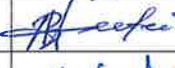
14. CHILD HELPLINE NUMBER TO SEEK SUPPORT ON ANY CASE OF CHILD ABUSE IS 1098

References

Smith, M. C. (2008). *Pre-professional mandated reporters' understanding of young children's eyewitness testimony: Implications for training. Children and Youth Services Review, 30(12), 1355-1365. doi:DOI: 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2008.04.00*

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENSE COMMITTEE
(POCSO) 2026 – 27

A CHILD ABUSE MONITORING COMMITTEE (CAMC) CONSISTING OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS IS CONSTITUTED UNDER THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT (POCSO ACT).

S.No	Name	Designation	Signature
1	Ms. Kauser Begum	Principal	
2	Ms. Madhu Srinivasan	Wellness Counsellor	
3	Ms. Deepamaline	Warden	
4	Mr. Samon Meetei	Physical Education Teacher	
5	Ms. Nagalakshmi	Teacher	
6	Ms. Blessy Albin	Teacher	
7	Head Boy	Students Representative	NAVEEN VIII
8	Head Girl	Students Representative	HANISTHI VIII

The prime responsibilities of the committee would be:

1. Conduct in-house induction sessions each term on child protection, gender sensitization and the provisions of the POCSO Act for students and staff.
2. Appropriate training for staffs to address the responsibilities to protect children from abuse.
3. Monitoring the school CCTV cameras.
4. Control access to school and hostel buildings by outsiders and monitor the safety of children.
5. Handling complaints of sexual offenses against children.
6. Ensuring the child's physical and emotional safety during the investigation.
7. Conducting a prompt and thorough inquiry into reported cases.
8. Providing support, counselling, and assistance to the child and their family.
9. Facilitating legal proceedings in compliance with the act.

CHILD LINE 1098- 24*7 HELPLINE FOR CHILDREN SERVICES



PENAL CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

VidyaGyan is committed to providing a work environment that ensures everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The organization is also committed to promoting an environment that is open & conducive to the growth of its members & other stakeholders. The organization will not tolerate any form of unlawful harassment and is committed to take all necessary steps to ensure that its members and other stakeholders are not subjected to any form of harassment.

Anyone violating the Policy for Prevention & Redressal of Sexual Harassment at Workplace is subject to disciplinary action as per the Disciplinary policy of the Organization. The nature and severity of disciplinary action against the guilty will be commensurate with the seriousness & gravity of the conduct reported and established by the Committee. This could range from but will not be limited to:

- Mandatory written apology
- Mandatory training and/or counselling sessions
- A letter of warning that will be filed in the personal file
- Immediate transfer to a different location / department
- Withholding of increment / promotion or both
- Dismissal / termination from the services of the organization
- Any other action that the committee may deem fit

CASH (Committee Against Sexual Harassment) Members at VidyaGyan School – Chennai

<u>INTERNAL COMMITTEE (IC) UNDER POSH POLICY</u> (For VidyaGyan School, Chennai, Tamil Nadu)	
Ms. Kirti Karamchandani (Presiding Officer) Designation: Associate Director - Government Affairs and Public Policy Email ID: kirti.karamchandani@hclgroup.in	
Ms. S Madhuranayagi (Member) Designation: Wellness Counsellor Email ID: s.madhuranayagi@vidyagyan.in	
Mr. Samson Premkumar S (Member) Designation: Director - Head HR Email ID: samsons@ssn.edu.in	
Ms. Smita Shankar (External Member) Member Legal in Electricity Consumers Forum, Delhi, External POSH IC Member in Non-Govt. Organizations, POSH Trainer with vast experience of handling women related issues specially under POSH	
POSH Complaint Email id: secure@shivnadarfoundation.org	

Principal

 (Signature)