

VIDYA DEVI JINDAL SCHOOL

Policy for Child Care, Conduct and Harassment (P3CH)

Vidya Devi Jindal School is a leading residential school exclusively for girls that focuses on all aspects of a student's life, namely- emotional, mental, physical, social, and spiritual. It provides a happy, caring, safe and secure, multicultural environment to the girls which encourages fearless intellectual curiosity, enthusiastic self-discovery, love for integrity and compassion for life.

Introduction

The **Policy for Child Care, Conduct and Harassment (P3CH)** addresses multiple dimensions of vulnerability that may be faced by the child during the entire cycle of her stay in the school and the boarding houses. It focuses on the overall healthy development of children by providing a secure and caring environment in the school campus, in the boarding houses, in the sports field and all places that children visit. It also takes into consideration the safety and security of children during trips/excursions/exchanges/conferences/inter school competitions i.e. all the spheres wherein the school is the custodian of the child.

The policy is in line with the Constitution of India, Article 15(3), which says that state must make special provision for children. Article 39 of Part IV of the Constitution asks the State to direct its policy towards securing (among other things), that children are not abused; not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength; and that they are given opportunities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, and are protected against moral and material abandonment.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines child protection as the "strengthening of country environments, capacities and responses to prevent and protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and the effects of conflict." Education systems have an important part to play in realizing child protection as children spend a significant amount of time of their childhood in the school environment, which is the next most influential setting for the child after the family.

VDJS believes that every child that joins the school has a right to enjoy the safe environment, with a strong sense of personal, social, and environmental responsibility.

The policy is our organization's commitment to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and organizational negligence. This is reflected in the way an organization and staff conduct its activities.

The policy caters to the above supreme goals by clearly defining terms, contexts, delineating robust complaint procedures as well as enlisting the redressal, punishment, and corrections mechanisms in the school. The policy also states various preventive measures and child friendly arrangements which the school practices to ensure pertinent child-care.

The policy has **four sections** divided as follows:

Section 1: Offences

Section 2: Complaint Procedures

Section 3: Redressals, Consequences, and Corrections

Section 4: Preventions and Child Friendly arrangements

The Policy Statement:

Vidya Devi Jindal School, Hisar, is committed to providing a safe environment to all its students free from discrimination on any grounds. The school operates a **zero-tolerance** policy for any form of harassment, treats all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations and charges. Any person found to have harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including rustication from the school. All complaints of harassment of any nature are taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimized for making such a complaint.

The policy in certain contexts states measures to be taken in reference to the already set school's SOPs, Codes of Conduct and all other formal bylaws and is to be governed by the same.

SECTION:1- OFFENCES

Offences that come under P3CH:

Child Protection is the protection of children from violence, harassment, exploitation, abuse and neglect. UNICEF uses the term 'child protection' to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour, and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. Under the purview of the same, this policy has been framed. Following are the offences that come under P3CH:

[A 1] Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

A single incident can amount to harassment. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". Harassment also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

It is unlawful as per school policy to harass a person because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. It also includes conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment). Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical conduct including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour;
- offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content or the display of offensive materials;
- unwanted jokes, banter, mocking, mimicking or belittling a person.

[A 1.1] Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient. The matter of consent (both parties willingly entering into such activity) doesn't become a clause as the population is under 18 years of age and isn't qualifying the age of consent (if above 18, is dependent on the custodian i.e. the school which strictly prohibits such behaviour)

Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal.

Examples of conduct or behaviour which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

[A 1.2] Physical conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. touching, pinching
- The use of any threat or rewards to solicit sexual favours

[A 1.3] Verbal conduct

- Comments on anyone's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex/gender of a person
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages

[A 1.4] Non-verbal conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually suggestive gestures

- Whistling
- Leering

[A 2] Inclusions

[A 2.1] Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment regardless of the gender. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

[A 2.2] Anyone, including minors, who harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with the internal policy of the school (SOPs and codes of conduct).

[A 2.3] All type of harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within academic, hostel or school premises. It is also prohibited outside, including at social events, trips, training sessions or conferences which are conducted/escorted by the school.

[B 1] Bullying: Bullying is the unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. The examples of bullying include by are not limited to-

[B 1.1] Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:

- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

[B 1.2] Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:

- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Telling other children not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public

[B 1.3] Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:

- Hitting/kicking/pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things
- Making mean or rude hand gestures

[B 1.4] Cyber-bullying: Cyber bullying is the use of technology like the internet, email, cell phones, social media or pictures to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target a person. But when an adult is involved, it may mean cyber harassment or cyber stalking, a crime that can have legal consequences and also include imprisonment. Any such act of bullying using virtual means is strictly prohibited.

[B 1.5] Stalking: Stalking has been defined as following someone, despite the clear indication of disinterest to such contact, or monitoring of the use of the internet or electronic communication, keeping track of events, engagements etc. further leading to discomfort and stress.

[C 1] Child Abuse:

Child abuse is when an adult or a caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and emotional abuse

[C 1.1] Physical Abuse: Physical abuse of a child is when a parent, caregiver or any adult causes any non-accidental physical injury to a child. for example, burning, beating, or breaking bones.

[C 1.2] Verbal abuse: Verbal abuse involves harming a child by, for example, belittling them or threatening physical or sexual acts.

[C 1.3] Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when an adult uses a child for sexual purposes or involves a child in sexual acts. It also includes when a child who is older or more powerful uses another child for sexual gratification or excitement.

[C 1.4] Emotional Abuse: When a parent or caregiver harms a child's mental and social development, or causes severe emotional harm, it is considered emotional abuse. While a single incident may be abuse, most often emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour that causes damage over time.

[C 1.5] Child Neglect: Child neglect is when a parent or caregiver or an adult who is entitled to, does not give the care, supervision, affection, and support needed for a child's health, safety and well-being. It occurs when someone does not provide the necessities of life to a child, either intentionally or with reckless disregard for the child's well-being.

Child neglect includes:

- Physical neglect and inadequate supervision
- Emotional neglect - withholding love or comfort or affection.
- Medical neglect - when medical care is withheld.
- Educational neglect

SECTION 2: COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Anyone who is subject to any misconduct should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. VDJS recognizes that at times it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser. If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of the said nature i.e. the school counsellor, Housemistress, principal or any other adult in which she can confide who shall later inform the designated personnel.

When a designated person receives a complaint of any misconduct, he/she will:

- ✓ provide psychological first aid and support
- ✓ immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- ✓ ascertain the views of the victim
- ✓ ensure that the victim understands the school's procedures for dealing with the complaint
- ✓ keep a confidential record of all discussions

Throughout the complaint procedure, a victim is entitled to be helped by a counsellor within the school. VDJS has a counsellor and a Dean of student welfare whose expertise enable them to assist victims of any misconduct, in severe cases, a referral to a clinical psychologist or a psychiatrist shall also be made by the authorized personnel.

Formal complaints mechanism

The person carrying out the investigation (the authorized personnel) will:

- ✓ interview the victim and the alleged harasser
- ✓ interview other relevant third parties
- ✓ decide whether or not the incident(s) of the misconduct took place
- ✓ produce a report detailing the investigations, findings and any recommendations
- ✓ if it took place, decide what the appropriate redressal following the school code of conduct
- ✓ keep a record of all actions taken
- ✓ ensure that the all records concerning the matter are kept confidential
- ✓ ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible.

SECTION 3: REDRESSALS, CONEQUENCES AND CORRECTIONS

Sanctions and Disciplinary measures

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the misconduct. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of misconducts are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal/rustication of the harasser.

[3 A] Complaint Redressal System:

VDJS has a well-defined system of ensuring that there is no abuse, neglect and maltreatment of any child. This shall include the staff being aware of what constitutes abuse, neglect and maltreatment as well as early indicators of abuse, neglect and maltreatment and how to respond to these challenges.

- VDJS has an Ethics Committee, chaired by the Dean of Students' Welfare and four other members from the faculty.
- School also has a Discipline committee headed by the School Administrator.
- The committee enquires into every complaint, records the statements, and produce a written report of every case.
- The Principal discusses the case with the committee members and then intimate the final decision to the concerned people.
- There is a system of addressing the grievances of children.
- They are free to make their complaint to any authority at any point of time.
- Every child has a right to complain/ voice her concern anonymously also.
- Suggestion boxes are kept in the school building and in the boarding houses, where children may give their suggestions or complaints.

[3 B] Disciplinary Actions/Consequences:

- ✓ The action taken shall be commensurate with the nature and degree of violation and the age of the child.
- ✓ In case anyone is found guilty, there is a very clear policy of consequences. Entire staff and student body is made aware of this policy of the consequences of inappropriate actions.
- ✓ VDJS has a disciplinary committee that investigates every complaint made by any member of the organisation. This committee consists of five senior members of the faculty, headed by the Administrator of the school.
- ✓ An enquiry, in accordance with the P3CH of the institution, shall commence no later than 24 hours after the incident has been reported.
- ✓ The outcome of complaints and the redressal mechanism shall be informed to the child or their representative within 7 days of the complaint being made.
- ✓ The complaints and action taken by the Committee shall be duly recorded.
- ✓ The committee must remember that complaint should be incident specific
- ✓ General and vague allegations should be avoided
- ✓ Exact Details, Dates, Witnesses & Documents are also important
- ✓ Parents are informed about proceedings of the committee after the complete interrogations if the case demands the same

The committee enquires every case in a detailed and unbiased manner, by interviewing the complainant and the culprit and submit the enquiry report to the Principal for necessary actions as per the code of conduct of the school.

*The school would ensure that the child offender shall not be subject to any mental/physical harassment or isolation beyond the consequences decided by the discipline committee.

Steps of dealing with unacceptable behaviour:

Any type of unacceptable behaviour of students and staff is taken very seriously. Depending upon the time, intensity, and duration of the unacceptable behaviour, the culprit is given the consequences.

The following steps are important for the purpose of enquiry:

- Receipt and acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint
- Meeting the complainant to explore options
- *Documentation*-Create an independent confidential file of the complaint and all subsequent related documentation.
- *Review code of conduct & policy*-Have a clear knowledge and understanding of the rules and regulations/acceptable behavior.
- Making a list of all the dates and events relating to the written complaint as well as the names of witnesses, wherever applicable
- The complainant or respondent may include the names of people believed to have witnessed, or those who may have been aware of matters related to the complaint.
- The Committee can at its discretion call any person as a witness, who it believes, has something to contribute to the inquiry process.
- Both the parties shall be given an opportunity of being heard
- Interviews are meant to obtain information that is relevant to the complaint from individuals.

- Interviews should be conducted with each person separately and in confidence.
- The Committee reviews the information gathered and their factual relevance and identifies the substance of each aspect of the complaint.
- The committee also comments on any underlying factor(s) that may have contributed to the incident.
- Based on all aspects, the Committee gives its recommendations which may include:
 - Where it has been unable to uphold the complaint, it shall recommend no action.
 - Where it upholds the Complaint, it may recommend such action as stated within the relevant Policy or Rules.
- All responses, documents and statements are required to be kept confidential

Depending on the type of complaint, the consequences will be according to the school's bylaws and policies.

Confidentiality is maintained to protect sensitive personal data. Information is only shared and handled by the committee members for the purpose of knowing the basis of the incident and not curbing personal curiosities, that is, access to the information is limited to the conduct of one's official duties. Only individuals who have legitimate reasons to access the information can receive it.

SECTION 4: PREVENTIONS AND CHILD FRIENDLY ARRANGEMENTS

VDJS has a built-in system and structure to prevent any untoward in the form of measures and preventions which are as follows:

[4 A] Organisational Structure:

VDJS as an organisation is headed by the principal and co-supported by the Administrator. It has a large team of teaching and non-teaching staff, that collectively care for the physical and psychological needs of children. There is a well-defined pastoral structure that is directly responsible for child's safety and security.

The entire student body is divided into four houses and each house is represented by students from classes IV to XII. There are four boarding houses that hosts approximately 175(+) students each, from different classes.

- Each boarding house comprises of a team, which includes number of adults in the hostels - the House Mistress, Assistant House mistress, Dorm parents and the support staff; who take responsibility for the safety and security and physical and emotional needs of every child.
- There is a system of attendance three times a day – morning, afternoon and at night.
- Every attendance system is being monitored by the authorities.
- Children follow a proper daily schedule, in which they are supervised at all times by responsible adult/adults.
- There are regular rounds in the hostels during the day as well at night to ensure that all children in the hostels are safe – physically, emotionally, and mentally.
- Regular meetings with children by the House Mistress, Assistant House Mistress, Dorm Parents, Mentors and Prefects (only in the presence of HM/AHM).
- VDJS promotes a strong mentor system – that ensures that children are not facing any problem in the school or in the boarding houses. Each mentor is allotted with few students and the mentor is responsible for ensuring the general wellbeing of the mentees.
- Every new student is attached to a buddy who guides her in the boarding houses as well as in school. The buddy a veteran student, who belongs to the same grade and same house.
- Sessions on safety and security for the students by the school counsellor are taken to sensitize them against child abuse and harassment of various forms.
- Teaching as well as the boarding house staff undergo workshops/seminars to get sensitized towards problems which are faced by children at different stages of life.
- Every teaching and pastoral staff member undergoes workshops regarding identification of early symptoms of ill psychological wellbeing and personal conduct, to maintain students with healthy minds.
- Staff is supposed to report to the P3CH Committee/Discipline Committee immediately, in case they come to know that any such act of harassment has taken place.

[4 B] Staff Recruitment:

- At the time of employment, the school authorities take the following documents from each employee - Proof of identity, Proof of Residence (both temporary and permanent), PAN Card, Aadhaar Card, Letter of experience and

good conduct from the previous employer, Attested proof of academic/ educational qualifications and previous work experience. Original documents are verified. Each employee undergoes a medical examination prior to employment.

- Each staff goes through a police verification and a personality assessment (psychometric test) at the time of appointment.
- All new recruits are provided with a copy of the Staff Service Regulation, Induction Booklet and Orientation Booklet of the school.
- Every new member of the school is attached to a senior mentor (Buddy), who guides and helps him/her to accept and adapt the school policies and code of conduct.

[4 C] Infrastructure:

VDJS as an organisation provides an inbuilt mechanism of infrastructure that takes complete care of the safety and security of every child at all the places that a child may visit.

- i. All classroom premises are constructed in a manner so as to keep children in a safe and protected zone.
- ii. The classrooms and the boarding houses are well lit and ventilated.
- iii. Wellness centre is accessible for children at all times.
- iv. Evacuation drills are the part of the school curriculum to sensitise children for disaster management.
- v. CCTV -The School campus is under the CCTV coverage and affords effective monitoring and surveillance.

CCTV cameras are in place up in the academic block, all the laboratories, sports field, main gate area, residential area and also in the boarding houses. The movement of students and staff is always monitored by the authorities. These cameras are regularly checked by the IT professionals. Entire staff and students are made aware of the presence of CCTV cameras, so that everyone is vigilant of their conduct at all times.

- vi. Suggestion boxes are kept in the school building and in the boarding houses, where children may give their suggestions or complaints and these boxes are periodically checked by the authorities.

[4 D] Cyber Security:

The school ensures the responsible use of computers and other information technology and refrain from inappropriate usage, especially that relating to the creation, viewing, downloading or distribution of any inappropriate or offensive material, including, but not restricted to, abusive images of children, or pornography.

- a. Social networking sites are blocked from the main server.
- b. Children are sensitised towards the uses and misuses of technology by the school counsellor.
- c. Senior students attend workshops on cyber security. In these workshops they are taught the precautions that they should adopt to avoid cyber bullying and the techniques of identifying the early symptoms of cyber bullying.
- d. In case of any type of cyber bullying, children are asked to report immediately to the authorities or any other responsible person.
- e. The school has a robust IT Policy which is signed by the parent and the student at the time of admission.

[4 E] School's Initiatives:

- The school adopts 'Hands off' policy for all the residents (Students and staff).
- No employee is permitted to connect with any child on social networking sites.
- No adult is permitted to click photo of any child – except for official purposes.
- Teachers can be friendly with their students but are not supposed to be their friends.
- Teachers are not permitted to come too close to children – should avoid hugging.
- Teacher to teacher hugging is also avoided in front of children.
- Dress code for staff is specified.
- POCSO booklet/guidelines is made available in the school library.
- Life skill education has been embedded with school curriculum.
- Child centered approach is being adopted i. e. Child centered and rights-based approach in order to keep children sharply in-focus in all our planning and direct work.
- No child is permitted to move anywhere alone – unescorted.
- In case of emergency, even at night, a child will always be escorted by a female adult.
- The staff is trained and sensitized of what constitutes abuse, neglect and maltreatment as well as early indicator of abuse, neglect and maltreatment and how to respond in such situations.
- Staff is also trained to handle needs of special need children.

- VDJS believes in transparency of information and actions in relation to the consequences of child abuse.
- **Self-Defense** – VDJS strongly believes that its girls should be so empowered, that they can face the challenges of the outside world. Training of self-defense is a major initiative in this direction. Every student undergoes a self-defense training session at least twice in a year, in which they are taught the skills to prevent any type of threat to self. It makes them more confident and empowered.
- **Holistic Development of the child:** - School administration is very conscious about holistic development of every child. School emphasises on regular meditation sessions and value-based teaching for the students. We believe in empowering children to face all types of challenges, making them mentally and emotionally strong. Students are exposed to sessions on 'Universal Ethics' by the staff. It has become a part of their curriculum.

[4 F] Protocols for students, staff, and visitors

As per school's SOPs mentioned in school policies and code of conduct.

[4 F1] Behaviour Protocols for other visitors (in addition to the above)

The behavioral expectations for the visitors are the same as that for the members of this organisation. However, school takes lots of precautions, so that safety and security of children can be maintained.

[4 F1.1] Visitors who come to meet children:

- All the students stay in the boarding houses and are not permitted to have a direct interaction with any visitor.
- At the time of admission, parents are issued five visitor cards. Every card contains the photo and signature of the visitor authorised by the parents. Each card is counter signed by the parent.
- In case someone needs to visit the child for some purpose – birthdays, leave, any other reason, the visitor should carry the authorised visitor card.
- Visitors card is checked at the main gate area before they make entry in the visitors' register.
- The visitors meeting areas are restricted to the reception of the school, under the supervision of the school staff and that area is always covered under the CCTV surveillance.

[4 F1.2] Official visitors:

Visitors who may come to take workshops or are present in the school campus for any other official purposes.

- The coordinator of the event/anyone who has asked any visitor to come to school, is overall responsible for their conduct.
- The security officer is being provided with the information about the visit.
- Every visitor makes an entry in the register at the main gate area and is issued with a visitors' card.
- The areas being visited by the officials is also restricted.

Implementation

VDJS ensures that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. It is included in the staff policy handbook. All new employees are trained on the content of this policy as part of their induction into the school. Every year, VDJS organizes for all employees a refresher training course on the content of this policy.

Compulsory Reporting Obligation

Staff, Employees and Students need to report any hint, gossip or suggestion, observation, suspicion of any allegation without exception to a member of the school authorities. The report needs to explain the circumstance of the source of the information so the investigating officer can make an informed decision to assess a rating/prioritization of a case.

Policy Dissemination

All staff members, and employees serving at School will receive a copy of this policy and sign a statement that they have read and will abide by it, both in terms of their own conduct and in terms of their professional responsibility for the conduct of colleagues and students. A copy of the Student Protection policy will be distributed in the orientation manual for new administrators, staff, and employees. An acknowledgement of receiving this policy and having read it will be kept in their personnel file.

With changes to the policy, all staff members will be advised of the changes and re-sign the new policy. Students will also be advised of the new policy.

Policy Review

There is a system of regular feedback and follow up from different segments of people at different points of time. It helps in monitoring the security system of the school.

- Regular feedbacks are taken from children about their mentors, pastoral staff, academics, boarding houses, facilities being provided to them and all other relevant areas.
- Every feedback gets analyzed by the authorities for necessary actions and interventions.
- The policy is subject to flexibility post analysis and interpretation of the periodical reviews.

I understand the Student Protection Policy and agree to abide by these guidelines as written.

Staff Name : _____

Signature : _____

Date : _____

(Note: To be kept in the personnel file.)
