

SCHOOL SAFETY MANUAL



**COUNCIL FOR THE INDIAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS
NEW DELHI**

Contents

S. No.		Page No.
1.	Foreword	1
2.	Acknowledgement and References	2
3.	Introduction	3-6
4.	Section 1: Planning and Safety	7-8
6.	Section 2: School Disaster Management Plan	9-11
7.	Section 3: School Safety Sub-committee	12-13
8.	Section 4: Securing the School Premises	14-24
9.	Section 5: Safety Hazards	25
10.	Section 6: Ensuring Psychological & Emotional Wellbeing of Students	26
	A. Child Abuse	27-31
	B. Child Neglect	32
	C. Common Risk Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect	33-34
	D. Common Protective Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect	35-36
	E. Role of the School in Identifying Child Abuse	37-41
11.	Section 7: Safeguards Relating to Staff	42-44
12.	Section 8: Special Attention for Children with Special Needs	45-49
13.	Section 9: Mechanism for Reporting a Case of Abuse	50-53
14.	Section 10: Transport – Pick and Drop (Travelling to and From the School)	54-59
15.	Section 11: Feedback Mechanisms	60-62
16.	Section 12: Gender Sensitization at the School Level	63-65

FOREWORD

“Safety and Security don’t just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear” – Nelson Mandela.

School safety is of paramount importance in an ever-evolving social framework, hence it becomes imperative that adequate safety measures be adopted to ensure a safe learning environment for children in Schools.



Recent times have witnessed a surge of incidents involving violent acts being perpetrated against children, especially in schools, once considered a safe bastion for students placed in their care. These incidents have left a deep scar on the impressionable minds of children and have led to a fear psychosis in the minds of parents, guardians and the community at large.

A safe environment within schools becomes vital for all stakeholders involved and it is only justifiable, that all measures and steps must be undertaken to ensure that each child is given the maximum in terms of ensuring his/ her safety and care, given their high degree of vulnerability.

The wellbeing of the students has always been the focal point and of utmost importance to the Council. It is with this intention that the Council has decided to bring out a book on safety guidelines in schools, titled ‘School Safety manual’. The material for this book has been collated from various sources of authority on the subject and the Council’s own thoughts on the same. Although it has been our endeavor to include as much relevant information in this book as possible, it is not all encompassing and therefore Heads of schools may also add any other relevant safety measures in their respective school campuses to provide additional safety and security to their students.

The Council has prepared safety guidelines that are **suggestive and non-prescriptive in nature** and are a management tool intended to offer guidance and practical advice to schools in planning, organizing and managing a safe and healthy environment for staff, students, parents, visitors and all stakeholders.

Council affiliated schools may use these guidelines to **fulfill their legal obligations** to suit the circumstances in consistency with **relevant legislations** and publications.

Gerry Arathoon
Chief Executive & Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND REFERENCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Ricardo H Soler
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SCHOOL SAFETY MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

School is a place where children must be provided a safe and secure environment, as they spend a majority of their time in Schools. In recent years there has been a series in the unfortunate incidents of anti-social/criminal/violent activities committed against children within the school campus and outside. The safety and security of students in schools is our fundamental concern owing to the vulnerable circumstances children face in the present scenario. Under such circumstances of a changing social and cultural environment, it becomes the prime duty and responsibility of schools to provide a safe and secure environment to our children, as we believe:

“Safe Children, Secured Future”.

‘School Safety’ has been defined as the creation of safe environments for children commuting from their homes to their schools and back. This includes safety from large-scale ‘natural’ hazards of geological/climatic origin, human-made risks, pandemics, violence as well as more frequent and smaller-scale fires, transportation and other related emergencies, and environmental threats that can adversely affect the lives of children. The concept has evolved over the last couple of decades as the threat to the physical well-being of children has become more visible both globally and in our country.

The school plays a vital and crucial role in providing both safety and security to children, for which it is essential to identify the safety parameters and areas of concern of the children. Safety concerns not only includes physical but also the emotional, psychological and social aspects too.

Apart from the physical safety of the children at the entry/exit points, classrooms, laboratories, toilets, workshops, art and craft, hobby rooms, playgrounds, swimming pool, terrace and other hazards such as electrical, water, gas, fire, sharp edges etc, the emotional and psychological issues like bullying, corporal punishment, physical, emotional or sexual abuse have increased against the most vulnerable sections of society in recent times. Digital technology now plays an indispensable and integral part in our lives, this in turn exposes children to cyber-bullying which can happen any time, in public and private space.

The safety and security of children is among the top challenges faced by the school administration. For, majority of schools, to create an emotionally /psychologically safe environment poses the stiffest challenge followed by the

infrastructural and physical safety concern. To achieve this vision of making children safe and secure in every respect, a collaborative effort and inclusive approach is required. All stakeholders that includes schools, teachers, parents and children need to understand their responsibilities as a team to build a safe and secure environment for all.

Objective:

The objective of these guidelines for safety in Schools is to create and maintain a **Safe, Secure and Caring** environment that facilitates and enhances quality teaching and learning processes.

School Safety seeks to:

- (i) provide opportunities for students to exploit and maximise potential for learning, growth and development.
- (ii) provide opportunity for students to participate in enhancing school safety.
- (iii) promote, maintain and contribute to the understanding of child and staff safety.
- (iv) provide a benchmark for monitoring and appraising the safety status of schools.
- (v) empower members of the school community to handle disasters and thus minimise risks.
- (vi) provide first line emergency services to students and staff who become victims of injury or are taken ill.
- (vii) counsel, guide and advise students and staff on issues relating to school safety.
- (viii) empower the school to liaise with parents, members of the community and other stakeholders to increase awareness about issues related to school safety.
- (ix) forge alliances and networks that enhance school and child safety.

Essential requisites of a Safe School:

- (i) High retention rate of enrolled students.
- (ii) Strong focus on teaching and learning, reflected by better academic performance and all-round character development amongst its students.
- (iii) Visible strategies in promoting the rights of children as provided in the Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

- (iv) High levels of interaction between school administrators, teachers, students, parents/guardians and the community, among others.
- (v) Active participation of stakeholders in school activities.
- (vi) Adequate and well-maintained facilities such as toilets and sanitation facilities.
- (vii) Clearly demarcated school grounds with proper fencing and secure gates/boundaries.
- (viii) An environment free from drug, alcohol and substance abuse, trafficking and illegal hawking.
- (ix) Low incidences of indiscipline.

NOTE: * indicate that The Schools shall maintain relevant Documents / Records

(Documents are created by planning what needs to be done and **records** are created when something is done.)

LEGAL PROVISIONS AND RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

The School Administration and parents should be aware of the legal provisions and rights of children prescribed in the Constitution of India for the welfare and safety of the children. So that in case of any eventuality one can seek justice as per law.

- **Article 21** of the Constitution of India states that children have the right to live in dignity and have access to education in an environment that is safe, protective and conducive to growth and development.
- **Article 39(e)** directs the state to work progressively to ensure that “..... the tender age of children are not abused”
- **Article 39(f)** directs the state to work progressively to ensure that “children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and the childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.”
- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.**

SECTION 1

PLANNING FOR SAFETY

PLANNING AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL – INCLUSIVE AND ONGOING ACTION *

Planning for emergencies at the school level cannot be done in isolation from the school community and the official structures responsible for schools. Therefore, the planning exercise must be inclusive:

1. Involving wide range of representatives from the school and its neighbouring communities, including school administrators, school principals, school staff, students and key representatives from the community.
2. It is equally important to recognize that planning for safety at the school level is not a one time or static process; it is an 'on-going' dynamic process involving identification of safety needs, developing prevention, response and preparedness protocols, evaluating physical facilities, and providing communication and training for staff members and students.
3. A comprehensive assessment of needs, conducted prior to the development of the School Development Plan (SDP) is essential for identifying the possible risks for children as well as their capabilities to respond and recover from critical incidents. The assessment should consider the history of natural disaster risk in the area and natural vulnerabilities, physical factors, such as the location of the school with regard to existing / emerging hazards, for example flooding due to proximity of a water body, building code requirements in relation to school structures as well as non-structural components that may threaten the well-being of children. It should also consider emergency uses of the school facility such as, school being designated as a relief shelter.
4. The School Management Committee members, children and teachers being the primary users of the school are in the best position to identify and plan for addressing hazards and risks that may threaten their safety. Once the School Management Committee has been formed and oriented to school safety issues, a dedicated group of individuals is available to lead the process of identifying risks and vulnerabilities.
5. Any appropriate tool may be used to conduct the process of identifying needs in a participatory manner. For instance, 'Hazard hunt' exercise is a tested method to identify risks, both inside and outside the school precincts that may threaten the safety of the school community. It involves identifying all

kinds of hazards including those that can cause physical harm such as deep potholes, lack of boundary walls; those that affect the health of children such as contaminated water sources, absence of washrooms and hand washing facilities; as well those factors that are outside the school such as fast-moving traffic on the road outside, ponds, etc.

SECTION 2

SCHOOL DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLAN*

Schools should develop a Disaster Management Plan defining procedure to confine, contain, consolidate and control an emergency or a crisis.

1. This plan should include among other aspects, system of warnings, communication protocols within and outside the school (including usage of public address system), identification of evacuation routes, access by emergency vehicles and care of children with special needs. The Disaster Management Plan should also include stock piling of emergency equipment and materials, regular maintenance of emergency equipment, arrangements for orderly release of students to guardians and the construction of a temporary shelter, where required. A site map should be included in the plan, designating planned evacuation routes and assembly areas. The same should be displayed on each floor of the school.
2. The plan would comprise measures to be taken both within school premises and in the immediate neighborhood including:
 - 2.2.1 Short-term interventions: both non- structural and structural activities
 - 2.2.2 Long-term interventions: both non- structural and structural activities
 - 2.2.3 Training plan: For students and teachers
 - 2.2.4 Knowledge building plan including awareness creation, mass sensitization, mock-drills including follow up through regular school timetable. This would also include the use and regular maintenance of emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, etc.
 - 2.2.5 Review and Monitoring plan including safety audit, availability of emergency equipment and materials.

Implementation of safety actions:

- (i) Appropriate siting, design and detailing for structural safety in new schools and repairing of existing schools. All existing as well as new schools need to conform to safety standards as per the National Building Code 2005.
- (ii) In addition, any other norms prescribed by the state government need to be adhered to.

Structural Safety Measures:

- i. Schools should be located, on a site that has adequate mitigation measures already in place against any imminent natural hazards. Existing schools located in a vulnerable location should either be relocated at a safer site or they should be provided adequate support to mitigate the effect of any natural hazards that may affect the area.
- ii. All new school constructions should include disaster resilient features. Existing vulnerable schools need to be repaired to the desired level of resilience with regard to local disaster risks.
- iii. Prescribed designs may be adapted to accommodate safety and child friendly features.
- iv. For design of structural standards of school building and its components such as corridors, staircases, side areas, quality of construction should be as per the National Building Code 2005. Only non-combustible, fire-proof, heat resistant materials shall be used in school construction.
- v. Vertical expansion of existing schools shall not be carried out without a fitness certificate for the building from a certified civil / structural engineer.
- vi. Additional classrooms or any other structures requiring horizontal expansion shall be designed taking into account the space availability and while constructing as a continuous unit to the existing structures, these should be designed to have less impact of seismic forces.
- vii. Each class room should have two doors for easy evacuation; adequate openings for ventilation and lighting are some of the essential elements that need to be accommodated in the design.
- viii. Doors opening outside, into open areas or corridors of adequate width are key details that need to be incorporated to make schools safer.

Non-structural Safety Measures:

Besides structural safety measures, non-structural elements within the school campus need to be addressed to ensure safety. These are mostly low cost, regular maintenance items that the school should address on a regular basis from their own funds. Some of these items have been listed below:

- (i) All items of furniture such as almirahs, shelves, black boards etc., as well as any other items that may fall and cause injury to students and teachers such as ceiling fans, coolers, water tanks etc. need to be secured to the walls or floor.

- (ii) Any electrical items such as loose wires that may cause an exigency should be addressed promptly by the school.
- (iii) Chemical and any hazardous materials in the school laboratory should be handled and stored as per instructions to prevent any harm to students and school staff.
- (iv) Open areas including corridors and evacuation routes including staircases and ramps should be kept free from any hurdles and barriers so that evacuation is smooth and swift.
- (v) Pots / planters in the playground or corridors should be kept in a manner that does not affect smooth evacuation
- (vi) Any derelict or unused building, rubble, etc. should be removed to prevent any harmful animals or pests from accessing children.
- (vii) Traffic movement outside the school should be managed to minimize risk to students at the time of entry and dispersal from school.
- (viii) During excursions, schools should carefully choose the location of excursion and the itinerary so that exposure to hazard is minimized. Extra precautions should be taken when students are being taken close to water bodies, narrow mountainous tracks etc.
- (ix) Buses or any other vehicles owned / hired by the school need to be maintained properly so that students are not at risk of accidents. Drivers need to be appropriately trained on speed limits, stoppage of vehicles as well as crisis management so that children remain safe during their travel to and from schools.
- (x) Emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, first aid kits, ropes etc. need to be procured and maintained regularly by the School Authorities.

SECTION 3

SCHOOL SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE

The safety of the school depends to a large extent on measures taken to organise and manage such safety. In this respect, involvement of teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders in safety programmes have important roles to play in facilitating and enhancing safety in schools. Nonetheless, the direct responsibility of overseeing school safety should fall within a specific **School Safety Committee**.

1. Formation of the School Safety Sub-Committee:

Each School Management Committee/Board of Governors shall constitute *a sub-committee to deal with School Safety*.

The Sub-Committee shall consist of the following members:

- (i) Secretary of the Management Committee - Chairperson
- (ii) Principal – Presiding Officer
- (iii) Vice Principal – Member
- (iv) Teacher In charge of School Safety – Member
- (v) Councillor – Member
- (vi) Teacher representative – Member
- (vii) Parent representative – Member
- (viii) Student representative – Member

(Attention must be paid to equitable gender representation in the school safety sub-committee)

2. Functions of the School Safety Sub-Committee

The specific functions of this Committee shall be to:

- (i) identify the safety needs of the school with a view to taking the necessary action.
- (ii) mobilise resources required by the school to ensure a safe, secure and caring environment for students, staff and parents / guardians.
- (iii) monitor and evaluate the various aspects of School Safety with a view to enhancing school safety.
- (iv) form sustainable networks with all stakeholders to foster and sustain School Safety.

- (v) keep students, parents and other stakeholders informed about School Safety policies and implementation activities.
- (vi) seek the support of parents and stakeholders and ensure their participation in activities relating to School Safety.
- (vii) constantly review issues of child safety in and around the school.
- (viii) The specific functions of some of the key members of the school safety sub-committee are outlined in the sections below.

3. Responsibilities and Functions of the Principal as a Member of the School Safety Sub-Committee

The Principal will be responsible for:

- (i) ensuring proper implementation of School Safety policies by coordinating all phases of programme implementation.
- (ii) coordinating the efforts of the School Safety-Sub Committee, teachers, students and parents in ensuring that the school is safe, secure and caring.
- (iii) ensuring that school resources are efficiently used in fostering a safe, secure and caring environment in the school.
- (iv) taking necessary corrective measures in accordance with the monitoring and evaluation reports.
- (v) ensuring that proper and up-to-date records relating to School Safety are compiled and properly managed.
- (vi) liaising with the teacher in-charge of School Safety and other members to ensure the implementation of School Safety measures agreed upon.

The Council trusts that the implementation of these guidelines in letter and spirit will facilitate schools to adopt the practice of periodic and repeated safety teachings, initiative in putting in place safety equipment and encourage the involvement of teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders in the safety programmes to create a secure environment.

SECTION 4

SECURING THE SCHOOL PREMISES

1. Schools must be equipped with every possible requirement, apparatus, man - power to protect children from all kinds of eventualities.
2. Schools must follow a planned protocol to keep an eye on every corner of the school, either deputing teachers or by any other technological means or by a combination of both.
3. Schools should be receptive to adopt new technologies to ensure the safety of its students.
4. A special budget needs to be allocated for the Safety and Security of schools and this should be revised annually.

I. Entry/Exit Points for Staff and Visitors

- (i) The Entry/Exit points of the school must be constantly manned by security guards preferably appointed from a registered Security Agency after due verification, which must include guards in an all-girls / residential / co-educational school/s (24x7) (number as per requirement).
- (ii) The staff of the school (permanent/contractual/temporary) must register his/her in and out time. The school may use either electronic swiping or biometric login/logout for the concerned staff.
- (iii) A separate register is to be maintained for the visitors/parents, which must include, name of visitor, address, telephone/mobile number, purpose of visit and person to be met and the in and out time. A visitor card/pass must be given to the visitors on entry and taken back on exit.
- (iv) On entry of students in school, the guards and teachers on duty should be present at the main gate to receive the students safely in to the school.
- (v) At the time of exit of the students, the teachers on duty and guards should hand over the child to the responsible and authorised guardian of the child, specially students enrolled in the pre – primary and primary sections. The guards & teachers should check the school identification card in case the child is coming to school through private means of transportation.
- (vi) Entry of unknown person/s must be strictly prohibited in the school, entry may only be allowed with authorised permission of the concerned authorities.
- (vii) The entry/exit of students should be confined only through the main gate. Side gates should be avoided. If side gates are necessary, they

should be under supervision and any entry or exit may be recorded in a register by the security guard on duty.

- (viii) Access to areas like bus area, swimming pools, sports room, hobbies room, canteen, and washrooms should be confined to persons whose presence in the area is required and are therefore specifically authorized to access these areas.
- (ix) Specifically, for bus drivers/conductors/contract employees of school, access area must be limited to just their respective areas and specific instructions must be given to them as to which areas are out of bounds for them.
- (x) Entry/Exit gates must be under constant CCTV surveillance.

II. School Perimeter Security & Safety: *

The school perimeter must be made secure in all possible ways and the boundary wall must be high enough to prevent any form of scaling from within or outside the school premises. Security services must be entrusted to a professionally recognised security agency in case the security is outsourced and verified security guards in case of in-house security. The entire campus/ premises should be under CCTV surveillance (Indoors and outdoors).

(i) INDOOR AREAS

(a) Classrooms:

- i. It is the responsibility of the class teacher / subject teacher to ensure the safety of students in the classroom.
- ii. Daily attendance of students should be recorded by the class teachers at the beginning and end of each day.
- iii. Furniture in the classroom should be arranged in such a way that there is adequate space between rows and tables & chairs, for easy movement in the classroom.
- iv. The furniture must not have any protruding nails, splinter etc. Sharp edged furniture should not be a part of the school furniture.
- v. There should be no loose electrical wires, broken switches/sockets in the classrooms. Fans and tube-lights must be fixed properly and checked routinely.
- vi. The children must not carry any sharp objects in/ on their possession.

- vii. School bags should not be kept in the passage ways. This is to prevent injury by tripping and to allow for quick exit in case of any emergency.
- viii. In the smart classroom, the viewing distance should be at a minimum of 3 meters.
- ix. Classes should be under CCTV surveillance.

(b) Laboratories:

Science experiments / practical are performed in laboratories using reactive chemicals, which may be inflammable in nature. Hence, they must be performed using utmost care under the direct supervision of the concerned teacher and laboratory assistant. Enforcement of safety rules and regulation in the science and all other laboratories are mandatory.

Teacher's Responsibilities:

- i. Instruct students about the basic safety/precautionary practices required in the laboratory.
- ii. Encourage students to wear the necessary protective equipment (e.g.: Gloves, safety goggles, mask etc.).
- iii. Conduct regular inspection of the first aid equipment.
- iv. Avoid using defective equipment in laboratories as they may be hazardous in nature.
- v. Demonstrate safe and correct methods, when any new technique is being introduced.
- vi. Ensure students develop the habit of cleaning, tidying and returning apparatus to their proper location after completion of practical work.
- vii. Instruct students and guide them accordingly on the use of the Bunsen Burner, spirit lamp and water taps etc.
- viii. The Laboratory must never be left unattended nor unsupervised. The teacher and or the laboratory assistant must conduct regular rounds to ensure maintenance of discipline in the laboratory.

Student's Responsibilities:

- i. Develop an attitude towards safety and acquire habits of assessing hazards and risks.

- iii. Wear protective equipment as and when instructed.
- iv. Ask questions, when in doubt (what to do, how to do).
- v. Inform your teacher if you or your friend is unwell or having a medical issue (allergy or asthma etc).
- vi. Chemicals, Bunsen burners, and gas should be used wisely as per the instructions of the teacher.
- vii. Wash hands with soap or use a sanitizer after working with chemicals or biological materials.

STUDENTS MUST:

Never	Always
(i) Enter the lab without permission	(i) Take permission of the teacher to enter lab
(ii) Carry out unauthorized experiments	(ii) Wear lab coat, safety goggles, gloves etc.
(iii) Work without protective clothing/ equipment	(iii) Handle all chemical/salt with spatula
(iv) Delay in action, if there is an inhalation of a gas/ toxin.	(iv) Avoid looking into the mouth of test-tube, while performing experiment.
(v) Hide any incident of an accident	(v) Close the gas pipe and water taps when not in use.
(vi) Try to taste any chemical/s	(vi) Inform the teacher immediately about any eventuality.

School Management's Responsibilities:

The school management must ensure and appreciate the need for establishing safety and security instructions as a fundamental part of Science curriculum and other departments and should operate their school in a safe and secure manner.

The School Management must focus on:

- i. A proper architecturally safe layout of all the laboratories (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer, Biotechnology and Home Science).
- ii. All laboratories being equipped with safety devices, such as, exhaust fans, fire extinguishers, first aid box etc.
- iii. A storage facility i.e. a separate room for chemical storage, gas plant etc. with locking facility in the laboratories.
- iv. Installation of Electrical connections that should be proper and with complete insulation.
- v. A suitable gas-pipe connection installed in the Chemistry laboratory.
- vi. Regular preparation and practice of the Emergency protocol.
- vii. CCTV coverage installed with recording facility and remote viewing.

(c) Crafts/Workshops ***i. Art:**

It is important to recognize that some art and craft material may cause adverse health effects. Being cautious and limiting exposure to potentially harmful art and craft materials prevents the possibility of developing adverse health effects in the long term.

- a) Choose the safest material available (e.g.: avoid use of those with no cautionary/warning labels).
- b) Ceramics, clay, glazes may be toxic by inhalation, ingestion and skin contact and must be supervised accordingly.
- c) Ensure proper ventilation in the craft hobby or workshop room/s.
- d) Good quality inks, markers, pastels, spray fixatives should be used.
- e) Keep an eyewash available.

- f) Protective gear/ equipment including goggles, gloves and apron must be used.
- g) Avoid photochemical/s with high toxicity.
- h) A First aid box-should be readily available and well stocked.
- i) The room/s should be under CCTV coverage.

ii. Home Science & Cookery: *

- a) Separate laboratories for Home Science and Cookery are to be made available.
- b) The Gas connection should be properly installed under safe supervision with the teacher in-charge being present during practical learning sessions/ discussions.
- c) Safety devices must always be in place and checked regularly.
- d) Fire extinguishers must be installed inside these rooms/ labs.

iii. Technical Drawing / Electricity and Electronics:

All electrical switches/sockets and wires must be properly insulated with no loose wire/s hanging.

Precautions while working with electricity

- ♦ Avoid contact with energized electrical circuits.
- ♦ Disconnect the power source before servicing or repairing electrical equipment.
- ♦ Use only tools and equipment with - non conducting handles when working on electrical devices
- ♦ Wear nonconductive gloves, protective clothes and shoes with insulated soles.

iv. Library/Reading Room: *

- a) Children should enter the library or reading room only in the presence of the teacher/librarian.
- b) Books should be kept on the shelves/in cupboards/Almirah in a proper order.
- c) There should be proper spacing in between the two shelves/cup-board/Almirah, to make an easy evacuation at the time of any emergency.
- d) The “Code of Silence” must be maintained at all times.
- e) The library and reading room must be under CCTV surveillance.

v. Canteen/Mess: *

- a) The Gas connection (LPG) should be carefully handled in the canteen/mess.
- b) Fire extinguishers, Exhaust Fans, first aid kit must be an integral part of the safety equipment in the canteen/mess.
- c) The canteen/mess must have proper cross ventilation.
- d) If the canteen/mess is run by the school, the quality of food served must be checked by the school authorities daily.
- e) If the canteen/mess is run by any contractor, he/she must possess a Health registration certificate/license. The food served by the contractor must be checked by the School Management periodically. The license/certificate issued by the local Health authorities should be displayed in the canteen.
- f) Serving of fast food/junk food is not advisable.
- g) Healthy and nutritious fresh food must be served always.
- h) Stale food must not be served nor stale mediums of cooking be used in food preparations.
- i) Verification of the identity of canteen / mess staff is mandatory and the canteen should be under CCTV surveillance.

vi. Washrooms:

- a) Entrance to washrooms must be under constant CCTV surveillance.
- b) The school must have separate washrooms for boys and girls on each floor and should be monitored by a (floor janitor/cleaner) to ensure that senior students do not visit washrooms meant for the primary or middle sections or otherwise.
- c) There should also be separate washrooms for female and male staff of the school.
- d) It is mandatory to ensure the identification and verification of all contractual staff (sweepers / janitors, cleaners, maids, etc.) who come in daily contact with the school children.
- e) Washrooms should be adequately lit and ventilated.
- f) Faucets/washrooms/cisterns should be functioning.
- g) Washrooms bowls & urinals must be cleaned & disinfected daily.
- h) It should be ensured that the floors are clean, dry and non-slippery.
- i) Visitors / contractual staff / bus staff should not be permitted to visit the washrooms meant for students.

vii. Infirmary:

- a) Among other essentials, first aid kit, a stretcher, a wheel chair and an oxygen cylinder must be made available for any form of medical emergency.
- b) A trained medical staff must be appointed to be on duty and be available during school hours. In case of a residential school trained medical staff must be available on campus for any emergency at all times.
- c) Infirmary/sick room must be under CCTV coverage and no visitor must be permitted to visit the sick room.

viii. Gymnasium/Sports Room:

- a) The Gymnasium and sports room must be accessed by children under the direct supervision of the physical instructor / games teacher.

- b) The instructor must emphasize on the use of personal protective equipment required in certain games or sports activities.
- c) The instructor must demonstrate how the new activities are carried out before allowing children to perform.
- d) If a child is not comfortable performing an exercise / activity or feels uneasy no insistence nor coercion should be used.
- e) Existing machines/equipment must be inspected on a regular basis, to ensure safety norms are in place.
- f) The gymnasium & sports room must be airy, well-lit and with adequate ventilation with safe flooring.
- g) A first aid kit must be readily available.
- h) The gymnasium / sports facilities must be under CCTV surveillance.

(ii) OUTDOOR AREAS *

(a) Playground/Field/other recreational sites:

- i. The playground needs to be maintained, supervised and inspected on a regular basis.
- ii. There should be no broken pieces of equipment such as broken swing, seats or slide lying around that might cause injury to students playing on the ground.
- iii. Any sharp points, corners or edges must be smoothened or removed.
- iv. A close inspection of moving parts such as welding points & bolts should be maintained regularly.
- v. Wooden equipment that are found to be deteriorating, should be discarded and replaced.
- vi. Metal equipment must be repainted and maintained periodically.
- vii. Proper drainage system of the ground should be maintained. Water should not collect under or near equipment especially under the slide and swing areas.
- viii. The children must use the playground under the supervision of a teacher/PTI.

- ix. The PTI / teacher in charge should monitor the children using playground equipment like swings, slides, merry-go-round, see-saw etc.
- x. The equipment and surface of ground must be in good condition.
- xi. The school management should prepare a playground supervision plan.
- xii. Other recreational sites like corridors, verandas, basketball court, badminton court, swimming pool area etc, must be under CCTV coverage.
- xiii. At sporting events such as football, cricket, hockey, basketball, skateboarding, boxing etc. a trained physical instructor / coach must be present. First aid squad with a stretcher and first aid kit must be readily available when a game is being played.
- xiv. Relevant protective gear must be worn for each sport.
- xv. Boundary walls around the school playground must be high enough to prevent any scaling. Schools with lower boundaries should increase the height of the fence/walls to disallow any form of intrusion.

(b) Swimming/Diving Area: *

- i. The swimming pool area must be under constant supervision of the swimming coach / instructor when in use. No visitor / nor unauthorised entry should be permitted.
- ii. The instructor must inspect the pool thoroughly before and after the use of the swimming pool by the students.
- iii. The pool must be clean and if the bottom of the pool is not visible or is unclean, all events scheduled should be cancelled.
- iv. Swimming should not be permitted in the diving area, when diving activities are in progress.
- v. Diving in the pool must be under the strict supervision of the instructor.
- vi. Lifesaving buoys and ropes must be easily accessible always.
- vii. The instructor must not leave the pool unattended if students are using the pool.

- viii. Only a limited number of swimmers and non-swimmers must be near the pool area at any given time.

Lifesaving equipment:

- ✓ Lifesaving buoys
- ✓ Bamboo Sticks (5 feet and 20 feet long with rope)
- ✓ Floats
- ✓ Kick boards
- ✓ Rope (20 feet long)
- ✓ Wire with belt.

(c) Terraces:

- i. The steps leading to the terrace should be locked with no entry being permitted. Only authorised staff/ personnel may be permitted for maintenance purposes under supervision.
- ii. The water tanks on the terrace must be covered, sealed and locked.
- iii. Entry must be confined only to the authorized staff.

SECTION 5

SAFETY HAZARDS *

1. **Electrical related risks:**

- i. Improper / exposed wiring and open electricity panel resulting in live wires, improper location of panels in areas where children frequently pass through. The school must ensure proper installation and insulation of MCB to prevent short-circuit; strict procedures to ensure that electricity, heating, air-conditioning are monitored and not left on overnight increasing risks of overheating and fires.
- ii. Areas with improper lighting must also be immediately addressed as such low-light areas become points where incidents of abuse or bullying are more likely to happen.

2. **Gas Related:** Periodic inspection and maintenance of Gas plant, gas burners in canteens/chemistry labs, checking of leakage in pipe and valves must be done regularly. Strict protocol to close the main valves, stoves, etc. after the work is complete is to be followed to prevent gas leakage.

3. **Water Related:** Safe drinking water on premises including periodic cleaning of tanks, which must be covered.

Preventing leakage resulting in slippery floor, open sumps, water pits that may pose risk of drowning. Swimming pools to ensure adequate safeguards with life guard and railing to prevent risk of drowning.

4. **Fire Related:** All fire extinguishers must be regularly maintained, besides adequate standby sand and water supplies. A certificate from the fire department on the school's fire-worthiness must be obtained every 6 months in accordance with the rules and be available for inspection. Regular fire safety drills are to be conducted for the students in school.

5. **Storage of Hazardous/Dangerous Material:** Materials such as acids, kerosene oil, spirits, pesticides, glass or other inflammable or toxic material in laboratories, kitchens or other godowns should be stored safely in an area away from the reach of children and must be stored under lock at all times.

6. **Physical Obstructions:** Low hanging power lines, improper placing of furniture, obstruction in escape routes at the time of emergency exits, sharp/heavy objects at a height (such as flower pots on parapet), etc. must be monitored and rectified periodically, including specific checks for cracked or broken glass.

7. **Structural Risks:** Cracks in building, loose false ceiling must be monitored periodically and rectified urgently in case of any problem. The glass doors/panels on the school premises should contain the stickers or coloured tape to ensure that the children do not try to cross the door running into the glass.

SECTION 6

ENSURING PSYCHOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF STUDENTS

One of the most challenging issues faced today by school authorities is to create and ensure an emotionally safe environment in schools. School Safety is an integral and indispensable component of the teaching and learning process. Recent incidents of violence and aggression are examples of the critical and alarming situations related to the compromise on safety and security of students on school campus.

These unfortunate incidents have shocked the collective conscience of society. It is only pertinent to mention that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is unsafe and insecure to both learners and staff. It is, therefore, imperative that educational stakeholders foster safe and secure school environments to facilitate an increased participation in the teaching and learning process.

The psychological/emotional issues may occur in various forms, *by the children or against the children*, hence as administrators, teachers, parents and all staff concerned it becomes the moral responsibility to identify and counter any kind of unwanted situations and create a safer place for children.

A child on entering school meets different people such as teachers, classmates, senior or junior students and various non-teaching staff. The Principal and the school management must focus on creating a safe and healthy environment by instructing and enforcing certain protocols or decorum for the safety of all concerned, especially children. Any kind of verbal, mental or physical abuse of children by teachers, classmates, senior students and non-teaching staff leads to a negative impact and instils fear in the mind of a child.

Psychological / Emotional issues

- ◆ Punishment by teachers
- ◆ Bullying / harassment by fellow students
- ◆ Sexual Abuse by the teacher, students, non-teaching staff, visitors.

A. CHILD ABUSE

Incidents of child abuse are on the increase with many being reported across the country. In such instances children suffer abuse at the hands of their fellow classmates, parents, guardians and teachers and associated staff. The implications of child abuse are many. Children subjected to physical violence may grow up believing that brute force, violence or aggressive behaviour are an acceptable part of society, hence many abused children become abusers in their adulthood. More importantly, abused children find it difficult to cope with the learning process.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Definitions of child abuse are many and vary. However, it can be simply defined as subjecting children to suffering through physical, sexual, emotional or neglectful behaviour. The abuse takes place in families, school and in the community at large. Abused children are often psychologically traumatised and are unable to concentrate while learning. Teachers play a key role in protecting children from abuse. For this reason, when teachers become the abusers, the implications of their actions are very serious.

The various forms of child abuse and their respective indicators are:

I. PHYSICAL ABUSE:

This is perhaps the most common and blatant type of child abuse. It mainly involves non-accidental injuries resulting from hitting/beating, shaking, throwing, pinching, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating the child. The symptoms of this form of abuse include:

- (i) Unexplained injury or injuries wherein conflicting explanations are given by the child.
- (ii) A repeated pattern of injuries, that do not appear to have been caused accidentally.
- (iii) Scalds and burns on external limbs.
- (iv) Bite marks.
- (v) Visible signs of bruises on the body.
- (vi) Clear signs of physical beating on hands / feet
- (vii) Untreated internal injuries or broken bones.
- (viii) Concealment or reluctance by the child to disclose the abuse.
- (ix) Withdrawn or aggressive behaviour.

- (x) loss of confidence.
- (xi) Continuous non-performance in academic standards.

In addition, some evidence of child abuse may be detected from the behaviour of parents or guardians. Parents may tend to:

- (i) be evasive and contradictory in explaining the child's injuries.
- (ii) be antagonistic, suspicious and fearful of other people.
- (iii) have inappropriate or unattainable expectations of their child.

II. EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

This form of abuse occurs when the child is denied basic needs like love, security, positive regard, warmth, praise, etc.

Emotional abuse can be recognised by:

- (i) Chronic lack of self-esteem and low self-confidence.
- (ii) Immature emotional responses, regression and neurotic behaviour.
- (iii) Demanding behaviour, attention seeking, in appropriate behaviour towards teachers and peers.
- (iv) Withdrawn behaviour, failure to make friends or sustain friendships.
- (v) Fear of new tasks, not wanting to experiment or join in any activity.
- (vi) Developmental and learning delays.
- (vii) Outburst of anger or distress or showing bouts of violent behaviour
- (viii) Indifferent or negative relationships with parents.
- (ix) Over-compliant behaviour, excessive desire to please.

III. SEXUAL ABUSE:

It is in the grey area of sexual abuse that most schools fall short of in the aspect of creating awareness among their students. That is why, most of children may not be aware of the danger they are exposed to. Rather than allowing this fear to stay with them, it is necessary to create a strong awareness of the evils that lurk and what they can do to protect themselves in such situations. The objective should be to make them more confident in dealing with any danger in public or in private life situations.

Sexual abuse takes the form of forcing or enticing a child into sexual activities. The abuser (more often an adult) has carnal knowledge of the child with or without the child's consent or the child is used for sexual stimulation. Other forms of this abuse include touching the child's private parts, sexual threats and intimidation. The use of pornographic materials to stimulate the

child also constitutes sexual abuse. The indicators of this form of abuse include:

- (i) Bruising and/or bite marks around the genitals
- (ii) unusual bleeding or discharge from the genitals.
- (iii) Inappropriate sexual behaviour towards adult, and/or other children.
- (iv) Sexual knowledge inappropriate for the child's age.
- (v) Self-harming.
- (vi) Eating and sleeping disturbances.
- (vii) Depression, low-self-esteem, suicidal behaviour.
- (viii) Poor achievement.
- (ix) Withdrawal.

The School should: *

Include awareness classes for the students, in which the following points should be taught:

- (a) **Good touch, Bad touch:** a child, even as young as 3-4 years must be told about the difference between good touch and bad touch (also explained as safe and unsafe touch), and specific parts of the body which should not be touched or circumstances which makes these expectations okay (specifically only mother giving bath, doctor examining in presence of parent, etc). The child must understand that if the touch makes him/her uncomfortable, he/she must report it, and must be encouraged to report feeling uncomfortable from a very early age.
- (b) **Safety from strangers:** Children from an early age, must be trained to be careful of strangers and never talk to strangers, or go anywhere with a stranger. Children must be given specific examples that they must never go with a stranger even if they are told that the mother/father asked him/ her to pick them up because of any reason. Also, that all strangers may not abduct them, but some may entice them with sweets/ice-cream/chocolate and they should not fall into their trap
- (c) **Yell, Run & Tell:** If a stranger tries to take them away or keep offering them sweets, they must Yell, run and tell. It explains what to do if someone touches you or comes close to touching you in a way that makes you uncomfortable or scared.

- (d) **First Step: Yell loudly**
- (e) **Second Step: Run as fast as you can**, to put maximum distance from the perpetrator.
- (f) **Third Step: Tell** – be sure to talk to your teacher/friend/parents about this so that action can be taken.
- (g) **Danger from known people**: Children should also be made aware that it is not only strangers who may cross the line with a bad touch, but it is often known persons who could take them into confidence after making them promise to keep a secret. They must be encouraged to share these situations immediately with their parents/ teachers.
- (h) **Internet Safety**: With cases of cyber bullying, stalking and fake profiling on the rise, children should be advised not to disclose their personal details to strangers on the internet, who in fact could be predators living in the area using a false identity. Encourage children to share with their parents any such contacts they are uncomfortable with, so that parents can guide them in making sensible decisions.
- (i) **Breaking the code of Silence**: Most children believe that it is better to remain silent rather than report an offence. They believe that they may get into trouble or get a scolding by reporting, so they prefer to remain silent. They may have been threatened that if they disclose, they will be harmed or may be blackmailed into silence by some other form of threat. In such circumstances, children should be made to understand that the kind of things they should report may include:
 - i. Something that happened to them personally by way of strange behaviour, bad touch, etc.
 - ii. Something of this nature that may have happened to another child that they may be aware of directly or indirectly.
 - iii. Something they saw in another person's belongings/bags they should not have such as a knife, gun, cigarettes etc.
 - iv. Something that tells them that another child is in danger – a wound, blood stains, a cut on a wrist, etc. which are unexplained, and the child does not want to talk about it.

Children must be assured that there will be no negative consequences of reporting any incident that makes them uncomfortable, and the only consequence will be the positive one of improved safety for all children.

- (j) **Self-Defence Lessons:** Many children, especially those of weaker build or girls, tend to feel far more confident if they have exposure to some form of self-defence. It is therefore recommended that the school organize self-defence classes for children of all classes as part of its curriculum and ensure every child is aware of some basic form of self-defence to protect themselves from an immediate or pending danger.

B. CHILD NEGLECT

Child neglect is an ongoing failure by a child's parents / guardians' inability to meet a child's physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs.

Forms of child neglect include:

1. Allowing the child to witness violence or severe abuse between parents or an adult.
2. Ignoring, insulting, or threatening the child with violence.
3. Not providing the child with a safe environment and adult emotional support.
4. Showing reckless disregard for the child's well-being.

The indicators of neglect include:

1. Poor growth and development.
2. Learning delays, poor academic performance in school.
3. Poor hygiene, inadequate clothing.
4. Untreated medical conditions.
5. Poor self-esteem.
6. Chronic tiredness and hunger, falling asleep in class, voracious eating.
7. Sores, poor health condition.
8. Lateness to school, frequent non-attendance.
9. Poor social relations, indiscriminate attention seeking with adults.
10. High levels of accidents.
11. The parents more often neglect their own physical health.

C. COMMON RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

I. Child Risk Factors:

1. Premature birth, birth anomalies, low birth weight, exposure to toxins in utero
2. Temperament: difficult or slow to warm up
3. Physical/cognitive/emotional disability, chronic or serious illness
4. Childhood trauma
5. Anti-social
6. Peer group
7. Age
8. Child aggression, behaviour problems, attention deficits

II. Parental/Family Risk Factors:

1. Personality Factors
 - (a) Factors External locus of control
 - (b) Poor impulse control
 - (c) Depression/anxiety
 - (d) Low tolerance for frustration
 - (e) Feelings of insecurity
 - (f) Lack of trust
2. Insecure attachment with own parents
3. Childhood history of abuse
4. High parental conflict, domestic violence
5. Family structure—single parent with lack of support, high number of children in household
6. Social isolation, lack of support
7. Parental psychopathology
8. Substance abuse
9. Separation/divorce, especially high conflict divorce
10. Age
11. High general stress level
12. Poor parent-child interaction, negative attitudes and attributions about child's behaviour
13. Inaccurate knowledge and expectations about child development

III. Social/Environmental Risk factors:

1. Low socio economic status
2. Stressful life events
3. Lack of access to medical care, health insurance, adequate child care, and social services
4. Parental unemployment; homelessness
5. Social isolation/lack of social support
6. Exposure to racism/discrimination
7. Poor schools
8. Exposure to environmental toxins
9. Dangerous/violent neighbourhood
10. Community

D. COMMON PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

I. Child Protective Factors

1. Good health, history of adequate development
2. Above-average intelligence
3. Hobbies and interests
4. Good peer relationships
5. Personality factors
 - Easy temperament, positive disposition, active coping style, positive self-esteem, good social skills, internal locus of control, balance between help seeking and autonomy.

II. Parental/Family Protective Factors

1. Secure attachment; positive and warm parent-child relationship
2. Supportive family environment
3. Household rules/structure; parental monitoring of child
4. Extended family support and involvement, including caregiving help
5. Stable relationship with parents
6. Parents have a model of competence and good coping skills
7. Family expectations of pro-social behaviour
8. High parental education

III. Social/Environmental Protective Factors

1. Mid to high socioeconomic status
2. Access to health care and social services
3. Consistent parental employment
4. Adequate housing
5. Family religious faith participation
6. Good Schools
7. Supportive adults outside the family who serve as role models and mentors to the child.

Communicating with Children During Disclosures of Abuse or Neglect

In a direct disclosure, the child tells a trusted adult (e.g. teacher, counsellor) what is happening. In an indirect disclosure the child will offer “hints” that there is a problem so that the adult asks further questions.

Things to Do	Things to Avoid Doing
Provide a safe environment. Ensure that the setting is comfortable and confidential. Give the child your full attention.	Have the conversation in a public place where there are other students around. Interrupt the child while he or she is talking.
Maintain a calm demeanour.	React with shock, horror, or anger.
Take what the child is saying seriously.	Minimize what the child is saying or suggest that it's not serious. <i>“Well, so metimes parents get mad at their kids.”</i>
Reassure the child that he or she did nothing wrong, and that he or she did the right thing by coming to you.	Scold the child or say things that imply he or she is somehow at fault. <i>“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?”</i>
Ask open-ended questions. <i>“Tell me what happened.”</i>	Interrogate the child by asking leading questions. <i>“Did he touch you inappropriately?”</i>
Let the child explain what happened in his or her own words.	Put words in the child’s mouth, or respond with information that he or she did not give you. <i>“So, you’re saying he molested you?”</i>
Give the child an idea of what you are going to do next, and what will happen next.	Make promises that can’t be kept.
Respect the child’s privacy.	Share information from the disclosure with people who are not directly involved in helping the child.
Document exact quotes from the conversation.	Provide a general summary of what the child shared.

E. ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN IDENTIFYING CHILD ABUSE

Teachers being the closest to the student community have a pivotal role in shaping the minds of young learners and it is imperative they play an indispensable role in making school a happier place. Thus, any form of neglect on their part in discharging their duties tantamount to a serious and gross violation of a child's trust and belief that denies them the joy of growing up in a civilised society.

RTE Act 2009, SECTION IV (17)

- (1) No child shall be subjected to Physical Punishment or Mental harassment.
- (2) Whoever contravenes the provision of sub-section (1) shall be liable to disciplinary action under the service rules applicable to such person.

Schools, parents and the students have the responsibility to identify and prevent child abuse and neglect. The school teachers, because of the daily contact with students for many hours, should be able to notice the various forms of abuse.

Primarily: *

1. Teachers should be able to identify children who have been subjected to child abuse through symptoms that indicate abuse and immediately report suspected cases to the appropriate authorities.
2. Teachers should sensitise students to distinguish between an honest parental touch and an ill-intended immoral touch by the parent, a relative or any other person.
3. Teachers should advise students to report any case where peers, relatives, strangers and family members touch them inappropriately (their private parts) or utter any seductive words to them. Students should be encouraged to report any similar type of incidents involving peers, relatives, strangers and teachers to their parents/guardians. In the event of such incidences by teachers, the parents should report the matter to the Principal / Head of school for appropriate action.
4. Students should be warned against accepting any inducements from strangers (sweets, money, gifts etc) and report any such cases to the school authorities and parents.
5. The school, should sensitise parents and community members on issues relating to child abuse and its serious implications.
6. Teachers should advise students to always be accompanied by their parents when going for visits or places of travel.

7. Teachers may advise children to attract attention by waving/ shouting if a stranger attempt to forcibly grab them.
8. Students should be advised not to talk to strangers who may want, for example, to obtain information or ask them questions. It is not common for adults to get information from children.
9. The school should counsel students who have been subjected to any form of abuse.

Corporal Punishment:

Corporal punishment is an act intended to cause physical pain on a person. It is most often inflicted on minors, especially at home and school. However, it is often used as a tool by teachers to, cane, slap, punch, spank, pinch or any other means of physical violence in order to discipline children.

Impact:

1. Physical injuries could lead to permanent damage to physical limb(internal/external) resulting in life changing or crippling situations.
2. Verbal, physical or mental abuse of children leaves a negative impact on young minds, leading to a fear psychosis, resulting in not being able to speak up, breaking down emotionally and mentally and ultimately distancing themselves from attending school.
3. Emotional or sexual abuse scars the child permanently and adversely effects of all form of growth and development.

It must be made very clear to all staff concerned that Corporal or any form of physical punishment is banned in Schools and attracts penal action. Hence any form of violation must be dealt with in the strictest terms, so that it acts as a strong deterrent.

Necessary measures: *

1. All staff concerned should undergo an intensive training regarding their responsibilities towards the Child Right Protection.
2. School administration should organize seminars, training programs by inviting experts and administrative officers who can guide and train school teachers and support staff on child care and safety, with an aim to sensitise them on the emotional and psychological needs of children placed under their care.

3. School administration must provide a copy of the service rules of the school to the teachers and other staff members at the time of appointment that provides specific details on issues that protect the rights of children, providing them a safe and child friendly environment and prohibition of any form of corporal punishment, harassment, discrimination or abuse of any form. The service rules should be amended to reflect departmental penalties which would be attracted, other than the penal provisions, on contravention of duties and responsibilities prescribed in the RTE Act, 2009.
4. Environmental traits, such as family and school where the child spends most of the time during childhood, becomes very important for the holistic growth of the child. Therefore, both the agencies are required to provide a “MORALLY UPRIGHT ENVIRONMENT” and nurture the child to become a good human being.

Bullying & Ragging:

Ragging involves the abuse, humiliation and harassment in an educational institution of junior students by their senior peers that takes the form of psychological or physical torture that results in serious consequences.

Types of Bullying:

- 1) **Physical – Hitting, kicking, punching.**
- 2) **Verbal – Abusive language, making jokes, offensive remarks about a person’s religion, gender, socio-economic status etc.**
- 3) **Indirect – Rumours, spreading lies etc.**
- 4) **Intimidation – Threats, Picketing etc.**
- 5) **Cyber – Sending SMS, MMS using digital media, online video games like Blue Whale.**

Factors for Bullying & Violence:

- **Socio-Culture differences**
- **Economic status of parents**
- **Family and school environment**
- **Access to uncontrolled digital media**
- **Jealousy & Frustration**
- **Lack of Understanding**
- **Inability to control emotions**
- **Behavioural and Psychological issues.**

In recent years, it has been observed that bullying on social media such as mimicking, spreading rumours, attack on social reputation have increased for which the digital media is being used for this purpose. These activities not only cause embarrassment but also humiliation. The recent form of bullying is with the use of digital technology (through social media) which is also termed as CYBER BULLYING.

Cyber Bullying has become even more prominent through creation of fake profiles, circulation of morphed or fake pictures and images, cyber stalking etc that leaves a mental scar on the psyche of children effected.

Use of Internet in Schools:

- a. **The School Management must set up a protocol related to the use of internet in the Computer labs.**
- b. **The Computers in the Computer Lab must have restricted access to the websites for the students.**
- c. **The Administration may restrict the unwanted websites using firewalls and Net warnings.**
- d. **The use of personal laptops by the students should be prohibited in the school campus.**
- e. **The data of the students (name, photo, address, mobile number of their parents etc.) must not be shared online with any stranger.**

Precautions and Measures: *

1. The school administration must frame a system of rules and regulations for all stakeholders of the school including teaching & non-teaching staff, students, parents and visitors to the School campus. **(Sign Boards of the Do's and Don'ts' must be prominently displayed)**. Dereliction of duties must be dealt with a firm resolve.
2. The entire School staff must be advised to regularly monitor the activities students and should intervene, if the need arises.
3. The campus must be constantly monitored, and the staff should be highly active during the morning assembly, lunch break, entry and exit of students.
4. The School staff must be deputed to take on a proactive role with responsibilities being assigned accordingly during the organisation of Annual functions related to Cultural, Literary, Sport activities, Science, Art & Craft Exhibitions, Parent Teacher Meetings etc.
5. CCTV surveillance must be actively functioning at all times.
6. The school must conduct regular counselling sessions.
7. There must be a "Reporting Cell" where students can report violations without fear.
8. Schools must engage parents immediately, if any behavioural change is noticed in their ward/s.
9. The school must promote or adopt methods / exercise to enable students to control their aggression (e.g.: Yoga).
10. The school must appoint a psychologist/occupational therapist to diagnose the difference between the psychological or behavioural or genetic issues being faced by children.
11. The school should handle cases of aggression in a sensitive manner while making children aware of the harmful effects it has not only to the fellow school mate/s but to themselves too.
12. Students should be monitored for symptoms of low-self-esteem or behavioural changes.
13. Parents should be counselled on the aggressive & violent behaviour of their wards and to handle the same in a tactful and understanding manner.

SECTION 7

SAFEGUARDS RELATING TO THE SCHOOL STAFF

I. **Recruitment:** *

- (i) No candidate with a criminal record should be recruited for any position within a school/institution.
- (ii) Apart from the verification of antecedents, it is recommended that the interview panel consists of the School Counsellor who can provide a psychological profile of the person being considered for employment, to ensure that these are in sync with the values and ethos of the school.
- (iii) The services of the person may be utilized but only on probation till the time references are verified.
- (iv) All selected candidates need to provide a signed affidavit to the institution that they have not been accused of offences under POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act 2012, the JJ (Juvenile Justice, Care & Protection of Children) Act 2000 and any other sexual and/or violent crimes under any other provision of law that has been in force.
- (v) The affidavit may also contain information pertaining to his/her character and background. In addition, two references (including a character certificate) may be provided by the person seeking employment.
- (vi) At the time of being given the appointment letter, all candidates will be presented with a copy of the school's child protection policy document and code of conduct and will be required to sign it in acceptance.

All school employees should undergo a 360-degree **verification** as specified below:

II. Process: the employee's complete employment record should be checked with specific reference checks against each employment on the resumé. Any previous history of violations should specifically be checked through police verifications and references at all addresses given in his/her resumé.

III. Purpose: Schools are obligated to vouch for the clean record of the person being employed and hence this verification is an important consideration, and appointment should be withheld if there is any indication that the concerned person did not demonstrate a high moral character. Accordingly, it is specifically required to check with all past employers the reason for the

employee's departure, to ensure there is no difference between stated reason and actual reason, which would be an immediate warning flag.

IV. Coverage: the term 'employee' refers to full-time staff on the rolls of the school, as well as part-time and contractual staff such as contractors and their workers, specifically construction staff, sanitation staff, security guards, cooks, canteen staff, gardeners, etc. It includes the school nurse housekeeping, electrician, plumbers etc who may be permanent or part-time. It specifically includes bus drivers and conductors, whether the transport staff is outsourced to a third party or is on the rolls of the school; in this respect, it must be ensured that all bus drivers have a valid driving licence, 5 years minimum stipulated years of experience of driving a heavy vehicle and no cases pending against them, as per the Supreme Court guidelines in this regard.

V. Procedure: References as specified above must be duly checked and a copy retained in school records.

- (i) In case there is no such verification record of current employees who have been with the school less than 6 months, this verification procedure must be completed retrospectively.
- (ii) This procedure must be strictly followed with all new appointments to the school.
- (iii) All support staff including the school nurse must be interviewed by a counsellor and recruited only after a due background check and police verification, especially those who have access to washrooms, medical rooms, such as cleaners, helpers (didis), nurses, etc. If this procedure has not been followed for existing support staff, it must be completed retrospectively.
- (iv) It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that all transport staff, even if provided by contractors have been verified. The school must maintain a copy of police verification for such staff, with details of contacts of their hometown, as well as 2 referees from hometown and 2 referees from Local sources. Likewise, police verification must be obtained for other outsourced activities like canteen, etc.

VI. Contractual staff such as electricians, plumbers etc.

- (i) All construction and repair work on school premises must be done only after school hours.
- (ii) No entry of plumbers, electricians, carpenters, labourers, etc. is to be permitted on premises during school hours even if a new wing is being

constructed, unless it is to attend to an emergency, in which case the person must be accompanied by a school admin person always, and entry/exit procedures of signing register and obtaining a visitor pass must be strictly followed.

- (iii) Contractor/s must obtain police verification format for all such contractual staff in his/her employees list and deposit a copy with the concerned officer of the school and maintain the records.

VII. Identity cards:

- (i) All school staff must be issued with photo identity cards which must be displayed on their person while on the school premises.
- (ii) Identity cards are a must for drivers and other contractual staff who are on the premises daily.
- (iii) For staff such as electricians who may be summoned on a specific basis, a visitor card must be issued and monitored to ensure due exit of the person after completion of the job.

VIII. Records of all staff:

- (i) Biodata with personal details of all staff, permanent or contractual must be maintained as part of school records. Besides a photograph and signature (or thumb impressions), it must also contain past employment details, addresses of local residence, hometown, person's mobile and landline numbers, family member contact numbers and 2 references from their hometown.
- (ii) All affidavit and/or references at time of recruitment shall be obtained in writing and maintained as part of the records of the school.
- (iii) The school should maintain a database of all staff which must be updated when a person is leaving clearly mentioning the reason for leaving. In case this is linked to misconduct or abuse of any sort, this must specifically be recorded and intimated to the local police station.

IX. Violations: In case of an employee or other person employed at a school is accused of an offence under POCSO, the JJ Act or any other sexual crime or violence, the person so accused shall be removed from active duty with immediate effect pending enquiry as per the due process established by law.

SECTION 8

SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children of special needs are at a far higher risk of abuse, particularly sexual abuse, because they are soft targets for the following reasons:

They are often not aware that they are victims of abuse because of:

1. a limited sense of danger
2. a limited understanding of sexuality or sexual behaviour
3. they are also at far higher risk because of a lack of mobility
4. high reliance on adults for many of their needs
5. having a variety of caregivers and care settings
6. need for intimate care such as washing and toileting

If they are aware, they are less likely to report this because of:

- a) poor communication skills/ limited verbal ability
- b) fear of not being believed as they often suffer from poor self- confidence, low self-esteem, feelings of isolation, powerlessness and limited assertiveness.

***Accordingly, special steps must be taken in case a school has any student/s with special needs. The steps outlined below must also be strictly followed by any school for children with special needs, be it an integrated or exclusive school.**

Regular schools that admit students with special needs would also be bound by guidelines of this section.

I. Infrastructure:

- (i) All classrooms and sessions will be under constant observation / surveillance either through CCTV, viewing windows, or through physical access for observation and should be unlocked.
- (ii) The centre should be open, accessible and well lit.
- (iii) Attention must be given to special infrastructure that may be required, including ramps, railings, washrooms for the children with physical challenged that can accommodate wheelchairs, to minimize inconvenience for those children in wheelchairs or requiring railing support on stairs.
- (iv) There must be a CCTV present at main entry, exit of the centre and covering all corridors of the centre, with specific attention to the corridor leading to the washrooms, so that entry and exit to the washrooms can be monitored. Most cases of abuse happen in case of a child who is not toilet-trained is taken to the toilet.

- (v) CCTV will however not be permitted inside the actual washrooms so as not to compromise the dignity of the child.

II. Recruitment of staff: *

- (i) Recruitment and screening of all staff especially when they are working with special needs children, must be done in a stringent manner.
- (ii) No candidate with a criminal record of sexual and/or physical violence may be recruited for any position within the institution.
- (iii) All selected candidates must provide a signed affidavit to the institution that they have not been accused of offences under POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012), the JJ (Juvenile Justice, Care & Protection of Children) Act 2000 and any other sexual and/or violent crimes under any provision of law that has been in force.
- (iv) The affidavit may also contain information pertaining to his/her character and background. In addition, two references (including a character certificate) may be provided by the person at the time of seeking employment.
- (v) Adequate background check of all staff must be carried out.
- (vi) In case of support staff/attendants/helpers/ayahs/nurses, police verification must be obtained and kept as part of the records of the institution.

III. At the time of appointment, all candidates must be presented with a copy of the institution's child protection policy document/code of conduct and will be required to sign it in acceptance.

IV. Code of conduct and protocols: *

- (i) A clear Code of Conduct should be laid out for all persons dealing with children having special needs, be they special educators, therapists, support staff, helpers, ayahs, etc. This must be explained and enforced. They must be aware of the strict punishments for any form of violation.
- (ii) Depending on the specific needs of the children involved, specific protocols may be developed for easy mobility in consultation with experts and parents of the child.
- (iii) The interaction should be conducted in a mutually respectful and transparent manner not compromising the dignity of the child.
- (iv) A female attendant must be present during therapy hours, especially when a girl child is undergoing therapy. Additionally, in case of a non-verbal child who is unable to communicate, a trained nurse should be present during the therapy session.

- (v) Parents have a right to be present during therapy and this cannot be prevented.
- (vi) During such therapy, at no time should doors be locked, or children tied.
- (vii) For children who require assistance while using washrooms, the minimum assistance required by the child should be clearly specified, along with specific do's and don'ts.

IV. Training of Staff on protocols:*

- (i) Periodic sensitization and awareness campaigns/seminars/talks on challenges and special needs of children must be conducted for the entire school staff including administrative staff, support staff, etc.
- (ii) Some therapy protocols require bodily touch leading to a thin line between good and bad touch. Strict guidelines must be issued to staff, and any therapy which requires bodily touch to private areas must be done only in presence of a parent and a female attendant.
- (iii) Staff will be adequately trained regarding privacy, toileting and related issues. If a child has a toilet accident, no matter how young he/she is, he will be changed in a toilet only. Attendants must be trained to maintain the dignity of the child while strictly following protocols for intimate care; male and female children will be changed separately and not in front of each other, irrespective of age or extent of cognitive ability.
- (iv) It must be clearly communicated in no uncertain terms to special educators that no form of abuse will be tolerated when they are interacting with children, nor should they cross the thin line in handling children by demonstrating any behaviour that is inappropriate. They should be trained to handle strong-willed behaviour and made to realize that the child may be facing processing issues and/or not being able to comprehend the educational demand being placed on him/her and that physical punishment will not help him/her learn.
- (v) No child will be subjected to verbal, emotional or physical abuse such as hitting, pushing, pulling hair, etc.
- (vi) Under exceptional circumstances, a child may be required to be put in a room for calming down (isolation); this should however be done only by a trained educator, and shall not exceed 5 minutes; a second responsible adult must always be informed of this.
- (vii) It must be clearly communicated in no uncertain terms to support staff that no form of abuse will be tolerated when they are interacting with children, nor should they cross the thin line in handling children by demonstrating any behaviour that is inappropriate. They are also required to report any incidence of abuse they may see while doing their jobs, including inappropriate touching by older children of

vulnerable special-needs children, which must immediately be reported and addressed by the concerned school authorities.

- (viii) There must be mandatory training /awareness sessions for teachers/aids/helpers especially sensitizing them about behaviour indicators of traumatized or abused children.

V. Safety skills programme for children: *

- (i) All Schools/Learning/Therapy Centres should develop a personal safety skills programme and personal health education lessons for children with special needs.
- (ii) Even though these children may not understand every nuance, they must nevertheless be taught about good touch and bad touch (safe and unsafe touch) and be encouraged to report if they feel uncomfortable at any time.

VI. Interface with parents:*

- (i) Parents or authorized guardians of children with special needs have a right to be present during one-on-one therapy sessions if they deem necessary, and in this respect, would be permitted.
- (ii) A consent from parents must be obtained about the strategies that would be used by the school/centre in case of a meltdown, when the child requires additional techniques. These would be authorized by a trained special educator.
- (iii) For children who need to be placed in the therapist's lap for occupational or physical therapy, the procedure will be explained to the parent, and the therapist will strictly adhere to protocols.

VII. Feedback channels: *

- (i) A constant communication channel with the parents at home is required, so that both sides can report any untoward behaviour or resistance from the child in coming to school.
- (ii) As with children of regular streams, here too and especially in these children, they must be encouraged to have a buddy/friend within their class who are given the responsibility, on short term rotational basis, of accompanying the child with special needs outside of class for extra activities or who could report to the mentor teacher in case of abuse.
- (iii) In addition to the special educators, schools with children having special needs must depute a mentor teacher who would be a trained psychologist, interacting with these children on a weekly basis, over maybe a lunch break, to engage with them and constantly monitor their emotional health.

- (iv) Select teachers, on a short term rotational basis, who could be assigned to play an added responsibility of ensuring that these school policies are being maintained.
- (v) All teachers/aids/helpers must be encouraged to report any case of abuse they may suspect, based on behaviour indicators or any other evidence they may have.
- (vi) All schools and therapy centres will have SOS number(s) of person(s) to be contacted. These will be displayed prominently in high traffic areas with the wording: IF YOUR CENTRE IS NOT FOLLOWING SAFETY PROTOCOLS, PLEASE CALL CHILD HELPLINE 1098 OR REPORT TO NEAREST POLICE STATION.

SECTION 9

MECHANISM FOR REPORTING A CASE OF ABUSE

***Routing of feedback/complaint which is of a preventive nature:** In case a child feels the need to report a complaint /discomfort of any sort against any process or person that makes him/her feel threatened, the child must be made aware of the ways to approach the school authorities, to bring such cases to light.

1. Reporting could be through the class teacher, any other teacher, counsellor, buddy/friend, helpline, complaint box or through any other responsible adult whom the child trusts in this situation.
 2. All school **Notice boards** shall display the **Safe zone poster** so that children are aware of how to route their feedback in case of any problem.
 3. Any feedback that is of a preventive nature must be immediately brought to the attention of the relevant person (be it Safety Officer, Vigilance Officer, School Counsellor etc).
 4. **Remedial measures must be taken to prevent recurrence of the problem within 3 working days.**
 5. A log of such feedback received, and action taken must be maintained, which is subject to inspection.
 6. Such logs must not compromise the confidentiality of the child, so depending on the sensitivity of the situation, it may be decided to withhold the name of the child in the log, or just list the roll number rather than name, which will be decided by the School Counsellor and Principal.
- I. Routing of feedback/complaint about a specific case of physical abuse or bullying:** this must be dealt with, or escalated if there is injury of a severe nature while ensuring the following critical procedures:
- (i) **Immediate actions:** this must be immediately brought to the attention of the School Counsellor, Principal, parents of the child and appropriate remedial action taken to ensure the child is protected and the abuser/bully is penalized and cautioned with strict warning or more serious punishment if warranted.
 - (ii) **Confidentiality:** the name of the victimized child must be kept confidential, except from those specific teachers/counsellors who may need to be aware, so that they can provide the necessary support. Likewise, the name of any other child/children who helped in passing the

feedback to the management must also remain confidential; this is to ensure that they are not victimized by any other affected parties in the system nor become the focus of unwanted attention.

- (iii) **Medical attention:** depending on the extent of injury, the school must provide immediate first aid, and bring in a qualified medical practitioner if warranted, and if the extent of injury is serious, then it is the responsibility of the school authorities to rush the child to the nearest medical facility, while informing the parents of the extent of the emergency/ crisis.
- (iv) **Transparency:** Schools found withholding facts of how the stage of injury /condition was reached from the parents (e.g. child fainting after being slapped by teacher or made to stand in the sun without water as punishment) are liable for penal action, and a criminal arrest can be issued against the person responsible for the abuse as per the relevant law in place.
- (v) **Expert assistance:** Depending on the severity of the case, an expert counsellor to assist parents/family may be brought in to guide the child/family on how to cope with the situation. The School Counsellor should play a key role. In the absence of the School Counsellor for any reason, assistance from a trained Counsellor must be taken immediately.
- (vi) **Mandatory Reporting: Immediate intimation to the local police station about the incident is also mandatory, especially if it involves serious injury to the child,** or use of weapons such as knives, guns to ensure that suitable arrests can be made as applicable, and as a deterrent for future cases.
- (vii) **Time frame for action:** the school must initiate investigations within the first 24 hours, whether it is a working day if it is severe case where there is injury to the child requiring medical attention; if it is a routine case, then investigations must begin by the first working day. An enquiry will be conducted by a team constituted by the school. The report must be submitted within 2 days. Punitive action must be taken against any person found guilty within 7 days of the incident, and personal records updated accordingly.

II. Routing of feedback/complaint about a specific case of sexual abuse: In case there is a specific complaint of sexual abuse, then this must be escalated to ensure speedy redressal while taking care of the following critical procedures:

(i) Immediate actions:

(a) if the abuse happened at the school or during travel, this must be immediately brought to the attention of the School Counsellor, Principal and parents of the child.

(b) If the abuse happened at home, then this must be discussed by the School Counsellor and at least one other School Safety Committee member, to decide which is the best way to protect the child, and accordingly the parent(s) not involved in the abuse may be informed.

(ii) Confidentiality – at no stage must the name of the child be made public, nor the name of any other child/children who helped in passing the feedback to the management; this is to ensure that they are not victimized by any other affected parties in the system nor become the focus of unwanted attention.

(iii) Medical attention: depending on the extent of injury, it is a priority to provide medical attention to the child. Ideally, with parents present, it is the responsibility of the school to take the child to the nearest medical facility. If the parents are found to be responsible for the abuse or have been complicit in it by ignoring abuse they were aware of, then it is advisable for the School Counsellor/trusted teacher to play this key role so that the child feels protected and safe.

(iv) Child safety expert: The presence of a Child safety expert is necessary to assist parents/family: it is critical that an expert is involved to guide the child/family on how to cope with the immediate situation and to deal with the rehabilitation process thereafter. The School Counsellor should play a key role, and if not competent to handle the situation due to inexperience or any other reason, then the school management is responsible to immediately bring in an expert counsellor.

(v) Mandatory reporting Immediate intimation to the local police station about the incident is also mandatory, to ensure that suitable arrests can be made as applicable, and details of the offender are added to the records; this essential step alone can prevent repeat offences from the same defaulter, whereas in cases where the defaulter escapes after abuse and goes scot free, the person most likely would surface elsewhere and repeat the offence. Delay in reporting and in registration of FIR must therefore be avoided at all costs. Swift punitive action is the best deterrent for such crimes to occur, and all attempts must be made to ensure action

is taken against the perpetrator; dismissal from service alone without due intimation to the local police station must never be considered.

- (vi) **Penalty:** Schools found withholding facts from the parents of how the stage of injury /condition was reached in case of sexual abuse are liable for penal action; apart from penalties applicable to the offender depending on the nature of abuse, as per the relevant law in place.

SECTION 10

TRANSPORT – PICK AND DROP

(Travelling to and from School)

Children travel every day from their homes to school and back. This travelling time is very crucial as the child is neither in the custody of their parents nor the school. Hence it becomes the responsibility of the parents to hand over their ward/s in the safe and reliable hands for dropping the child to the school and school responsibility also to hand over the child to the right person who has come to pick up the child. If the school has provided the bus facility, then the responsibility of the parents is to hand over the child to the bus attendant at the bus stop and to receive the child at the bus stop.

*To ensure safety for children while coming to school and leaving the school, the school and parents must follow certain guidelines / rules. These rules should be conveyed to the parents by the school to ensure cooperation and adherence by parents.

I. Dispersal of children using school buses:

- (i) The school must have a safe passage from the bus to the school premises. If a passage is not possible there must be a school guard and a teacher present (specially to receive children of the lower classes) to ensure the safe passage of children from the bus drop-off point to the school gate.
- (ii) The bus in-charge must check and ascertain that every bus has been emptied and no child has remained in the bus.
- (iii) Every bus must have a female attendant or teacher before the first child boards the bus at the start of the journey to and from school.
- (iv) At dispersal, attendance is to be taken. If any child who was present in the morning is missing, the name must immediately be informed to the bus in-charge, so this can be accounted for.
- (v) In case a child who usually travels by bus is being picked up by the parent for some reason, this must be done only after due procedure of request for special departure from the parent to the class teacher, and a specific gate pass signed by the bus-in-charge. The gate pass is to be given at the gate when the parent leaves with the child.

- (vi) The Bus driver should ensure that the doors of the bus are closed before the bus moves, children are seated, and no child is directly in front of the doors even when closed.
- (vii) When the children get off at their bus stop near their homes, it is important that they are not left alone on the road but must be handed over only to the parent/maid or authorized representative upon showing the identity card in their custody. The school must impress upon parents that it may not be safe even for older children, especially girls, to walk alone from the bus stop to their home depending on the specific location and condition, parents should make arrangements for the child to be met at the drop/ pick up points/ locations.
- (viii) In case the parent/guardian has not reached to pick-up a child of class 5 or below, under no circumstance should the child be left on the road. In the event there is another known parent in the same locality willing to take responsibility, this may be permitted as an exception after the teacher confirms this with the parent of the child telephonically. If there is no one else to pick up the child, the child may not be permitted to alight, and the teacher in the bus will coordinate with the parent for getting off at the next convenient stop.
- (ix) The teacher/attendant in the bus shall inform the Bus in-charge about the completion of the route.
- (x) The Bus-in-charge should be in contact with all the buses in the route through the teacher/attendant.
- (xi) All the buses must be GPS enabled. The Bus-in-charge must monitor the routes of the buses.
- (xii) Apart from the safe passage of children, the school bus-in-charge must ensure that the bus driver follow the guidelines for safe boarding/de-boarding of children at their stops.
- (xiii) School buses on the road will follow limits on speed and shall not drive rashly nor beyond specified speed limits as per government regulations.
- (xiv) Buses shall stay on the left lane and not block other faster moving traffic.
- (xv) The driver should take care that the child does not cross the road, whenever this is feasible.
- (xvi) Under no circumstance the child be made to get out of the bus in the middle of road forcing him/her to walk through moving traffic.

- (xvii) Stopping of the bus for boarding/de-boarding in the second lane is not permitted.
- (xviii) The location of the stop should also be such that inconvenience to smooth flow of other traffic is minimised.
- (xix) Buses should be painted yellow and have the words 'School Bus', name and contact / mobile details of the school and route number displayed prominently.
- (xx) The Bus should have a first-aid box, fire extinguisher etc.
- (xxi) The Bus Driver should possess a valid driving license and minimum 5 years of experience of driving a heavy vehicle.
- (xxii) The driver should have no previous record of any traffic offences or challans.
- (xxiii) The driver must strictly follow all traffic rules and use safe driving habits specifically, never use mobiles while driving.
- (xxiv) All the buses should have CCTV cameras inside the bus, which can be monitored by the school.
- (xxv) There should be a mechanism to give feedback on the school bus and its driver/conductor by parents or by the public.

II. Dispersal of children travelling by means other than school bus:*

- (i) Children of Primary classes should not be allowed to leave the school premises on their own but must be picked up from the designated spot within the premises by their parents / authorized guardian after showing the identity card. Handing over the child to the parent/authorized guardian must be supervised by the class teacher/representative of the school.
- (ii) In case the parent who usually picks up the child cannot come to pick up their wards at the last minute for some reason, they must compulsorily inform the school teacher concerned through SMS or phone. If not informed already in writing through the child by a note or diary where this was known in advance they may authorize someone else to pick up their child who must carry the identity card.
- (iii) Handing over of a child to a person not carrying the identity card must not be permitted, unless in exceptional circumstances where the teacher recognizes the parents or has been informed specifically either

on phone or in person explained about the extreme circumstances under which the person meeting the child will not be carrying the card.

- (iv) The school is responsible to ensure adequate number of designated staff/ security guards at the drop off points for those reaching by cars or on foot/cycles, to ensure that the safety of children is not compromised, and they safely reach the school gate.
- (v) At dispersal time as well, the school is responsible to ensure that adequate number of designated staff /security guards are present at the pick-up point to ensure that the safety of children is not compromised.
- (vi) The school must have in place the following measures to deal with the menace of underage driving which is an offence and directly places children and other commuters on the road at risk. Parents must be summoned, made aware of the seriousness of the offence, and their role by permitting their wards to use a vehicle and their understanding to prevent this from happening again must be obtained.

III. Road Safety

A basic sense of road safety must be taught to children as early as possible in the classroom. Inputs would be age-appropriate namely:

- (i) For very small children (Age group 3 to 7), awareness must include:
 - (a) never to walk on a road without an accompanying adult
 - (b) when walking with an adult, always to walk on the inner side of the road, not on the side of the traffic
 - (c) wherever possible, use the pavement
 - (d) never run across the road
 - (e) while crossing, walking is better, so oncoming vehicles find it easier to predict your path
 - (f) how to cross a road – look right, then left, then right again (many adults themselves do not follow the second two steps, and therefore the child being aware of this is a good way for a child to take responsibility and remind the adult)
 - (g) always use seat-belts; never stand in front seat of a car.

- (ii) For older children, apart from the above, basics of pedestrian safety must be explained including:
 - (a) always be alert when walking on a road and not in the path of any oncoming traffic
 - (b) never to use headphones or mobiles while walking/cycling on the road
 - (c) focus completely on traffic and one's own safety
 - (d) never walk behind a vehicle or bus that is reversing
 - (e) preferably wait till it has stopped moving or cross from the front of the vehicle rather than behind it
 - (f) If to move between cars parked on the road, walk on the inner side rather than the outer side of the parked cars, to reduce proximity to moving vehicles.
- (iii) For children who may cycle or walk to school, basic road precautions must also be explained, including right of way, hand signals, etc.
- (iv) All children must be taught basic traffic rules, so they can influence the adults who drive them, and imbibe this discipline when they learn driving. They must specifically learn to never jump red lights and respect signals, use seat-belts /helmets, never over-speed or drive the wrong way. No mobile phones should be used while driving and they must possess a valid learners licence.
- (v) Dangers of underage driving – the school must impress upon older students the dangers of underage driving and driving without a proper license, if using two or four wheelers. They should be made aware that this is a clear offence and of their responsibilities to abide by these rules from a safety perspective.
- (vi) The school should also make them aware of preventive measures in place to ensure there is no underage driving nor driving under intoxication.
- (vii) Any student older than 18 must be made to understand the critical importance of helmets/seatbelts, strict adherence to speed limits, traffic signals, etc. to prevent fatalities common among youngsters.
 - ♦ ***(Refer to the Hon'ble Supreme Court directives for further reference and guidance)***

EDUCATIONAL TRIPS AND TOURS

1. If the school is organizing any educational trip, picnic or excursion, the school becomes the solely responsible for the safety and security of students.
2. The school should inform parents about the details of the trip and the itinerary of the journey to be undertaken.
3. The school must obtain all details and information required in advance of the place of visit.
4. Brief the students on all the necessary safety measures to be adopted during their stay at the location specified for undertaking the tour, visit or excursion.
5. All the necessary instructions should be given to students in terms of the required equipment e.g. camping equipment, dress, water bottles, food items etc required for the trip/ excursion.
6. Monitor the students and maintain absolute discipline to avoid any untoward incident.
7. Before going Trekking and camping, students must be briefed about the safety measures they need to adopt.
8. Any student going river rafting must be a good swimmer. Students must opt for these activities only with the prior permission of the parent and teacher and should perform under the supervision of an expert.
9. Teacher/s should take the attendance of students at various intervals to update the presence or absence of students going on a visit / trip.

SECTION 11

FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

All schools should put in place a series of various levels of checks and mechanisms by which any untoward incident that puts the safety of children at risk must be prevented, but in the unfortunate event that it occurs, it is immediately reported. Children must therefore be made aware that if there is any problem they experience, it must be brought to the attention of a responsible adult at the very earliest.

Children must be encouraged to speak up to any of the following persons in case they have any form of abuse: their class teacher, any other teacher, school counsellor, friend/buddy. If a child is still hesitant to approach any of the above at the school premises itself, then the child must immediately report to a parent. If the abuse is happening outside the school, perhaps at the home by a relative or neighbour and the child is hesitant to approach the parents, then the child must approach someone in the school or at least another child.

To provide multiple feedback channels to suit the inclinations of every child, the following feedback mechanisms are suggested for every school:

- I. Concept of Buddy (Close friend) (suggested)** every child must be encouraged to have an avenue by which any single case of abuse gets reported. Some children are more outspoken, and some are quiet by nature. However, in case of abuse, it is not just the quiet ones but the outspoken ones as well who may fall into silence for various reasons.

Accordingly, having a channel through which such cases may come to light is essential. Assigning a 'buddy' (friend) from an older class is one good way to doing this. Children from older classes may be assigned to one or two younger children as a formal buddy. The buddy plays the role of mentor and interacts with children to build rapport, so they can share stories of bullying, abuse or other such problems.

This is especially useful for those children who do not have an older sibling, as they now have an older friend they can share problems with. It may not be feasible to have buddies in the ratio of one per child, but it can be done to have one for every 5 children, or at least one per class, so that children know a specific name of a senior student they can talk to, if they are hesitant to talk to an adult.

II. * Counsellor (mandatory) – Every school must have a qualified Counsellor.

The minimum qualification of the counsellor must be B.A Psychology, though it is recommended to recruit a person holding a Master's in Psychology or allied fields. In a school with girls, the School Counsellor must necessarily be a female.

- (i) The role of the Counsellor will be to prevent any problems from happening by advising the school management on specific interventions required, to have a close rapport with the children and assist in addressing problems when they occur.
- (ii) The Counsellor will handle any problem cases among children, be it simple problems of coping which create a sense of being unsafe, cases of bullying to cases of physical or sexual abuse.
- (iii) The Counsellor must attempt to have a close rapport with children, and be approachable, yet discreet. Children should feel comfortable to approach him/her with problems such as a girl being stalked, or a boy falling into bad company and wishing to get out but needing help.
- (iv) The Counsellor should visit each class at least once a term – even if for just half an hour, to connect with children, where appropriate discussions can take place, but more importantly, there is interaction between child and counsellor so that a rapport can be built.
- (v) The Counsellor should interact closely with class teachers to be updated on children who are facing problems, so that the counsellor can then build a direct rapport with such children.
- (vi) In case of any suspicion that a child is a possible case of abuse, the matter must immediately be brought to the attention of the Counsellor who will handle the child and involve parents and senior management in a discreet manner.
- (vii) In the absence of an appointed school Counsellor, the School Principal shall directly connect with a qualified counsellor who can be consulted in case of extreme problems.

III. Helpline (mandatory) - Every school shall have a Helpline number clearly displayed on Notice-boards and telephone lists, so that any child could approach this helpline confidentially in case of a problem. The helpline should ideally be a dedicated easy-to-remember number but could also be an intercom number or the number of the Counsellor who will handle calls discreetly. In addition, children must be made aware to dial the **Police**

Control Room 100 in case of emergency. The **Child Helpline 1098** must be publicized through notices as well.

IV. Complaint box (mandatory) - Having a complaint box (which should not be placed in front of a CCTV camera) in a corner is a likely way to get more children to share problems about themselves or others, which they may otherwise withhold, especially those children who do not feel comfortable to tell another person.

V. Suggestion boxes/ hotlines / tell-an-adult (suggested) - In addition to the earlier- mentioned channels suggested for reporting abuse, other means of anonymous reporting systems such as student hotlines, suggestion boxes or tell-an-adult campaigns could be used to encourage feedback. The more feedback channels the school can put in place, the higher the chances of any untoward instances being reported.

VI. Anonymity of informers - To maintain confidentiality of the complainant or person giving feedback in case of abuse or suspected abuse or any other feedback, anonymity shall be guaranteed. Accordingly, all anonymous complaints/feedback will also be accepted and acted upon by the School Safety Committee whether received through any of the above means or by fax, telephone, mobile text message, WhatsApp, letter or any other means of communication.

SECTION 12

GENDER SENSITIZATION AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL*

I. The true purpose of education:

Education or schooling is a process through which society creates the kind of individuals we wish to see in the world. Hence, it's imperative that school curriculum lays strong emphasis on inculcating values of equality, inclusivity and diversity, all of which are essential for building a healthy society.

II. Change must begin from a young age:

In a patriarchal country like India, where stark gender roles, overt gender discrimination and devaluation of women and girls is ingrained into our daily lives, it is extremely important to identify and address this problem from a very young age. Boys and girls start developing their gendered identities from birth. The upbringing at home also influences them. While egalitarian gender roles may not be present at home, the school can become a space of transformation where children, especially those hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds, learn to question gender roles, identify areas of gendered discrimination, and work towards changing them.

III. Change must start from the grassroots:

In many families, in both rural and urban areas, while boys are encouraged to study and have a career, girls are taught to concentrate on household chores. Only when both boys and girls learn to question this typical gender bias at school, will the situation at home also change for the better.

The different geographical and cultural contexts gender roles and inequalities are very contextual, and rooted in cultural and social practices. Thus, to have a national policy addressing gender equality is not sufficient. At a more local level, we need clear directives to understand and address specific gender norms through the schooling process.

IV. Despite providing efforts towards education of a girl child, where exactly are we lacking?

For the longest time, we have been working on bringing girls to school and ensuring that they complete their schooling. We assume that schooling and academic ability will empower a girl through financial and social independence. Why then, do **we still have a society where women and girls fear for their safety and well-being, and are considered 'burdens' on their families?**

We may have been able to bring women to the forefront, but without addressing and challenging gender norms at a nascent stage of social development, we cannot hope to work towards a society where women and girls feel safe and valued.

Imperative to this process is the need to working with boys. From a young age, i.e. through schooling itself, if boys are taught to understand **how an egalitarian society is beneficial for all by questioning gender norms, only then will boys learn to treat women as equals**. Education thus can play a critical role in making society safer for women, and that can happen by making gender sensitisation a part of the school curriculum.

The Government policy also outlines the importance of gender sensitisation.

The importance of gender sensitisation in schools has been recognized and given due importance in all policy outlining quality education. The Right to Education Act 2009, and its operating arm, the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**, has clearly mentioned that gender equality is one of the expected outcomes of elementary education in the country. Schools need to address unequal gender roles at a critical stage, when children are growing up. Shouldn't we insist that schools give due importance to gender sensitization and ensure that it is very much a part of our children's schooling process?

If you want to see a society devoid of discrimination, one where women and girls are not treated as inferior, and where equal opportunities and rights are given to all women, emphasize on the importance of gender sensitization and do your part to ensure that over time, we move towards a more equal and inclusive society.

♦ **(Excerpts from an Interview on Gender Sensitisation)**

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (“SHA”)

Sexual harassment at workplace is not uncommon and we come across various cases dealing with harassment in the workplace. India finally enacted its law on prevention of sexual harassment against female employees at the workplace in 2013. The statute was enacted almost 16 years after the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court of India, in the matter of Vishaka and others vs. State of Rajasthan (“**Vishaka Judgment**”). The Vishaka Judgment laid down guidelines making it mandatory for every employer to provide a mechanism to redress grievances pertaining to workplace sexual harassment and enforce the right to gender equality of working women (“**Guidelines**”). Till the enactment of the SHA, organizations were expected to follow the Guidelines, but in most instances, they fell short. The enactment of the SHA has brought the much-needed relief to the women workforce.

The definition of sexual harassment in the Sexual Harassment Act is in line with the Supreme Court’s definition in the Vishaka Judgment and includes any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication) such as;

- a. physical contact and advances,
- b. demand or request for sexual favours,
- c. sexually coloured remarks,
- d. showing pornography,
- e. or any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

Apart from dealing with complaints, an employer has additional obligations in the nature of:

- a. providing a safe working environment,
- b. display conspicuously at the workplace, the penal consequences of indulging in acts that may constitute sexual harassment and the composition of the ICC,
- c. organize workshops and awareness programmes at regular intervals for sensitizing employees on the issues and implications of workplace sexual harassment and organizing orientation programmes for members of the Internal Complaints Committee
- d. treat sexual harassment as a misconduct under the service rules and initiate action for misconduct.

