International School Rheintal

# Child Protection Policy

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International School Rheintal
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# ISR Guiding Statements

## International School Rheintal Vision

ISR is the school of choice in the Alpen Rheintal region providing a high quality international education in English for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, inspiring international-mindedness, academic and personal excellence and responsible engagement.

**Reviewed June 2023**

## International School Rheintal Mission

ISR is a supportive, challenging and student-centered environment. We encourage each student to reach their potential whilst promoting international-mindedness, empathy and life-long learning. Through teamwork and individual endeavours, members of the school community should:

- Respect and take responsibility for themselves, others and the environment
- Appreciate and respect diversity
- Think critically
- Reflect thoughtfully
- Communicate effectively
- Celebrate success

**Reviewed June 2023**

# ISR Policy Statement

Child abuse and neglect are concerns throughout the world. Child abuse and neglect are violations of a child's human rights and are obstacles to the child's education as well as to their physical, emotional, and spiritual development. ISR endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, of which our host country, Switzerland, is a signatory.

Schools fill a special institutional role in a society as protectors of children. They need to ensure that all children in their care are afforded a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop, both at school and away. Educators, having the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time, are in a unique position to identify children who are in need of help and protection. As such, educators have a professional and ethical obligation to identify children who are in need of help and protection, and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of the services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All staff employed at ISR should report via 'Safeguard My School' to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in cases of suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect, whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow-up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with this Child Protection Policy. Furthermore, cases of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to the appropriate local authorities by the DSL.

In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, ISR will follow a course of due process, i.e. all matters will be resolved in a fair manner and according to this policy, the ISR Whistleblowing Policy, as well as Swiss laws, including Cantonal laws.

# Commitment of ISR to Child Protection

ISR is committed to the protection of children and to the prevention of child abuse in any form. Hence, ISR only recruits staff who have been through a vetting and police check (→ see: ISR Safer Recruitment Policy).

ISR is committed to educating and supporting students, parents and teachers in ways that develop protective behaviours, and to working with teachers to help them recognize signs of abuse and give appropriate support where necessary. Teachers are regularly trained in child protection through DSL workshops and EduCare courses.

ISR is committed to providing families with access to outside agencies and/or individuals who can support families resolving issues associated with child abuse.

Protecting the welfare of the students is the role of every professional who has contact with ISR students. All faculty and staff employed at ISR should report suspected incidents of physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect to the DSL.

Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with the process respective to this policy and with Swiss law.

# Definition of Key Terms

**Child Protection** can be defined as preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children. Child protection is part of a school's safeguarding practice; it is the activity that is undertaken to protect children. Safeguarding is to prevent harm – child protection is how we respond to harm. Please note that this definition also includes harm to self.

**Child protection concerns** include suspected, alleged, self-disclosed, or witnessed abuse/neglect of a child by anyone associated within or outside the school which must be investigated and followed by appropriate action.

**Child Abuse** constitute, all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. The four main types of abuse are:

- Physical Abuse,
- Sexual Abuse,
- Emotional Abuse, and
- Neglectful Behaviour.

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury which results in physical harm and may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning or scalding, drowning,

suffocating, or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. Physical abuse may involve:

- Hitting, shaking, throwing,
- Drowning,
- Burning or scalding,
- Poisoning,
- Suffocating, and/or
- Otherwise causing physical harm.

Signs of physical abuse include:

- Bumps and bruises,
- The presence of injuries in several stages of healing indicating
- repeated maltreatment,
- Burning marks,
- Black eyes, broken bones, bite marks,
- Marks that may indicate strangling, and/or
- Injuries that are inconsistent with the explanation given.

Physical abuse often results in the following behaviour signs:

- Flinching when touched,
- Inability to recall how injuries occurred,
- Avoiding getting changed for PE,
- Wearing long trousers and sleeves on hot and sunny days
- (check for religious and cultural reasons that may explain the dress code),
- Reluctance to go home,
- Eager to please,
- Being aggressive,
- Being sad,
- Being suicidal, and/or
- Using drugs.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves someone forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. Abusers are often male but can also be female. Younger children may not be aware that they are being abused and they may not have the words and vocabulary to describe what is being done to them. Non-penetrative acts may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual abuse may involve:

- Assault by penetration,
- Non-penetrative acts, such as kissing, touching, and rubbing,
- Watching sexual activities or pornographic material,
- Inappropriate role plays, and/or
- Grooming.

Grooming is defined as the action by a paedophile of preparing a child for a meeting, especially via an internet chat room, with the intention of committing a sexual offence.

Possible physical signs of sexual abuse include:

- Stomach pains,
- Genital soreness, bleeding, or discharge,
- Urinary infections,
- Discomfort in walking or sitting,
- Sexually transmitted infections, and/or
- Appearing filthy, often on purpose, as the victim tries to protect him-/herself by wanting to appear unattractive to his/her abuser.

Possible behavioural signs of sexual abuse are:

- Change in behaviour,
- Not wanting to change (undress) for PE or swimming,
- Sexual knowledge, language and behaviour beyond age expectations,
- Self-harming, e.g. cutting,
- Fear or avoidance of being with a person and/or people,
- Being withdrawn,
- Unexplained amounts of money (prostitution),
- Disturbed sleep,
- Sexualised drawings,
- Change in handwriting,
- Not attending school, going missing, and/or
- Being picked up from school by unknown cars.

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child and it is usually involved in all other forms of abuse, although it may also occur alone. Examples of emotional abuse are:

- Conveying to a child that he/she is worthless,
- Silencing a child deliberately,

- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child,
- Rejecting or ignoring a child completely,
- Using degrading language or behaviours towards the child,
- Preventing social interactions with other children or adults,
- Experiences of bullying,
- Witnessing the abuse of another child or adult,
- Causing a child to feel frequently frightened or in danger, and/or
- Child exploitation.

Emotional abuse often shows in certain physical signs, especially the following:

- Self-harm marks,
- Erratic weight or growth patterns,
- Delayed development - physically and/or emotionally, and/or
- Erratic behaviour.

Behavioural signs of emotional abuse may include:

- Difficulty in forming relationships,
- Inappropriate attention-seeking,
- Being withdrawn,
- Unexplained underachievement at school,
- Self-harming,
- Disturbed sleep, and/or
- Bed-wetting.

## Neglectful Behaviour

Neglectful behaviour or just neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. Examples include:

- Failure to provide food, clothing, shelter,
- Failure to protect a child from harm or danger,
- Failure to ensure access to medical care and treatment, and/or
- Failure to respond to a child's basic emotional needs.

In terms of physical signs, neglect may show as follows:

- Unattended medical or dental problems,
- Lack of energy due to inadequate nutrition,
- Very thin or swollen stomach; being constantly hungry,
- Inadequate clothing (e.g. no warm clothes in winter),
- Untreated skin or hair problems (e.g. rashes, sores, lice),

- Lack of muscle tone, and/or
- Tiredness.

Behavioural signs of neglect can include:

- Demanding constant attention,
- Difficulty in making friends,
- Missing school, having an irregular attendance,
- Stealing and/or begging for food,
- Emotional withdrawal,
- Lack of aspirations,
- Low self-esteem,
- Poor social relationships,
- Alcohol or substance misuse,
- Developmental delay (weight, language, social skills), and/or
- Mental health problems.

## Specific Safeguarding Issues

Specific safeguarding issues include the following:

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) and/or breast ironing,
- Forced marriage,
- Honour-based violence (to defend the honour of one's family),
- Extremism and radicalisation,
- Fabricated or induced illness (Munchhausen syndrome by proxy), and/or
- Online abuse (→ see: ISR ICT Policy).

## Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Peer-on-peer abuse is the abuse and control that is exercised between children and young people:

- Bullying,
- Forced sexual relationships,
- Sexting,
- Coercive control,
- Blackmail (without physical threats) and extortion (with physical threats),
- Up-skirting (taking photos from a position that allows to look inside a woman's dress or skirt), and/or
- Hazing (initiation ceremonies, drink and drug games, tests of courage).

Indicators of peer-on-peer abuse may include the following:

- Missing school, being truant from lessons,
- Being withdrawn,
- Being anxious,
- Being aggressive,
- Doing self-harm, and/or
- Abusing alcohol and/or other substances.

# The Role of Staff

All staff (teaching and support staff) play a key role in preventing and noticing child abuse. The role of staff is to report in a timely appropriate manner (usually as soon as possible) to the DSL in case of the following:

- Noticing signs of any type of abuse,
- Having concerns about a child's welfare,
- Receiving disclosure from a child, and/or
- Observing a staff member behaving inappropriately with a child (→ see: ISR Whistle Blowing Policy).

In case of the DSL's absence, the Deputy DSL is to be informed immediately. In the absence of both — DSL and Deputy DSL — all staff will be informed by the DSL about a critical incident person who is also safeguarding trained.

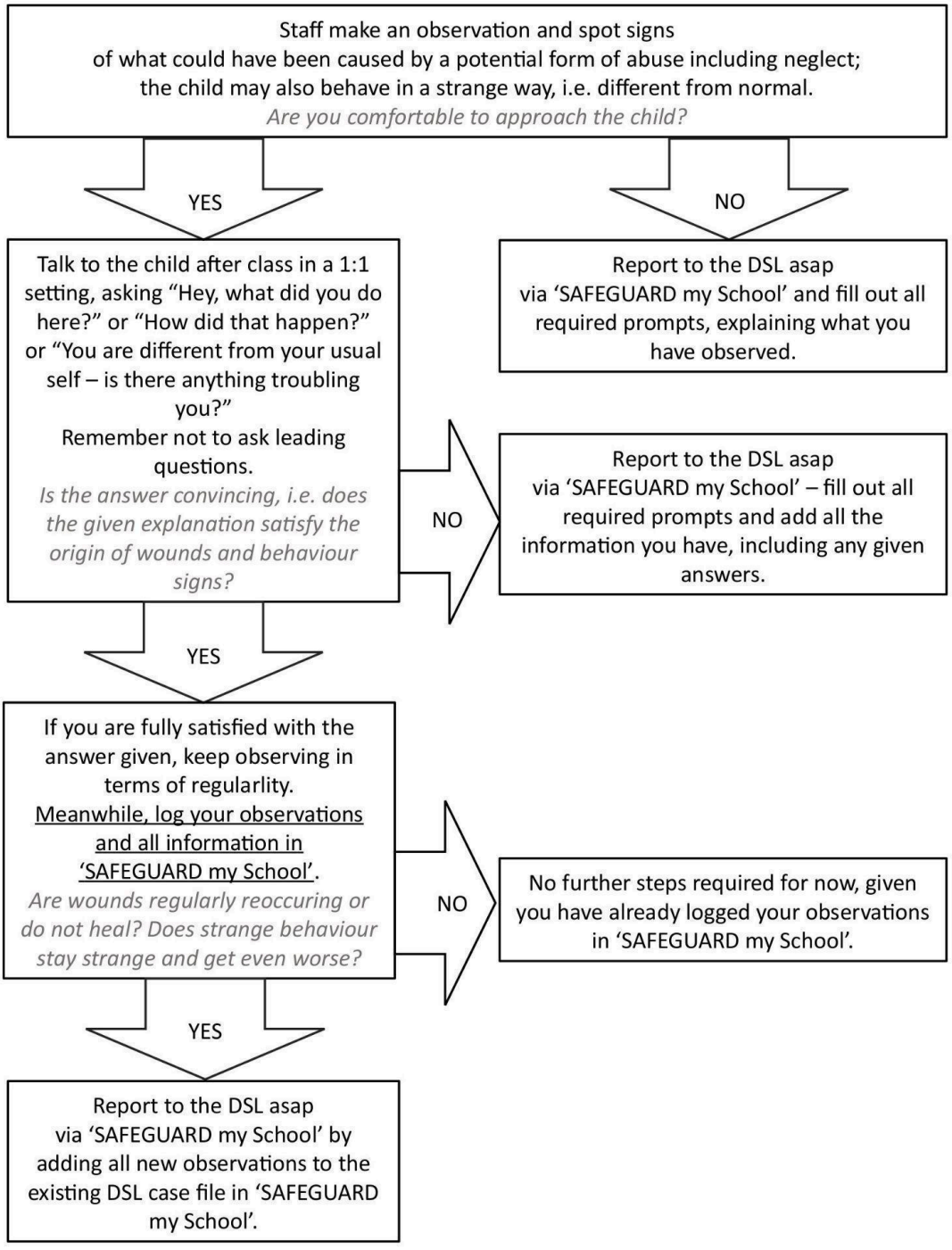
Staff who have a concern, received a disclosure, and/or made an observation must:

- Inform the DSL as soon as possible via 'SAFEGUARD my School'
- Once logged in using your credentials, follow and fill in all the prompts
- Provide as much information as possible, trying to answer what, who, when, where, how and why (why is often not answerable),
- In obvious and severe cases of abuse, it is advisable to talk to the DSL directly and in addition to logging a case via 'SAFEGUARD my School'.

Remember, the role of staff is to be observant and notice potential abuse, make observation notes and report to the DSL in a timely manner on the same day via 'SAFEGUARD my School'. The role of staff is not to be a detective or criminal investigator.

Staff need to familiarise themselves with the flowchart below:

## Flowchart: Making observations, spotting signs



# Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is defined as the positive application of force in order to protect or prevent a student from injury to him or herself, or other students, or staff. Physical restraint is used to prevent injury to self or others, or very serious damage to property. Physical restraint shall only be used in emergency situations. Physical restraint may be necessary as a positive strategy to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations. Staff members must immediately report any incident involving the use of physical restraint via Safeguard My School.

Reasonable force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a student to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances, such as breaking up a fight, or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. In any application of physical restraint, the minimum reasonable force should be used to calm down the situation.

Where necessary, help should be summoned from colleagues; students should never be involved in physical restraint. The student should be approached calmly but firmly. Where possible, the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour should be explained and it should be communicated to the student that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach is required by staff throughout. The method of restraint employed must use the minimum force for the minimum time.

Restraint must not:

- Involve hurting the student
- Involve deliberately inflicting pain on the student
- Restrict the student's breathing
- Involve contact with sexually sensitive areas
- Involve locking the student in a room

During any incident the person restraining should:

- Offer a verbal reassurance to the student
- Cause the minimum level of restriction of movement
- Reduce the danger of any accidental injury
- Cease the restraint if there are any signs of physical distress in the student such as sudden change in colour, difficulty breathing or vomiting

Physical restraint can be:

- Partial: restricting and preventing particular movements
- Total: as in the case of immobilisation

Physical intervention can take several forms and may involve staff:

- Physically interposing between students
- Blocking a student's path
- Holding
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Leading a student by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back, or in extreme circumstances using more restrictive holds

Do:

- Summon help
- Ensure a free passage of air through airways
- Be aware of any feelings of anger
- Continue to talk to the student in a calm way
- Provide a soft surface if possible
- Be aware of any accessories worn by you or the student that could cause injury
- Monitor the student's respiration, circulation and state of consciousness

Don't:

- Try to manage on your own
- Stop talking, even if the student does not reply
- Straddle the student
- Push their arms up their back
- Touch the student near the throat or head
- Put pressure on joints or on arterial pressure points (inside of upper arm, groin, neck)
- Use facedown holds

# Disclosure

Disclosure means that a child confides in a staff member and makes a secret known to this staff member. In safeguarding terms, such a secret is usually synonymous with any form of abuse, neglect, or self-harming behaviour. Staff members must know how to respond if a child confides abuse to them:

- Stay calm, be patient, find a quiet spot for your conversation,
- Be welcoming, make the child feel safe,
- Reassure the child that he/she has done nothing wrong in telling you,
- Listen carefully, take it seriously,
- Let the child talk freely, DON'T interrupt the flow,

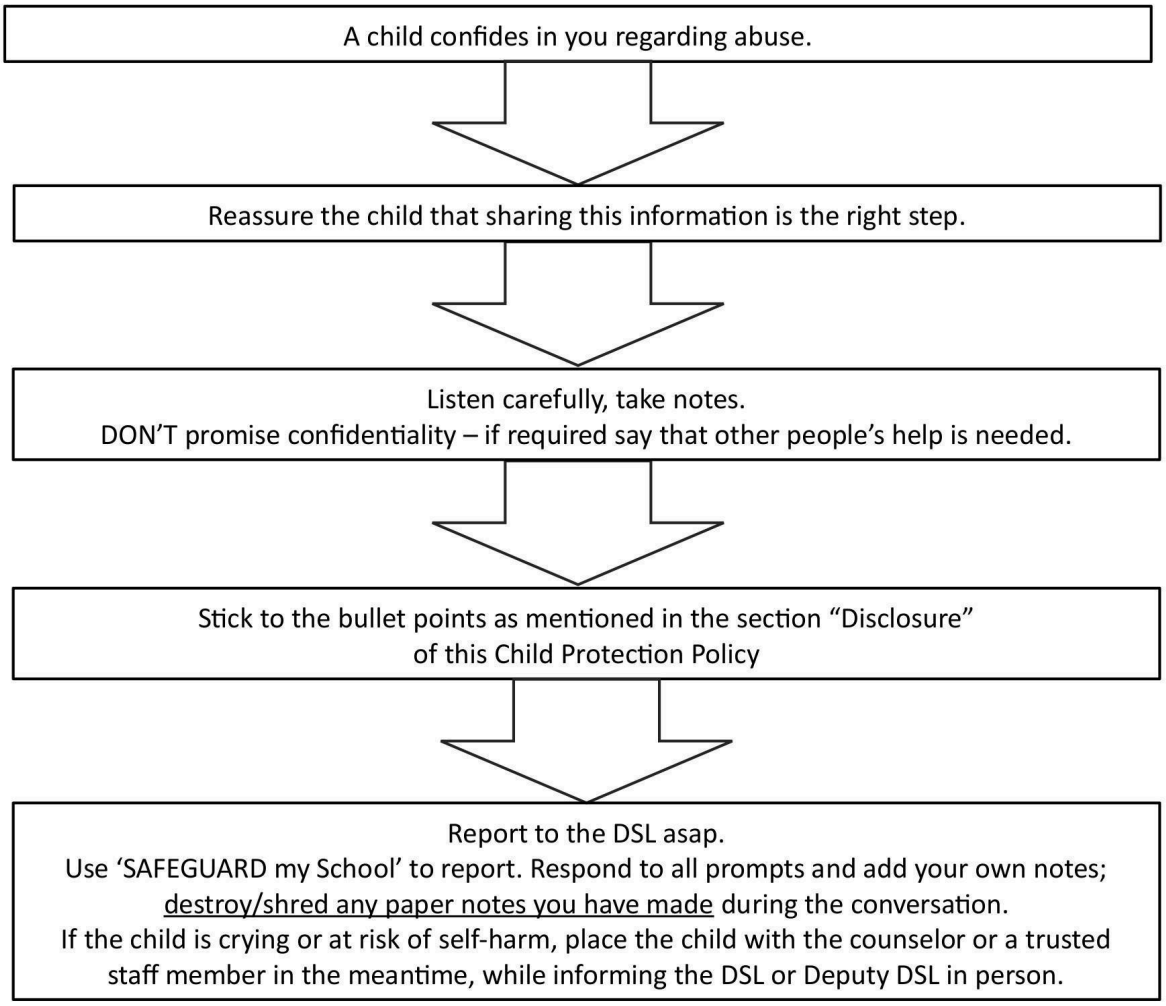
- Only ask questions for clarification, DON'T ask leading questions,
- Explain what you will do with the information and what will happen next (i.e. that eventually you will have to share this with the DSL, as he/she is the person who has been put in charge to help, so DON'T promise confidentiality to the child),
- Write down what you have been told as soon as possible, and
- Report the matter to the DSL as soon as possible and on the same day of the disclosure and before the end of the school day.

In cases of disclosure and like already indicated above, there are some DON'Ts that staff have to adhere to:

- DON'T promise confidentiality,
- DON'T ask leading questions,
- DON'T look panicked, shocked or angry,
- DON'T make him/her repeat the story,
- DON'T interrupt the flow,
- DON'T give an opinion,
- DON'T view any images,
- DON'T suggest the child may be to blame, and
- DON'T inform parents until you have had a discussion with your DSL.

Staff needs to familiarise themselves with the flowchart below:

**Flowchart: A child confides in you**




# Staff Conduct

Staff conduct means that staff have to behave in certain ways when being at school in order to be compliant with safeguarding and child protection policies. Staff must behave as follows:

- Avoid suggestive, provocative or discriminatory language,
- Don't show favouritism,
- No online contacts with current students,
- Don't share your phone number with students,
- Don't share or ask for personal information,
- When teaching 1:1, ensure that the lesson is known to the public (tell a colleague, make sure it's timetabled),
- Use offices and rooms with a glass door (or sheet of glass) for 1:1s,
- Don't give students a lift in your car.

# Visitors and Parents

Visitors, such as volunteers and contractors, are required to sign in at the front desk, stating their name, company and purpose of visit. They will then receive a visitor tag and will be supervised by the staff member who is in charge of them for their time being at ISR, e.g. custodians, IT-Manager etc. Before leaving, visitor tags must be returned to the front desk and visitors must sign out, stating their time of departure. Parents who help out on a regular basis and have classroom-like contacts with ISR students must go through a clearance check and obtain a Swiss police check. The DSL can advise on how to obtain such a clearance.

# The Roles of the DSL and Deputy DSL

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the number one person to go to when it comes to sharing information about potential cases of abuse and neglect. Reported cases are then discussed together with the Deputy DSL to enable next-step discussions and determine the best course of action in the light of the child's welfare. While the Deputy DSL mainly supports the DSL, the latter is primarily in charge of the following:

- Discussing cases immediately after they have been reported with the Deputy DSL,
- Deciding in conjunction with the Deputy DSL on the most suitable course of action,
- Taking notes which document the course of action,
- Applying the Swiss safeguarding and child protection referral system,
- Dismissing Green Cases (see below),
- Dealing with Yellow Cases (see below),
- Outsourcing Orange Cases (see below),
- Escalating Red Cases (see below),
- Liaising with outside agencies and stakeholders,
- Maintaining good contacts with the local police,
- Filing all observations, reports and courses of action,
- Keeping staff up-to-date regarding safeguarding and child protection measures by offering yearly workshops during in-service days,
- Reviewing safeguarding policies regularly, and
- Hosting the safeguarding committee meetings regularly.

# The Swiss Referral System in the Canton of SG

As mentioned above, the DSL dismisses green cases, deals with yellow cases, outsources orange cases and escalates red cases. Together with the Deputy DSL, the DSL makes a judgement in terms of the colour that applies to a case. The DSL's training, experience and the Swiss Referral System support this decision-making process:

| **Green Cases** | **Yellow Cases** | **Orange Cases** | **Red Cases** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ a one-off observation<br><br>☐ no patterns<br><br>☐ no repeated observations reported<br><br>☐ no reports from other staff members<br><br>☐ child seems not at risk or in danger<br><br>☐ no obvious signs of abuse<br><br>⬇<br><br>file the report, continue to observe for a short time | ☐ observation, potentially repeated observations by different staff members<br><br>☐ check paper trails, i.e. a previous green case turning yellow<br><br>☐ reported issue seems likely or even true, minor abuse<br><br>☐ abusive party is likely to be willing to stop its behaviour<br><br>☐ reported issue can be solved by the abusive party<br><br>☐ auto-corrective behaviour of the abusive party is assumed<br><br>⬇<br><br>file report, invite abusive party for a learning conversation, continue to observe afterwards | ☐ observation, potentially repeated observations by different staff members<br><br>☐ failed auto-corrective behaviour, i.e. yellow cases turning orange<br><br>☐ evidence for the reported issue exists<br><br>☐ abused party is willing to receive outside support<br><br>☐ abusive party is willing to receive outside support<br><br>☐ risk of further harm exists<br><br>⬇<br><br>file report, outsource the case to a suitable agency asap (see appendix):<br>> KJPD<br>> KESB<br>> ASD (FL)<br>> Schul-psychologischer Dienst SG | ☐ observation, potentially repeated observations by different staff members<br><br>☐ evidence for the reported issue exists<br><br>☐ abused party is at immediate risk<br><br>☐ severe abuse<br><br>☐ very violent or sexual abuse<br><br>☐ home is likely to be unsafe<br><br>☐ abusive party is unlikely to stop the abuse<br><br>☐ abusive party is unlikely to be willing to receive help or cooperate with authorities<br><br>⬇<br><br>file report, emergency case:<br>> Kinderschutz-zentrum SG<br>> NUK SG<br>> Krisenkompetenz Michael Freudiger |

**There are common examples for each case colour:**

A typical green case could be a child who does not wear a jacket on a cold winter day. The child forgot the jacket inside the school building and is too lazy to go back in to grab it. A teacher observes this and reports the case to the DSL. As it turns out, this is a one off, as the child normally wears the jacket.

A typical yellow case is often based on cultural differences. Certain cultures still allow slapping one's own child. A child tells a teacher that the parents slap him/her at home. The teacher reports to the DSL. The child is not at immediate risk and no bruises are observed, which is also confirmed by the swimming teacher. The DSL gets in touch with the parents and educates them on Swiss culture and the Swiss law. The DSL assumes at this stage that the learning conversation with the parents results in auto-corrective behaviour, i.e. the parents will correct their own behaviour, choose a non-physical method of punishment (e.g. reduced computer or TV hours) and stop slapping the child from now on. A follow-up may happen, depending on the credibility of the parents. Reporting teacher and DSL continue to observe.

Orange cases are often related to teenagers who inflict self-harm of some sort. It's important to check for the root cause of this behaviour, as self-harm is also a way to deal with other sorts of abuse, such as sexual abuse to name just one example. Pure self-harming behaviour that is linked to the victim's own psychological troubles is a typical orange case and referred to an outside agency which will offer helps and also check on suicidal tendencies. Normally, the victim and parents agree to be referred and are willing and happy to receive help. Another common example of an orange case are eating disorders which — from a DSL point of view — constitute a form of self-harming behaviour.

Red cases are normally sexual abuse cases and often the carer or a close family member is the abusive party. Red cases could also be cases where a carer or one parent beats up other family members, even to a degree that victims require medical attention. Such cases constitute emergency cases and are immediately referred to named agencies that will then contact the police as well (so we do not need to do this).

# Allegations against Staff

Allegations against staff can happen and trigger special mechanisms (→ see: ISR Whistle Blowing Policy). Most common allegations are related to hitting a child or being sexually abusive towards a child. The Swiss conference of Cantonal Educational Directors (EDK) talks about two possible routes:

| **Route 1 - unlikely to have happened** | **Route 2 - likely to have happened** |
|---|---|
| ☐ the allegation seems highly unusual | ☐ the allegation seems somewhat credible |
| ☐ the accuser seems less trustworthy | ☐ the accuser seems trustworthy enough |
| ☐ there is no evidence, i.e. physical signs that are considered rather common for that specific type of abuse are lacking | ☐ there is evidence, i.e. physical signs that are considered common for that specific type of abuse |
| ☐ confront the accused party and get their statement in the absence of the accuser | ☐ do not confront the accused party as there is the risk of the accused party leaving the town or country |
| ☐ inform the parents of the accuser explaining the case and investigative process | ☐ inform the parents of the accuser explaining the case and investigative process; establish immediate safety |
| ☐ inform the following agencies and seek their advice:<br>> KIG<br>> local police<br>> Krisenkompetenz Michael Freudiger | ☐ inform the following agencies and seek their advice:<br>> KIG<br>> local police<br>> Krisenkompetenz Michael Freudiger |

# Agencies and Contacts

The following agencies (alphabetical order) support the DSL and Deputy DSL in their handling of cases:

- ASD - Amt für Soziale Dienste Liechtenstein
  - Address: Postplatz 2, 9494 Schaan FL
  - Phone: +423 236 72 72

- KESB - Kindes- und Erwachsenenschutzbehörde Werdenberg
  - Address: Fichtenweg 10, 9470 Buchs SG
  - Phone: 058 228 65 00

- KIG - Kriseninterventionsgruppe St. Gallen
  - Address: Müller-Friedbergstrasse 34
  - Phone: 0848 0848 48 (availability: 24 hours, 365 days)

- Kinderschutzzentrum SG
  - Address: Claudiusstrasse 6, 9006 St. Gallen
  - Phone: 071 243 78 02

- KJPD - Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrische Dienste St. Gallen / Sargans
  - Address: Grossfeldstrasse 19, 7320 Sargans
  - Phone: 071 243 47 00

- Krisenkompetenz Michael Freudiger
  - Address: Zeughausstrasse 52, 8400 Winterthur
  - Phone: 052 544 29 28, Emergency No.: 079 957 00 88

- NUK - Notunterkunft St. Gallen
  - No address given
  - Phone: 071 525 00 05

- Police - Local Police Buchs SG
  - Address: Ulmenstrasse 1a, 9470 Buchs SG
  - Phone: 058 229 54 30

- Schulpsychologischer Dienst St. Gallen / Sargans
  - Address: Markthallenstrasse 7, 7320 Sargans
  - Phone: 058 229 08 60

# Sources


- EduCare Child Protection Workshop Handouts:
    - https://www.educare.co.uk/ (accessed August 2021, login required)
- Kinderschutz Schweiz - Kindeswohlgefährdung erkennen und angemessen handeln, Kinderschutz CH (2020)
- Kinderschutz Schweiz - Kindesmisshandlung, Kinderschutz CH (2020)
- Krisensituationen - Ein Leitfaden für Schulen, EDK (no year stated!)


*NB - Last policy review led in 2024 by Oliver Beck, Head of Senior School and Catherine Trainor, Head of Primary School*