



Montessori
SCHOOL OF CAYMAN

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Keeping Every Child Safe at Montessori School of Cayman

Policy approved and adopted: September 2021

Reviewed: August 2025

Reviewed and updated: July 2026

Montessori School of Cayman — Child Protection Policy

Policy approved and adopted by: Montessori School of Cayman Ltd.

Date: September 2021

Reviewed: August 2025

Reviewed and updated: July 2026 — this revision refreshes the policy's language and formatting for clarity and consistency; the substantive standards, legal references, and reporting procedures are unchanged.

The Montessori School of Cayman Child Protection Policy & Reporting Procedures has been developed and implemented in consultation with the whole school community, including parents/guardians, staff, and the Cayman Islands Ministry of Education.

Child Protection Officer	Signature
Child Protection Officer / Director of Teaching, Learning & Operations — Ms. Aristeia Underwood	
Child Protection Officer / Head of School — Mrs. Briana Bergstrom Currie	

Table of Contents

1. Policy Aims and Goals
 2. Code of Conduct
 3. Safe Environment Policy
 4. Intimate Care Policy
 5. RCIPS/DCFS Contact with Children at Montessori School of Cayman
 6. Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Policy
- Appendix 2 — Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Procedures
- Appendix 3 — Child Abuse Incident Report Form for MSC Employees/Volunteers
- Appendix 4 — Suspected Child Abuse Report
- Appendix 5 — DCFS/RCIPS Removal of a Child from Montessori School of Cayman

1. Policy Aims and Goals

For the purposes of this Policy, the term “school” includes both early childhood and primary education.

The purpose of the Montessori School of Cayman (MSC) Child Protection Policy is to:

- support and protect the health and safety of all children enrolled at Montessori School of Cayman
- outline our Code of Conduct, which clearly states the steps taken to keep our children safe
- provide definitions of abusive or neglectful behaviour
- explain Montessori School of Cayman’s approach to reporting any concerns regarding children to staff, parents/guardians, and the community
- clarify for staff the steps to follow if and when a cause for concern of this nature arises
- highlight the legal requirements and responsibilities for all staff at Montessori School of Cayman.

It is of utmost importance to us at Montessori School of Cayman that we work with parents/guardians and the community to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students, and to give them the very best start in life.

It is imperative for us at Montessori School of Cayman to create an environment where children are safe from any form of abuse or neglect. We also strive to keep our parents/guardians well informed and involved when it comes to a child’s wellbeing, and every attempt will be made to share those concerns. However, where there is any suspicion that a child’s safety and/or emotional wellbeing is at risk, we will respond promptly and appropriately by following our Child Protection guidelines, which are in line with the Cayman Islands’ Children Law (2012) and the procedures given to us by the Cayman Islands Department of Children and Family Services.

Clear expectations of best practice for ensuring safe, supportive, and respectful interactions between adults and children at the school are provided in this Child Protection Policy.

We aim to create an environment that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, regardless of race, language, religion, culture, or home background. We encourage children to establish and sustain healthy relationships within their families, with their peers, and with other adults. Our aim is to help children develop a sense of self-sufficiency and independence in our school environment, and to help parents/guardians build their understanding of, and commitment to, the welfare of all our children at MSC.

2. Code of Conduct

Montessori School of Cayman requires that all adults engage in safe, supportive, and respectful interactions with children at all times. The following outlines appropriate and expected conduct for physical behaviour, verbal and digital communication, and general conduct.

2.1 Appropriate Physical Contact

At times, staff will be required to give practical assistance to a child who is hurt or who needs particular assistance or encouragement. Examples of appropriate physical contact include:

- giving first aid
- supporting a child who has hurt themselves
- assisting with toileting for a young child
- non-intrusive gestures to comfort a child who is experiencing grief or distress, such as a hand on the upper arm or upper back

- non-intrusive touch — for example, greeting or congratulating a child with a handshake or a pat on the upper arm or back.

Staff should remember the importance of accompanying such touch with positive and encouraging words, and should always seek a child's permission before making physical contact to assist with first aid or a minimal gesture of comfort.

Physical contact between individuals must be:

- discretionary
- careful
- consensual
- respectful
- age appropriate
- gender appropriate.

2.2 General Standards of Conduct

- All adults interacting with children must do so in open, public spaces. If one-on-one meetings are necessary for educational or emergency purposes, they should be conducted in an area where the interaction can be observed, or in a room with the door left open and another adult notified of the meeting.
- All communication (verbal, written, or digital) between adults and children should be transparent and about school or programme activities. Communication between adults and parents/guardians of children should also be transparent and conducted using the school's phone or email.
- Adults will treat all children with respect and provide safe, supportive interactions that foster children's social, emotional, and academic development.
- Staff will comply with all mandatory reporting procedures.
- Staff will cooperate fully with any investigation of misconduct or abuse of children.
- Staff of Montessori School of Cayman will not transport children in their personal vehicles for any reason, unless there is an emergency or written consent is given by that child's parent. Where a child is transported by a member of staff, two staff members will be present to ensure the utmost safety and to avoid 1:1 situations.
- Adults will not engage in bullying or any behaviour of that nature.
- Adults will not use or be under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs in the presence of children or during regular school hours.
- Adults will not give individual children gifts without the knowledge of the children's caregivers.

2.3 Examples of Inappropriate Conduct

The following outlines examples of inappropriate physical behaviour, verbal and digital communication, and general conduct. If these behaviours are witnessed, they should be reported and addressed:

- receiving gifts of an inappropriate nature or at an inappropriate time (e.g. not as part of end-of-year gift-giving)
- flirtatious gestures and comments
- inappropriate social invitations
- inappropriate touching or invasions of personal space (i.e. touch outside of assisting a child with first aid or comforting them)
- inappropriate postings using any medium
- correspondence or communication that suggests or invites an inappropriate relationship.

2.4 Definitions in the Cayman Islands

(Taken from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy (2016).)

Child Abuse is defined as any intentional act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver (e.g. clergy, coach, teacher) that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. Child abuse can be:

Physical — intentional actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent such injury through neglectful actions. This includes, but is not limited to, slapping, shaking, punching, hitting, pushing, grabbing and/or pinching.

Sexual — any sexual act, including non-contact acts, performed with a child by an adult or an older child, including but not limited to: sexual touching of any part of the body (clothed or unclothed), penetrative sex (including penetration of the mouth), encouraging a child to engage in or witness sexual activity, showing children pornography or using children to create pornography, encouraging a child to engage in prostitution, exposing oneself, or saying sexual things to a child.

Emotional — actual or likely severe negative impact on a child's emotional, psychological, and behavioural development, resulting from persistent or severe emotional/psychological ill-treatment.

Neglect — severe or persistent failure to provide for a child's physical, emotional, or basic needs. This can include inadequate or erratic physical care (feeding, hygiene, clothing), failure to respond to a child's distress, leaving a child alone or unsupervised, failure to ensure a child attends school or to support their education needs, lack of stimulation resulting in developmental delay, lack of boundaries and guidance, failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, and/or denial of medical care or treatment.

Concerns may be directed to the Montessori School of Cayman Head of School.

2.5 Legal Requirement to Notify — Children Law (2012 Revision), Part IIIA.32A

If a teacher, principal, counsellor, or other employee/volunteer in an institution established for the care and education of children has a reasonable suspicion that a child has been or is being abused or neglected, and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's duties, that person shall notify the Department (MASH: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) of the suspicion as soon as practicable after forming it.

A person who contravenes this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars, imprisonment for a term of one year, or both.

A notification under this section shall be made by the employee or volunteer following Montessori School of Cayman's Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect procedures, which are in line with the Ministry of Education's expectations. Teachers and other school employees/volunteers who have reason to believe that a student is being abused are mandated to report that information to MSC's Head of School, Briana Bergstrom Currie. Once verbally reported, the MSC Child Abuse Incident Report Form is completed and submitted to the MASH unit.

All suspicions of abuse are kept confidential and are in no circumstances discussed by members of staff with anyone outside the reporting process.

3. Safe Environment Policy

A safe environment policy helps limit situations in which children are at increased risk of abuse due to the physical characteristics of the building and grounds. At Montessori School of Cayman, it is of utmost importance that we provide adequate supervision that allows for proactive monitoring of child and staff interactions, limiting the opportunity for inappropriate or abusive interactions to occur.

Our Safe Environment Policy at MSC reflects best practice for ensuring a safe environment when it comes to visibility, supervision, and access.

Visibility — Montessori School of Cayman ensures open physical spaces visible to multiple persons, through clear lines of sight throughout the building, landscaping that keeps spaces open and visible, doors with windows, no closed doors (without windows) when children are present in the room, bright lighting in all areas, and locked and unused areas or rooms accessible to personnel only.

Supervision — Montessori School of Cayman ensures that the activities of children and staff are adequately supervised, through sufficient playground, classroom and non-classroom supervision, and periodic walk-throughs of the building and grounds to ensure there are no unidentified persons on site.

Access — Montessori School of Cayman ensures that access to children and staff is controlled, by requiring all visitors, volunteers and contractors to sign in at the main office and wear a visitor badge; ensuring all staff are aware of restrictions on noncustodial parents' access to a child or children; requiring that children entering or leaving at times other than typical arrival or dismissal do so only with parental permission, except in an emergency; and ensuring that all fences, gates and similar boundaries around the grounds are functioning properly and in good repair.

4. Intimate Care Policy

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of an individual child. Parents have a responsibility to advise staff of their child's intimate care needs, and staff have a responsibility to work in partnership with children and parents.

Intimate care can include:

- feeding
- oral care
- washing
- dressing/undressing
- toileting
- photographs
- supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care.

4.1 Fundamental Principles

The following are the fundamental principles upon which this Policy and its guidelines are based:

- every child has the right to be safe
- every child has the right to personal privacy
- every child has the right to be valued as an individual

- every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect
- every child has the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities, to express their views on it, and to have those views taken into account
- every child has the right to have levels of intimate care that are as consistent as possible.

4.2 Guidelines for Good Practice

All children have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. These guidelines are designed to safeguard children and staff, and apply to every staff member involved in the intimate care of children. Disabled children can be especially vulnerable; staff involved in their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs. Adhering to these guidelines should safeguard both children and staff.

- involve the child in their intimate care
- treat every child with dignity and respect, and ensure privacy appropriate to the child's age and situation
- ensure practice in intimate care is consistent
- be aware of your own limitations and ask for guidance or assistance if needed
- promote positive self-esteem
- report any concerns you may have immediately.

5. RCIPS/DCFS Contact with Children at Montessori School of Cayman

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for a member of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) and/or the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to meet and have a confidential discussion with a child without the consent or knowledge of the parents/guardians. In some cases, it may also be necessary for a child to be removed from Montessori School of Cayman by DCFS/RCIPS officers without the consent or knowledge of the parents/guardians. Where either of these actions is taken, the circumstances requiring the meeting and/or removal will have been carefully considered by the relevant agencies and appropriately authorised.

However, Montessori School of Cayman has a duty of care to all of our children, and it is essential that the protocol below is followed whenever a member of the RCIPS or DCFS arrives at our school to meet a child.

5.1 Montessori School of Cayman Protocol

If a member of RCIPS/DCFS visits the school and requests to see a child, the following protocol must be followed:

- Montessori School of Cayman administration immediately informs the Child Protection Officer (CPO) that DCFS/RCIPS are on campus and wish to speak with a child.
- The CPO meets the officers and confirms their identity by requesting to see their DCFS/RCIPS-issued ID cards.
- The CPO ascertains the purpose of the visit and facilitates the initial meeting in an appropriate space. The CPO should support the child during the meeting, with the agreement of the attending officers.
- If the officers subsequently need to remove a child from the school, the CPO must ensure that the proforma in Appendix 5 is completed and stored appropriately.
- The DCFS/RCIPS officers are expected to inform the parent/guardian that the child has been removed from the school before 2:00pm the same day, or as soon as possible after the child has been removed from Montessori School of Cayman.

See Appendix 5 for the form to be completed by the CPO in the event a child is removed from Montessori School of Cayman.

6. Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Policy

Role	Name
Child Protection Officer / Director of Teaching, Learning and Operations	Ms. Aristeia Underwood
Child Protection Officer / Head of School	Mrs. Briana Bergstrom Currie

6.1 Responsibilities of School Employees and Volunteers

Teachers and other school employees/volunteers who have reasonable suspicion that a student is being abused are mandated to report that information to the school's primary Child Protection Officer (Ms. Aristeia Underwood) or, if that is not possible before the close of day, to the other assigned Child Protection Officer (Mrs. Briana Bergstrom Currie), in accordance with Montessori School of Cayman's Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect procedures.

- In deciding whether to report an incident or situation of suspected abuse/neglect to the School Child Protection Officer, it is not required that the person making the report have proof that abuse/neglect has occurred. Any uncertainty in deciding to report a suspicion shall be resolved in favour of the child, and the report made immediately.
- The employee or volunteer will report to the School Child Protection Officer what has been said by the student, or what has been observed leading to the suspicion of child abuse/neglect, including the context of that information. There shall be no attempt by the school employee to question the child, as the role of investigation lies with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS). The child shall be protected from repeated disclosures.
- If the child is injured, the employee/volunteer shall escort the student to seek appropriate medical attention and inform the School Child Protection Officer of the action taken.
- The employee or volunteer referring the suspected case of child abuse/neglect must not contact the parents.
- Given the sensitive nature of child abuse/neglect referrals, the employee or volunteer should not expect feedback following the referral to the School Child Protection Officer. Children Law (2012 Revision), Part IIIA.32C provides protection to the notifier, requiring that the receiver of a notification of suspected child abuse (DCFS/FSU) not disclose the identity of the notifier to any other person, except when communicating to another person acting in the course of official duty. Only where the court is satisfied that the evidence is of critical importance to the proceedings, and that failure to admit it would prejudice the proper administration of justice, will a notifier be called to provide evidence. Should a member of staff have to attend court, support will be offered by the Head of School, including accompanying the staff member to court.
- School leadership shall ensure that all employees and volunteers are provided with information and training that enables them to carry out their duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect, as well as training on identifying and responding appropriately to child protection issues.

6.2 Responsibilities of the School Child Protection Officer

MSC's Child Protection Officers are Ms. Aristeia Underwood and Mrs. Briana Bergstrom Currie. Where a School Child Protection Officer has reasonable suspicion that a child may be suffering or may have suffered abuse/neglect, there is an immediate duty to report that suspicion, and the information on which it is based, to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). This requirement applies whether or not the information was initially shared in confidence, and whether it comes directly from the child or indirectly from another employee, volunteer, or community member.

- It is the School Child Protection Officer's (CPO's) duty to report incidents or suspicions of child abuse/neglect; it is not the CPO's responsibility to investigate. In speaking with the child, the CPO will take careful note of what is

said and the context in which it is said, taking care not to ask leading or unnecessary questions. Documentation of what is said (or of any injuries) is important, and the student's own words shall be used as much as possible.

- "Immediate duty to report", in this case, means that the report is communicated to DCFS according to the MSC Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect procedures (see Appendix 2).

Once information for a report has been obtained, a written referral must be submitted to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) unit as soon as possible, using the MASH Suspected Child Abuse Report form. Where deemed necessary — in time-sensitive situations, for example where there are concerns about the child going home — a telephone call to MASH would be appropriate; after hours, the telephone report shall be made directly to RCIPS. The telephone referral will be followed by a written referral to MASH. MSC's Child Protection Officer, Ms. Aristeia Underwood, is responsible for completing and submitting the written referral.

Immediately prior to, or soon after, making a report of suspected abuse/neglect, the School Child Protection Officer shall inform the Head of School of that action. The Head of School will be informed that a report has been made, but not the specific details of the report.

It is not the School Child Protection Officer's responsibility to inform parents of any report of suspected child abuse/neglect; however, when making the referral to DCFS, how the parents become informed will be discussed and the best course of action agreed with that agency.

A record of any follow-up contact made to external agencies regarding a referral shall be kept.

6.3 Responsibilities of the School After Referring Cases of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Following any report of suspected child abuse/neglect, the School Child Protection Officer will assume a role of student support and advocacy as required. The Head of School will cooperate with DCFS and/or the FSU throughout any investigation and release relevant student records and employee/volunteer reports.

If the suspected offender is an employee of, or is hired to perform duties at, MSC, the Head of School will in turn inform the school's ECCE representative of the referral. If the suspected offender is the Head of School, the school's Child Protection Officers will inform ECCE in writing that an allegation was made.

Prior to interviewing a child at school, DCFS will contact school administration. It is not the school's responsibility to inform parents of the interview; however, the subject of parent notification will be discussed with DCFS, and a decision taken in the best interest of the child.

School leaders shall assist DCFS by providing an appropriate interview space and discreetly arranging for the student to be interviewed. The DCFS worker may request that a school employee be present during an interview to support the student; if the worker does not request this, the School Child Protection Officer may make this request on the student's behalf.

If it is necessary for DCFS staff to remove the child from school during the investigation, MSC will comply with this request.

Following an investigation, the Head of School and Child Protection Officer, as appropriate, will participate in DCFS case conferences and liaise with DCFS staff on behalf of the child as requested.

All information related to suspected child abuse/neglect cases shall be treated confidentially. The school provides a secure cabinet for filing and maintaining confidential information related to child abuse/neglect cases; no documentation related to such reports or investigations shall appear within a student's cumulative folder.

On a regular basis, and no less frequently than annually, the Ministry of Education may request that the School Child Protection Officer submit the total number of child abuse and neglect referrals made to DCFS by MSC.

When following procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse/neglect, the safety and welfare of the student will always dictate which course of action is to be pursued. Any uncertainty shall always be resolved in favour of the child's best interest.

6.4 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy — Statement of Receipt and Agreement

I understand that, as a person working with and/or providing services to children at Montessori School of Cayman, I am subject to a criminal background check.

My signature confirms that I have read and understood the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy, and that I agree to comply with the standards contained therein. I understand that any action that violates this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from Montessori School of Cayman.

Name:

Signature:

Witness:

Date:

Appendix 2 — Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Procedures

MSC's Child Protection Officers are:

1. Ms. Aristeia Underwood
2. Mrs. Briana Bergstrom Currie

All employees and volunteers must report any disclosure or suspicion of child abuse, even in historic cases. It is not the staff member's/volunteer's role to investigate or determine the validity of what is observed or told.

A report template is available at Montessori School of Cayman and must be used when reporting suspected abuse. The template also provides a 'check and record' section for use by the Child Protection Officers.

A student discloses abuse to an employee/volunteer, or another student reports abuse/neglect of another student, or an employee/volunteer observes concerning behaviour that may indicate abuse/neglect:

Employee/Volunteer Will:

In the case of a disclosure:

1. Thank the student for sharing this information.
2. Not ask leading questions (e.g. "did so-and-so hit you?") — only open-ended questions (e.g. "how did you get that bruise?").

Once reasonable suspicion is formed:

1. Immediately complete the report template (available from the Child Protection Officer) and email it to yourself as a dated record, then print the email.
2. Submit the form and printout of the email to one of the two designated Child Protection Officers in the school.
3. Refrain from discussing the matter with anyone else, or further with the child.

Child Protection Officer Will:

Within 1 hour:

1. Put the school date stamp on the report.
2. Inform the Principal that there is a child protection issue that will be referred to DCFS. No details should be provided beyond this. If the alleged perpetrator is employed on the school compound, the Principal must be informed and will inform DCFS. If there is an allegation against the school Principal, the Child Protection Officers will immediately inform the school's Directors (Mr. Kris Bergstrom and Mrs. Deborah Bergstrom) and report to DCFS.
3. Call DCFS to report the alleged abuse.

Within 24 hours:

1. Follow up the phone call by attaching the DCFS report form to an email to DCFS. Print the email and put the school's date stamp on it.
2. File the email and report in a confidential child protection file held by the Child Protection Officers.
3. Log any subsequent agency actions on the report template held on file.
4. If, following the report to DCFS, there are ongoing reports of concern or it appears there has been no effective follow-up, the Child Protection Officer should initiate calls to DCFS and log these on the MSC report form for this purpose, keeping it on file.

NB: If a student is removed from school by DCFS and the parent asks where the child is, they should be directed to call DCFS for information.

Any contact with parents should be a decision for the Child Protection Officer, who should seek advice from the relevant DCFS/MASH staff before doing so.

Appendix 3 — Child Abuse Incident Report Form for MSC Employees/Volunteers

This form should be attached to the MSC Reporting Form and kept in the child's private Child Protection File.

State the nature and extent of the current injury, neglect, or sexual abuse to the child in question, and the circumstances leading to the suspicion that the child is a victim of abuse or neglect:

CURRENT INJURY / NEGLECT / ABUSE & CIRCUMSTANCES

Information concerning previous injury, sexual abuse, or neglect experienced by this child or other children in this family situation, including previous action taken, if any:

PREVIOUS INJURY / ABUSE / NEGLECT & PRIOR ACTION

State other known information that may be helpful in establishing the cause of the child's status:

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Date:

Signature of Employee/Volunteer:

Appendix 4 — Suspected Child Abuse Report

MASH Reporting form on file at MSC as a hardcopy.

Appendix 5 — DCFS/RCIPS Removal of a Child from Montessori School of Cayman

RCIPS/DCFS Officer Details

Name:		ID Number:	
Name:		ID Number:	

Child's Details

Name:		School:	
-------	--	---------	--

Parental Consent

Is the parent/guardian aware that the child is being removed from Montessori School of Cayman? YES / NO

If No, what is the justification for removal without consent?

JUSTIFICATION FOR REMOVAL WITHOUT CONSENT

Who will inform the parent/guardian that their child has been removed from the school (name and title)?

When will the parent/guardian be informed that their child has been removed from the school?

Signatures

Name	Signed	Date	Time

When completed, this form will be retained by the school's Child Protection Officer.