

ACS DOHA

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

SAFEGUARDING HANDBOOK



ACS Doha Safeguarding Handbook

Our Commitment to Safeguarding

ACS Doha is committed to creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment where all students are protected from harm and able to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Safeguarding is the responsibility of every adult in the school community.

We believe that every child has the right to:

- feel safe;
- be heard;
- be respected;
- learn in a secure environment; and
- receive appropriate support when concerns arise.

All staff are expected to actively promote the safety and wellbeing of students and to report any concern relating to student welfare immediately.

This handbook aligns with:

- Artemis Education safeguarding expectations;
- Qatar Ministry of Education requirements;
- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); and
- international safeguarding best practices.

1. Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

All adults working at ACS Doha are responsible for safeguarding students. Staff must:

- maintain professional boundaries;
- create safe learning environments;
- report concerns immediately;
- participate in safeguarding training; and
- act in the best interests of students at all times.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL oversees all safeguarding procedures and concerns within the school. Responsibilities include:

- managing safeguarding reports;
- coordinating investigations and support;
- maintaining confidential records;
- liaising with external agencies when necessary;
- ensuring staff training and compliance; and
- advising school leadership on safeguarding matters.



Deputy DSLs

Deputy DSLs support the DSL and act in their absence.

School Leadership

School leaders ensure safeguarding systems are implemented consistently across the school and that safeguarding remains a priority in all operations.

Parents and Guardians

Parents are expected to work collaboratively with the school to support student wellbeing and safety.

2. Recognizing Abuse and Harm

Abuse may occur through direct action, indirect action, or failure to act.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical harm or injury caused intentionally or through unsafe actions.

Possible indicators:

- unexplained bruises or injuries;
- repeated injuries;
- burns or marks;
- injuries inconsistent with explanations.

Emotional Abuse

Persistent actions that negatively affect a child's emotional wellbeing or self-worth.

Possible indicators:

- withdrawal;
- extreme anxiety;
- fearfulness;
- low self-esteem;
- sudden behavioral changes.

Sexual Abuse

Any sexual activity imposed on a child, including grooming, exploitation, or inappropriate contact.

Possible indicators:

- age-inappropriate sexual knowledge;
- fear of specific individuals or locations;
- changes in behavior;
- reluctance to change for PE;
- unexplained injuries.

Neglect

Failure to provide adequate supervision, care, medical attention, or emotional support.

Possible indicators:

- poor hygiene;
- hunger or fatigue;
- repeated absence;
- lack of supervision;
- parents repeatedly unreachable in emergencies.

3. Peer-on-Peer Abuse

ACS Doha recognizes that students can harm other students. Peer-on-peer abuse is never considered “normal behavior” or “part of growing up.”

This may include:

- bullying or cyberbullying;
- physical aggression;
- discriminatory behavior;
- sexual harassment;
- inappropriate image sharing;
- online abuse;
- intimidation or coercion.

All concerns involving student-to-student abuse will be addressed seriously and promptly.



4. Online and Digital Safety

Students are taught digital citizenship and online safety through advisory lessons, technology instruction, and ongoing school programs.

Safeguarding concerns may involve:

- cyberbullying;
- grooming;
- exploitation;
- inappropriate online communication;
- sextortion;
- AI-generated or manipulated images;
- social media misuse;
- harmful online communities.

Students are encouraged to report any online behavior that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

5. Reporting Concerns

ACS Doha International School promotes a culture of “if in doubt, report.” All safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately through the school’s safeguarding reporting platform or directly to the DSL/DDSL. Where the matter has been discussed directly with the safeguarding team, staff are still expected to record all concerns on the school’s safeguarding platform on the same day.

If a Student Discloses Harm

Do:

- stay calm;
- listen carefully;
- reassure the student;
- explain that you must share the information with safeguarding staff;
- record the concern accurately;
- report immediately.

Do Not:

- investigate;
- ask leading questions;
- promise confidentiality;
- share information unnecessarily;
- attempt to resolve the issue independently.

The welfare of the student is always the priority.

6. Professional Conduct Expectations

All staff are expected to maintain clear professional boundaries with students at all times.

Staff must:

- use approved communication channels;
- avoid private or secret communication with students;
- maintain appropriate physical boundaries;
- avoid favoritism;
- model respectful behavior;
- immediately report concerns involving staff or volunteers.

Low-level concerns regarding professional conduct should still be reported so that patterns can be identified and addressed early.

Examples may include:

- over-familiarity;
- inappropriate jokes or comments;
- one-to-one meetings in isolated spaces;
- inappropriate digital communication;
- humiliating or belittling students.

7. Safe Touch and Positive Handling

Appropriate physical contact may occasionally occur in educational settings, including:

- comforting a distressed student;
- guiding movement safely;
- first aid;
- sports coaching;
- assisting younger students.

Any physical contact must:

- be appropriate;
- be proportionate;
- respect student dignity;
- never be used as punishment.

Physical intervention should only occur when necessary to prevent harm to a student or others and must always be reported to safeguarding leadership.



8. Student Mental Health Concerns

Student wellbeing is a central part of safeguarding.

Staff should take all concerns related to:

- self-harm;
- suicidal thoughts;
- severe emotional distress;
- dangerous behavior; seriously.

Warning signs may include:

- withdrawal;
- sudden mood changes;
- hopelessness;
- risky behavior;
- unexplained injuries;
- significant behavioral changes.

If concerned:

1. Stay with the student.
2. Inform the DSL/DDSL or leadership immediately.
3. Do not leave the student alone.
4. Record and report the concern promptly.

9. Missing Student Procedure

Attendance is monitored throughout the school day.

If a student is missing:

1. Notify leadership immediately.
2. Check attendance, medical room, counseling office, and specialist lessons.
3. Contact security and review CCTV if necessary.
4. Contact parents if the student is not located promptly.
5. Escalate to emergency procedures and authorities if necessary.

All incidents are documented and reviewed.

10. Intimate Care and Changing

ACS Doha promotes student independence in personal care and hygiene.

For younger students or students requiring support:

- dignity and privacy must be maintained;
- another adult should be alerted;
- appropriate hygiene procedures must be followed;
- all incidents requiring significant support should be documented.

Any safeguarding concern identified during intimate care procedures must be reported immediately.

11. Safeguarding Education

ACS Doha provides age-appropriate safeguarding education throughout the school year.

Topics may include:

- personal safety;
- healthy relationships;
- bullying prevention;
- consent;
- emotional wellbeing;
- digital citizenship;
- online safety;
- how to seek help.

Students are regularly reminded of trusted adults and reporting pathways available within the school.



12. Safer Recruitment and Training

ACS Doha is committed to safer recruitment practices.

All staff and volunteers:

- undergo background and reference checks;
- complete safeguarding training during induction;
- receive annual safeguarding updates;
- review and sign the staff code of conduct annually.

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all employees.

13. Key Safeguarding Contacts

Role	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Benjamin Burgess
Deputy DSL	Meadhbh Murphy
School Reception	ACS Doha Reception
Emergency Services	Local Emergency Authorities

Students and parents may contact any trusted adult in the school community regarding safeguarding concerns.

14. Visitor and Campus Safety

ACS Doha is committed to maintaining a safe and secure campus environment for all students, staff, and visitors.

To support campus safety:

- all visitors must sign in at reception;
- visitors may be required to present identification;
- visitor access may be restricted to approved areas;
- all adults on campus are expected to wear visible identification;
- students may only leave campus with authorized adults or approved permission;
- security personnel and campus supervision systems support student safety throughout the school day.

The school maintains security systems and procedures, including controlled entry points, supervision protocols, and CCTV monitoring where appropriate.

15. Emergency Preparedness and Safety Drills

ACS Doha maintains comprehensive emergency preparedness procedures designed to protect students and staff during emergencies.

The school conducts regular safety drills throughout the academic year, including:

- fire evacuation drills;
- hold-in-place procedures;
- duck-and-cover drills;
- full evacuation drills; and
- other emergency response practices as required.

Staff receive training on emergency procedures, and students are taught age-appropriate expectations and routines to ensure calm, safe, and efficient responses during emergencies.

Emergency procedures are reviewed regularly to support continuous improvement and operational readiness.

16. Transportation and Dismissal Safety

ACS Doha prioritizes student safety during arrival, dismissal, and transportation.

The school maintains procedures to ensure:

- safe supervision during dismissal;
- authorized student pickup;
- secure bus and transportation procedures where applicable;
- accurate attendance and sign-out processes;
- timely communication with families regarding student safety concerns.

Parents are expected to support school procedures related to transportation and dismissal to ensure the safety of all students.

17. Educational Visits and Overnight Trips

Safeguarding expectations apply during all school-sponsored activities, including educational visits, athletics, extracurricular activities, and overnight trips.

Appropriate safeguards include:

- suitable staff supervision ratios;
- clear behavioral expectations;
- appropriate accommodation and rooming arrangements;
- emergency communication procedures;
- professional staff-student boundaries at all times.

Risk assessments and safety planning are conducted before educational visits and tr



18. Inclusion and Vulnerable Students

ACS Doha recognizes that some students may be more vulnerable to harm, abuse, or exploitation.

Additional safeguarding support may be necessary for students who:

- have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND);
- are experiencing social, emotional, or mental health challenges;
- are affected by trauma or family stress;
- are new to the school or country;
- require additional language support.

Staff are expected to remain attentive to the individual needs of students and to report concerns promptly so that appropriate support can be provided.

19. Safeguarding Culture

Safeguarding at ACS Doha is proactive, preventative, and relationship-based.

We aim to create a school culture where:

- students feel safe, known, and respected;
- students understand how to seek help;
- adults respond consistently and professionally to concerns;
- wellbeing and belonging are valued alongside academic achievement;
- safeguarding is embedded into daily school life.

All members of the school community share responsibility for maintaining a safe and supportive environment.

20. Safeguarding Reporting Process

Immediate Danger

If a student is believed to be at immediate risk of harm:

1. Ensure the student is safe.
2. Inform the DSL, DDSL, or school leadership immediately.
3. Follow emergency procedures if necessary.
4. Record and report the concern as soon as possible.

General Safeguarding Concerns

1. Observe and document concerns factually.
2. Report concerns immediately using the school safeguarding reporting platform or directly to the DSL/DDSL.
3. Do not investigate independently.
4. Maintain confidentiality.
5. Continue supporting the student appropriately.

Low-Level Concerns About Adults

Concerns regarding staff conduct or professional boundaries should be reported to safeguarding leadership promptly, even if the behavior appears minor.

Early reporting supports:

- student safety;
- professional accountability;
- early intervention;
- identification of patterns of concern.

21. Key Safeguarding Principles

At ACS Doha:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
- student welfare is always the priority;
- concerns are taken seriously;
- early reporting is encouraged;
- all students deserve dignity, safety, and respect;
- professional boundaries matter;
- creating a culture of trust and belonging is essential to student wellbeing.



Definitions

Safeguarding

Safeguarding refers to the actions and systems used to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and unsafe environments while promoting their wellbeing and development.

Child Protection

Child protection refers to specific actions taken to respond to concerns that a child may be experiencing or at risk of abuse, neglect, or significant harm.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves intentionally causing physical harm or injury to a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves persistent behavior that negatively impacts a child's emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, or sense of safety.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing, pressuring, or involving a child in sexual activity, exploitation, or inappropriate sexual behavior.

Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, medical, educational, or supervisory needs.

Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Peer-on-peer abuse occurs when one student harms another student physically, emotionally, sexually, socially, or online.

Online Abuse

Online abuse includes cyberbullying, exploitation, grooming, harassment, coercion, or harmful behavior occurring through digital platforms or technology.

Low-Level Concern

A low-level concern is behavior by an adult that may be inconsistent with professional expectations or boundaries, even if it does not meet the threshold for formal disciplinary action.