



Child Safety and Respect Policy

(This document is developed in accordance with the Safety and Security Guidelines of CISCE and Gurgaon Police)

The respect and dignity of every child, irrespective of age, gender, ability, socio-economic and cultural background, is of paramount importance in Shikshantar at all times. Thus, Shikshantar is committed to inclusion and will always work to develop a culture of equity and safety in its policies and practices that include all learners.

All team members - teachers, administrative staff, auxiliary staff, substitute teachers, visiting faculty, parents, senior students – are expected to engage with children with sensitivity and compassion at all times.

In order to ensure the above, all team members are expected to follow a code of conduct referred to as the '**Child Safety and Respect Policy**'.

Please go through the following policies carefully to understand your roles and responsibilities.

Physical Safety

In school

From the time that a child enters school till the time s/he is safely picked from school or dropped at the designated bus stop, no child should be unsupervised.

From this point onwards, each child is meant to be under the guidance and supervision of the group teacher(s) and rotating subject teachers.

Be extra vigilant about your surroundings all the time, if you observe something that needs attention, report immediately to the concerned supervisors.

While it would be unrealistic and undesirable to preclude all physical contact between adults and children, all team members are expected to exercise caution and avoid placing themselves in a position where their actions might be open to criticism or misinterpretation. In a school like Shikshantar, there is a natural bond and sense of trust that young children have with their facilitators. They exhibit this by initiating physical contact through hugs, wanting to sit on didi's lap, holding their hand during a transition etc. All female staff members are advised to be responsive and not proactive in such physical contacts. Male staff members should exercise caution and not encourage any kind of physical contact with children. Where incidents occur which might be otherwise misconstrued, this will be reported to the concerned Supervisor and adequate action will be taken.

During transitions

Transitions or movement of children in small and large groups occur in a school day several times. These can be as simple as movement of children from the gate to the classroom or from the group to the music or lunch room.

The designated teacher in-charge of every group is expected to be responsible for the safety of all children of their group during all transitions, including those that occur during out-of-school trips.

1. Teachers are required to reach their classrooms ten minutes prior to the arrival time of children. This helps them organise things for the day and at the same ensures that children do not walk inside empty classrooms.
2. There is a purpose to our day with children at school. All teachers including subject and resource facilitators are expected to diligently follow the time table, reach their classes/activity areas on time. It is our responsibility to ensure that all children are effectively engaged in the activities planned for the day and are under consistent supervision.
3. Sports/dance/music/art, subject teachers and special educators are equally accountable and responsible for the safety and security of each and every child in school.
4. Children frequently move out of the classrooms to take water breaks, go to the wash rooms and at times to collect material for classroom activities. Teachers are expected to be sensitive and alert to the time taken by children during such transitions. If the time taken by a child is longer than the usual time, the teacher must immediately check and enquire for the reasons regarding this delay.
5. Spaces at Shikshantar are designed to enrich the learning experiences of children. Often teachers organise project activities, circle time, choice time and other activities in various spaces outside their classrooms. They are expected to ensure that children under their supervision are in their circle of vision at all times.
6. There are days when children are required to stay back after school while preparing for school events such as Hamara Manch, interschool sports, enrichment classes or after school sports coaching programme. The sports in- charge or teacher in- charge is expected to ensure that children are in the designated areas, engaged and adequately supervised.
7. At departure time, dispersal of children is planned from specific classrooms and dispersal areas. Teachers are given responsibilities for accompanying children to the dispersal areas, respective bus routes and supervise the departure of children from dispersal areas. All teachers must assume these responsibilities with sensitivity and a high sense of commitment. It is mandatory to check the pick up cards before handing over children to parents/guardians.

In the school bus

The role of teachers and their involvement with children extends beyond classrooms. As per the Hon'ble Supreme Court guidelines, Teachers are given transport duties to accompany children to and from school in the buses. A duty roster is prepared by the transport team and shared with all teachers well in advance. Transport duties are mandatory for all teachers. The purpose is to ensure safe arrival and departure of children in school buses.

1. When a child boards the bus from her/his pick up point, the teacher on duty is expected to mark the attendance and help the child comfortably settle in the bus.
2. Similarly during departure time teachers are expected to accompany children from the classrooms to their respective bus routes, help them get inside the buses, hand them over to the route in- charge who in turn is required to mark the attendance of all children.

3. Teachers on transport duty must check that all children fasten the seat belts. Children of different classes and age groups travel together on the bus routes. Teachers are expected to be alert and vigilant and ensure that no child is bullied, feels threatened or intimidated.
4. In a conflict situation, the teacher on duty is expected to intervene meaningfully and not be a spectator.
5. When a child is being dropped at her/his drop point, the teacher on duty should ensure that the child is safely handed over to the parent/guardian. It is mandatory to check the pick- up card.
6. In cases where the guardian is not carrying the pick- up card, the child will be brought back to school by the teacher. A call to the parents will be made from the bus itself and they will be asked to pick up their child from the school. Till that time the child will be with the admin /academic supervisor of the block.

Out of school trips

Field trips and visits play an important role in enriching the learning experiences of children and are scheduled in the school calendar for all classes. These visits are facilitated by the school team and some times by other collaborating organisations in association with the school team. Out of school trips are also organised when children participate in inter school events and activities such as debates, MUNs and other educational and cultural programmes.

Curriculum Coordinators have the responsibility of coordinating out of school visits and facilitate the process of readiness and preparation.

1. They are expected to create a detailed plan keeping in mind the purpose, experiences, mode of transport, distance, duration of the trip, number of children, supervision and safety and security of children.
2. This plan has to be shared with the academic supervisors.
3. Teachers are required to pre visit the venue in order to familiarize themselves with the experiences and to assess the safety and security of children.
4. If planning a visit to places such as planetarium or museum, tickets need to be booked in advance.
5. Teachers are expected to share a timely communication with parents specifying the details of the visit.
6. Teachers are required to orient children about the trip and experiences through circle time discussions and themes.
7. Teachers accompanying children on the trip are expected to carry the phone numbers of all parents and a first aid box.
8. For safety and security reasons children must wear their identity cards and T shirts of uniform colour .
9. Teachers must consciously be **with** the children. Each and every child should be in their sight at all times.

Interpersonal Relations

Children and young people of all ages observe and emulate the communication styles that they come across in their daily lives. The values of ‘respect’ and ‘dignity’ can be internalised and imbibed by them only when they see responsible adults around them following the same. Therefore it becomes our prime responsibility to be aware as well as conscious of the kind of verbal and non verbal exchanges we engage in with them or in their presence.

Verbal exchange:

- a. An excellent beginning for effective verbal communication is the ability of an adult to be a good listener. Adults can be more effective in their communication by being active listeners. A facilitator has to be open and approachable, listening carefully to what a child is saying and doing. When a facilitator gives a patient hearing, s/he lets children know that the child is valued as a person and communicates care.
- b. Facilitators are expected to use respectful and appropriate language at all times with children. Use of harsh language and condescending tone has to be avoided at all times. Keeping the tone of a conversation positive nurtures a sense of respect and responsibility in a child.
- c. Genuine and thoughtful words of appreciation as well as constructive criticism, given in meaningful ways build a child's personality in the growing up years.
- d. Logical and accurate reasons for your requests or expectations help a child realize its importance and appreciate the same.
- e. It is possible for an adult also to err at times. Being honest in such situations and if need be apologizing for any inadvertent behavior makes a child respect an adult more.
- f. Following styles of verbal communication are completely unacceptable in Shikshantar :
 - Sarcasm that hurts or lowers the child's dignity
 - Calling names and scolding using humiliating adjectives ,intimidation
 - Using derogatory remarks for the child including pinning of slogans
 - Ridiculing the child with regard to her background, status, parental occupation, caste or with regard to her health status or that of the family (any kind of special condition or illness)
 - Belittling a child in the classroom due to his/her inability to meet the teacher's expectations of academic achievement
 - Using punitive measures to correct a child and even labelling him/her as difficult : such as a child with special needs, posing a problem in management of classroom behaviour, unable to cope with the academics at his/her grade level.
 - 'Shaming' the child to motivate the child to improve his/her performance
 - Ridiculing a child with developmental problems such as speech delay, learning difficulty etc.

Non-verbal exchange acts as a scaffolding mechanism to our verbal communication with children and young people. An eye contact, a reassuring nod, a pat on the back are ways we affirm our faith and trust on the child. Apart from words, non verbal exchanges makes a child feel secured, appreciated and valued.

- a. There can be classroom situations that are challenging and difficult for teachers to handle. At such times, teachers are expected to maintain their calm and objectivity. At no point should the body language of a teacher get aggressive, threatening or intimidating for children.
- b. In such a situation, if a teacher feels overwhelmed, s/he should step back and approach the respective supervisors/ coordinators for guidance and assistance.
- c. Shikshantar facilitates an inclusive environment where children from 'integration of families' and with special needs are part of our integrated classrooms. Each and every facilitator is expected to be sensitive and nurturing towards all children in their supervision. Any form of discrimination is unacceptable.

Discrimination is understood as prejudices, views and behaviour towards any child because of her caste/gender/economic or social status/ academic ability and social -emotional needs

- Bringing social attitudes and prejudices of the community into the school by using belittling remarks against a specific social group ,gender, ability/disability
 - Assigning different duties and responsibilities in school based on any personal biases
 - Commenting on academic ability based on caste, community or family prejudices
 - Deliberate neglect
 - Denying any facility or object that is due to the child in the school such as library book, lunch, sports and resource facilities and equipments.
-
- **Interactions with children with Special Needs:**
 - α. Therapies which require bodily touch will be done by a female therapist or in the presence of a female attendant in an area where both the child and the therapist are visible .
 - β. In the event of a child having a toilet accident, no matter how young he/she is, the child will be changed in a toilet only. Maintaining the dignity of the child, strict protocols for intimate care need to be followed; male and female children will be changed separately and not in front of each other, irrespective of age or extent of cognitive ability.
 - γ. Sometimes a child might have certain processing issues and /or not being able to comprehend the educational demand being placed on him/her and this could lead to some strong willed behaviour. In such situations the educator will have to be extremely patient and understand the reason for the behaviour. No form of abuse will be accepted on the part of the educator.
 - δ. No child will be subjected to any form of verbal, emotional or physical abuse under any circumstances.
 - ε. Support facilitators, helpers, ayahs etc must be oriented and sensitised about their conduct in the school with the children. Team members such as Coordinators, Special Educators, concerned group facilitators need to supervise the support team.
 - φ. Support staff needs to be trained and is expected to avoid any form of abuse when interacting with children . They should also report any form of abuse they may see while doing their jobs.

Interactions beyond school (social/academic)

The 'student teacher' relationship is based on mutual trust, respect and warmth. Children look up to their teachers as role models. It is important for teachers to maintain objectivity within this relationship. Teachers are expected to create a responsible and mature balance in interactions beyond school hours.

1. Celebrating the uniqueness of a soul is the essence of birthday celebrations in Shikshantar. Birthday of each and every child is celebrated in a simplistic manner in the classroom. Teachers facilitate and are a part of the celebration in school. At times children might want to invite teachers for their birthday celebrations outside school. Teachers are expected to abstain from being part of these celebrations or any other such social gatherings.
2. Befriending children or their parents and interacting with them on social network site sets a very casual tone to the relationship. Teachers are expected not to befriend children and parents or post their pictures on facebook, twitter, snapchat or any other social network sites.
3. A responsible teacher ensures that each and every child in the classroom learns and progresses in a meaningful manner. In situations where a child requires extra support, teachers facilitate enrichment sessions within the school premises. Teachers are expected not to take private tuitions for any child. In specific cases special educators are required to facilitate sessions for children beyond school hours. This should be done in consultation with the immediate Supervisor.

In case of any uncomfortable situation or a concern being reported by children or any staff member, the steps to be followed are:

- Hearing out the individual or group patiently.
- Trusting the concerned person and assuring confidentiality.
- Not being in a hurry to make an assumption or judgement of the situation.
- Reporting it to the concerned coordinator /supervisor immediately in case of any abuse that they suspect based on behaviour indicators or any other evidence that they may have.
- **Immediate information to core team members through the coordinators/supervisors.**
- **Keeping parents/guardians informed of any issues or concerns regarding their children.**
- **Authorizing the Safety and Security Committee for an investigation to be conducted in strictest confidentiality.**
- **Documentation of all details such as the date, person or persons involved, and any additional relevant information.**
- **A thorough investigation including documentation of all steps and aspects would lead to the resulting action.**

Investigation would include the following:

- **conference with students involved (keeping age appropriateness in mind)**
- **parent notification**
- **meeting with parents**
- **meeting with others pertinent to the case, including alleged perpetrator(s)**
- **seeking medical advice if required**
- **referral to counseling sessions if required**
- **suspension and/or termination of employment (if a school employee)**
- **legal action as required**

SAFE AND SECURE SCHOOL SPACE:

It is essential that high standards of concern and professional responsibility are adopted with regard to alleged child abuse when members of staff are accused of abuse. This means in the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender, Shikshantar School will conduct a full investigation and take any and all professional and legal steps deemed necessary to protect students.

In case a team member observes or suspects an incident of abuse occurring in school premises, s/he has to immediately report it to the concerned Supervisor. Strict confidentiality needs to be maintained in such situations and concerned team member has to refrain from discussing it informally with colleagues.

I, _____ have carefully read and understood the above mentioned policies and practices in context of the safety and respect of all children in Shikshantar. I agree to follow the same while being part of the school team.

I, _____ have not been accused of offences under POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012), the JJ (Juvenile Justice, Care and Protection of Children)Act 2000 and any other sexual /or violent crimes under any other act for the time being in force.

Signature of the Employee

Date -