

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Bawa educational centre

1. Policy Statement

Bawa educational centre is committed to creating a safe, caring and supportive environment where all children are protected from harm. All staff, volunteers, parents, and visitors share the responsibility of safeguarding children's welfare and upholding their rights as outlined in the **Kenyan Constitution, Children Act (2022)** and **Basic Education Regulations**.

The best interest of the child is our top priority.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to:

1. Protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation.
2. Guide staff and management in responding to child protection concerns.
3. Ensure the school is safe, trusted, and accountable to the community.
4. Protect the school and management from legal or reputational risks through clear procedures.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All teachers and support staff
- School management and directors
- Volunteers and interns
- Parents, guardians and visitors
- Any person interacting with children within school premises or during school activities

4. Definitions

- **Child:** Any person below 18 years.

- **Child abuse:** Any action or failure to act that harms a child. This includes:
 - **Physical abuse** – hitting, slapping, harsh punishment
 - **Emotional abuse** – insults, threats, humiliation
 - **Sexual abuse** – inappropriate touching, exposure, exploitation
 - **Neglect** – failing to provide basic care
 - **Child labor** – using a child for work that harms their growth and development

5. Guiding Principles

1. **Best interest of the child** comes first.
2. **Zero tolerance to abuse**—no form of abuse is acceptable.
3. **Confidentiality**—information is shared only with authorized persons.
4. **Respect and dignity**—all children must be treated fairly, without discrimination.
5. **Community involvement**—parents and guardians are partners in protection.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

School Management

- Ensure all staff understand and follow this policy.
- Appoint a **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**.
- Keep records of all reported cases.
- Ensure safe recruitment procedures.

Child Protection Officer (CPO)

- Receive and document child protection concerns.
- Report serious cases to management and relevant authorities (Chief, Police, DCS).
- Follow up to ensure action is taken.
- Train staff on basic child protection.

Teachers and Staff

- Maintain safe, respectful interactions with children.
- Report any suspicion, disclosure, or evidence of abuse immediately.
- Do not use corporal punishment or abusive language.
- Follow behavior guidelines.

Parents/Guardians

- Support safe behavior at home and in school.
- Report concerns affecting their child's safety.
- Follow school rules on child pick-up/drop-off.
- Should not harm or abuse their child either at home or at school

7. Safe Practices at School

Behaviour Guidelines for Staff

- Use positive discipline (no shouting, beating, using harsh words or humiliation).
- Avoid being alone with a child behind closed doors.
- Keep physical contact appropriate and necessary (e.g., comforting a crying child).
- No taking photos of children without permission from management.
- No gifts to children that could create favoritism or suspicion.
- The staff should maintain healthy and safe boundaries between them and the child

School Environment

- Maintain clean, safe classrooms and play areas.
- Ensure safe arrival and departure procedures.
- Provide supervision during all activities, including toilets and playground.

8. Reporting Procedures

Any staff member who notices or suspects abuse must report immediately.

Step-by-Step Reporting

1. **Observe or receive information** (signs, child tells you, witness event).
2. **Report to the Child Protection Officer** the same day.
3. **CPO documents** the concern and informs School Management.
4. **Management and CPO** decide next steps, which may include:
 - Talking to the child in a safe, calm way
 - Informing the parent/guardian (unless they are suspected)
 - Reporting to local authorities:
 - **Department of Children Services (DCS)**
 - **Chief/Sub-chief**

- **Nearest police post/GBV desk**

5. **Keep supportive follow-up** with the child.

Note: Staff should NOT investigate the case themselves.

9. Handling Allegations Against Staff

If a staff member is suspected or accused:

- The child will be protected immediately.
- The staff member may be suspended from duty during investigations.
- The case will be reported to relevant authorities.
- The school will cooperate fully with investigations.
- Disciplinary action will follow if the allegation is proven.

10. Confidentiality

- All reports and documents will be kept private.
- Only the CPO, management, social worker and relevant authorities may access information.
- Gossip or sharing sensitive information is not allowed.

11. Safe Recruitment

The school management will:

- Interview and vet all new staff.
- Request references from previous employers.
- Conduct background checks where possible.
- For staff, volunteers, or partners based in the United States, background checks are typically conducted by the **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** and are known as **Identity History Summary Checks**.
- Train new staff on child protection before they begin work.

12. Communication with Parents

- Parents will be informed of this policy during admission.
- The school will discuss child safety during meetings and share updates regularly.
- Any major safety concern will be communicated promptly.

13. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed every **12 months** or earlier if needed.
- Staff training will be done at least once a year.

14. Declaration

All staff, volunteers, and partners must sign a declaration agreeing to follow this Child Protection Policy.
