

SAFETY AND SECURITY GUIDELINES OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL (SSGCS)



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Introduction

This SSGCS is a comprehensive set up of guidelines that define our commitment to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and lays down the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Scope of SSGCS

The School follows a 'zero tolerance' approach to any act of violence, bullying, sexual abuse etc., in the school premises, school buses and such extended environments, as defined in this SSGCS.



This SSGCS covers abuse, harassment, and offenses that can occur in school campus and in premises under control of the Institution, as well as extended environments including the modes of transport.

This SSGCS comprises key elements to guide behaviour and practices of personnel and individuals in relation to the School such as prevention of abuse, complaint mechanisms and response, recruitment, disciplinary action for misconduct, monitoring and review etc.

Applicability

This SSGCS aims to protect students and applies to all School Staff/ Teachers/ Visitors/ Parents/ Visiting Faculty/ Third Party Service Providers under Vidya Mandir Society, who directly/indirectly interact with students.

Conformity with Laws in force in India

This SSGCS is guided by the existing legal frameworks of child protection in India.

This SSGCS is in conformity with all relevant laws in force in India such as Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, The Indian Penal Code, 1860, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and The Information Technology Act, 2000, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and shall include any subordinate or delegated legislation made from time to time.

In the event, any part of this SSGCS is contrary to any law(s) in force, such part shall be deemed to be null and void.

Any term not defined in this SSGCS, shall bear the meaning given to it under the relevant applicable law.

Offenses and other Acts covered under this SSGCS

The following offences and acts constitute the cause of action for making a complaint under this SSGCS:

- a) Cyber Bullying: means any form of intimidation or harassment, using a computer, communication device or computer network or the Internet;
- b) Cyber Stalking: means monitoring the child by internet, email or any other form of electronic communication.

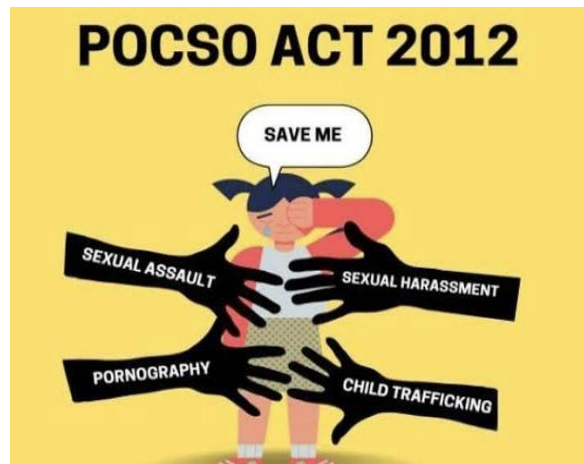
c) Mental Harassment: “Mental Harassment” means and includes insults, ridicule, humiliation, name-calling and repeated threats to cause physical violence to a child;

d) Penal Offenses: “Penal Offence” means any offence that is punishable under the law, such as, offences defined and punishable under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and/ or POCSO Act, 2012 and/or the Juvenile Justice Act or any other law in force on the date of the incident;

e) Physical Violence: “Physical Violence” means any act or conduct which is of such a nature so as to cause bodily pain, harm, or danger to life, limb, or health or impair the health or development of the child;

f) Ragging / Bullying: “Bullying” or “Ragging” means any disorderly conduct whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness any other student, indulging in rowdy or indisciplined activities which cause or is likely to cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in a fresher or a junior student or asking the students to do any act or perform something which such student will not do in the ordinary course and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student.

g) Sexual Assault: “Sexual Assault” has the same meaning as assigned to it in Section 7 of POCSO Act, 2012.



h) Sexual Harassment: “Sexual Harassment” has the same meaning as assigned to it in Section 11 of POCSO Act, 2012;

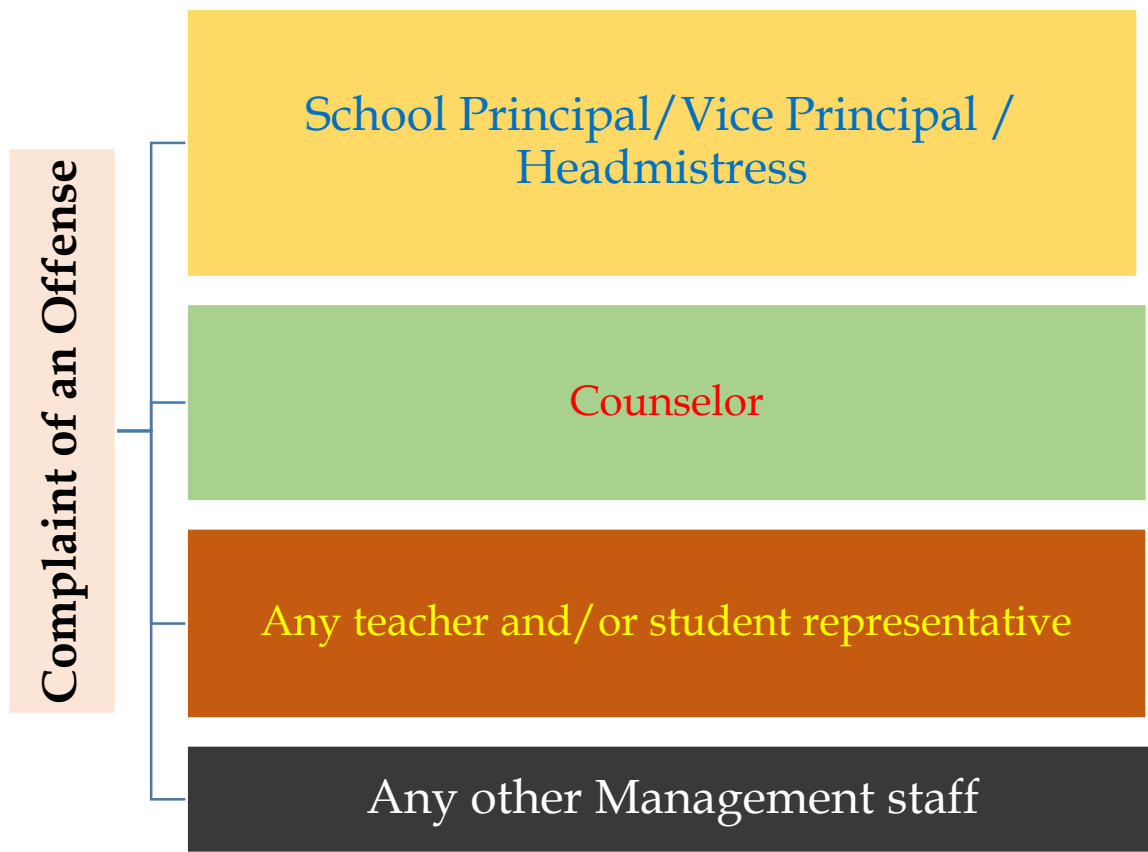
i) Stalking: “Stalking” means following a child and contacting or attempting to contact such child to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by such child.

It is clarified that the aforesaid acts and offenses are not mutually exclusive to each other but may be overlapping with one another, and shall be dealt with in addition to one another.

Complaint of an Offense

A complaint in writing by a student and/ or parent(s) of such student complaining of any act that constitutes a penal offense under the law may be handed over to either of the following persons:-

- a) School Principal/Vice Principal / Headmistress
- b) Counselor
- c) Any teacher and/or student representative
- d) Any other Management staff



In the event the complaint constitutes an offence under POCSO Act (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012), the same shall be forwarded to the School POSCO Committee and the procedures as established by such committee shall be followed.

With respect to offenses under POCSO, the School is duty bound to report the offense to the concerned law enforcement agencies in terms of Section 19 and Section 21 of the Act.

The School will cooperate with the concerned law enforcement agencies inquiring into and/ or investigating complaints of penal offense(s).

Complaint Redressal Mechanism for Child Sexual Abuse Cases

If a person has knowledge that an offense has been committed or belief or apprehension that an offense is likely to be committed must report to any member of the School POSCO Committee (SPC).

Such persons as stated above should not conduct their own investigation or look into the matter. There should not be any delay in reporting the matter to the School POSCO Committee (SPC).

The School POSCO Committee must hold a meeting and immediately report the matter to the local police/ Special juvenile police unit/ State commission for protection of child rights.

Minutes of the meeting should be maintained and signed by all members. A copy of the same should be shared with the authorities.

When the matter is closed or withdrawn for any reason whatsoever, the School must prepare a post incident report/ closure report to the person concerned.

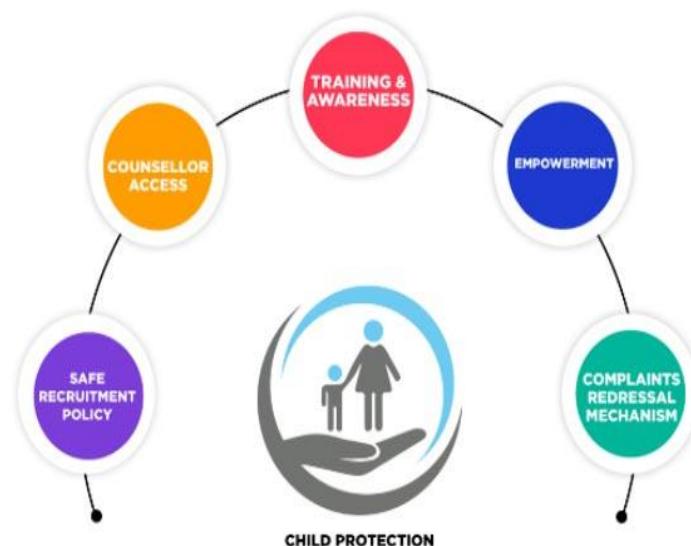
Code of Conduct

All staff members, external personnel and visitors shall follow the prescribed Code of Conduct to safeguard the child from any incidence of abuse.

Code of Conduct for the Staff

1. Be conscious of and respect the privacy and dignity of each and every child.
2. Be visible and not in a secluded place, while in contact with children at the workplace.

3. Respect and encourage children's voice and views.
4. Educate children about their rights, issues of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
5. Be affectionate, caring and understanding to the requirements and needs of the children.
6. Be responsive in case any special need of the child arises such as health issues or emotional support.
7. Have a sense of accountability, in order to deter any poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.
8. Immediately report any suspicious behaviour/suspected occurrence of abuse. It is a criminal offence to conceal or abet incidents of child abuse, and is mandatory to report such offences.
9. Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, nationality, ethnicity, disability or other status.
10. Comply with all relevant Indian and State legislation, including all child related laws.



It is **NOT** appropriate for staff to

1. Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
2. Physically assault or physically abuse the child.

3. Use language that is discriminatory, abusive or hurtful to the child.
4. Develop relationships with the child that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
5. Store obscene / pornographic material (photographs, video clips) on their mobile phones and showing to children.
6. Browse, publish or transmit material in any form which depicts children engaged in sexually explicit act or conduct.
7. Create text or digital images and/or collect, seek, browse, download, advertise, promote, exchange or distribute material in any electronic form depicting children in obscene or indecent or sexually explicit manner.
8. Show or talk of content that is sexual in nature or take photographs of children.
9. Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
10. Condone and/or participate in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
11. Use physical punishment on children.
12. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
13. Stigmatize or humiliate a child.
14. Act in a manner that puts the child at risk.
15. Engage in any sort of physical contact with a child that may make the child or an observer feel uncomfortable, or that may be seen by an observer to be violating boundaries.
16. Engage in any communication with a child within or outside of school duties, that may make the child uncomfortable or that may be seen by an observer to be violating boundaries.
17. Conduct their own investigation into allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour

- it is an employee's duty to report the matter to his/her Principals/Vice Principal/ Headmistress /Child protection and safety coordinator.

18. It is important to note that whether or not a particular behaviour or action constitutes inappropriate behaviour will be a matter determined by the organization having regard to all of the circumstances, including past behaviour, and allegations or suspicions related to such behaviour.
19. Every complaint regarding inappropriate behaviour or communication with a child, shall be taken cognizance of by the management of the School. However, whether or not a particular behaviour or action constitutes inappropriate conduct, or is in contravention of the aforesaid Code of Conduct outlined in this SSGCS, will be a matter determined by the management of the School, based on the report of the relevant committee, having regard to the relevant facts and circumstances. The findings and decision of the management of the School shall be final.

Prevention of Ragging and Bullying

To prevent ragging in the school campus/ premises or school buses, the Principal and the teaching staff should interact with students especially freshers and apprise them of their rights as well as an obligation to fight against ragging apart from complaining about the same and to generate confidence in their mind that any instance of ragging to which they are subjected or which comes in their knowledge should forthwith be brought to the knowledge of the Principal and/ or staff of the School and that such complaints shall be promptly dealt with while protecting the complainants from any harassment by the perpetrators of ragging.

The Principal and other senior members of the School staff should conduct meetings of teachers, parent(s) and students collectively or in groups, on bi-annual basis, to spread awareness that ragging is a reprehensible act.



Recruitment

The School shall undertake child safeguarding measures while appointing new staff and orient them on this SSGCS.

As a part of the recruitment process, interviews of the applicants are conducted by an interviewing panel. The panel assesses the applicant's attitude towards children as also his/ her ability to safeguard and promote welfare of children. The School clearly talks about the knowledge of Child Safety & Protection to the interviewee.

Every member of the staff is given an ID Card which he/ she must carry all the time mandatorily.

The School officially applies for police verification and background checks of the applicants.

All newly selected candidates must also provide a signed affidavit to the educational institution that they have not been

accused of offense under the POCSO Act, 2012 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act,2015.

Regular training programs on all aspects of child safety are to be conducted by the School.

All staff members are to be continuously made aware of “Do’s and Don’t(s) in School Premises” which covers principles such as ‘No touch policy’, etc.

Briefing on Do’s and Don’t(s) is to be done on a regular basis so as to ensure that the concept of Child care & protection is ingrained in the minds and behaviour of all staff members.

As a part of preventive measures for safety and security of students, visits to the school by outside visitors is strictly regulated. Visitors’ management system has been introduced whereby the visitor has only controlled access and a written confirmation to the security for having met the concerned person only.

All school buses, provided by the transport providers, have qualified drivers and conductors. The transport provider to strictly adheres to the Supreme Court Guidelines and RTO and other school bus safety regulations.

Safety Guidelines for Online Learning

Guidelines for Teachers

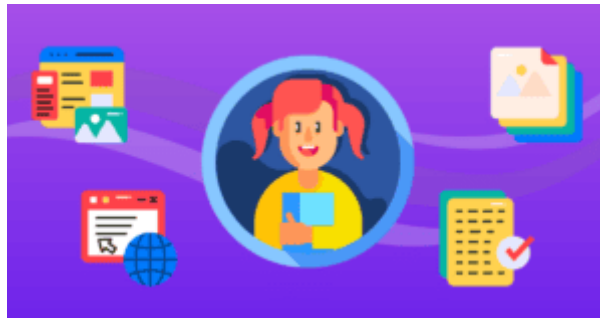
1. Continue to abide by the recommendations and guidelines as outlined in this SSGCS.
2. In case of suspected or observed child abuse of any kind, follow the reporting process outlined in this SSGCS and inform the Principal.
3. Proactively check on the wellbeing of the students.

4. Maintain communication channels on appropriate platforms, do not interact with students over social media platforms i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter or any other social media platform.
5. Ensure that the broadcasting location, clothing, surrounding environment, language, behaviour, and body language is professional, appropriate, and culturally sensitive.
6. Full names are to be used as a display name in virtual spaces that you interact with students. No abbreviations, nicknames or characters that resemble alphabets are to be used.
7. Norms to be set up with students about what can be shared in the group, and appropriate timings to do so.
8. Sharing of personal details to be avoided including, contact information, and details of day-to-day life unless in the context of a learning session.
9. Check that the online learning platform being used is secure and with appropriate controls over any intrusions, screen sharing or unwanted attendees.
10. Students to be advised to engage in the learning session from a common space within earshot of parents/guardians wherever possible or in a space known to parents/guardians.
11. Ensure that the content that is being created, used, or shared is age-appropriate and culturally sensitive.
12. Student work/data/opinions or images/videos from online learning sessions is not to be shared without taking consent from the student(s) involved.

Guidelines for Students

1. Students must use their full name and an appropriate profile picture on any platform when interacting with other students and teachers.

2. Students must not share personal information about themselves or anyone else on any platforms.
3. Students must not share images, videos or audio clips with personal or inappropriate content of themselves or anyone else.
4. Students must inform their parents/guardians about any and all online sessions and interactions.



Continuous Assessment and Monitoring of SSGCS

This SSGCS shall be comprehensively assessed periodically so as to improvise the same in line with contemporaneous society.

An audit called “Child Safety Checklist” shall be conducted annually by the School POSCO Committee constituted by School Management. The audit shall be a critical analysis and evaluation of the safety and security of children at large studying in the school. An audit report shall be prepared and published annually.

The various actions required to be taken under this SSGCS, such as forwarding the complaint of a penal offense to the law enforcement agency, becoming a co-complainant, seeking legal opinion, taking disciplinary action against the wrongdoers and all other acts in connection with this SSGCS, shall be done by a committee or committees or Senior Staff Members who may be nominated for this purpose by the Management of the School.

The School has presently allocated responsibilities of protection of its students to the members of the School POSCO Committee.

This SSGCS may be revised or amended from time to time, by the Management of the School or by a committee appointed for this purpose.

Dissemination of this SSGCS

A copy of this SSGCS is given to all staff members and they shall acknowledge that they have received, read, understood and will abide by the SSGCS.