

ALEXANDRA EDUCATION COMMITTEE (AEC)**CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Registration: Public Benefit Organisation 930-000-698-PBO

Non-Profit Organisation: 025-968-NPO

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Approved By: AEC Council

Policy Lead: Paul Channon, Executive Director

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Alexandra Education Committee (AEC) is unequivocally committed to protecting all children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm. This Child Safeguarding Policy establishes our duty of care and outlines comprehensive measures to prevent and respond to safeguarding concerns in alignment with South African law and best practice standards.

Our fundamental principle: The best interests of the child are paramount in all decisions and actions concerning children within our programmes and activities.

2. INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Purpose

This policy outlines AEC's commitment to safeguard all children who come into contact with our programmes, including:

- High school bursary recipients (currently 240+ students)
- Saturday school participants (200+ Grade 5-7 learners)
- Children attending AEC events and activities
- Children in partner schools supported by AEC

2.2 Legal Foundation

This policy is guided by South African legislation, as amended from time to time, particularly:

- **The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005** - establishing children's rights and protection frameworks
- **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Section 28)** - guaranteeing children's fundamental rights
- **Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998** - requiring reporting of domestic violence against children
- **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007** - defining and criminalizing child abuse and sexual offences against children

2.3 Mandatory Reporting Obligations

AEC staff are legally required to comply with statutory reporting obligations as outlined in our separate "AEC Reporting Obligations" document, with failure to comply carrying penalties of fines, imprisonment, or both.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Child

A person under the age of 18 years, as defined in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005.

3.2 Child Safeguarding

All measures undertaken to ensure that children are protected from intentional and unintentional harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or maltreatment, and that concerns are responded to expeditiously and appropriately, in line with the best interests of the child.

3.3 Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse: Any act causing physical harm or injury to a child, including hitting, kicking, burning, shaking, poisoning, or any form of corporal punishment.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity or attempt to engage in sexual activity with a child, including grooming, exposure to sexual content, fondling, rape, sexual exploitation, or encouraging/forcing a child to engage with pornography.

Emotional Abuse: Persistent emotional ill-treatment, rejection, verbal assault, humiliation, belittling, or threats that harm a child's emotional development or mental well-being.

Neglect: Persistent failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or developmental needs, including adequate food, shelter, supervision, education, medical care, or protection from danger.

Exploitation: Using a child for someone else's advantage, gratification, or profit, including child labour, trafficking, sexual exploitation, or exposing children to acts/materials intended for adult benefit.

3.4 Key Principles

Best Interests of the Child: A foundational principle requiring that all decisions prioritize the child's physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and moral well-being (Section 7, Children's Act).

Child Protection: Prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children through legal and social measures.

4. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to:

- **All AEC staff:** Director, Academic Coordinator, Financial Administrator, General Secretary, and any future employees
- **All AEC Council members:** Including sub-committee chairpersons and volunteers
- **Volunteers and interns:** Anyone working with AEC programmes
- **Contractors and consultants:** Including Saturday school tutors and external service providers
- **Partner organizations:** Schools, donors, and other stakeholders involved in AEC activities
- **All settings:** AEC offices, Saturday schools, partner schools, events, and any AEC-organized activities

4.1 Programme Coverage

- High school bursary programme (240+ students across 27+ partner schools)
- Saturday school programme (200+ Grade 5-7 learners)
- Teacher training workshops

- Student mentoring and support services
- Alumni activities and events
- All AEC-sponsored or organized activities

5. AEC COMMITMENTS

The Alexandra Education Committee commits to:

Zero Tolerance: We have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm in all forms.

Rights-Based Approach: We uphold and promote the rights of all children as enshrined in South African law and international conventions.

Prevention: We prevent abuse through careful recruitment, comprehensive training, robust procedures, and proactive risk management.

Awareness: We raise safeguarding awareness among all staff, volunteers, students, families, and partner organizations.

Response: We respond promptly, appropriately, and sensitively to all concerns raised by children, staff, or others.

Reporting: We report all incidents in line with legal requirements and maintain transparency with our stakeholders.

Continuous Improvement: We regularly review and enhance our safeguarding measures based on best practices and lessons learned.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1 All AEC Representatives Must:

- ✓ **Treat children with respect and dignity** at all times
- ✓ **Use appropriate, child-friendly, and inclusive language**
- ✓ **Maintain appropriate physical boundaries** (avoid unnecessary physical contact)
- ✓ **Ensure visibility** when interacting with children (avoid being alone with a child where not visible)
- ✓ **Report any concerns immediately** through established channels
- ✓ **Respect confidentiality** while understanding mandatory reporting obligations
- ✓ **Model positive behaviour** and maintain professional boundaries
- ✓ **Obtain appropriate consent** for photographs, videos, or sharing children's information

6.2 All AEC Representatives Must Never:

- ✗ **Use physical punishment** or any form of corporal punishment
- ✗ **Engage in sexual contact, or any conduct of a sexual nature**, with a child under any circumstances
- ✗ **Shame, degrade, or emotionally abuse** a child
- ✗ **Use inappropriate language** including profanity, discriminatory, or sexual language

- ✗ **Give gifts** to individual children without organizational approval
- ✗ **Spend time alone** with children in unsupervised settings
- ✗ **Share personal contact information** with children or use children's personal contact information inappropriately
- ✗ **Ignore signs** of abuse or concerning behaviour

6.3 Digital and Social Media Guidelines

- No personal social media contact with current students, regardless of whether they are children
 - All photos/videos require appropriate consent
 - Children must not be identifiable in social media posts without explicit parental consent
 - No sharing of children's personal information online
 - Report any concerning online behaviour involving AEC children
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7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 AEC Council

- Approve and oversee implementation of child safeguarding policy
- Ensure adequate resources for safeguarding measures
- Receive regular safeguarding reports
- Support the Executive Director in maintaining safeguarding standards

7.2 Executive Director (Paul Channon)

Primary Safeguarding Officer

- Overall responsibility for safeguarding implementation
- First point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Liaison with external authorities and partner organizations
- Ensure staff training and policy compliance
- Report to Council and external stakeholders as required

7.3 Academic and Mentoring Coordinator (Kate Wong)

Deputy Safeguarding Officer

- Support Executive Director in safeguarding implementation
- Direct contact with students and families
- Monitor student welfare and academic progress
- Coordinate with schools on safeguarding matters

- Handle concerns when Executive Director is unavailable

7.4 All Staff Members

- Adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures
- Complete mandatory safeguarding training
- Report concerns promptly and appropriately
- Maintain awareness of child protection issues
- Support creation of safe environments for children

7.5 Financial Administrator and General Secretary

- Ensure safeguarding considerations in administrative processes
- Maintain confidential records appropriately
- Support safeguarding training and awareness initiatives
- Report any concerns encountered in their roles

7.6 Partner Schools

- Maintain their own child protection policies
- Coordinate with AEC on safeguarding matters
- Report concerns about AEC-sponsored students
- Participate in safeguarding training as required

8. SAFE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

8.1 All Positions Involving Children

Job Descriptions: Include specific safeguarding responsibilities and requirements

Criminal Background Checks: Mandatory for all staff, volunteers, and contractors with child contact

Reference Verification: Minimum two professional references with specific safeguarding questions

Interview Process: Include safeguarding scenarios and value-alignment questions

Identity Verification: Confirm identity and address gaps in employment history

Probationary Periods: Monitor performance and safeguarding compliance before confirmation

8.2 Ongoing Measures

- Regular review of recruitment policies
- Annual criminal record checks for key positions
- Continuous professional development requirements
- Regular supervision and performance reviews including safeguarding competency

9. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING AND AWARENESS

9.1 Mandatory Training

All New Staff/Volunteers: Complete safeguarding training within one month of appointment

Annual Refresher Training: All staff and regular volunteers

Specialized Training: Additional training for safeguarding officers and high-risk roles

Partner Training: Provide safeguarding awareness to partner school staff as needed

9.2 Training Content

- Understanding child abuse and neglect
- Understanding and acknowledging absolute obligation to desist from any abusive or inappropriate conduct
- Recognizing signs and indicators
- Reporting procedures and legal obligations
- Appropriate professional boundaries
- Cultural sensitivity in safeguarding
- Supporting children who disclose abuse
- Record keeping and confidentiality

9.3 Awareness for Children and Families

Student Orientation: Inform all students about their rights and how to seek help

Family Information: Provide safeguarding information to parents/caregivers

Regular Communication: Include safeguarding messages in AEC communications

Accessible Reporting: Ensure children know how to report concerns safely

10. PROGRAMME SAFETY MEASURES

10.1 Risk Assessment

Programme Design: All activities designed with child safety as a priority

Risk Identification: Regular assessment of potential risks to children in all programmes

Mitigation Strategies: Implement measures to reduce identified risks

Regular Review: Ongoing evaluation and improvement of risk management

10.2 Saturday School Safety

- Minimum staff-to-student ratios maintained

- Clear supervision protocols for all activities
- Safe physical environment maintained
- Emergency procedures established and practiced
- Parent/caregiver contact information current and accessible

10.3 Partner School Coordination

- Regular communication with school safeguarding officers
- Shared information on student welfare (with appropriate consent)
- Coordinated response to concerns involving AEC students
- Support for schools in enhancing their safeguarding measures

10.4 Events and Activities

- Risk assessments for all events involving children
- Appropriate supervision ratios
- Clear safeguarding protocols for external venues
- Emergency contact information readily available
- Transportation safety measures

11. INCIDENT REPORTING AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

11.1 Recognition and Initial Response

Take All Concerns Seriously: Any concern, disclosure, or suspicion must be treated as potentially valid

Immediate Safety: Ensure the child is in a safe environment

Do Not Investigate: Staff should not conduct investigations but should gather basic information

Do Not Promise Confidentiality: Explain the need to share information to keep the child safe

11.2 Reporting Process

Step 1: Immediate Documentation Record within 24 hours:

- Child's name and details
- Date, time, and location of incident/disclosure
- Names of persons involved or present
- Objective description of what was observed, heard, or reported
- Actions taken immediately
- Name of person recording

Step 2: Internal Reporting Report immediately to:

- Primary: Executive Director (Paul Channon)
- If unavailable or implicated: Academic Coordinator (Kate Wong)
- If both unavailable/implicated: Council Chairperson

Step 3: External Reporting Within 24 hours of becoming aware, report to appropriate authorities:

- **Department of Social Development:** Local office
- **South African Police Service (SAPS):** If criminal matter
- **Child Protection Services:** 0800 428 428 (24-hour hotline)

11.3 Reporting Obligations

As per AEC's legal obligations document:

Section 110 of Children's Act: Mandatory reporting for social workers, teachers, and caregivers who conclude child has been abused

Section 2B of Domestic Violence Act: Adults who know/believe/suspect domestic violence against a child must report

Penalties: Failure to report can result in fines and/or imprisonment up to 10-20 years depending on circumstances

11.4 Internal Communication

- Inform relevant AEC staff on need-to-know basis
- Notify Council Chairperson
- Prepare communication for parents/caregivers as appropriate
- Consider communication with partner school if relevant

12. DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING

12.1 Incident Records

Confidential Filing: Secure, locked storage with restricted access

Detailed Documentation: Comprehensive records of all incidents, actions taken, and outcomes

Factual Reporting: Objective, factual information without speculation or opinion

Regular Updates: Document all follow-up actions and developments

12.2 Access and Retention

Limited Access: Only authorized personnel with legitimate need

Retention Period: Maintain records as required by law and best practice

Secure Destruction: Appropriate disposal when retention period expires

Digital Security: Password protection and encryption for digital records

12.3 Privacy Protection

- Maintain strict confidentiality
 - Share information only as required by law or child's best interests
 - Protect dignity of all involved parties
 - Comply with Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA)
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13. INVESTIGATION AND FOLLOW-UP

13.1 Internal Assessment

Immediate Review: Rapid assessment of immediate safety and required actions

Investigation Decision: Determine if internal investigation needed or refer to authorities

Professional Approach: Use trained personnel or external experts as needed

Child-Centred: Keep child's best interests as primary consideration

13.2 Investigation Principles

- **Child Protection:** Safety and well-being paramount
- **Confidentiality:** Appropriate information sharing only
- **Non-Retaliation:** Protection for those reporting concerns
- **Legal Compliance:** Full adherence to South African law
- **Professional Standards:** Use qualified investigators when needed

13.3 Possible Outcomes

Disciplinary Action: Internal measures for policy violations

Criminal Referral: Report to police for criminal matters

Support Services: Counselling and support for affected children

Policy Review: Assessment and improvement of policies/procedures

Training Enhancement: Additional training if gaps identified

14. COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

14.1 Transparency Principles

Open Communication: Regular updates on safeguarding measures and improvements

Incident Communication: Appropriate sharing of information about serious incidents (while maintaining confidentiality)

Policy Awareness: Ensure all stakeholders understand safeguarding commitments

14.2 Key Stakeholders

Students and Families: Regular information about safeguarding policies and how to seek help

Partner Schools: Coordination on safeguarding matters and shared responsibility

Donors and Funders: Regular reports on safeguarding measures and any significant incidents

Community: General awareness of AEC's commitment to child protection

14.3 Crisis Communication

- Prepared templates for different scenarios
- Clear authorization levels for external communication
- Legal review of communications as needed
- Support for affected families and communities

15. MONITORING AND REVIEW

15.1 Regular Review Schedule

Annual Policy Review: Comprehensive review of policy effectiveness

Bi-Annual Training Assessment: Evaluation of training programmes and needs

Quarterly Incident Analysis: Review of any incidents and lessons learned

Continuous Improvement: Ongoing enhancement based on best practices

15.2 Performance Indicators

Training Completion: 100% of staff complete required training within timeframes

Incident Response: All incidents reported and responded to within required timeframes

Stakeholder Awareness: Regular assessment of stakeholder understanding of policies

Compliance Monitoring: Regular audits of safeguarding practice implementation

15.3 External Review

- Professional audit of safeguarding practices every three years
- Peer review with other similar organizations
- Legal review of policies for compliance with current legislation
- Expert consultation on best practices

16. CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY BREACH

16.1 Investigation Process

Immediate Assessment: Rapid evaluation of alleged breach

Fair Process: Thorough investigation with appropriate procedural fairness

Legal Compliance: Investigation in accordance with South African employment and criminal law

Support: Appropriate support for all parties during investigation

16.2 Possible Consequences

Disciplinary Action: Warning, suspension, or dismissal depending on severity

Criminal Referral: Report to police if criminal activity suspected

Civil Action: Potential civil liability for damages

Professional Referral: Report to professional bodies as required

16.3 Immediate Safety Measures

- Immediate suspension from duties involving children pending investigation
- Restriction of access to AEC premises and activities
- Notification of relevant authorities as required
- Support for affected children and families

17. KEY CONTACTS

17.1 Internal Contacts

Role	Name	Phone	Email
Primary Safeguarding Officer	Paul Channon, Executive Director	011 887 4182	director@alexeducation.org.za
Deputy Safeguarding Officer	Kate Wong, Academic Coordinator	011 887 4182	info@alexeducation.org.za
General Office	AEC Administration	011 887 4182	info@alexeducation.org.za

17.2 External Emergency Contacts

Service	Contact	When to Use
Child Protection Hotline	0800 428 428	24-hour reporting for child abuse
South African Police Service	10111	Emergency situations requiring immediate police response
Gauteng Department of Social Development	011 355 7000	Reporting child abuse and neglect

Service	Contact	When to Use
Alexandra Police Station	011 334 7000	Local police for non-emergency reporting
ChildLine South Africa	116	Free counselling and support for children

17.3 Partner Organization Contacts

Organization	Contact Person	Phone	Purpose
Save the Children South Africa	Gugu Xaba, CEO	012 430 7775	Technical support and guidance
Legal Advisor	Daniel Pretorius	011 669 9000	Legal advice on safeguarding matters

DECLARATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For all AEC Staff, Volunteers, and Associates

I hereby declare that:

- I have read, understood, and accept all terms of this Child Safeguarding Policy
- I understand my legal obligations regarding child protection and reporting
- I commit to adhering to the Code of Conduct set out in clause 6 above and all safeguarding procedures
- I understand that failure to comply may result in disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution
- I will report any concerns about child safety immediately and appropriately

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Position: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

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This policy replaces all previous child protection guidelines and constitutes the complete framework for child safeguarding within the Alexandra Education Committee.