

American Academy Casablanca



Child Protection Policy

Updated December, 2022

Safeguarding and Child Protection Commitment Statement

American Academy Casablanca and its entire stakeholder community is committed to the safety of our students both on and off of our campus. This commitment takes on many forms and is in place to ensure that our children are protected from danger to ensure their well-being.

Every child, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, creed, or cultural background, in the care and supervision of AAC Faculty, Staff, and Volunteers has the right to be protected from maltreatment in any form. As mandated reporters, AAC employees shall safeguard and advocate the best interests of all enrolled students at AAC at all times.

Making decisions and taking actions that affect children's best interests is the top priority of all stakeholders working in and out the school. AAC fully recognizes and embraces its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all enrolled children and young people in our care, and that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility as mandated reporters. This responsibility encompasses the following principles:

- To protect children from harm (maltreatment) in any form including physical, mental, verbal, sexual, or exploited.
- To prevent impairment of children's health and development by intervening as necessary and appropriately.
- To treat the interests of our children as paramount while taking into consideration their disability, culture, religion and history.
- Every child shall be treated equitably, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background shall be protected.
- Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times,
- AAC's educational program must encourage the development of every child's personality, talents, and abilities to the fullest. The school shall encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

AAC's Definition of Child Protection

Child protection is the protection of all children in the care of AAC from abuse (physical or sexual), neglect, bullying, malnourishment, or any other maltreatment that would cause physical, mental, or social-emotional harm to a child or young person.

AAC Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

AAC has researched and implemented *mandated reporting training and practice* within the school this academic year. A mandated reporter is any person in our school (teachers, staff, administration, and volunteers) that works with our students and is required by the school to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities. By placing this expectation and procedure within our community the clarity now is in place to prevent or end any possible child abuse or neglect at the earliest possible stage. All school employees and volunteers are required to participate in onsite training. Additionally, key staff members have taken online training and received a certification for Child Protection Awareness Course through ChildSafeguarding.com. Being a mandated reporter entails the following roles, responsibilities, and understandings:

- Stakeholders understand their legal obligations as a mandated reporter.
- Define the types of child abuse and neglect.
- Recognize signs of child abuse and neglect.
- Identify groups of children who may be at a higher risk for abuse or neglect.
- Learn how to respond to a child who discloses abuse or neglect.
- Know how to prepare for and make a report of child abuse/neglect.
- Understand the process that occurs after a report is made.

Leadership

AAC has several stakeholders involved with the review and leadership of child protection and care. First, as mentioned prior, it is everyone's responsibility to lead the safeguarding of children and understanding and valuing their role and community expectations. The Director of the school and the School Counselors play a large role in monitoring and advocating for the school's child protection and care policies and procedures. The AAC Board of Governance and Community Board approves this policy and it is annually reviewed by them, as well as the school's handbooks that include policies and procedures. The School Counselors are responsible to review, maintain and implement initiatives supporting child welfare and protection.

Recruitment Practices

Another important child protection measure is our approach to vetting faculty and staff to work within our school. The process by which AAC hires its employees follows internal practices. After a thorough and rigorous interview process any offer of employment is pending until acceptable reference checks from prior employees are verified in addition to the submission of a police background check.

Code of Conduct

AAC's faculty and staff will protect the rights of all students. School adult stakeholders are expected to be fair and respectful to all their students and not to take advantage of their position in any way. Adults who work in AAC are expected not to push their personal beliefs on students because they are a "captive audience" and have a professional relationship with all students and not let it get too casual and familiar. Adults will not abuse the power of their position over students. All adult stakeholders will protect students' safety and wellbeing and not believe that this is someone else's job. All adults in AAC who work with children are mandated reporters

and will be responsible to exercise this role with integrity and urgency. These expectations for conduct are confirmed when completing annual mandated reporting.

AAC Students shall treat one another with dignity and respect, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, creed, or home language and culture. AAC students will be “up-standarders” and not “by-standers” meaning that students shall not be passive in watching acts of unkindness, including bullying, and/or inappropriate behavior; Instead AAC students will be up-standarders by reporting unsafe and all harmful behaviors to adults for intervention, and where appropriate, students will intervene with their peers to challenges unsafe, bullying, or any other unwelcome behavior.

Procedures - Reporting Maltreatment

All trained mandated reporters in the school would submit a [confidential incident report form](#) that documents and archives any reported incidents. The School Counselor will review all reported cases and **will not disclose the name of the mandated reporter** to any families. If legal or institutional considerations are needed then the Director will report the case to the Board, which will examine the next steps which could include a disciplinary panel being called, and or the contacting of the local authorities. The Board will not disclose the name of the reporter. Regardless of the outcome, the incident is archived in the schools e-database.

Partnerships

The Kingdom of Morocco has taken many important steps to realize the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and to meet international standards of adequate protection for children. However, a concern has persisted amongst practitioners and professionals working with children in Morocco that the national child protection strategy has mixed results in realizing its mission. Child protection and partnership is an emerging practice for schools in Morocco and AAC is working to better develop such partnerships. On a preliminary level the school has identified organizations that it currently is contacting to better understand their services and to explore areas of collaboration:

Moroccan Associations for Child Protection Association Bayti

Tel.: +212 522 756966 contact@association-bayti.ma

Moroccan Children’s Trust

Tel.: +44 7877268156- info@moroccanchildrenstrust.org

Protection Measures Integration

AAC’s protection measures are integrated within school systems such as recruiting, curriculum design (advisory), funding for adequate onsite medical and accidental insurance, and performance management (all students submit mid-year anonymous surveys of all their teachers). We plan for the health and well-being of children with highly trained medical and clinical professionals from local clinics and strategically implement counseling support and workshop training. AAC’s Board of Governance and Community Board approves this policy and it is annually reviewed by them, as

well as the school's handbooks that include policies and procedures. AAC's facilities are fit for their intended purpose and follow an annual review by the local fire department via inspection.

Accountability

Child protection accountability is shared across all stakeholders and is held to the highest expectations in line with the compliance of the legal, ethical, and cultural expectations and requirements in the context of the Kingdom of Morocco. AAC's faculty, staff, and volunteers understand their role as mandated reporters and that failure to comply with the school and community expectations could result in employee disciplinary actions, including dismissal from the school.

Related Terminology and Definitions

Child: Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Cyberbullying: *An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself.'*

Emotional Abuse: Involves a consistent attack on the child or young person's self-esteem to the extent that it is affecting the child or young person's physical, emotional, social and/or intellectual development. It can take the form of rejection, put-downs, intimidation, threats, frightening or isolating the child or young person.

Mandated Reporters: People required by law to report suspected or known instances of abuse. At AAC all adults are considered mandated reporters.

Neglect: This is a situation where a child or young person's basic daily needs are not being met and this is risking their health and development. It can involve a lack of food, clothing, personal hygiene, shelter, medical treatment or appropriate supervision.

Physical Abuse: This abuse occurs when a person intentionally injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. The injury may involve: slapping, kicking, punching, shaking, burning, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, strangling or any other form of behavior causing physical injury. Physical abuse can also involve a situation where a parent or caregiver is not adequately ensuring a child or young person's safety, leading to them being placed in situations of extreme physical danger.

Sexual Abuse: When a person uses their power over a child or young person to involve them in sexual activity. Sexual abuse covers a wide range of sexual activities including both contact and non-contact situations.

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is the person appointed to take lead responsibility for child protection issues in school. The DSL or a deputy is available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

The DSL:

- works with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure safeguarding is at the heart of the school ethos and that all staff are supported in knowing how to recognise and respond to potential concerns.
- liaise with the Head of School to keep them informed of any safeguarding of issues especially ongoing enquiries and police investigations
- as required, liaise with the local authority case manager or the designated officer at the local authority if a concern has arisen regarding a member of staff
- liaise with staff on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies
- act as a source of support, advice and expertise for staff.
- provides annual training to staff on best practices
- ensures that all staff have access to and understand the school's child protection policy
- keeps detailed, accurate and secure records of concerns and referrals
- understands the role of the school in terms of the Prevent duty where required
- attends refresher and other relevant training
- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in terms of what the school does to protect them.

Appendices

Appendix A CYBERBULLYING

What is Cyberbullying?

Central to the AAC's anti-bullying policy is the principle that '*bullying is always unacceptable*' and that '*all pupils have a right not to be bullied.*'

The school recognizes that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside school, which spills over into school; therefore once aware, we will respond to any cyber-bullying we become aware of carried out by pupils when they are away from the school site.

Cyberbullying is defined as '*an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself.*'

Cyberbullying can be a very serious matter and can constitute a criminal offence.

Technology allows the user to bully anonymously or from an unknown location, and at any time. Cyberbullying leaves no physical scars so it is perhaps less evident to a teacher or parent than physical bullying, but it is highly intrusive and the hurt it causes can be very severe.

Types of Cyber-bullying

There are many types of cyberbullying, of which the following are the most common:

- Text messages that are threatening or cause discomfort; also included here is 'bluejacking' (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using 'Bluetooth' wireless technology).
- Picture/video clips via mobile phone cameras - images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
- Mobile phone calls - silent calls or abusive messages; or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.
- Emails - threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name.
- Chat room bullying - menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- Instant Messaging (IM) - unpleasant messages sent while children or young people conduct real time conversations online using social media, gaming websites etc.

- Bullying via websites - use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites.
- Sexting – the sharing of naked or 'nude' pictures or video through mobile phones and/or the internet. This also included underwear shots, sexual poses and explicit text messaging. The use of sexted images in revenge following a relationship breakdown is becoming more commonplace.

We take this bullying as seriously as all other types of bullying, and therefore we will deal with each situation individually.

School Procedures

In cases of cyberbullying, as with all bullying, the procedure will fall under the anti-bullying policy.

Pupils are taught:

- To understand how to use these technologies safely and to know about the risks and consequences of misusing them
- What to do if they or someone they know is being cyberbullied to report any problems with cyberbullying. If they do have a problem they
- To talk (either giving their name or anonymously) to a member of staff, their parents, the police, the mobile network (for phone) or their internet service provider (ISP).

The school uses a variety of security tools to ensure that the programs and websites most frequently used for cyberbullying are unavailable on the school network. Support for parents and pupils of cyberbullying will consist of assessing the harm caused, identifying those involved, and taking steps to repair harm and to prevent a recurrence.

Once the person responsible for cyberbullying has been identified, the school will take steps to change their attitude and behaviour as well as ensuring access to any support that is required.

Advice to pupils (whether at school or elsewhere)

Advice to pupils who are the victims of cyberbullying:

- Remember that bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it usually can be replaced with a more constructive and respectful pattern of behaviour.
- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent.
- Don't retaliate or return the message: if you show that you are angry it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.

- Don't give out your personal details online: if you are in a chat room, watch what you say about where you live, the school you go to, your email address, etc.
- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. These can then be used as evidence.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender.

Appendix B

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Preamble

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children,

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth",

Recalling the provisions of the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules); and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, Recognizing that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration,

Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child, Recognizing the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries,