

## **AHIGS Child Safeguarding Policy**

### **Scope of Policy**

The Association of Heads of Independent Girls' Schools NSW (AHIGS) trading as Independent Girls' Schools Association (IGSA) and its members' schools have identified a Child Safeguarding Policy as integral to the objectives of the Association and for all activities that it undertakes. The Child Safeguarding Policy applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors of IGSA.

### **Description and purpose**

At IGSA, we are committed to supporting the safety of all children, with a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. This includes a culture where preventing and reporting abuse is encouraged and supported.

All employees, volunteers and contractors are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. This includes understanding and responding to children's diverse needs and cultural considerations.

Our Child Safeguarding Policy sets out how we expect adults in our organisation to behave around children to help prevent harm and abuse in our physical spaces and online.

- All children and young people have the right to feel safe and be protected from abuse, harm, and neglect.
- It is everyone's responsibility – committees, volunteers, contractors, participants, parents and carers.
- It is about taking preventative actions to create a safe and inclusive environment.
- Engaging in unacceptable behaviour is a breach of our Policy and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Different types of child harm and abuse**

Child abuse takes many forms. It can include psychological, physical and sexual abuse, grooming, misconduct and lack of appropriate care as defined below. Please also refer to the IGSA Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy (available on the IGSA website - <https://igsa.nsw.edu.au/>).

- Psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse)

This includes bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming and name calling, ignoring and isolating a child, and exposure to domestic and family violence.

- Physical abuse

This includes physical punishment, such as pushing, shoving, punching, slapping and kicking, resulting in injury, burns, choking or bruising.

- Sexual abuse

This includes the sexual touching of a child, grooming, and production, distribution or possession of child abuse material.

- Grooming

This is a process where a person manipulates a child or group of children and sometimes those looking after them, including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of 'trust' so they can then later sexually abuse the child.

- Misconduct

This is inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse but could indicate that abuse is occurring and would often be in breach of the Association's Codes of Conduct available on the IGSA website - <https://igsa.nsw.edu.au/> ). This could include showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, having inappropriate conversations with a child or an adult sitting with a child on their lap.

- Lack of appropriate care

This includes not providing adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.

### **Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in IGSA**

The list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours below in relation to interactions of staff, contractors and volunteers with children who interact with our Association's services, locations or activities.

#### **I will:**

- treat all children with respect;
- uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs;
- make sure the needs of all children remain the paramount focus of any decision-making;
- listen to and value the ideas and opinions of all children, and respond to them appropriately;
- welcome all children and their families and carers and ask them to refer to the IGSA Codes of Conduct (available on the IGSA website - <https://igsa.nsw.edu.au/> ).
- actively promote safe and inclusive practices for all children, including those with diverse needs, circumstances and backgrounds, including children with disability;
- adhere to the IGSA's child safe policies, procedures and practices;
- participate in all compulsory child safe training;
- include a child's parent or carer in any direct online communication or correspondence;
- when transporting a child at work, take all reasonable steps to ensure at least two adults are travelling with the child at all times or put in place a suitable arrangement between my organisation and the parents or carers of the child. If the child is alone, they must sit in the back seat of the vehicle;
- let the Association know about any out-of-hours contact with any children in the care of our Association or who interact with our services, and make sure there is a valid reason for this contact, and parents or carers are also aware of this contact;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm and abuse, and report and act on any concerns or allegations;
- report any conflicts of interest such as a relationship with a child that is outside of IGSA;
- raise concerns with the Executive Officer if risks to child safety are identified;
- take a child seriously if they disclose harm or abuse and follow the correct procedures for responding to a disclosure;
- make sure breaches of the Child Safeguarding Policy and any instances of concerning behaviour from adults are reported immediately; and
- respect the privacy of children, and their families, and keep all information about child protection concerns confidential.

#### **I won't:**

- condone or participate in unsafe, harmful or concerning behaviour towards children, including psychological, physical and sexual abuse, grooming, misconduct or lack of appropriate care;
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of concerning behaviour;

- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues;
- persistently criticise or denigrate a child;
- use hurtful, discriminatory or offensive behaviour or language with children;
- verbally assault a child, or create a climate of fear;
- deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships;
- engage in unwarranted and inappropriate touching involving a child;
- be alone with a child without supervision or adequate risk management in place;
- have contact after hours with children;
- encourage a child to communicate with me in a private setting, including online or on social media;
- give personal gifts or benefits of any kind to a child unless direct permission has been given from the parent or carer;
- share details of sexual experiences with a child;
- use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children;
- show sexual, violent or other inappropriate images to a child;
- take videos or images of children interacting with the organisation or under the care of the organisation on a personal device without permission from the organisation;
- share videos or images of children on social media without consent; and
- fail to report information to police or other relevant authorities if I know a child has been harmed or abused (see reporting obligations below).

### **Concerning behaviours**

Concerning behaviours are behaviours that, on their own, may not constitute a breach of our Child Safeguarding Policy but when viewed together may indicate grooming behaviour.

These include:

- Showing favour to one child over others;
- Babysitting children without prior consent from the organisation (babysitting outside the organisation is only allowed in exceptional circumstances when the child and their family or carer is known has a pre-existing relationship with the staff member or volunteer outside the organisation);
- Participating in the lives of children outside the service without a valid reason;
- Crossing professional boundaries with the children in our care;
- Spending time alone with children; and
- Being 'child centric', which means showing a preference for hanging out with children rather than adults.

### **Internal and external reporting obligations**

You must follow all internal and external reporting obligations set out in IGSA Child Safe Reporting Policy

### **Criminal offences for not acting to protect children**

Some breaches of this Policy may need to be reported to NSW Police, the Office of the Children's Guardian or the Department of Communities and Justice.

It is a criminal offence for adults not to report to police if they know or believe that a child abuse offence has been committed. In addition, people employed in child-related work may be subject to a criminal offence if they fail to reduce or remove the risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse.

The adult concerned should reach out to the Executive Officer (sberry@igsa.nsw.edu.au ) if they are unsure of what may need to be reported externally.

**Penalties for staff, contractors or volunteers who breach our Child Safe Policy**

Staff, contractors or volunteers who breach our Child Safeguarding Policy but do not commit a criminal offence may still be subject to disciplinary action. This can include increased supervision, appointment to a different role, additional training, suspension or termination

**Concerning behaviours**

If a staff member, contractor or volunteer shows patterns of concerning behaviour but do not commit a criminal offence, this may result in increased supervision and / or additional training. If these behaviours of concern continue, the staff member, contractor or volunteer may be subject to disciplinary action, including appointment to a different role, suspension or termination.

**Agreement to abide by the terms of Child Safeguarding Policy**

I have read and agree to abide by the terms of this Child Safeguarding Policy during my association with IGSA.

I understand that breaches of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action or termination of my contract with IGSA.

Name of staff member, contractor or volunteer

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Role in organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and date \_\_\_\_\_

## Definitions

AHIGS	Association of Heads of Independent Girls' Schools of NSW
IGSA	Independent Girls' Schools Association (trading name of AHIGS)
OCG	Office of the Children's Guardian

**The policy is to be read in conjunction with the following documents** (available on the IGSA website - <https://igsa.nsw.edu.au/>):

- a. AHIGS Child Safe Reporting Policy
- b. IGSA Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy
- c. IGSA Sport Code of Conduct
- d. AHIGS / IGSA Complaints Policy
- e. AHIGS Privacy Policy