



**Montessori**  
SCHOOL OF CAYMAN

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY  
Updated: August 2023



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## POLICY AIMS AND GOALS

*For the purposes of the 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 well-being 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 includes a child’s well-being and every attempt will be made to share those concerns. However, any suspicion that a child’s safety and/or emotional well-being is at risk we will be promptly and appropriately responding 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 practices for ensuring safe, supportive, and respectful interactions between adults and children at the school are provided in the Montessori School of Cayman’s Child Protection Policy.

We aim to create an environment which 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 to develop a sense of self-sufficiency and independence in our school environment and to help parents/guardians to build their understanding of commitment to the welfare of all our children at MSC.



## 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.

- At times, staff will be required to give practical assistance to a child who is hurt or needs particular assistance or encouragement. Examples of appropriate physical contact are:
  - Giving first aid
  - Supporting a child who have 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 (e.g. greeting or congratulating a child with a handshake or pat on the upper arm or back.
  - Staff should remember the importance of accompanying such touch with positive and encouraging words.
  - Staff should always seek a child's permission to make physical contact to assist a child with first aid or a minimal gesture of comfort.
- Physical contact between individuals must be:
  - Discretionary
  - Careful
  - Consensual
  - Respectful
  - Age appropriate
  - Gender appropriate
- 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 is notified about 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 done using the school's phone or email.
- Adults will treat all children with respect and provide safe and supportive interactions that foster children's social, emotional and academic development.
- Comply with all mandatory reporting procedures.
- 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 unless written consent is given by that child's parent. In the event that a child is to be transported by a member of staff, two staff members will be present to ensure the upmost 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.



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 an end of year gift giving).
- Flirtatious gestures and comments.
- Inappropriate social invitations.
- Inappropriate touching or invasions of personal space (e.g. 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.

### **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 without failure to prevent injury through neglectful actions. Some of these include (but not limited to) slapping, shaking, punching, hitting, pushing, grabbing and/or pinching.

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

**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. These 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 failure to support 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.



**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 s/he forms the suspicion.

A person who contravenes this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars or to 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. Once verbally reported, the *MSC Child Abuse Incident Report Form* will be completed and submitted to the MASH unit.

All suspicions of abuse are kept confidential and are in no circumstances discussed by members of staff to anyone.



## SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

A safe environment policy helps limit situations in which children are at increased risk for 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 which allows for proactive monitoring of child and staff interactions. This limits opportunity for inappropriate or abusive interactions to occur.

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

**Visibility** – Montessori School of Cayman will ensure open physical spaces visible to multiple persons by providing clear lines of sight throughout the building, landscaping that ensures open, visible spaces, 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 by personnel only.

**Supervision** – Montessori School of Cayman will ensure that the activities of children and staff are adequately supervised by implementing sufficient playground classroom and non-classroom supervision, periodic walk-throughs of the building and its grounds to ensure there are no unidentified persons on site.

**Access** – Montessori School of Cayman will ensure that access to children and staff is controlled 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 to 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 the case of an emergency, ensuring that all fences, gates and so on surrounding the grounds are functioning properly and in good repair.



## Montessori School of Cayman's Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Policy

**Child Protection Officer – Ms. Courtney Peddle**

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**Child Protection Officer – Ms. Briana Bergstrom**

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**Head of School – Ms. Briana Bergstrom**

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**Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) -**

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**Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) -**

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### 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. Courtney Peddle) or, if that is not possible before the close of day, to the other assigned Child Protection Officer (Ms. Briana Bergstrom in accordance with Montessori School of Cayman's *Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect* procedures.

- In deciding whether or not 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 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 Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or Family Support Unit (FSU) of 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.
- 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 and requires that the receiver of notification of suspected child abuse (DCFS/FSU) shall not disclose the identity of the notifier to any other person other than in the instance of communicating to another person acting in the course of official duty. Only in cases when the court is satisfied that the evidence is of critical importance in 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 to them by the Head of School. This support includes accompanying the member of staff to court.
- School leadership shall undertake to ensure that all employees and volunteers are provided with information and training that will enable them to carry out their duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect as well as training regarding identifying and responding appropriately to Child Protection issue

### Responsibilities of School Child Protection Officer

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

- It is the School Child Protection Officer's (CPO) 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. Care will be taken not to ask leading or unnecessary questions. Documentation of what is said (or of any injuries) is important. 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, utilising 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 the MASH would be appropriate. If after hours, the telephone report shall be made directly with the RCIPS. The telephone referral will be followed by a written referral to the MASH. MSC's Child Protection Officer, Ms. Courtney Peddle 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. These individuals will be informed of the report 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 upon with that agency.

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

### 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 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 arranging discreetly for the student to be interviewed. The DCFS worker may request that a school employee member be present during an interview to offer support to the student. If the worker does not ask for student support, the School Child Protection Officer may make this request on behalf of the student.

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

Following investigation, the school's 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. Schools must provide a secure cabinet for the filing and maintaining of confidential information related to child abuse/neglect cases. No documentation related to child abuse/neglect reports or investigations shall appear within the student's cumulative folder.

On a regular basis, and no less frequently than on an annual basis, 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.**



Policy Approved & Adopted by: ***Montessori School of Cayman Ltd.***  
Date: ***September 2021***

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*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 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. Courtney Peddle
2. Ms. Briana Bergstrom

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.

***Student discloses abuse to an employee/volunteer or other students report abuse/neglect of another student or employee/volunteer observes concerning behaviour which may indicate abuse/neglect:***

### Employee/volunteer will:

#### In the case of a disclosure:

1. Thank student for sharing this information.
2. Do not ask leading questions (i.e. did so-and-so hit you); only open-ended questions (i.e. 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 this to yourself as a dated record and print the email.
2. Submit the form and printout of email to one of the 2 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 school date stamp on the report.
2. Inform the Principal that there is a child protection issue which 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 he/she 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 email and put the school's date stamp on it.
2. File the email and report in a confidential child protection file which is held by the Child Protection Officers
3. Log any subsequent agency actions on the report template held on file.
4. If further to 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 and it should be held on file.
- 5.

NB: If a student is removed from school by DCFS and the parent asks regarding 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 relevant DCFS/MASH staff before doing so.

## **APPENDIX 3: Child Abuse Incident Report Form for MSC Employees/Volunteers**

*This should be attached to the MSC Reporting Form and kept in 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 circumstances leading to the suspicion that the child is a victim of abuse or neglect:

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:

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

Date: .....

Signature of Employee/Volunteer: .....

## **APPENDIX 4: Suspected Child Abuse Report**

*MASH Reporting form on file at MSC as a hardcopy.*