Maria International School of Bucharest

Resilience Respect Compassion Integrity Responsibility

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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Our Mission

We provide a learning experience and environment at Maria International that fosters creativity and excellence. Whilst providing supportive, stimulating and relevant lessons and resources within the context of the British-style International curriculum.

Our school will be a caring place, where adults and children are valued equally. Our aim is to create an environment where children and the whole school community will be inspired to be resilient, respectful, compassionate and act with integrity.

Our children will learn to respect themselves and others in an atmosphere of high expectations, where they are nurtured and dare to make mistakes

We will strive to create opportunities for students to have a well-rounded school and learning experience, where they can develop critical thinking skills and work in collaboration with others.

Our Values

Resilience - We will handle adversity and problems with a mentality that enables us to keep going and do better.

Respect - We treat others with dignity, empathy and equality through our words and actions.

Compassion - We are kind, caring and will help everyone to be the best they can be.

Integrity - We are open, honest and act with good morals and ethics in all situations.

Responsibility - We ensure our own work, learning and duties are completed in a timely manner and to a high standard.

Child Protection Statement

At Maria International, we recognise that we have a moral and legal responsibility to safeguard and promote the positive welfare of all students. Maria International is committed to providing a safe environment, where all children, staff and visitors feel welcomed, respected and valued. Our staff are trained and alert to the signs of abuse, neglect, and follow procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

Guiding Principles

- **The health, safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount**: This approach ensures that the child is kept as the central focus and that the staff and school consider what is in the best interests of the child at all times
- **All children have equal rights to protection and safety, with no exceptions**: In line with the values inherent in the **UN convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)**.
- **All Maria International Staff are expected to share these values and share equal responsibility to act** on any suspicions or disclosures that suggest a child is in harm
- **Students and Staff involved in Child Protection issues will receive appropriate support**

Introduction

Child abuse refers to physical, emotional, or sexual harm inflicted on a child. Although child abuse can sometimes take the form of specific actions, such as hitting, it is also possible for inaction to cause harm, as in the case of neglect. Current data suggests that more than half of the world's children, around 1 billion, have experienced some form of violence in the last year and cases of neglect have been increasing. Due to the day-to-day interactions that staff have with students, Maria International staff are uniquely positioned to observe changes in children's behaviour and/or appearance and also the outward signs of abuse. Children are more likely to turn to an adult that they trust in school when they are feeling distressed or at risk. Therefore, it is vital that our school staff are alert and trained to notice the signs of abuse and understand the procedures that must be followed to report their concerns.

The staff at Maria International, in line with our commitment to student safety and welfare, follow the following core safeguarding principles:

- Maria International staff and the school organisation place the safety and welfare of all students as its main priority
- Safe and happy children are more successful learners
- Representatives from all areas of the Maria International community are involved in policy review and development
- Policies reviewed annually will be written using relevant and up-to-date data and research.

Legislation

Section 175 of the UK Education Act 2002 requires Local Education Authorities and the governors of maintained schools and further education (FE) colleges to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
Section 157 of the same act and the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations, 2003 require proprietors of independent schools (including academies and city technology colleges) to have arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students at the school. Current UK guidance is taken from the UK Department for Education (DfE) document: (1) Working Together to Safeguard Children (2024) and (2) Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024).

Terminology

- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** refers to the process of protecting children from maltreatment, abuse or neglect, preventing the impairment of child's health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and undertaking that role so as to enable all children to have optimal life chances.
- **Child Protection** refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering significant harm
- **Staff** refers to all those working for or on behalf of the school, full time or part-time, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.
- **Child** refers to all young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- **Parent/Guardian** refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example, step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents

Aims

The procedures and processes outlined in this policy apply to all Maria International staff and visitors.

This policy aims to set clear guidelines that should be followed in order to:

- Provide clear guidance to all Maria International staff and those in the Maria International community about the expected behaviours and routines when dealing with Child Protection and Safeguarding cases
- Provide necessary information to enable all Maria International staff and those in the Maria International community to meet their safeguarding responsibilities

- Ensure all concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, discreetly and professionally to support the needs of the child, through the development of good practice and sound procedures
- Make clear the Maria International commitment to Safeguarding and Child Protection to parents/guardians, staff and the wider Maria International community.

This policy should be read and used in conjunction with:

- Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Complaints and Concerns Policy;
- Staff Handbook
- Staff Code of Conduct

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding Leads

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Robert (asst.ks2@misb.ro)
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Cristina (minigroup@misb.ro)
Designated Safeguarding Governor Lead: Yara (rorijo2010@gmail.com)
Headteacher: Nikki Vicol, (head@misb.ro)

Maria International Staff

All Maria International Staff:

- Should understand that the safeguarding and promotion of positive child welfare is everyone's shared responsibility
- Should be fully committed to every aspect of Maria International's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Are expected to provide a safe and caring environment for children, where they can develop confidence, share ideas, feelings and opinions
- Should treat students with respect and in line with the framework of agreed and understood behaviour
- Be aware of the symptoms of abuse
- Have a responsibility to identify and report suspected abuse, in order to ensure and maintain the safety and wellbeing of the children at Maria International.
- When reporting or identifying suspected abuse, Maria International staff should seek advice and support from the Designated Safeguarding Lead

- Should follow the early help and referral processes laid out in this policy
- Should expect to support other agencies and professionals in early help referrals that could follow a referral
- Should keep clear, dated, accurate and confidential records of child protection concerns
- Are required to adhere to Maria International policies, protocols and Code of Conduct as well as the standards laid out in the Staff Handbook
- Are expected to undergo regular and appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and professional development sessions that the Headteacher and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead deems necessary,
- Must complete and regularly review any online courses in Child Protection that Maria International deem necessary and appropriate
- Should ensure that they have followed the required guidelines for any updates, including the reading of relevant documentation, as required to ensure that they have relevant and up-to-date skills on effective safeguarding
- Must forward a copy of any certificates of completion of any safeguarding and child protection courses to the Office/Administration and Designated Safeguarding Lead to be kept in the staff records

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Maria International Designated Safeguarding Lead:

- Should be appropriately trained and have an understanding of Child Protection procedures and Romanian legislation and UK legislation
- Keep written records of all concerns, ensuring that such records are stored securely and flagged on, but kept separate from, the student's general file
- Act as a source of support and expertise to the Maria International community
- Should ensure that all staff undergo suitable checks
- Should ensure that all staff have undergone approved in-school and online training regarding Child Protection and Safeguarding and renewal of these every year
- Should ensure that all staff sign to agree that they have read, understood and agree to follow Maria International policies
- Assists in ensuring that the Maria International Child Protection and Safeguarding policy is reviewed and updated annually
- Assist in ensuring that the Maria International Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is shared with and is available to parents/guardians
- Is responsible for reporting any suspicions of child abuse directly to the Headteacher
- Should ensure that important parties such as the Head of Key Stage, Homeroom teacher etc are informed of any suspicions or allegations of abuse that have been made regarding a student

- Should liaise with the Designated Governor Safeguarding Lead, local authorities and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the Headteacher
- Should develop and maintain effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies
- Refers any cases of suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities or the police as appropriate

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

In the absence of the DSL, the Deputy DSL carries out those functions necessary to ensure the ongoing safeguarding of students. In the event of the long-term absence of the designated DSL, the deputy will assume all of the functions above.

Designated Governor for Safeguarding Lead

The Maria International Designated Governor for Safeguarding Lead:

- Ensures that the appropriate systems and procedures are in place to cover all aspects of the safeguarding agenda and all statutory governing board responsibilities are met.
- Monitors appropriate policies, including the safeguarding and whistleblowing policies.
- Ensures there is a suitably qualified, trained and supported Designated Safeguarding Lead who has responsibility for responding to and overseeing safeguarding issues.
- Ensure there is a suitably qualified, trained and supported Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead who has responsibility for responding to and overseeing safeguarding issues as agreed reasonably to be delegated by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead adequately supervises and supports the work, development and wellbeing of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and any other individuals to whom they may delegate additional safeguarding responsibilities in order that there exist clear lines of accountability.
- Ensure there is a robust system for recording, storing and reviewing child welfare concerns.
- Liaise with the Headteacher about general child protection and broader safeguarding issues within the school and as such be able to provide reports to the governing board in respect of themes and issues within the school/locality to enable adequate oversight, understanding and development of solutions.
- Ensure that school staff training is up to date.
- Attend Basic Awareness Safeguarding training every 3 years and other training as appropriate to the role and relevant to issues within the school/locality.
- Ensure other governors attend appropriate safeguarding training.

- Ensure appropriate members of the governing board complete training in respect of allegations against staff.
- Ensure at least one governor on the recruitment and selection panel for staff has successfully completed accredited Safer Recruitment training.
- Ensure interview panels are convened appropriately and safer recruitment practices are followed.
- Have oversight of the single central record and ensure it is up to date and maintained in line with guidance.
- Take account of how safe pupils feel when in school.
- Ensure the voice of pupils is truly heard and appropriately acknowledged.
- Ensure the school constantly reviews and considers its curriculum in order that key safeguarding 'messages and lessons' run throughout.
- Ensure the school does not operate in isolation and has an awareness of agencies available to support children and families
- Ensure the safeguarding agenda is embedded in the ethos of the school.
- Monitor progress against any outstanding actions on the governing board's safeguarding audit tool and other local authority review.
- Provide an annual report to the full governing board to include, amongst other relevant items, detail pertaining to training, themes, issues and contribution to multi-agency meetings and good practice.

Headteacher

The Maria International Headteacher:

- Has overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection
- Appoints the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Ensure all staff are suitable to be working with children
- Scrutinise applications, after-school instructors, volunteers and other agencies involved with Maria International by verifying their identity, references and comprehensive background checks, including DBS and police background checks
- Ensures that training for Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) is up to date and includes knowledge of local procedures.
- Ensures that all staff receive annual training regarding the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures.
- Is responsible for reviewing and amending the policy where necessary to be approved on an annual basis.
- Ensures that students' safety and welfare are addressed through the curriculum;

- Ensures that the Child Protection & Safeguarding policy and procedures are implemented and followed by all staff;
- Allocates sufficient time and resources to enable the DSL (or deputy) to carry out their role effectively, including the assessment of students and attendance at strategy discussions and other necessary meetings;
- Ensures that all staff feel able to raise concerns about any poor or unsafe practice,
- Ensures that concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with appropriate 'whistle blowing' procedures.

Together, the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that Maria International has:

- A Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant procedures that are annually reviewed and also made available to parents/guardians and all in the Maria International community
- Procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff, including allegations made against the Headteacher;
- Safer Recruitment procedures that comply with the UK and international standards, including the requirement for and use of appropriate background checks;
- A training strategy that ensures all staff, including the Headteacher, receives child protection training with refresher training every two years.
- The DSL should also receive advanced refresher training at two-yearly intervals;
- Arrangements to ensure that all temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of, and comply with, the school's arrangements for Child Protection.

Office/Administration, Security and Other Staff

It is the responsibility of the office/administration staff to ensure that accurate and up-to-date records of Police and DBS background checks for all employees are kept. They are further responsible for ensuring that all employees have completed any relevant online Child Protection and Safeguarding courses.

All staff are required to be vigilant and adhere to the procedures governing the access, detailed record-keeping, provision of a visitor pass to be worn for identification and monitoring of visitors around the school.

Good Practice Guidelines

In order for Maria International to meet its responsibilities towards our students, all of our staff must maintain agreed-upon standards of good practice by:

- Treating all with mutual respect
- Setting a good example of good and appropriate conduct
- Involving students in decisions that affect them, to an age appropriate level
- Encouraging and modelling safe and positive behaviour
- Being a good and active listener
- Being alert and aware of any changes that occur in a student's behaviour
- Recognising that challenging behaviour could be an indicator of abuse
- Reading, understanding and adhering to Maria International's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and other related guidance on wider safeguarding matters
- Asking student permission, when possible, before doing anything for them of a physical nature, such as assisting them in dressing, providing physical support, or administering first aid
- Maintaining appropriate standards of communication and interaction with and between students
- Avoiding the use of sexual or derogatory language
- Being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of students could lead to an increased risk of abuse

Support For Those Involved In A Child Protection Issue

Maria International aims to ensure that we support student's, their families and Maria International staff who become involved in a child protection issue by:

- Taking all suspicions and disclosures regarding Safeguarding, Child Protection and other issues seriously
- Nominating a link person who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact
- Where a member of staff has become the subject of an allegation made by a student, separate link people will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest
- Responding with sympathy to any request made by staff or students for time out or off to deal with anxiety or distress
- Maintaining confidentiality and discretion when sharing sensitive information
- Storing records safely and securely
- Offering details of any relevant helplines, counselling, agencies and avenues of support
- Following the procedures in the Maria International Whistleblowing Policy, Maria International Concerns and Complaints Policy and other relevant Maria International policies
- Cooperating fully with any relevant statutory agencies

Complaints Procedures

Where a Maria International student or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a student, the Maria International Complaints and Concerns policy and procedures will be followed. Poor practice includes unfairly singling out a student, using sarcasm or humiliation as a form of control, bullying or belittling a student or discriminating against them in some way.

Complaints are managed by senior staff and the Headteacher in accordance with this policy. Complaints from staff are dealt with through the Maria International Complaints and Concerns policy and through disciplinary and grievance procedures. If the concern raises safeguarding issues rather than poor practice, then the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures should be followed.

Child Protection Procedures

Key Points

All Maria International staff are required to report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

If a child informs any member of the Maria International staff that they are being abused or neglected, it is important for the staff member to know how to respond and react:

- Be available
- Be amenable
- Listen carefully and at the child's pace
- Avoid too many questions, **NO** leading questions
- Take what is said seriously
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell someone
- Tell the child that the information has to be passed on
- Make a careful, written record of what was said verbatim
- Complete a record of the concern
- Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible

It is important that the following **NEVER** happens:

- Take photographs or physically examine a child
- Investigate a disclosure or allegation
- Make promises to the child
- Speculate or accuse anyone

- Forget to record what was said
- Fail to pass the information to the appropriate person
- Disclose information to colleagues, friends or family. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis
- Do not disclose information that has been discussed to the parents or guardians until it is deemed safe to do so

If You Suspect A Child Is At Risk Or Experiencing Harm, Abuse Or Neglect

If you suspect that a child is at risk or experiencing harm, abuse or neglect but have no 'real' evidence try to give the student an opportunity to talk. The signs you have noticed, such as changes in behaviour, disturbing or bizarre artwork, written stories or poetry that reveal distress or confusion, physical but inconclusive signs, maybe due to a variety of non-abusive or neglectful factors. It is acceptable to ask the student if they are OK or if you can help in any way. Use the Report Form to record any early concerns you may have.

If, following the conversation, you remain concerned, then you should complete a report form and hand it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible, no later than the end of the school day.

If A Student Makes A Disclosure To You

If a student talks to you about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, you must let them know that you have to pass this information on and that you are not allowed to keep secrets. The point in the conversation you do this is a matter of professional judgement, but do not leave it to the very end of the conversation, as the student may feel misled into revealing more information than they otherwise would have. Be careful to say it immediately, however, as the student may think that you don't want to listen to them or be discouraged from disclosing a dangerous matter.

During the conversation, it is important to:

- Allow the student to speak freely
- Remain calm and not overreact
- Give reassuring nods and words of comfort
- Do not be afraid of the silences
- Do not ask investigative questions
- At an appropriate time, tell the student that in order to help them you must pass the information on;
- Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused;
- Avoid admonishing the student for not disclosing earlier.

- Tell the student what will happen next. The student may agree to go with you to see the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Otherwise, let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day;
- Report verbally to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately;
- Write up your conversation as soon as possible on the Report Form and hand it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in person;
- Seek support if you feel distressed.

The DSL may involve other members of staff as required in an investigation. In the absence of the DSL, incidents must be reported to the Deputy DSL Governor

Concerns About Staff

Abuse of Trust

All Maria International staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards students is unacceptable and that their conduct towards students must be beyond reproach. Additionally, all Maria International staff must understand that, under Romanian, UK and EU laws, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, even if the relationship is consensual. This principle is extended to all students at Maria International and any sexual relationships between staff and students will result in the most severe disciplinary consequences, including the notification of international Child Protection agencies and the Police.

If You Have Concerns Regarding A Colleague

Any Maria International staff members who are concerned about the conduct of another Maria International member of staff or a member of its associated agencies must remember that the welfare of the students is paramount. The Maria International Whistleblowing Policy and code enables Maria International staff to raise concerns or allegations in confidence and for sensitive enquiry to take place.

- Concerns of poor practice by colleagues should be reported to the relevant Head of Key Stage
- Concerns of possible child abuse by colleagues should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will inform and liaise with the Headteacher
- An allegation made against the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead should be reported to the Designated Governor for Safeguarding Lead

Staff Who Are The Subject Of An Allegation

Allegations made against a member of the Maria International staff have the right for their case to be dealt with discreetly, quickly, fairly and consistently. They also have the right to be kept informed of the progress of the case. Suspension is not mandatory or automatic, however, in some cases suspension may be deemed to be the best way to ensure that they and/or the students are protected.

Concerns About Students

Children may be being harmed by other children or young people, not just adults. Maria International staff are aware of the harm that bullying can cause and will use the Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures when necessary. However, there may be occasions where a student's behaviour needs to be responded to under Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures rather than Anti-Bullying procedures.

Staff Recruitment and Training

Safer Recruitment

Maria International's safer recruitment procedures are followed for all staff employed by Maria International. All Maria International staff are subject to a rigorous recruitment process to ensure, as best as possible, that they are suitable to work with children.
Maria International's safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

- Provide evidence of their identity
- Provide evidence of their qualifications
- Provide at least two references including their most recent employer, who can comment on the applicant's professional abilities and suitability to work with and around children. These references will be contacted and checked by the Maria International Headteacher and/or Senior Leadership Team
- Be checked through the DBS, Criminal Records Bureau or the equivalent in each country they have lived or worked in, appropriate to their role.
- Be interviewed by the Maria International Headteacher, Owners and/or Senior Leadership team

Full details about Maria International's recruitment procedures can be found in the Maria International Recruitment and Retention Policy.

All new members of staff will undergo an induction with the Designated Safeguarding Lead that includes training and familiarisation with the Maria International Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and procedures and identification of their cold protection training needs.

Staff Training

It is important that Maria International staff have sufficient and regular training to recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect as well as what to do if they have a related concern. New staff, receive this training during their induction. All staff are required to complete any Child Protection and Safeguarding training deemed necessary and/or appropriate by the Headteacher and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

All staff will receive appropriate and up-to-date Child Protection and Safety refresher training courses every two years, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Designated Governor for Safeguarding Lead will receive higher-level training at least every two years, including training in inter-agency procedures in Romania.

Extended School and Off-Site Arrangements

Where extended activities are provided and managed by Maria International, the Maria International Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures apply. Any external activity teachers are required to provide a Criminal Background check/clearance before they begin working with our students.

When Maria International students attend off-site activities arranged by Maria International, Maria International staff will ensure that effective child protection arrangements and procedures are in place.

Photography and Images

The photographs and use of imagery that occurs at Maria International by Maria International staff are for understandable and acceptable reasons such as evidence of work to share with parents/guardians. However, to protect students Maria International:

- Has to have permission from the student's parents/guardians, consent is given at enrolment on an 'opt-out' basis
- Will not publish photographs that include students whose parents/guardians have opted-out
- Ensure that the students are appropriately dressed
- Encourage students to tell staff if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them

- Do not store any photos of students on personal devices. They should be deleted within 24 hours.

E-Safety

All Maria International staff and students must read and sign Maria International's E-Safety and Acceptable Usage Policy and rules. Chat rooms, social media and similar applications, programs and websites are not allowed to be accessed in school. Cyberbullying in any form is treated as seriously as any other form of bullying and is not tolerated at Maria International. Any instances of cyberbullying are managed through our Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Forms of Abuse and Neglect

To ensure that Maria International students are protected from harm, we must make it clear what types of behaviours constitute abuse and neglect. There are many different forms of child abuse but they can all be classified as one or more of:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological/Emotional abuse
- Neglect

Physical Abuse

Physical child abuse is deliberately causing harm to a child through physical action. The abuser's aim is to hurt the child and, in extreme circumstances, can lead to the child's death. Physical child abuse could also include the threat of injury to a child.

Physical child abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Hitting, punching, slapping or kicking a child, including for the purpose of discipline
- Breaking a child's bones
- Deliberately burning or scalding a child
- Deliberately drowning, suffocating or choking a child
- Giving a child harmful drugs or alcohol
- Fabricating or inducing an illness or ill health; such as pretending the child has an illness and giving them drugs or medication they don't need
- Failing to protect a child from physical harm
- Inappropriately restraining or falsely imprisoning a child
- Shaking or hitting a baby. This can cause non-accidental head injuries and, in extreme cases, lead to the child's death.

Sexual Abuse

Childhood sexual abuse occurs when a child is enticed or forced to take part in sexual activities. It is child sexual abuse even if the child isn't aware of the nature of what is happening to them or if they go along with it without protest. Equally, it is child sexual abuse even if there is no threat of violence. It is important to note that child sexual abuse is often perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

Child sexual abuse encompasses a variety of acts that broadly fall under the following two categories:

- When a child is made to take part in sexual activities, both physical and non-physical
- When an individual commits sexual acts upon a child, whether forcefully or otherwise

The following is a list of what constitutes child abuse of a sexual nature:

- Grooming a child for future sexual abuse, including via the internet
- Discussing sexually explicit topics with a child
- 'Sexting' a child, or coercing a child to send inappropriate images of themselves
- Taking inappropriate photographs or videos of a child
- Showing sexually-explicit images or videos to a child
- Physical contact, such as touching a child inappropriately
- An adult exposing themselves to a child
- Forcing, coercing, or grooming a child to engage in sexual behaviour like kissing and all forms of intercourse
- Using young people under the age of 18 in prostitution
- Female Genital mutilation

Psychological/Emotional Abuse

Emotional child abuse, or psychological child abuse, covers any abuse that negatively affects the child's emotional and social development. Emotional child abuse can have a long-lasting impact on the child's wellbeing. It can affect how they feel about themselves, how they fit in with friends and skew their perspective on what is normal in relationships.

It's important to note that all forms of child abuse involve emotional abuse on some level.

Emotional abuse can take the form of:

- Bullying a child, including cyberbullying
- Constant or unjust punishment
- Unnecessary or unrelenting criticism

- Humiliation or telling a child they are worthless
- Denying a child love and affection
- Terrorising a child
- Limiting of the child's exploration and learning
- Not giving a child opportunity to express their views
- Preventing a child from taking part in normal social interaction
- Letting a child see or hear the ill-treatment of someone else. This might often be the case in a domestic violence situation
- Being complicit when you see a child being mistreated

Neglect

Child neglect occurs when an adult with responsibility over a child fails to meet their basic needs over an ongoing period. For example, the child might be left hungry, unwashed or uncared for. Children rely on adults to look after them, and if their physical or psychological needs are not being fulfilled, it can be damaging to the child's development, and their emotional and physical wellbeing.

It is frequently the case that a child who has been subject to neglect often undergoes other forms of abuse as well. Neglect can be intentional or unintentional, and both parents can be guilty of neglecting their child.

Some forms of child neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Neglect during pregnancy due to mother's substance abuse or violence towards the mother during pregnancy
- Failure to provide food, shelter, clothing or warmth, including throwing a young person out of the family home
- Failure to seek or follow medical care for the child, including dental treatment
- Failure to protect a child from physical or emotional harm or danger
- Abandoning a child
- Failure to provide appropriate supervision of a child, including making inadequate childcare arrangements
- Unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child

Specific Forms Of Abuse and Neglect

Peer on Peer Abuse

Peer on Peer Abuse is likely to include, but is not limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);

- abuse in personal relationships between peers;
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element that facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

Whole-School Approach To Anti-Peer On Peer Abuse

All Maria International staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer-on-peer abuse). It can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all Maria International staff recognise the indicators and signs of peer-on-peer abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

Maria International takes all cases of peer-on-peer abuse seriously and emphasises the importance of prevention. Maria International staff are required to document and report any incidences of peer-on-peer abuse to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, using the universal Report Form. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst-case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Maria International is aware that peer-on-peer abuse may be taking place in school, even if it is not reported. It is important, therefore, that all Maria International staff and the Maria International community is aware of and can recognise the signs of peer-on-peer abuse.

Online Safety and Peer-On-Peer Abuse

It is important that all Maria International staff and those in the Maria International community are aware that peer on peer abuse can often take place using social media. Therefore, Maria International staff must adhere to the rules on mobile phone use in school which are stated in the E-Safety and Acceptable Usage Policy and must bring to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, as well as the Headteacher, any unauthorised mobile phone use in school as soon as it occurs.

If a student reports peer on peer abuse which is being conducted via social media, but outside of school hours, this will be dealt with as a safeguarding issue and parents will be informed. It is important that parents are aware of the risks of internet use and to facilitate this, a copy of the school's E-Safety and Acceptable Usage Policy will be shared with parents at the beginning of the year. It will also be available on the school website and a physical copy will be presented upon request.

It is important to us at Maria International that our students are aware of the support that is available if they are experiencing peer on peer abuse. As part of the PSHE programme and anti-bullying week, students should be made aware of what to do if they experience this, or any type of abuse. They should also be aware of what constitutes peer on peer abuse and that Maria International has a zero-tolerance policy towards this type of behaviour.

Serious Violence

All Maria International staff are expected to be aware of the indicators that can signal that a child is at risk from or is involved with serious violent crimes. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm, a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Recognising Abuse In Students With SEND

Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;

- being more prone to peer group isolation than other children;
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs;
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

Staff should be extra vigilant when working with young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
The DSL should liaise regularly with the Headteacher to help in maintaining a culture of vigilance and by being alert to any relevant new information or concerns.

A one size fits all approach may not be appropriate for all children, and a more personalised or contextualised approach for more vulnerable children, victims of abuse and some SEND children might be needed.

Impact Of Abuse

Childhood maltreatment can be linked to later physical, psychological, and behavioural consequences as well as costs to society as a whole. These consequences may be independent of each other, but they also may be interrelated. For example, abuse or neglect may stunt the physical development of the child's brain and lead to psychological problems, such as low self-esteem, which would later lead to high-risk behaviours, such as substance use.

The outcomes for each child may vary widely and are affected by a combination of factors, including the child's age and developmental status when the maltreatment occurred; the type, frequency, duration, and severity of the maltreatment; and the relationship between the child and the perpetrator.

Additionally, children who experience maltreatment often are affected by other adverse experiences (e.g., parental substance use, domestic violence, poverty), which can make it difficult to separate the unique effects of maltreatment (Rosen, Handley, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2018).

Children Who May Be Particularly Vulnerable To Abuse and Neglect

Some children may have an increased risk of abuse and it is important to understand that this increase in risk is due more to societal attitudes and assumptions, and Child Protection procedures that fail to acknowledge children's diverse circumstances, rather than the individual child's personality, impairment or circumstances.

Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and a reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur.

To ensure that all of our students at Maria International receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to defined classes of individuals. Staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for children who are:

- Disabled or have special educational needs;
- Missing school regularly;
- Living in challenging family circumstances or transient lifestyles (in foster care/temporary accommodation, domestic abuse, mental health problems etc);
- Misuse drugs or alcohol, or are affected by parental substance misuse;
- Asylum seekers;
- Vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying;
- Vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality;
- At risk of prostitution, modern slavery, exploitation, radicalisation or trafficking;
- Learning English as a second language

Indicators of Abuse

There can be physical signs that define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised.

The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they ‘tell’. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For these reasons, it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated person.

It is important for all Maria International staff to remember that whilst it is their responsibility to report their concerns, it is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has or is being abused.

A child who is being abused or neglected may show the following signs:

- Often has bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures, or other injuries
- Shows signs of pain or discomfort

- Keeps their arms and legs covered even in hot weather
- Is concerned about changing clothes in front of others for PE or swimming
- Looks unkempt and uncared for
- Changes their eating habits
- Has difficulty in making and maintaining friendships
- Appears fearful
- Is reckless in regards to their safety and/or the safety of others
- Engages in self-harm
- Frequently misses school or arrive late
- Shows signs of not wanting to go home
- Displays a change in regular behaviour, from quiet to outspoken and aggressive, or the reverse, outgoing to withdrawn
- Challenges authority
- Becomes disinterested in their schoolwork
- Is constantly tired or preoccupied
- Is wary of physical contact
- Is involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about, drugs, alcohol or weapons
- Displays sexual knowledge or behaviour that is not normally expected for their age

Individual indicators will rarely provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a bigger picture, and each piece of information will help the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher decide how to proceed. It is most important that you report your concerns – you do not need 'absolute proof' that the child is at risk.

Taking Action

First Steps

If you have concerns about a Child Protection issue or if a child makes a disclosure then Maria International staff should:

- Treat the student with care and sensitivity
- Inform the student that you have to pass any information on and that you are not allowed to keep secrets
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible
- Provide the Designated Safeguarding Lead with a completed Report Form by the end of the school day
- Only share information with others on a need-to-know basis
- Seek support if they are distressed

Notifying Parents

Maria International will usually seek to discuss any matters or concerns regarding a student with their parents/guardians. When this occurs, it is to be handled sensitively and the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make contact with the parents/guardians in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure of abuses and/or neglect.

However, if after discussion with the Headteacher, the Designated Safeguarding Lead believes that notifying the parents/guardians could further increase the risk to the child or make the problem worse, then advice will be sought from an external statutory agency or Romanian Child Protection Services/Agencies.

Notifying Children's Social Care and Other Child Protection Agencies

Maria International's Designated Safeguarding Lead will make a referral to Children's Social Care if it is believed that a student is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The student (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made unless doing so would increase the risk to the child.

In order to ensure a student's safety in an emergency, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may also share information directly with the police or other Child Protection services.

Confidentiality and Sharing of Information

All Maria International staff must understand that Child Protection issues warrant the highest levels of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the student and staff involved but also to ensure that being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.
Staff should only discuss concerns with the DSL, or with the Headteacher if the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the subject of the concern. That member of staff will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will share that information on a need-to-know basis.

Maria International's policy on confidentiality and information-sharing is shared with parents each year as part of the annual Terms & Conditions.

Storing Child Protection Information

Child Protection information is stored separately from a student's general school file and the school file will be 'flagged' to indicate that separate information is held. The Child Protection information is handled and stored in line with the UK's Data Protection Act (1998) and relevant Romania and EU Laws.
Any data that is stored should be:

- Adequate
- Relevant
- Not-excessive
- Accurate
- Processed for limited purposes
- Processed in accordance with the subject's rights
- Kept no longer than necessary
- Kept securely

Written information, such as Report Forms and minutes of discussions are stored in a locked resource. Any electronic information should be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals. Furthermore, to prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information, electronic information should not be stored on laptop computers which, by the nature of their portability, could be lost or stolen. If it is necessary to store Child Protection information on portable media, such as a backup device, these items should also be kept in locked storage.

Access To Child Protection Information

Child Protection records are exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act; this means that students and parents/guardians do not have an automatic right to view them. If any Maria International staff receives a request from a student or parent to see Child Protection records, they must refer the request to the Headteacher.

Staff Reporting Directly To Child Protection Agencies

Maria International staff should follow the reporting procedures to the Designated Safeguarding Lead outlined in this policy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the person to report child protection and safeguarding concerns to outside agencies, after consultation with the Headteacher.

Maria International staff may only share information with an outside agency, child protection agency, or the police if:

- The situation is an emergency
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher are all unavailable
- Convinced that a direct report to these agencies is the only way to ensure the child's safety and welfare.
- The situation directly involves the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher and Designated Governor for Safeguarding Lead

Code Of Ethical Practice For Maria International Staff

All Maria International staff are valued members of the Maria International community and are expected to set and maintain the highest standards for their own performance, work as part of a team and be exemplary role models for the Maria International students.

As such all Maria International staff should:

- Place the safety and welfare of Maria International students above all else
- Treat all members of the Maria International Community with consideration and mutual respect
- Adhere to all principles and procedures that are contained in the Maria International Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and other Maria International Policies
- Treat each student as an individual and make appropriate adjustments to meet the child's needs
- Clearly model an understanding and commitment to non-discriminatory practices
- Ensure that power and authority are not abused
- Understand that Maria International staff are in a position of trust and that the breaking of this trust could result in disciplinary and/or legal action
- Be alert to, and report appropriately, any behaviour that could indicate that a child is at risk of harm or neglect
- Encourage all students to reach their full potential
- Never condone inappropriate behaviour or actions by staff or students
- Take responsibility for their own continual professional development
- Refrain from any action that would bring themselves or Maria International into disrepute
- Value themselves

- Seek support for any issue that would have an adverse effect on their professional practice

Whistleblowing Code For Issues Relating To Children and Young People

Purpose Of This Code

Maria International adheres to whistle-blowing procedures that help enable staff to raise concerns relating to any of the following:

- Crimes
- Miscarriage of Justice
- Illegal Acts
- Health and Safety Violations
- Environmental or Property Damage
- Unauthorised Use of Funds
- Concealing or Attempting to Conceal Any of the Above

When To Use This Code

Whistleblowing procedures can be followed by any Maria International staff member who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee towards a student is inappropriate or is involved or suspected to be involved in any of the activities listed above.

Reasons For Whistleblowing

Maria International staff must take responsibility for ensuring that students are treated safely and fairly. If poor practice is allowed to continue, it could result in escalation with serious unforeseen consequences.

Maria International, therefore, sees whistleblowing as another way to ensure the safety and protection of its students and community. Whistleblowing also helps to deter suggestions that another individual has been involved with or colluded in the poor practice that they knew was occurring but did not report.

Whistleblowing can also aid the subject of the complaint or concern as their conduct could be the result of inexperience, lack of training or ignorance which can be directly addressed by the Maria International Leadership team.

Maria International staff who deliberately fail a student and show no remorse or desire to improve have to have their conduct confronted for the sake of the Maria International students and reputation.

Barriers To Whistleblowing

An individual may worry that they have insufficient evidence to raise a concern, that they will set in train an unstoppable chain of events; that there will be adverse repercussions for their career, that they may suffer harassment or victimisation, or that their suspicion or concern might be totally misplaced.These concerns are entirely understandable, but each individual can be reassured that the whistle-blowing procedures take account of and address these fears.

One useful way to decide whether the concern should be reported is to write down what has been observed or heard to cause concern and then consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member was involved.

Maria International will fully support any whistleblower and do all it can to protect them from any harassment or adverse repercussions that may arise from whistleblowing.

No action will be taken against a member of staff who raises a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded. However, allegations that prove to be deliberately fabricated or malicious will be severely dealt with through staff disciplinary procedures.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All concerns are treated in confidence and, as far as possible, the identity of the ‘whistle-blower’ will not be revealed. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (if, for instance, as a result of the investigation the whistle-blower is required to provide a witness statement or attend a court hearing).

Individuals may, if they wish, raise their concern anonymously. However, anonymous complaints may not be followed up as the Maria International’s leadership team would have to consider whether the credibility or seriousness of the concern warrants investigation if the source - and therefore key evidence - is not readily available.

Whistleblowing Process and Procedures

Raising The Concern

- Concerns should be raised directly with the Headteacher, either verbally or in writing
- If the Headteacher is the subject of the concern, the concern should be raised in writing with the Maria International Owners/Governors.
- A supportive friend or colleague may accompany the whistle-blower to meet with the Headteacher if desired.
- The Headteacher will clarify and record issues of and requests for confidentiality and the protection of the whistle-blower's identity.
- The Headteacher will outline any proposed actions to be taken and set a date for a follow-up meeting.

Investigation

- The Headteacher will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred.
- Members of the school community may be asked to provide information or advice.
- Specific advice, e.g. legal guidance, may be sought internally (e.g. from Human Resources) or from outside (e.g. Children's Social Care).

Recordkeeping and Feedback

- A written record of the conduct, established facts and outcome of the inquiry will be kept.
- The whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.
- Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial inquiry, but the case should not be allowed to stall.
- Initial feedback will be given to the whistle-blower within 10 working days.
- The timescale for any subsequent feedback will then be agreed

Outcome

The outcome of the inquiry will be one of the following:

- No poor practice or wrongdoing is established and the case is closed;
- The concern has some substance and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the Headteacher and Maria International leadership team to improve practice;
- Poor practice or wrongdoing is established and disciplinary proceedings are initiated.
- The concern is more serious and an investigation is initiated. This investigation may involve Children's Social Care or the police.
- If at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, Children's Social Care will be immediately involved.

Further Action

If an individual has raised a concern but is dissatisfied with the way it has been managed or with the outcome, Maria International's Concerns and Complaints Policy and procedures should be followed. The individual may also contact the Maria International Owners/Governors for advice. The individual may also seek guidance from a professional association, a solicitor, the police, or a Children's Social Care organisation.

Report Form (Universal)

Use this form to record any concern about a student's welfare and give it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/DDSL.

Report Form

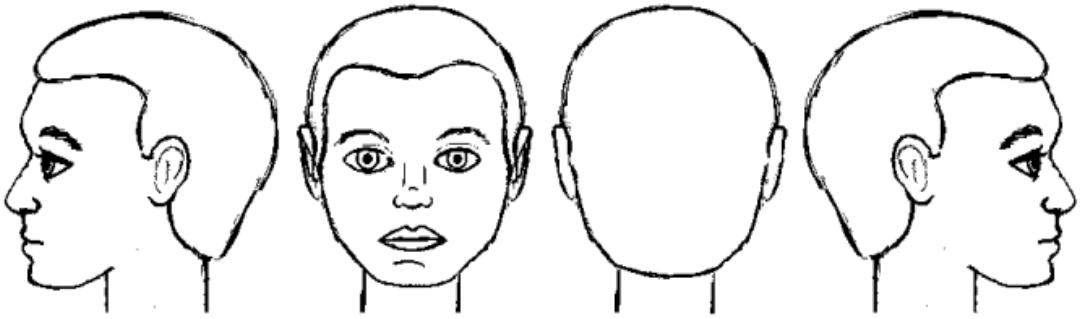
Date and Time:	
Location:	
Type Of Incident	• Medical (Witness → HR Teacher → DSL) • Behaviour (Witness → HR Teacher → Head Teacher) • Bullying (Witness → HR Teacher → DSL+Head Teacher) • Safeguarding (Witness → DSL/DDSL) • Other
Name Of Person Involved:	• Student • Staff • Visitor
Staff Supervising At Time:	
Description of Event(s):	
Action(s) Taken:	
First Aid Report: **(If Required)**	
Next Steps:	
Senior Leadership Member In Attendance:	• Yes • No **Name:**
Parents/Guardians Informed By:	**Name:** **Signature:**
Senior Leader Informed: **(If Not In Attendance)**	**Name:** **Signature:**
Report Completed By:	**Name:** **Signature:**
Report Filed By DSL` **(If Required)**	**Name:** **Date:** **Signature:**

Maria International School of Bucharest

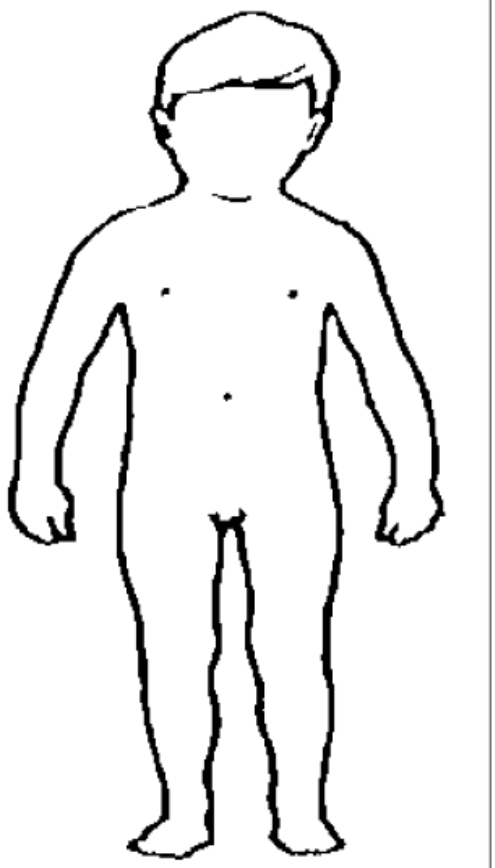
Resilience Respect Compassion Integrity Responsibility

GROWING SAFETY – INJURY BODY MAP

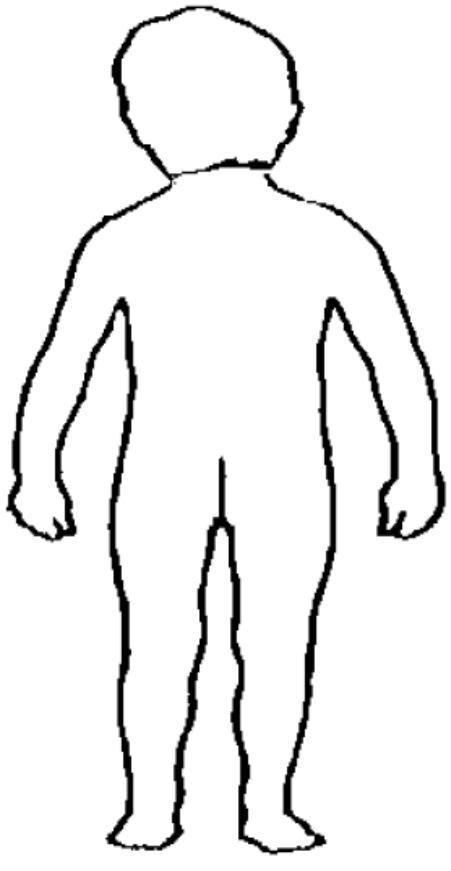
NAME OF CHILD		DATE OF BIRTH	



LEFT SIDE RIGHT SIDE



FRONT

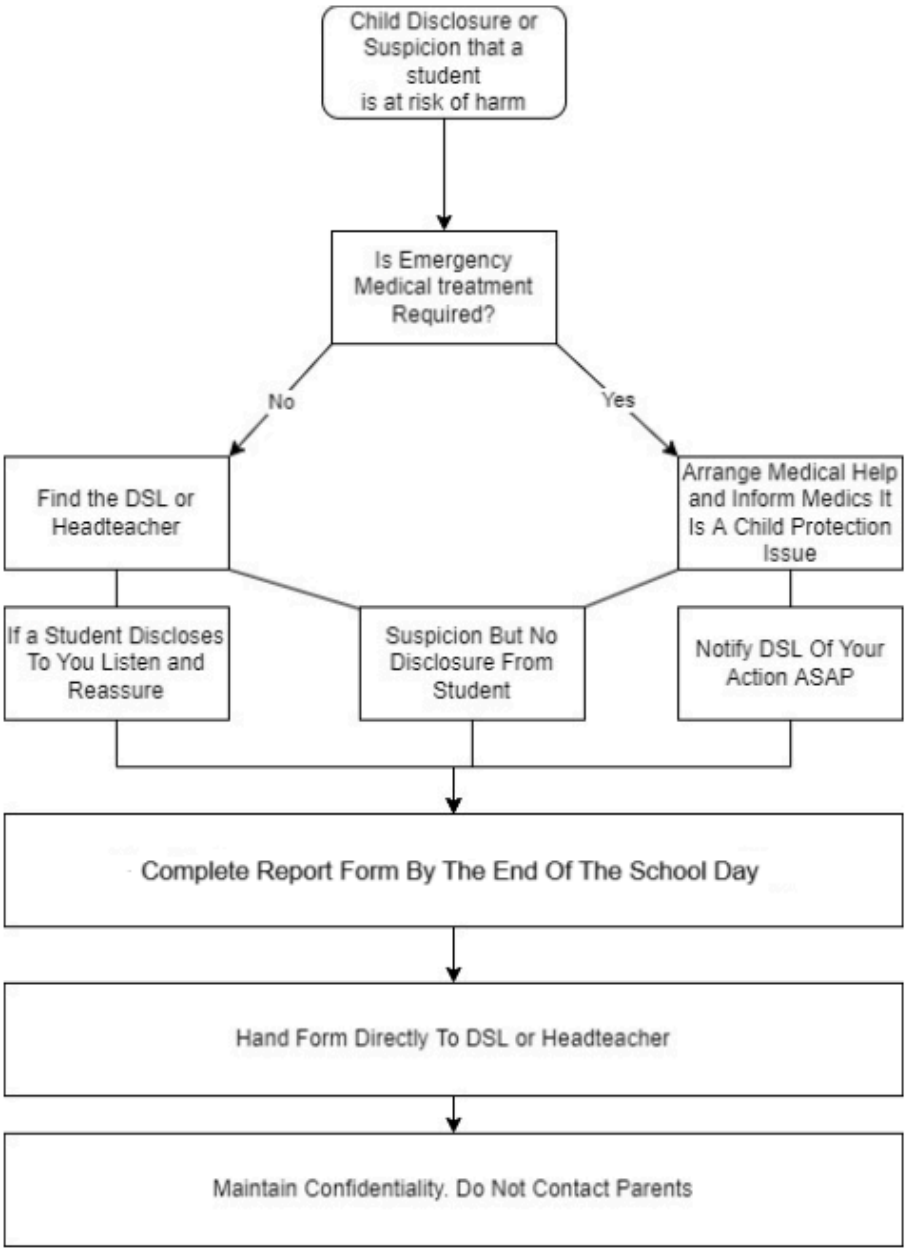


BACK

NAME OF WORKER		DATE RECORDED	

NOTE THIS IS A SOCIAL WORK RECORD AND DOES NOT REPLACE A MEDICAL RECORD OR PAEDIATRIC REPORT

Reporting A Concern Flowchart



Child Protection Contacts

Name and Role	Contact Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead: Robert	Email: asst.ks2@misb.ro
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Cristina	Email: minigroup@misb.ro
Designated Governor for Safeguarding: Yara	Email: rorijo2010@gmail.com
Headteacher: Nikki	Email: headteacher@misb.ro
Local Authority for Allegations:	Tel: 112
Local Authority For Safeguarding:	Email: prevenire.abandon@dgaspc-sectorul1.ro
Local Authority For Human Resources:	Email: bruapamp@dgaspc-sector1.ro
Local Authority For Child's Social Care:	Tel: 021 223 4197
Local Authority Out Of Hours Duty Team:	Tel: 073 445 4543
Health Authority/Health Centre:	Email: contact@dspb.ro
Police - Child Abuse Investigation Unit:	Tel: 021 222 9925
Helpline:	Tel: 080 080 0061

Review and Evaluation

This policy is to be renewed, evaluated and appropriately updated annually by the Maria International leadership team and Head Teacher.

Date of next review: 15/08/2025

Prepared/Updated by: Robert Grosu **Date**: 24/11/2024

Approved by: Nicholette Vicol **Date**: 27/11/2024

This policy is to be reviewed **annually** and updated as and when relevant changes occur.