



AARHUS  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL

# Aarhus International School

## Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

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Aarhus International School (AIS) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. The goal of child protection is to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of all children to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. At AIS, we believe that children thrive and develop in environments which are built on a foundation of mutual respect, open communication, and which have the tenets of love, happiness and positive support at their core. All members of the school community are responsible for contributing to a protective environment which allows students to learn, grow and thrive. AIS has policies and procedures in place to respond to any concerns which threaten the well-being of a child, specifically to concerns of “physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploration, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who comes into contact with the child” (Article 19, UN Convention for the Rights of the Child).



**CONVENTION  
ON THE  
RIGHTS OF  
THE CHILD**

This policy is directly linked to the AIS mission statement and school values and guides us in our commitment to ensuring that all students in our care have the opportunity for a safe and secure school environment that allows for ongoing physical, social, and emotional well-being.

<i><b>Our Mission</b></i>	<i><b>Our Values</b></i>
<i>AIS provides a high-quality international education, which enables students to become socially and environmentally responsible citizens, enthusiastic inquirers, and lifelong learners in a challenging and nurturing environment.</i>	Responsible  Caring  Respectful

This policy is inspired by the stance taken by the International Baccalaureate (IB), in alignment with the International Task Force on Child Protection, which recognizes the following principles as a foundation to child protection:

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm and abuse.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- All schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school.
- All actions on child protection are taken with the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

*(International Task Force on Child Protection, 2016)*

As a school located in Denmark, we comply with Danish Federal laws pertaining to child protection and based on the provision and requirements set out in the Consolidation Act on Social Services (2013). We follow the response procedures and guidelines set out by Aarhus Kommune.

## Guiding Principles

Aarhus International School is guided by a duty and responsibility to 'protect and safeguard the interests of all children.' Any action around child protection is founded on agreed upon and documented procedures, collaboration with all relevant institutions/legal authorities and informed and confident staff, who are knowledgeable and prepared to respond to child protection situations.

This policy document provides the foundation for all work associated with child protection and safeguarding at AIS. The procedures section provides general guidelines for all members of the AIS school community to ensure our students' safety and wellbeing are a priority, at all times.

As such, AIS will:

- Ensure this policy is made available to all members of the school community, and support consistent good practice in the areas of child protection and safeguarding;
- Provide developmentally appropriate education for students about their rights as children, how to keep themselves safe, and what to do if they are in danger;
- Provide guidelines and/or training for all adult AIS community members in identifying and acting on child protection related issues;
- Protect AIS employees who come forward and report on any suspicious allegation; and
- Regularly review the policy for effectiveness, to ensure its efficacy in practice, and to ensure alignment with international best practice and Danish law in the areas of child protection.

AIS is committed to ensuring that students at our school have access to and feel safe enough to speak freely with adult members of the school community should they have concerns related to their own well-being or the well-being of others. All members of the school community who come into contact with students at AIS and their families have a role to play in safeguarding our students.

All professionals in Denmark who have a job which requires close contact with children and youth have a strict legal **obligation to react** and notify the authorities about any concerns they might have about the welfare of a child or young person with a need for special support. This includes staff members at Danish private independent schools (fagpersoners særlige underretningspligt). Adults in the AIS school community, including staff members, families/parent(s) and legal guardian(s), who have the opportunity to interact with and observe students with or beyond the school grounds, have a professional and/or ethical obligation to:

- Respond to students who are in need of support and protection, and
- Report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect whenever there is reasonable cause to believe, even if certainty has not been established or proven, that a child has suffered, or is at significant risk of suffering abuse or neglect.

Any disclosure, including potential reports against an adult member of the AIS community, will be taken seriously and follows internal procedures. At all times, the safety of the student will be kept at the highest priority whilst maintaining the reputation and integrity of the adult concerned. The duty of notification is described in the Danish Consolidation Act on Social Services.

## **Confidentiality**

AIS recognizes that all matters relating to child protection are highly confidential. The Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Lead will share that information on a strict “need to know” basis. Concerns about individuals should never be discussed, inside or outside the school, unless in confidential meetings for that purpose. AIS expects that all parties treat sensitive information with confidentiality in mind at all stages in the process.

Professional secrecy means that professionals have a duty to observe professional secrecy with regard to confidential information on children, young persons and their families, which becomes known in the course of employment. The duty of notification is an exception to the duty to observe this professional secrecy. In the interest and welfare of the child, concerns must be reacted upon.

## **The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Leads**

AIS has two identified Designated Safeguarding Leads:

- Kindergarten Administrator (PYP1-PYP3)
- School Counsellor (PYP4-MYP5)

The Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) have the responsibility within the kindergarten and the school programmes for ensuring child protection is a key focus and that appropriate protocols and procedures are in place. Responsibilities of the DSL include:

- Acting as the first point of contact in the event of suspected or disclosed abuse or neglect,
- Being a source of advice and support for staff who may have child protection concerns,
- Ensuring the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is reviewed regularly,
- Ensuring required staff have received child protection training and that this is documented,
- Ensuring practices and procedures within the school are developed with a child protection lens,
- and overseeing the maintenance and confidentiality of child protection records and documentation within school systems.

In the case that a report/referral of concern is needed, the DSL will submit the report to the Kommune on behalf of the team, based on the gathered information. The DSL will also be responsible for direct communication with the Kommune or other relevant authorities after the report has been sent, should this be necessary. In the event that the relevant DSL is not able to follow through on this process, the Head of School will take responsibility, or assign another member of the Pedagogical Leadership Team to take the lead on this process.

## **Child Safeguarding**

AIS is responsible for supporting and protecting all children within our care, and to take steps to keep students safe from the risks of harm and abuse. It is the school’s responsibility to create a safe and healthy learning environment, to identify students who are suffering or who are at-risk, and to take suitable action should the situation arise.

As a part of our safeguarding responsibilities, AIS works to develop a culture of well-being/trivsel and a curriculum that teaches children developmentally appropriate ways to protect themselves and to seek help. Across the curriculum through relevant Units in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) & Middle Years Programme (MYP), along with the homeroom curriculum, targeted PSPE & PHE lessons, preventative social/emotional learning, and school-wide efforts such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Week, students will be supported in this endeavor. It is the responsibility of AIS to ensure that there are clear procedures in place if staff are concerned about the well-being of a child. AIS is also responsible

for following through on necessary background checks for school staff and volunteers who come into contact with children and youth.

All AIS staff members should have an awareness of safeguarding issues, which can include but are not limited to the following:

- bullying and cyberbullying
- children missing education
- child missing from home or care
- child sexual exploitation
- domestic violence
- drugs
- fabricated or induced illness
- faith abuse
- female genital mutilation
- forced marriage
- gangs and youth violence
- gender-based violence/violence against women and girls
- hate
- mental health
- private fostering
- preventing radicalisation
- relationship abuse
- sexting
- trafficking

## **Child Protection Procedures**

### **Step 1: Duty of Notification**

If an AIS staff member suspects or receives information pertaining to an incident of child abuse or neglect, or a pattern of behaviour that indicates that a child may be subject to abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to discuss and/or report it within AIS. The Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed if a case is being discussed. Based on the case, parent(s) and/or legal guardian involvement will be considered in the next stage. The individual who initially disclosed the case will be informed that case has been followed up.

### **Step 2: Assessment & Possible Action**

The AIS team involved in the further evaluation of the case may include one or more of the following staff members: Head of School, MYP Coordinator/Principal, PYP Administrator, Kindergarten Administrator, Designated Safeguarding Lead, School Counsellor, Teacher(s), or School Nurse. Depending upon the nature of the concern, the case may require further consultation with parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or support services of the municipality of residency of the student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s).

The outcome of this stage may include one or more of the following as identified by the team:

- Collaboration with family, parent(s) and/or relevant support services
- Should parent(s)/guardian(s) not follow up on agreed steps or refuse(s) to cooperate, official report to local authorities
- Immediate official report to local authorities (underretning)

If a decision to report to local authorities (e.g. Aarhus Kommune) is reached, AIS follows the guidelines set forth by the municipality of residency. A notification to the municipality may be made verbally or in writing, although AIS will strive to make such reports in writing whenever possible. The notification, according to Danish law, must include: contact details for the child or young person and, where appropriate, the custodial parent(s), along with the background for the decision to notify the authorities.

Depending upon the nature of the case and the specific requirements of the municipality, the notification may also include:

- Your role in relation to the child or young person (for example, class teacher, contact teacher or other)
- Your observations of the child or young person and the family
- A general description of the physical psychological, and social circumstances, resources and difficulties of the child or young person
- Collaboration with the parents/guardians
- The child's or young person's school attendance/ rates of absence
- How long you have known the child or young person at the school
- Other important information about the child or young person
- Information about the parents'/guardians' comments on the notification
- Information on any reasons why the parents/guardians' may not been involved in the notification process

*(Source: "Professional Concern: A guide for private independent schools on children and young people who have welfare issues and are in need of special support." Pg. 10)*

### **Notifying Parents/Guardians of Concerns**

AIS will normally seek to openly discuss any concerns about a child with their parents/guardians. With respect to concerns of child protection or child well-being, each situation must be handled sensitively. The Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Lead will make contact with the family in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure. However, there may be cases where notifying the family first could increase the risk to the child, thus exacerbating the concern. In these cases, advice will first be sought from other agencies. For example, in cases of suspected physical harm or abuse, the school will first reach out to the municipality before contacting the family, in line with local and national response procedures.

### **GDPR & Data Storage**

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with GDPR principles. Such information must be:

- processed for limited purposes
- adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- kept no longer than necessary
- processed in accordance with the data subject's/child's rights
- secure

Child protection records and other written information with confidential information must be stored on the school system in the schools limited-access confidential files. Any electronic information must be password-protected and only made available to relevant individuals. Every effort will be made to prevent unauthorised access. Sensitive information should not be stored locally on laptop computers, which, by the nature of their portability, could be lost or stolen. When members of staff write safeguarding concerns, any files that are stored must be deleted from the staff member's email accounts and computer(s).

## Resources & References

“Child Protection in Schools: CIS Training for Teachers.” *Child Protection in Schools | CIS Training for Teachers*, 2021, <https://www.cois.org/about-cis/child-protection>.

“Convention on the Rights of the Child.” *UNICEF*, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>.

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“International Task Force on Child Protection School Evaluation Committee Final Report and Recommendations.” International Task Force on Child Protection, 1 Nov. 2015.

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UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html> [accessed 2 December 2021]