



Cedarwood School

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Cedarwood School

Effective Management of Abuse, Self-Injury and Sexual Offences within the Educational context

This policy must be read in conjunction with the POPIA Manual

This policy must be read in conjunction with the POPIA Manual and 'Guidelines and Procedures: Dealing with Child Abuse within the Education System.'

Purpose of this Policy

To provide all staff working within Cedarwood School with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with confirmed and suspected cases of child abuse or self-injury.

The policy on effective management of abuse within the Educational context is a summary of relevant points for teachers to consider when managing a case of alleged physical, sexual, social or emotional abuse, as well as reports of self-injury.

The manual of *Guidelines and Procedures: Dealing with child abuse within the Education System*; provided in training with the Teddy Bear Clinic, should be referred to for more information.

The relevant legislative framework needs to be consulted and considered when managing a case of abuse. Within the Cedarwood context these include the Children's Act, Sexual Offences Act, Child Justice Act, Mental Health Act, White Paper 6 or the SIAS document and the Constitution.

Relevant Role Players will also need to be informed, depending on the nature of the case, including; District Office, District Based Support Team (DBST), Principal, Board members, School Management Team (SMT), School Based Support Team (SBST), Staff and Parents.

Reporting and action structures:

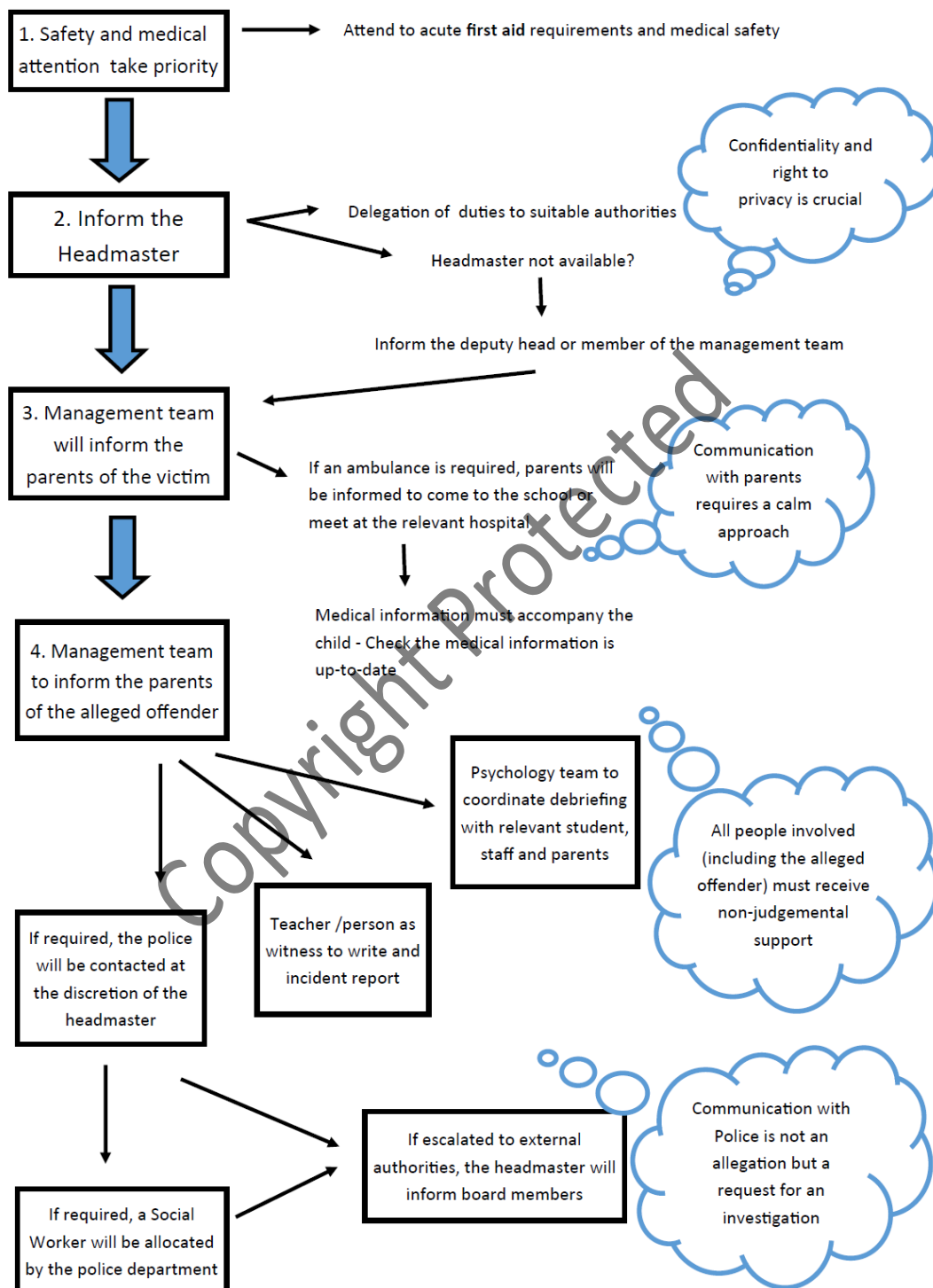
Individual elements of each case will need to be carefully considered:

Acute cases of deliberate significant physical harm

Definition of grievous *bodily harm* - serious physical injury inflicted on a person by the *deliberate* (conscious and intentional) action of another.

Please refer to the following flow chart in order to follow the required management of an acute case.

Actions to take in the event of deliberate significant physical harm



Management of Non-Emergency Child Abuse

If a child discloses abuse that does not require immediate medical attention, the following steps should be taken:

- Assess from the child whether their parents or guardians can be informed. If there is no objection, a parent can be contacted to share concerns.
- If the child objects or becomes distressed at the mention, the following can be instituted:
 - Ask the child to identify a member of staff that they trust who can monitor the situation for them (if not serious enough to be reported to the SAPS)
 - If further assessment is required, inform the principal and consider whether an assessment is required from social development
 - Form 22 may be required.

Sexual Offences

Stages of healthy sexual development and concerning behaviours are summarised in the Teddy Bear Clinic manual and consultation with the Psychology team is advised when uncertain.

The definition of sexual offences, or acts that are considered sexual offences can be found in the following Gazette: No. 32 of 2007: Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007.

Limits to confidentiality are of paramount importance:

- Certain secrets can NOT be kept
- Do not make false promises
- Encourage a child to talk to you and provide support, but do not guarantee secrets will be kept
- Witnesses to sexual offences who do not report incidences are liable to disciplinary procedures

Important information to keep in mind:

- Cases are managed according to the age of students involved
 - Criminal capacity: no criminal capacity under age 10, age 10-14 need to prove their capacity to understand right from wrong, age 14 and older can be tried and convicted
- Important ages to keep in mind:
 - Consensual sexual activity Age 16
 - Age differentials are important to consider age in a criminal case
- If both parties are between age 12 and 15 the incident is not a criminal case but a social worker is required to support life skill development
- If an age differential occurs the case must be reported to the police as a criminal offense to protect the school and refer for therapy
 - Termination of pregnancy can occur without parental consent at any age
 - Medical treatment can be consented to by a child of 12 years if they fully understand the benefits, risks and social implications
- Diversion programs and Life Skills programs will be utilised where possible to provide support and intervention without court procedures.

Disclosure of abuse or sexual offence requires any relevant adult to report, by law. Reporting procedures require strict confidentiality. The Psychology team can support the completion of Form 22 to report Abuse, whether, sexual, physical, or neglectful; **however, the person who received the disclosure needs to approach the relevant authorities.**

The police station closest to where the alleged abuse occurred must be approached; child protection services will be consulted, and a social worker will be allocated to the case. An acute case is an

incident which occurs within the **last 72 hours** and requires medical attention as a priority. (See flow chart to guide decision-making.)

Social Media

(To be read in conjunction with the Social Media Policy and Bullying Policy)

Cyber bullying is threatening, lying about, stalking or otherwise harassing a person online or via other electronic communication devices like a cell phone.

Keep a record of all harassing messages, posts and comments in case you decide to tell the police. Monitor the use of appropriate social media and block inappropriate contacts.

Sexting is sending sexually explicit text or photographs via mobile devices. Sometimes adolescents share the photographs voluntarily, but at other times children may be coerced into taking or sending the photographs. Once the photos are sent, some children use them to bully, harass, intimidate, or embarrass victims online or via mobile devices.

Any naked photo or video of someone under 18 could be considered child pornography, which is always illegal. Taking photos or videos is considered 'production of child pornography'; saving such media on a device constitutes being 'in possession of child pornography'; sharing or sending the media constitutes 'dispensing child pornography'.

- Understand the risks and educate students about the risks and potential dangers of online behaviour
- Involve parents in open communication and collaboration
- Model appropriate interaction on social media
- Educate pupils on the dangers and criminal and psychological repercussions of social media interactions outlined above.

If teachers become aware of inappropriately distributed content via social media, parents are to be informed.

Self-Injury

Self-Injury is the act of deliberately injuring one's own body. Self-mutilation, also referred to as self-harm, self-inflicted violence or cutting, is a recognized psychiatric disorder and does not necessarily represent a suicide attempt. Although the intent is different, some forms of self-mutilation can lead to serious medical consequences, up to and including death. Like eating disorders; people who practice self-injury often go to great lengths to keep their symptoms secret.

Any suspicion of Self Harm must be brought to the attention of a member of the Psychology team, whilst protecting the dignity and confidence of the student. Any acute cases (whereby medical attention is required) must be dealt with as such. Where necessary, parents are to be informed by a member of the Psychology team.

Substance abuse

Substance abuse can be a contributing factor to academic difficulties, absenteeism and behavioural concerns. Substance use is also strongly associated with high risk behaviours such as crime, violence, unprotected sex, accidents and mental and physical health problems.

The Cedarwood policy has been informed by local best practice and the Guide to Drug Testing in South African Schools (Department of Basic Education; 2013). South African Schools have been declared drug free zones, and the implementation of policies promote prevention, early detection and health promotion. (Refer to the Policy on Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse.)

A child or adult who is using substances or tests positively in a substance abuse test, will be offered involvement in a supportive agreement with the school in order to assist rehabilitation. If a pupil is suspected of being under the influence or abusing substances, a member of the Psychology team should be informed.

School Based Strategies for support and prevention:

- Educational Psychologists who work on the school premises can be consulted to support staff, parents and children
- Social Workers work in consultation with the School when required
- Staff Development occurs on a regular basis
- Emotional Intelligence (EQ) workshops are offered for emotional and social developmental requirements
- External presenters are invited to address the staff, students and parents
- The core values of the school include Care, Open Engagement, Respect, Community and Inclusion of Diversity; therefore, the ethos of the school is conducive to respectful communication about any difficulties, including psychological, social and emotional concerns
- Life Orientation, in accordance with the curriculum requirements, promotes healthy development
- Code of conduct is signed by parents and children at the start of the year to promote positive behaviour within relevant boundaries
- The Guardian is consulted to ensure all adults working in the property are cleared on the sexual offences act
- The Health and Safety Team work to safeguard against possible harm
- Students are always monitored by staff, incident books are signed after all morning, break and afternoon duties are completed

Reminder:

The Bill of Rights in the Constitution Act 108 of 1996 enshrines the rights of all people.

- It protects and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.
- *No person may unfairly discriminate against a learner.*
- All learners shall receive equal protection and treatment before the law.
- *Every learner has the right to dignity and privacy and has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading manner.*
- *Learners have the right to education and to a clean and safe school environment that is conducive to education.*

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of Cedarwood School's policy on Effective Management of Abuse within the Educational context. I have also been given the opportunity to read and ask questions about the policy. I understand that by signing this acknowledgement, I agree to accept the policy as a condition of my employment with Cedarwood School.

Employee Name (Print): _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

RECORD OF CHANGES

<u>Date</u>	<u>Page no, heading, brief description of changes</u>	<u>Entered by</u>
20 March 2018	None	P Kotze
18/07/18	None	P Kotze
30 Sept 2019	None	M Bathgate
11/09/20	POPIA	Management
29/10/2020	Multiple – see track changes on other documents & POPIA	Claire Maher
13/09/21	None	Management
23/11/2022	None	Management
09/10/2023	None	Management

