

Date: 01 April 2023

Vega Schools Child Protection Policy (CPP) as per POCSO Act

PURPOSE & SCOPE

In accordance with the government regulation for The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012., Vega Schools has adopted (POCSO) act as part of the Child Protection Policy ,for ensuring a happy and safe environment for all its stakeholders during effective implementation of its curriculum. Child Protection is the school's commitment to safeguard children from harm and abuse. At Vega Schools, the child protection mandate is reflected not only in the policies but also in every aspect of the school administration and management including in staff recruitment, training and teaching learning transactions that would impact interactions between teachers, students, the school environment and parents – rendering them more child centric. Our objective is to create awareness about THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES (POCSO) ACT, 2012' for all its stakeholders (Internal or External).

The policy will apply to all people related to the school and who come in direct or indirect contact with children. This Policy encompasses guidelines for safety and protection of children that includes physical, emotional and personal safety, protection from corporal punishment, sexual abuse, cyber-crime, and emergencies and disasters. The Policy comprises the following key elements to guide the behaviour and practices of personnel and individuals in relation to the school such as:

- Creating a child safe and child sensitive school environment
- Prevention of child abuse – dealing with various forms of child abuse including corporal punishment
- Responding to Child Safety Violations - Complaints mechanisms and response procedures.
- Recruitment and capacity building of personnel.
- Disciplinary action for misconduct.
- Monitoring and Review that includes self-assessment, feedback mechanisms and reporting.

CPP COMMITTEE

The school shall constitute a Child Protection Committee (CPC) as per Govt. Notification (Ministry of Women and Child Development) with the following composition:

Chairperson	Mrs Komal Sood (Director)
Member Governing Council	Ms Sangeeta Das (Head People & Culture)
The Child Protection Officer	Ms Monika Dhingra (School Counselor)
Head Senior School	Ms Utkalika Das (Vice Principal)
Two teachers-One teacher from senior school and one teacher from junior school	Ms Sweta Singh (PGT) Ms Gurdain Bhasin (Primary Coordinator)
Parent member from the Parent School Committee	Sandeep Jain

Two or more students from 8th standard or higher classes with equal gender Representation	Harmeher And anya Sachdeva
School Administrative Officer	Ms Surbhi Singh (Head Administration)

DEFINITIONS:

Any term not defined in this CPP, shall bear the meaning given to it under the relevant applicable law.

- **“Child”** means a student admitted and enrolled in the School located anywhere in India;
- **“Child Abuse”** is any deliberate behaviour or action which includes all forms of physical, emotional, online and sexual abuse that results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development or dignity and endangers child safety;
- **“Cyber Bullying”** means any form of intimidation or harassment, using a computer, communication device or computer network or the Internet;
- **“Mental Harassment”** means and includes insults, ridicule, humiliation, name-calling and repeated threats to cause physical violence to a child;
- **“Penal Offence”** means any offence that is punishable under the law with corporal punishment and/ or fine, such as, offences defined and punishable under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and/ or POCSO Act, 2012 and/or the Juvenile Justice Act or any other law in force on the date of the incident;
- **“Physical Violence”** means any act or conduct which is of such a nature so as to cause bodily pain, harm, or danger to life, limb, or health or impair the health or development of the child;
- **“Bullying” or “Ragging”** means any disorderly conduct whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness any other student, indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities which causes or is likely to cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in a fresher or a junior student or asking the students to do any act or perform something which such student will not do in the ordinary course and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student.
- **“Sexual Assault”** has the same meaning as assigned to it in Section 7 of POCSO Act, 2012;
- **“Sexual Harassment”** has the same meaning as assigned to it in Section 11 of POCSO Act, 2012;
- **“Stalking”** means following a child and contacting or attempting to contact such child to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by such child; or monitoring the child by internet, email or any other form of electronic communication.

Offences and other Acts covered under this CPP: The following offences and acts constitute the cause of action for making a complaint under this CPP:

- a) Cyber Bullying
- b) Cyber Stalking
- c) Mental Harassment
- d) Penal Offences
- e) Physical Violence
- f) Ragging / Bullying
- g) Sexual Assault
- h) Sexual Harassment
- i) Stalking

The aforesaid acts are defined in the Definitions clause. It is clarified that the aforesaid acts and offenses are not mutually exclusive to each other but are overlapping with one another, and shall be dealt with in addition to one another.

Complaint of an Offense:

A complaint in writing by a student and/ or parent(s) of such student complaining of any act that constitutes a penal offense under the law may be handed over to either of the following persons:-

- a) Any teacher
- b) Counselor
- c) School Principal/Vice Principal
- d) Child Protection Officer

- In the event the complaint constitutes an offence under POCSO Act (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012), the same shall be forwarded to the Child Protection Committee and the procedures as established by the Child Protection Committee shall be followed.
- With respect to offenses under POCSO, the School is duty bound to report the offense to the concerned law enforcement agencies in terms of Section 19 and Section 21 of the Act.
- Where the complaining student and/ or parent(s) of such student, is of the view that the complaint constitutes a penal offense and should be forwarded to the concerned law enforcement agency, the School shall forward the same to the concerned law enforcement agency.
- The School will cooperate with the concerned law enforcement agencies inquiring into and/ or investigating complaints of penal offense(s).
- In the event the complaint does not fall within the above, the complaint shall be dealt with by the Disciplinary committee and procedures as established by the Disciplinary Committee shall be followed.

Complaint Redressal Mechanism for Child Sexual Abuse Cases:

- If a person has knowledge that an offense has been committed or belief or apprehension that an offense is likely to be committed must report to any member of the Child Protection Committee or any senior member of the School.
- Such persons as stated above should not conduct their own investigation or look into the matter. There should not be any delay in reporting the matter to the Child Protection Committee or any senior member of the School.
- The Child Protection Committee must hold a meeting and immediately report the matter to the local police/ Special juvenile police unit/ Child helpline 1098/ State commission for protection of child rights.
- Minutes of the meeting should be maintained and signed by all members. A copy of the same should be shared with the authorities.
- When the matter is closed or withdrawn for any reason whatsoever, the School must prepare a post incident report/ closure report.

Code of Conduct

- All staff members, external personnel and visitors shall follow the prescribed Code of Conduct to safeguard the child from any incidence of abuse. In the event, a legislation or subordinate legislation prescribes any code of conduct for school staff, the school shall abide by the same in addition to the code provided below.

Code of Conduct for the Staff

- Be conscious of and respect the privacy and dignity of each and every child.
- Be visible and not in a secluded place, while in contact with children at the workplace.
- Respect and encourage children's voice and views.
- Educate children about their rights, issues of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Be affectionate, caring and understanding to the requirements and needs of the children.
- Be responsive in case any special need of the child arises such as health issues or emotional support.
- Have a sense of accountability, in order to deter any poor practice or potentially abusive behavior.
- Immediately report any suspicious behavior/suspected occurrence of abuse. It is a criminal offence to conceal or abet incidents of child abuse, and is mandatory to report such offences.
- Treat children with respect regardless of race, color, gender, language, religion, nationality, ethnicity, disability or other status.
- Comply with all relevant Indian and State legislation, including all child related laws.

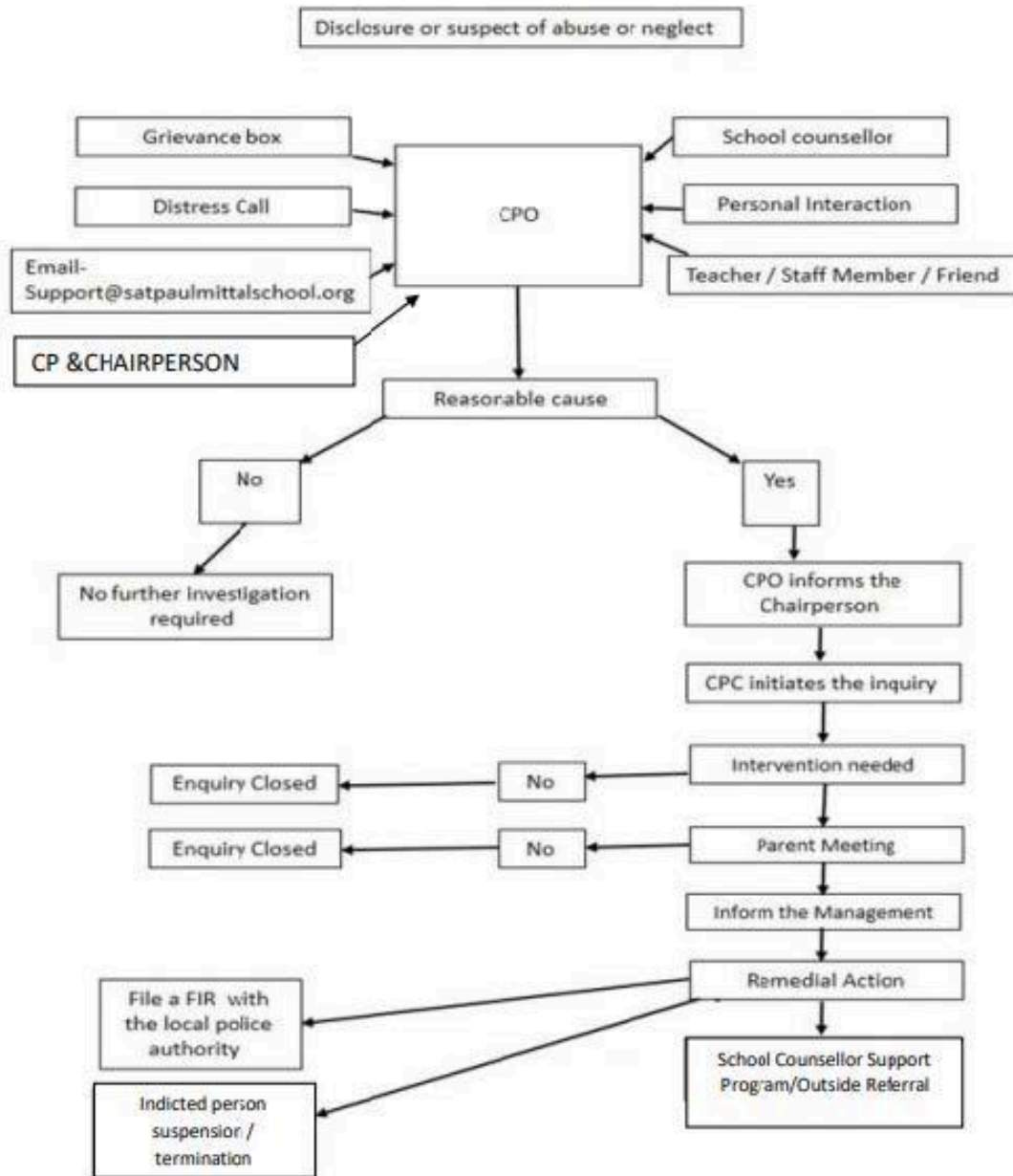
It is NOT appropriate for staff to

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
- Physically assault or physically abuse the child.
- Use language that is discriminatory, abusive or hurtful to the child.
- Develop relationships with the child that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Store obscene / pornographic material (photographs, video clips) on their mobile phones and show them to children.
- Browse, publish or transmit material in any form which depicts children engaged in sexually explicit acts or conduct.
- Create text or digital images and/or collects, seeks, browses, downloads, advertises, promotes, exchanges or distributes material in any electronic form depicting children in obscene or indecent or sexually explicit manner.
- Show or talk of content that is sexual in nature or take photographs of children.
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Condone and/or participate in behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Use physical punishment on children.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Stigmatize or humiliate a child.
- Act in a manner that puts the child at risk.
- Engage in any sort of physical contact with a child that may make the child or an observer feel uncomfortable, or that may be seen by an observer to be violating boundaries.
- Engage in any communication with a child within or outside of school duties, that may make the child uncomfortable or that may be seen by an observer to be violating boundaries.
- Conduct their own investigation into allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal or inappropriate behavior – it is an employee's duty to report the matter to his/her Principals/Child protection coordinator.

It is important to note that whether or not a particular behavior or action constitutes inappropriate behavior will be a matter determined by the organization having regard to all of the circumstances, including past behavior, and allegations or suspicions related to such behavior.

Every complaint regarding inappropriate behavior or communication with a child, shall be taken cognizance of by the management of the School. However, whether or not a particular behavior or action constitutes inappropriate conduct, or is in contravention of the aforesaid Code of Conduct or this CPP, will be a matter determined by the management of the School, having regard to the relevant facts and circumstances. The findings and decision of the management of the School shall be final.

STEPS FOLLOWING DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT:



Redressal Timeline:

Committee meeting	Within 3 working days of reporting the event.
Closure of case	Within 90 days

Continuous Assessment and Monitoring of CPP: This CPP shall be comprehensively assessed annually so as to improvise the same in line with contemporaneous society.

An audit called “Child Safety Checklist” shall be conducted annually by a committee constituted by School Management. The audit shall be a critical analysis and evaluation of the safety and security of children at large studying in the school. An audit report shall be prepared and published annually.

The various actions required to be taken under this CPP, such as forwarding the complaint of a penal offense to the law enforcement agency, becoming a co-complainant, seeking legal opinion, taking disciplinary action against the wrongdoers and all other acts in connection with this CPP, shall be done by a committee or committees or Senior Staff Members who may be appointed for this purpose by the Management of the School.

The School has presently allocated responsibilities of protection of its students to the members of the Child Protection Committee.

This CPP may be revised or amended from time to time, by the Management of the School or by a committee appointed for this purpose.