



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**AS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**ON MAY 14, 2012**

**TO BE REVIEWED AGAIN IN MAY 2014**

## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

**Global Schoolroom is dedicated to sharing educational experience between communities worldwide to help eradicate poverty, promote economic development and build sustainable communities.**

## **OUR FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**Education has the power to enlighten one another and expand each individual's scope for opportunity.**

**A primary education for every child is essential (the UN's Millennium Development Goal for universal education).**

**Sharing good educational practices enriches the collective educational experience and widens the cultural horizons of everyone involved.**

**Forging respectful links between educational partners works to their mutual benefit.**

**Working directly with teachers and communities is the best way to build a strong framework for high standards of teacher training which, once in place, can be delivered by sustainable local networks.**

## **OUR POLICIES**

**Global Schoolroom's policies are proofed against our Mission Statement and Guiding Principles and aim to reflect best international practice.**

## **STATEMENT ON CHILD PROTECTION**

Global Schoolroom owes a clear duty of care to protect children and young people within the community in which we work. All staff and volunteers must be alert to the possibility of child abuse and alert to their obligation to report reasonable concerns or suspicions to the appropriate authorities.

### **OUR POLICY**

This policy sets out the obligations of all concerned and the reporting procedures to be followed. Global Schoolroom aims to create a safe and healthy environment for the children and young people in the communities in which we work and we are committed at all times to ensuring their safety and welfare. Global Schoolroom seeks to ensure that throughout its work it commits to policies, practices and procedures that are consistent with good practice and that are consistent with the best interests and the protection of the child at all times.

These Guidelines are based on the principles that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of conduct for employees, interns and volunteers
- Following carefully the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of employees, interns and volunteers
- Informing/sharing guidelines with employees, interns, volunteers and Global Schoolroom members through support and training
- Reporting concerns to statutory agencies and partner organisations appropriately
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with our partner organisations

### **OUR APPROACH TO WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS ON CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES**

Global Schoolroom is an intermediary organisation working with partner organisations, who work with children in Ireland and India. Our work with our partner organisations both domestically and overseas is underpinned by the principles outlined in our policy statement.

In relation to the work of its partners, Global Schoolroom will:

- Create an environment where child protection issues are discussed openly in a nonthreatening, safe and supportive environment within Global Schoolroom and with our partners

- Promote open lines of communication both internally and externally within and between organisations to improve awareness and to document learning from the implementation of child protection policies and procedures
- Create a framework to deal openly, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning both direct and indirect abuse where information is brought to our attention

## **GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE**

All Global Schoolroom participants must follow these guidelines in order to respect the rights, privacy and dignity of those we work with as well as to protect themselves from false allegations. These good practice guidelines include a 'Do Not' section which gives explicit clarification of unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry, and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken or criminal proceedings being instituted by Global Schoolroom.

### **IT IS GOOD PRACTICE TO:**

- Always act in the very best interest of the child
- Treat all young people equally with respect and dignity
- Always work in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position
- Be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible
- Avoid doing something that could be misinterpreted by a third party
- Immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation by a third party
- Wait for appropriate physical contact to be initiated by the child (e.g. holding a small child's hand)
- Ask permission from children, parents and guardians before taking photographs
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse and bullying and address it with both individuals where possible
- Do not stand aside when inappropriate action is being inflicted by children on other children e.g. sexually provocative games
- Do not show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual persuasion or any other status
- Be sensitive to risks of personal safety and the possibility of unfounded allegations that can arise

### **TRY NOT TO:**

- Show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child
- Encourage any inappropriate attention seeking behaviour, such as tantrums by a child
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion
- Allow children to engage in inappropriate or high risk games with each other

- Act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate or degrade a child

#### **DO NOT:**

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child
- Use language that will mentally or emotionally harm a child (ie, profane or sexually explicit language)
- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child
- Kiss, fondle or touch a child in an inappropriate or insensitive way
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing and bathing
- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal or unsafe
- Display any materials (on computers, mobile phones or otherwise) that is unsuitable for them. This includes but is not limited to pornography

#### **USING MOBILE PHONES AND EMAIL**

Anything which compromises the ability of a Global Schoolroom worker to maintain a safe environment for young people is actively discouraged. Contacting young people by phone, text or email should never be undertaken without parental/guardian consent. A Global Schoolroom worker should not contact or respond to contact with children through social networking sites such as Facebook.

#### **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOS**

As signatories of the Dóchas Code on Images and Messages, Global Schoolroom's use of images and messages is based on the paramount principles of:

- Respect for the dignity of the people concerned
- Belief in the equality of all people
- Acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice

Therefore, while Global Schoolroom recognises that publicity and pictures of young people engaging with its activities are essential to promote its work, all Global Schoolroom workers must abide by the Code on images and messages.

#### **RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND TRAINING PROCEDURES**

Global Schoolroom employs a rigorous recruitment, selection and training policy. Garda vetting is conducted in respect of every Global Schoolroom worker. Applicants with convictions against children will be excluded from employment and/or volunteering. All staff and volunteers of Global Schoolroom will receive training in child protection policies and guidelines, including information about how to respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse.

## REPORTING GUIDELINES

It is important to remember that all those working with children within an educational organisation, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harm. While it is not the responsibility of any one staff or volunteer working within Global Schoolroom to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place, there is a responsibility on them to act on any concerns through contact in the appropriate channels as detailed below. In order to manage this, Global Schoolroom has an appointed Child Protection Officer to deal with child protection concerns reported by Global Schoolroom workers.

## ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

The Designated Child Protection Officer in Global Schoolroom has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child protection and welfare policy of Global Schoolroom is promoted and implemented. Because Global Schoolroom works largely overseas it has been deemed appropriate to assign the CEO as the main point of contact for overseas programmes reporting directly to the Designated Child Protection Officer. The CEO will, where necessary, liaise with local agencies/hosts.

The role of the Child Protection Officer involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with “Children First”, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of Global Schoolroom child protection guidelines
- To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines
- To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing employees, interns and volunteers in Global Schoolroom on the child protection policy
- To build a working relationship with the Health Executive (HSE), An Garda Síochána and other agencies as appropriate
- To ensure that supports are put in place for Global Schoolroom employees/volunteer in cases of allegations being made
- To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection policy and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of Global Schoolroom policy and procedures in this area
- To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues

## **DEFINITION AND RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse.

A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

## **RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE FROM A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON**

In the event of a child/young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the worker/volunteer involved. The following are guidelines to support the worker/volunteer in this:

- Inform the young person of your duty to report their disclosure as early as possible in the conversation. Never agree to keep the disclosure secret
- React calmly; an over-reaction may intimidate and increase any feelings of guilt
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously; the child is taking a risk by telling you this
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Ask questions for clarification only. Using open-ended questions such as "Do you want to tell me about this?" Be mindful not ask leading questions such as "Did Joe Blogs do this to you?"
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood; being mindful not to make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Do not express any opinions about the allegation
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES IN RESPECT OF CHILD ABUSE**

The reporting procedures for different types of allegations of abuse will differ slightly, but the initial response is the same. As it is vital to protect the confidentiality of all involved outlined below are the reporting channels recommended:

- All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse by Global Schoolroom workers should be reported directly to the CEO
- An Incident Report Form (see attached) must be filled out by the person reporting the incident/disclosure and sent to the CEO

*If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child and the designated people are not available, contact another Global Schoolroom worker and local host.*

As per best practice guidance, the following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported:

- Specific indication from a young person that (s)he was abused
- An account by a person who saw the young person being abused
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indicators of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a young person is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

The report of the incident should include:

- The programme or activity which was happening at the time
- Date of Incident
- A record of what happened
- Details of who was involved
- Details of where and when it happened
- A record of any significant comments
- A record of any injury to person or property
- Details of how the situation was resolved or left

#### **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH AN ALLEGATION OF SUSPECTED ABUSE AGAINST STAFF OF A PARTNER ORGANISATION**

- All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse against staff of a partner organisation should be immediately reported to the CEO who will record and act on these concerns in a confidential manner
- An Incident Report Form (see attached) must be filled out by the person reporting the incident/disclosure and sent to the CEO

*If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child and the designated people are not available, contact another Global Schoolroom worker and local host. Global Schoolroom may decide to contact the senior management team or Board of the Partner Organisation requesting their official response to the situation. While Global Schoolroom understands that some of our partners operate in different culture and legal systems, Global Schoolroom may be unable to continue a partnership when it has serious doubts about the*



*actions and behaviour of the organisation or individuals within the organisation with regard to child protection.*

## **PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH AN ALLEGATION AGAINST A GLOBAL SCHOOLROOM EMPLOYEE, INTERN, VOLUNTEER OR GLOBAL SCHOOLROOM WORKER**

When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully.

**Global Schoolroom will take immediate action against any Global Schoolroom worker where it is judged that serious misconduct has occurred.**

This procedure is the responsibility of the CEO and the Designated Child Protection Officers.

- If there is an allegation of suspected child abuse against a Global Schoolroom worker the CEO must be informed immediately
- The CEO will inform the Designated Child Protection Officer
- The first priority should be to ensure that no young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. As a matter of urgency, protective measures will be agreed
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against a Global Schoolroom worker will be taken in consultation with the Statutory Authorities
- The CEO will then contact the Global Schoolroom worker whom the allegation has been made against, informing them of an allegation against them and allowing them to respond to the allegation
- The CEO will maintain close contact with the accused and support will be provided as necessary. Independent counselling and support will be offered

The CEO may, depending on the seriousness of the allegation and in consultation with the Statutory Authorities, suspend the staff member or volunteer.

- This suspension will be recorded, dated and signed.
- Upon completion of inquiries a further disciplinary hearing will be heard, and appropriate action taken as required.
- This hearing will also be recorded, dated and signed.

## **SUPPORT WHEN DEALING WITH THE ALLEGATION OF ABUSE**

Global Schoolroom assures all Global Schoolroom workers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Following an allegation of child abuse, consideration will be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents, members of staff, interns volunteers and society members. Consideration will also be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

## **IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF AN ABUSIVE ACTION**

If you are accused of an abusive action:

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible
- Contact the CEO
- Seek access to professional and legal advice
- Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation
- Consult Global Schoolroom procedures and make sure these are followed correctly
- Avoid any discussions around the topic/ allegations with anyone outside of the proper procedures

## **RECORD KEEPING**

The Designated Child Protection Officer is responsible for keeping the following records related to Child Protection. The Designated Child Protection Officer and the CEO are the only officers who have access to these records:

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of young people while working with Global Schoolroom
- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations, including informal advice and informing parents/guardians
- Any bullying complaints related to Global Schoolroom work with young people and the follow up action

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

### **IRISH LAW**

You must respect the laws of Ireland and specifically, but not exclusively, be aware of your responsibilities under Irish law.

### **GLOBAL SCHOOLROOM POLICIES**

In addition, there are policies in a variety of areas, which Global Schoolroom Directors, Management, Staff, Volunteers and all other participants must be aware of and operate under where these policies are relevant.