

Roots Gymnasium Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy



Approved by:	Approval Date:	Next Reviewed:
Senior Leadership Team	January 2024	January 2025

Policy Name: Roots Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Date of Next Review: Date 1 year from approval for Contact Officer to review policy.

1. Policy Statement and Purpose:

Roots Gymnasium is committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all students. We recognize our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in our care. This policy outlines our commitment to ensuring their protection from abuse and harm.

Every student should feel safe and protected from any form of abuse. Roots Gymnasium is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and care of its students and expects **all staff and volunteers** to share this commitment. Roots Gymnasium will take all reasonable measures to:

- 1.1. Ensure that suitable staff and volunteers are recruited to work with students.
- 1.2. Be alert to signs of abuse both at Roots Gymnasium and elsewhere.
- 1.3. Do all that is possible to protect each student from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another student.
- 1.4. Deal appropriately with every suspicion or complaint of abuse.
- 1.5. Support students who have been abused.
- 1.6. Design and operate procedures which ensure that teachers and others, who are innocent, are not prejudiced by false allegations.
- 1.7. Be alert to the needs of students with medical conditions.
- 1.8. Operate robust and sensible health and safety procedures.
- 1.9. Operate clear policies on drugs, alcohol, and substance abuse.
- 1.10. Teach students about safeguarding through the curriculum and specifically via Homeroom (Life Skills) and Bible lessons.

1.11. Take all practicable steps to ensure that Roots Gymnasium's premises are as secure as possible.

2. Legal Framework:

This policy is in accordance with the laws and regulations of Namibia, including but not limited to the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020. It is designed to support the principles and requirements outlined in the Childcare and Protection Act 3 of 2015.

3. Definitions:

- **Child:** Any person under the age of 18 years.
- **Abuse:** Any form of maltreatment, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect, causing actual or potential harm to a child's well-being.
See Appendix 1: Types and signs of abuse.

4. Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Roots Gymnasium will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will be responsible for coordinating safeguarding and child protection matters. The DSO's contact details will be prominently displayed and communicated to all staff, students, and parents.

The DSO in 2024 is Mr. Johan Meyer, Head of School.

5. Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Staff and Volunteers:** All staff members and / or volunteers are responsible for the welfare and protection of children. They should be aware of signs of abuse, report concerns promptly, and participate in relevant training.
- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** The DSO will ensure that all staff members are aware of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, provide advice and support, and liaise with external agencies when necessary.
- **Parents/Guardians:** Parents/guardians are encouraged to work in partnership with the school to ensure the safety and well-being of their children.

6. Safer Recruitment:

Roots Gymnasium is committed to a rigorous recruitment process that includes appropriate checks, in line with the Namibian Constitution, to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. This includes criminal record checks, reference checks, and verification of qualifications.

7. Training:

All staff members will receive regular training on safeguarding and child protection issues. This will include recognizing signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and keeping up to date with relevant legislation.

8. Reporting Procedures:

Any concerns about the welfare of a child should be reported to the DSO immediately (within 24 hours). A record of concerns and actions taken will be maintained confidentially.

See ***Appendix 2: Guidance for staff on suspecting or hearing a complaint of abuse from a student*** and ***Appendix 3: Dealing with allegations against staff***.

9. Confidentiality:

All information regarding safeguarding and child protection matters will be treated confidentially, shared only on a need-to-know basis, and in line with data protection laws.

10. Communication:

This policy will be communicated to all staff, students, and parents. It will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.

11. Review and Monitoring:

This policy will be reviewed annually by Roots Gymnasium and updated in response to changes in legislation or best practice. The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored regularly.

Appendix 1 : Types and signs of abuse

Types of abuse

Abuse may include:

- a. **Physical abuse:** A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding or otherwise causing physical harm to a student. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a student.
- b. **Emotional abuse:** The persistent emotional maltreatment of a student such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the student's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a student that he/she is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of the other person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on students. These may include interactions that are beyond a student's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the student participating in normal social interaction. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing the student to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of students. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a student, although it may occur alone.
- c. **Sexual abuse:** This involves forcing or enticing a student or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether the student is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, rubbing and inappropriate touching outside of clothing. It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving students in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging students to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, engaging in inappropriately sexualised talk, or grooming a student in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other students.
- d. **Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet a student's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the student's health or development. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); failing to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- e. **Student sexual exploitation:** This involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or in some cases simply affection) for engaging in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for affection or gifts, to serious organised crime by gangs and groups. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim which increases as the exploitative relationship develops. Sexual exploitation involves varying degrees of coercion, intimidation, or enticement, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying including cyberbullying and grooming. It also important to recognise that some young people who are being sexually exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.

Signs of abuse

Possible signs of abuse include:

- a. The student says he/she has been abused or asks a question or makes a comment which gives rise to that inference.
- b. Injury where there is no reasonable or consistent explanation for a student's injury; the injury is unusual in kind or location or there have been several injuries and there is a pattern to those injuries.
- c. The student's behaviour stands out from the group as either being extreme model behaviour or extremely challenging behaviour, or there is a sudden or significant change in the student's behaviour.
- d. The student asks to drop subjects with a particular teacher and seems reluctant to discuss the reason.
- e. The student's development is delayed, the student loses or gains weight or there is deterioration in the student's general wellbeing.
- f. The student appears neglected, i.e. dirty, hungry, inadequately clothed.
- g. The student is reluctant to go home, or has been openly rejected by his/her parents.
- h. Inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff or any other person working with students; for example the use of inappropriate sexual comments, excessive one to one attention or inappropriate sharing of images.

Appendix 2 : Guidance for staff on suspecting or hearing a complaint of abuse from a student

There are 3 reasons to respond to abuse/ suspected abuse:

1. A child discloses abuse.
2. A member of staff discovers abuse.
3. We have reason to suspect abuse.

If staff suspect that abuse is happening, have witnessed abuse, or have been told by a child that they are being abused, it's their responsibility to report it immediately.

Action staff must take:

A member of staff suspecting or hearing a complaint of abuse must:

- a. Listen carefully to the student and keep an open mind. The member of staff should not take a decision as to whether the abuse has taken place.
- b. Not ask leading questions, i.e. a question which suggests its own answer.
- c. Reassure the student but not give a guarantee of confidentiality. The member of staff should explain that they need to pass the information to the relevant CPO who will ensure that the correct action is taken.
- d. Keep a sufficient written record of the conversation, which should include:
 - i. The date and time.
 - ii. The place of the conversation.
 - iii. The essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence.The record should be signed by the person making it and should use names, not initials. The record must be kept securely and handed to the relevant CPO as soon as possible.
- e. Keep any evidence, for example, scribbled notes, mobile phones containing text messages, clothing, computers, of relevance and pass it on to the relevant CPO.

All suspicions or complaints of abuse must be reported to the relevant CPO as soon as possible (within 24 hours) unless it is an allegation against a member of staff in which case the procedures set out in Appendix 3 should be followed.

Appendix 3 : Dealing with allegations against staff

Procedures

The procedures for dealing with allegations made against staff will be used when the member of staff or volunteer has:

- a. Behaved in a way that has harmed a student, or may have harmed a student.
- b. Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a student.
- c. Behaved towards a student or students in a way that indicates he/she would pose a risk of harm if he/she were to work regularly or closely with students.

All such allegations must be dealt with as a priority to avoid any delay.

Reporting an allegation against staff or volunteer

When an allegation or complaint is made against any member of staff or a volunteer, the matter should be reported immediately to the relevant CPO, or to the relevant principal. In the event of the allegation or complaint being made against the CPO, incidents should be reported to the principal as a matter of urgency.

When an allegation or complaint is made against a member of the Senior Leadership Team, it should be reported to the Director of School, Mrs. Colette Rieckert.

Disclosure of information

The Principal will inform the accused person of the allegations having met with the relevant CPO. Roots Gymnasium Private School have a duty of care for its employees and will therefore ensure that effective support is provided for anyone facing an allegation. In addition to being informed of the allegation individuals will be given an explanation of the likely course of action and offered appropriate support.

The Parents of the student involved will be informed of the allegation as soon as possible. They will also be kept informed of the progress of the case, including the outcome of any disciplinary process.

The identification of a teacher who is the subject of such an allegation will not be disclosed to the press.

Suspension

Suspension will not be an automatic response to an allegation and will only be considered to facilitate an investigation in a case when:

- a. There is reason to believe that a student is at risk of significant harm.
- b. The allegation is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.

A member of staff will only be suspended if there is no reasonable alternative. If suspension is deemed appropriate, the reasons and justification will be recorded, and the member of staff notified of those reasons in writing.

Return to work

If it is decided that the person who has been suspended should return to work, Roots Gymnasium will consider how best to facilitate this e.g. arranging a phased return and/or the provision of a mentor to aid and support in the short term. Roots Gymnasium will also consider how best to manage the contact with the student who made the allegation.

Dismissal of staff

If Roots Gymnasium ceases to use the services of a member of staff or volunteer because he/she is unsuitable to work with students the matter will be reported to The Ministry Of Education and, if necessary and following legal advice, to the police.

If a member of staff or volunteer tenders his/her resignation, or ceases to provide his/her services, any student protection allegations may still be followed up by Roots Gymnasium, depending on the circumstances and the nature of the allegation, in accordance with this policy.

Please also see the [Staff Disciplinary Policy and Regulations](#).

Unsubstantiated or malicious allegations

- a. When an allegation by a student is shown to have been deliberately invented or malicious, the Principal will discipline the student concerned; it is likely that the disciplinary sanction will be exclusion from Roots Gymnasium.
- b. When a parent has made a deliberately invented or malicious allegation it is highly likely that the Principal will require the parent to withdraw his/her son/daughter from Roots Gymnasium.
- c. Whether or not the person making the allegation is a student or a parent (or other member of the public), the school reserves the right to contact the police to determine whether any action might be appropriate.
- d. Details of allegations found to be malicious will be removed from personnel records.
- e. An allegation proven to be false, unsubstantiated, or malicious will not be referred to in employer references.