

Essential Questions for School Communities

to ensure the safeguarding and protection of children in schools

International Task Force on Child Protection
School Evaluation Committee, 29th September 2015

Rationale:

The School Evaluation Committee of the International Task Force on Child Protection was asked to collect, review and assess current external processes, standards and indicators used to regulate, evaluate and monitor school practices designed to ensure Child Protection and Well-being, and determine what measures need to be put into place to ensure their effectiveness. The Committee conducted extensive research into effective child protection practices and reviewed existing requirements of school evaluation, accreditation and inspection agencies operating within national and international contexts.

In developing the Committee's recommendations to these agencies, recognition has been given to the requirement for schools to conform to legislation within the countries in which they operate and the extent to which each of the agencies are themselves subject to the legislation, regularity framework and expectations of their sponsoring organisations and countries.

The results of the June 2015 Training Needs Survey of schools conducted by the International Task Force on Child Protection, in cooperation with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), demonstrated the need for such comprehensive standards to be universally adopted and the need to provide appropriate and effective training to enable schools to meet these standards.

Collaboration between the many school evaluation, accreditation and inspection agencies has been outstanding and it is envisaged that all agencies will ensure that the recommended ideals for effective safeguarding and child protection be adopted in full, in whatever format best suits each individual agency.

The Committee's recommendations fall into two sections:

- A) A set of **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS** that must be comprehensively considered and which form the basis of whole school community dialogue on the school's policies and practices related to safeguarding and child protection.
- B) A set of comprehensive **EXPECTATIONS** which school evaluation, accreditation and inspection agencies will adopt as essential requirements within their evaluation programmes. *The agreed recommendations are expected to be published in November 2015.*

In developing the Essential Questions the committee has taken into account the work and findings of the ITFCP School Recruitment Committee and the ITCFP School Policies and Resources Committee.

Members of the Committee wish to thank the representatives of the many organisations that have contributed to their work. The dialogue and discussion have shaped, formed and refined the Committee's final recommendations. In particular the Committee is indebted to the work of the African Association of International Schools and specifically the advocacy of Dennis Larkin.

Essential Questions:

Schools have a duty of care to protect children and prevent them from harm, and act with a sense of urgency if a child is at risk of harm. These discussion questions focus on child protection in the context of abuse and neglect from any person. These include those in authority, those entrusted with the care of a child, or any person with access to children in the school. These questions are applicable to the safety and protection of day, home-stay and boarding students. The school should build partnerships with external agencies to enhance child protection practices. All questions are asked with reference to the regulatory framework, unique cultural context and sensitivities of a country/state. The role of the school in child protection cases is also determined by this cultural context and specific regulatory framework.

1. Has the school created a definition of child protection with ensuing policies/procedures which are fully understood and followed by Board Members/Governors/Owners, school leaders, staff, students, parents and volunteers?
2. Do the school's culture and values support and encourage good practice leading to enhanced child protection?
3. Does the school comply with all legal and statutory requirements / obligations in relation to child protection within the country in which it operates? Does it have effective working relationships with support agencies (where they exist)?
4. Does the school have robust policy/procedures, which are successfully implemented, to ensure that it only employs and engages people of sound moral character? If so, is the school compliant?
5. Does the school have robust and fully implemented policies/procedures to ensure that all helpers, volunteers and contract workers are people of sound moral character and suitable to work with children?
6. Does the school communicate publicly its child protection policy/procedures?
7. Are child protection policies and procedures reviewed with sufficient regularity and systematically?
8. Is there a designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) in the school with oversight of child protection procedures and related school policies?
9. Do the school's operational procedures support and encourage good practice leading to enhanced child protection, including:
 - a. Training and support;
 - b. Identification/Disclosure; and
 - c. Reporting in line with policy.
10. Are the school's buildings and facilities, security and protection measures compatible with child protection and related policies?
11. Does child protection education and on-line/virtual safety form part of the written and taught curriculum?

12. Are students, staff and volunteers aware of what to do if they feel uncomfortable or have concerns about mistreatment or abuse?
13. What measures are taken by the school to ensure the safety and protection of students in homestay accommodation or on residential trips and student-exchange programmes, and to what extent are they successful?