

EEB3 | Child Protection Policy

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I. Definition of 'Child Abuse' and Scope of the Policy

Child abuse is when a parent/legal representative or person of responsibility or another person, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm, or risk of serious harm to a child. It is the physical, psychological maltreatment or sexual molestation of a child. Various forms of abuse can co-exist in child abuse cases. Acts of abuse against a child always have a detrimental impact on the child's emotional development and physical integrity. The effects of toxic stress (repeated stress) are significant for a child's development.

A minor in Belgium is a person under the age of 18 years.¹ The following is without prejudice to applicable national criminal and child protection laws and regulations.

I.1. Scope

All EEB3 employees must be alert to the possibility that students with whom they are in contact may be experiencing abuse or neglect. This document contains guidance on the four main types of abuse and how abuse and neglect can be recognized. This policy document also outlines the schools' actions in terms of prevention and intervention in relation to child protection and allegations of child abuse.

I.2. Serious Grounds for Concern

It is advisable that the Director and Deputy Director of the concerned Cycle (Nursery and Primary or Secondary) are informed where a person has **serious grounds** for concern that a child is in significant and imminent danger of being abused or neglected. If the symptoms of abuse are ignored, it could result in on-going harm to the child or adolescent.

Where a member of staff has a **strong suspicion**, they are invited to discuss with the school psychologist. The information will be carefully considered with any other information available, and an assessment will be carried out where sufficient risk is identified.

In any of the two cases, it is not the school's role to investigate but to refer (as will be explained later in the policy document) and to seek help of the appropriate professionals in the best interest of the minor.

Serious grounds for a child protection concern include:

- ▶ Evidence (e.g., injury or behaviour) that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way,
- ▶ Any concern about possible sexual abuse,
- ▶ Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect,
- ▶ A child saying or indicating by other means that they have been abused,
- ▶ Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed,
- ▶ An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

I.3. Types of Child Abuse and how they might be recognised

All EEB3 employees should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse. This document describes the four main types of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse and outlines how abuse and neglect can be recognised. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in a community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger and can be an adult or another child.

¹ If there is a court decision emancipating the minor, this needs to be followed.

In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the situation should be considered a child welfare and protection issue for both children and child protection policy should be adhered to for both the alleged victim and the alleged abuser.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this chapter are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

The procedures for reporting child abuse or neglect can be found later in this policy.

I.4. Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse internationally. On-going chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation, supervision, and safety. Neglect includes deprivation of food or essential care.

Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having difficulties of attachment. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life, as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence and parental mental illness and disability. Neglect can also occur in families where there is no poverty and have a good financial situation.

In the vast majority of cases, neglect is not intentional. This does not mean that there is no harm done to the child, but that the care may be different, particularly if the care giver is unable to look after the young person or is ignorant of some aspect of development.

I.5. Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. One-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/legal representative or caregiver and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency, and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent/legal representative or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet the children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A serious concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/legal representative or caregiver. This includes also involving a minor in the commission of a crime or offence and inciting a minor to undergo so called conversion practices, as well as inhuman and degrading treatment.

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Witnessing domestic violence (and therefore conflict) is psychological abuse. With impacts on the child's socio-emotional development

I.6. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. This includes intentional bodily harm, torture, etc.

A serious concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, maybe, or has been damaged because of suspected physical abuse.

If there is an allegation and/or evidence of physical abuse, it is important that this is documented by the medical staff at the school infirmary.

I.7. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (i.e.) contact sexual abuse (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex, indecent assault, rape and other non-consensual sexual acts, prostitution, sexual mutilation, etc) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography (i.e.) non-contact sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities, including grooming (a process by which an adult intentionally manipulates minors for their own sexual gratification) and online sexual exploitation. It rarely involves just a single incident and, in many instances, occurs over several years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or their siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult and/or by physical symptoms.

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that an age of consent to sexual intercourse in Belgium is 16. Where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse, if the school has concerns about a possible abusive situation and how it is affecting any person involved in the relationship, the school may need to take appropriate steps and inform the child's parents/legal representatives. However, not all such cases would necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse, for instance if both parties are underage. Parents/legal representatives would be informed only if there is a suspicion or evidence of a negative impact on any child involved.

Viewing inappropriate films is also considered to be psychological abuse. Acting out (sexual acts) during adolescence is a sign of psychological fragility.

I.8 Exceptions

As explained, there are certain situations that involve underage sexual activity that do not necessarily constitute child sexual abuse. Generally, a sexual relationship between one or both parties who is under the legal age in a particular member state (the age of consent to sexual intercourse in Belgium is 16) is considered abusive in nature. However, there are certain factors that need to be taken into consideration when analysing situations and working towards defining if child sexual abuse has occurred or not.

Such factors may include:

- ▶ The child concerned is aged between 15 and 17 years old and may be engaging in sexual activity.
- ▶ The age difference between the parties and the other party to the sexual activity is not more than 24 months (however one must ensure that there is no experience of violence, coercion, and/or power relationship involved).
- ▶ There is no difference in capacity (capability) or maturity between the parties engaged in the sexual activity concerned.
- ▶ The relationship between the parties engaged in the sexual activity concerned is neither intimidatory nor exploitative toward either party.

II. Prevention

II.1. Recruitment

EEB3 ensures compliance with the requirements of police clearance at the point of recruitment of all persons employed by the school. Police clearance does not, however, take the place of normal recruitment policy, such as seeking and following up on references and ensuring that any unexplained gaps in employment records/CV are satisfactorily accounted for. Whether a person is being considered for employment in the school, comprehensive procedures for the checking of the person's suitability to work with children are an essential element of child protection practice.

- ▶ At the point of recruitment of seconded staff – all member states have the responsibility to ensure that seconded members of staff have appropriate level of vetting required to work in schools and provide the schools with the necessary certificates of police clearance.
- ▶ At the point of recruitment of locally recruited staff – all staff must provide a certificate of police clearance before beginning work in school. (Extrait de casier judiciaire (modèle II) in Belgium).
- ▶ Work contracts will include a clause obliging employees to abide by the school's Child Protection Policy.
- ▶ EEB3 requests all employees (seconded and locally recruited) to give an updated certificate of police clearance every four years.

II.2. Prevention Programmes and Awareness Raising

Effective child protection depends on the skills, knowledge and values of personnel working with children and families, as well as co-operation with local agencies. Relevant training is an important means of achieving this.

It is imperative that EEB3 school employees and stakeholders have the necessary familiarity with this policy to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities therein. It is planned that this will be achieved by the school developing a culture of awareness and knowledge of this policy amongst all stakeholders and, where appropriate, ensure that available training is undertaken.

EEB3 endeavours to raise awareness of its Child Protection Policy by organizing a number of actions which may include running campaigns/awareness weeks during the school year, with workshops for pupils and information sharing evening with parent/legal representatives. EEB3 will collaborate with outside agencies who work in this area of prevention, if it is possible to find agencies that are available to offer services to our school.

III. Training of staff

Child protection training for staff at EEB3 will take place to keep the Child Protection Policy active, raise awareness and inform and update staff members.

IV. Intervention

When establishing the intervention procedure, it is first important to consider what the local legislation states and what parameters of obligation and/or responsibilities exist within the law.

IV. Legislation in Belgium

Belgium's child protection legislation is both international and national.

- (1) Internationally, Belgium has signed and ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child of November 20, 1989. This is the first piece of legislation applicable in Belgium. The Convention reiterates key principles such as the definition of the child and the notion of their best interests.
- (2) Other legislation has been adopted by the Belgian legislator for the protection of children.²
- (3) A minor *in danger* is one whose health, safety, morality, or educational conditions are compromised, either by their own behavior or by the person(s) who has/have custody of the said minor.
- (4) Belgian Criminal Code allows but does not mandate professionals bound by confidentiality such as healthcare workers but also teachers, to report suspected abuse (Article 458bis of the Criminal Code).
- (5) Article 422bis of the Belgian Criminal Code serves as a legal base of reporting a case of suspected child abuse since a failure to assist a person in danger imposes a duty on every citizen to provide assistance to a person exposed to serious danger whether they have personally witnessed the situation or it has been described to them by those requesting their intervention, unless doing so would endanger their own safety or that of others.

² The legislation applicable to minors residing in Brussels is:

- The law of April 8, 1965 on youth protection;
- The decree of July 12, 2013 on integral youth assistance;
- The decree of January 18, 2018 establishing the Prevention, Youth Assistance and Protection Code;
- The ordinance of the Joint Community Commission of April 29, 2004 on youth assistance.

IV.2. Possible actions for all EEB3 employees

School employees are especially well placed to observe changes in children's behaviour, their lack of development or outward signs of abuse. In any situation where an EEB3 employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child is in serious and imminent danger, have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, they need to consider possible course of action. While there is no legal obligation for professionals to report suspected cases of child abuse, the law does allow it when there is serious and imminent danger. Professionals are also strongly encouraged to consider reporting and are expected to act in the best interests of the child.

Considering this, an EEB3 employee shall, without delay, report the matter to the Director/Deputy Director of the cycle the student is in. While the responsibility remains with the Director, a school may have a member of staff designated to coordinate and focus on child protection issues. At the start of the implementation of this policy document, the EEB3 Management Team has decided that there will be no designated person responsible of child protection matters but it will remain the responsibility of the management team. Once the policy implementation becomes accustomed, the management team may consider assigning a designated member of staff for child protection issues. The school psychologist will be involved in each case at the very beginning when the case becomes known, even if they are not the trusted member of staff who has received the allegation. Their role will be an advisory one and also to make contact with outside agencies when necessary.

EEB3 employees shall familiarise themselves with this information to enable them to meet the reporting procedures outlined under this policy. It is important that all EEB3 employees consult this policy and liaise with the Director/Deputy Director where they have a concern that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect.

The safety and well-being of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made.

IV.3. Dealing with disclosures from children

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress, and a member of school personnel may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care shall be taken not to damage that trust.

When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of school staff will need to:

1. reassure the child.
2. endeavour to retain their trust.
3. explain the need for action which will necessarily involve other adults being informed.
4. tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support them.
5. do not make promises that cannot be kept e.g., promising not to tell anyone else.

If the member of staff concerned needs guidance on how to respond to the child, the school psychologist can be consulted before speaking to the child. EEB3 will avoid many people speaking with the child concerned. This is not beneficial for the child. As few people as possible should speak directly to the child.

Disclosures of abuse must be dealt with sensitively and professionally. Sensitive information should be communicated only to those directly involved, and in a position to support the analysis and improvement of the situation.

The following approach is suggested as best practice for dealing with these disclosures:

- ▶ React calmly.
- ▶ Listen carefully and attentively.
- ▶ Take the child seriously.
- ▶ Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- ▶ Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault.
- ▶ Do not promise to keep anything secret.
- ▶ Ask questions for clarification only³. Do not ask leading questions.
- ▶ Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood.
- ▶ Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser.
- ▶ Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow and explain any follow up actions.
- ▶ Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible and send this to the management.
- ▶ Treat the information confidentially.
- ▶ Deal with any allegation of abuse or neglect in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to talk about the problem.
- ▶ Avoid interviewing the child about details of what happened but use empathy and paraphrase what the child has told you so that you are sure you have understood.

It must always be remembered that school employees have a supportive, not an investigative role. One can never be 100% sure about any allegation reported but it is best to act with vigilance than not to act at all.

IV. 4. Confidentiality

Confidentiality cannot be maintained when harm is being done to a child. This is the case even if the child tells you not to tell anyone. EEB3 employees are obliged to refer an allegation of child abuse to the school management if they are recipients of this information or have a strong suspicion. If during the process of investigation, professionals need to speak to the minor, it is important that the minor is prepared for these interventions explaining what is about to happen. It is very important that we do not promise complete confidentiality. In very serious situations, adults are obliged to take action to protect the well-being of minors.

IV. 5. Infirmary

If there are physical signs on the child's body, the nurses in the infirmary may be requested to verify the situation and take necessary actions in accordance with legislation governing their profession.

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- ³ Could you please elaborate on that?"
 - ``Can you give me an example?"
 - ``Are you saying that...?"
 - ``What do you mean by...?"
 - ``Is this the same as...?"

IV.6. Referral Procedure

If any EEB3 employee (teaching and non-teaching) receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, they are encouraged, without delay, to report the matter to the Deputy Director of the cycle (or the Assistant Deputy Director if the Deputy Director is absent) concerned. It is important to remember that every situation is unique and may need different ways of handling.

The concerned employee will disclose all information and/or observations and following this, the employee will also prepare a report (see template in Annex II) that will be given to the Deputy Director and the Director.

Upon receiving the information from an EEB3 employee, the Deputy Director shall inform the Director immediately and discuss the case. The Deputy Director and the Director will log down the information received about the allegations.

Normally, a Child Protection Action Plan Meeting is held.

A member of the management team (Director, Deputy Director, or Assistant Deputy Director) will chair this meeting, with the Assistant Deputy Director always in attendance. The teacher who submitted the report, the school psychologist, and any other staff members who can contribute meaningfully at this stage will also attend. A report of this meeting will be completed using the template provided in Annex III.

In case of any doubt, SOS Enfants hotline can be consulted for advice. SOS Enfants can also be consulted without disclosing the child's identity. This hotline provides guidance on how to handle the situation. SOS Enfants will ask specific questions to the person who is reporting.

A confidential internal report is created for potential further action. An action plan is developed with the school team. It is important to discuss each case in a team as each case is different.

If the allegation being made is against the Deputy Director, then the member of staff shall, without delay, report the matter to the Director. In such cases, the Director shall assume the role normally undertaken by the Deputy Director followed.

If the allegation being made is against the Director, the member of staff is invited to, without delay, report the matter to the Secretary General of the European Schools. If the member of staff wishes to, they can seek the support of the Deputy Director of their cycle. In such cases, the Secretary General shall assume the role normally undertaken by the Director followed.

IV.7. The Child Protection Action Plan meeting

The Child Protection Action Plan Meeting will discuss the facts of the case, will discuss the student concerned and decide on the next step forward. Depending on the information available many steps may be possible. These include:

1. No referral to a third party and continue to observe and support the student in school.
2. In most cases, it is necessary and best to inform the parent/legal representatives (except in cases of severe emergencies which involve the parents). It is also good practice to inform the parent/legal representatives that a referral to an external agency concerning their child has been made (if this is not detrimental to the child concerned or the safety of any personnel in the school) and the reasons for the decision to make the report.
3. If a meeting is held with the parents/legal representatives, this would normally involve a member of the management team, the school psychologist and possibly a member of the medical team if necessary. Other persons may be present depending on the case, including the person to whom the disclosure was made.

4. The Child Protection Action Plan meeting will draft an action plan and discuss with the Director who will take the decision on the next step to be taken.
5. If it is decided that the first step will be to inform the parent/legal representative that a case of alleged child abuse, it is important that this meeting takes place in situ as much as possible. The news needs to be given gently, correctly, and clearly to the parent/legal representatives and if it is found to be appropriate, the school psychologist should be present.

EEB3 will not inform the parent/legal representatives:

- (1) if by doing so, the child will be placed at further risk or
- (2) in cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair a follow up risk assessment
- (3) if the reporter is of the serious opinion that by doing so it may place the reporter at risk of harm from the family.

If the allegations are against a parent/legal representative, the following possibilities are available to the school management depending on the nature of the case:

6. An option for the school may be to refer the case to SOS Enfants. **SOS enfants** gives professional advice on the types of abuse and works with the school to draw up an action plan based on the problem. They can meet families and children. The first meeting is almost always with the person who received the information from the child/pupil. Following this, other appointments can be scheduled with the family to assess the situation and build a care pathway. This is a non-binding service: parents/legal representatives can refuse to attend.
7. If the case is more serious in nature (advice about severity of the case will be sought from SOS Enfants), the situation may be referred to the "**Service d'Aide à la Jeunesse**" (SAJ). SAJ will intervene following a referral: either from the school or from SOS Enfants. Here, the parents are invited to an interview to analyse the situation. The SAJ will then draw up an action plan based on the problems, resources, and commitment of the family. They may, for example, propose therapeutic follow-up, request an expert assessment of the situation (often from SOS Enfants), or refer the family to SPJ. This is also non-binding assistance. Once SAJ is working with the family, the school's role is limited to providing information to SAJ. The school will continue to support the student in their schooling but the investigation and any follow up of the issue is taken over by SAJ. If it is decided that the first step will be to inform the SAJ, then contact will be made with them firstly by phone and then the proceeding steps will be decided upon. It is to be noted that when the school decides to report to an external, local agency, it is normally the SAJ. This agency gives great importance to referrals made by the school.
8. A case may need to be referred to **Service de la protection de la jeunesse (SPJ)**. SPJ: is a binding service. A judge is mandated to intervene in the situation. The SPJ is called in when other approaches have failed or in extremely serious situations. When voluntary assistance fails, because the parent/legal representatives refuse to cooperate, the SAJ will inform the public prosecutor's office, which will request that a file be opened with the court. The school has no further role to play in such proceedings, apart from informing the Court, at its request, of the progress of the minor's situation at the school.
9. If a school needs to refer to an outside agency, it is normally the school management who does this.
10. Report the case to the police if the child is in imminent or serious danger.

These decisions will be based on:

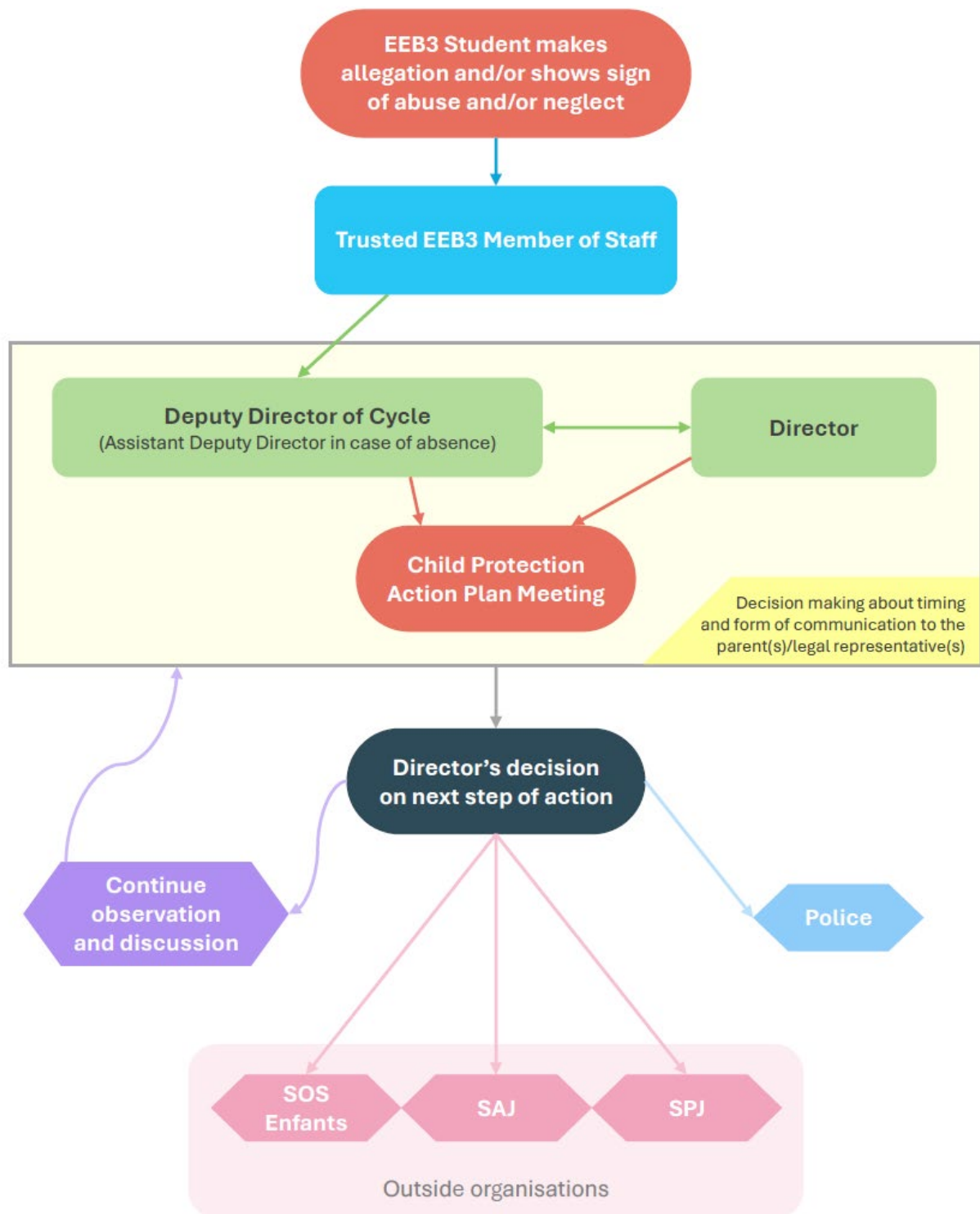
1. Whether a situation is deemed to be a crisis or an urgent situation.
2. If a child is in imminent danger, all professional secrecy is lifted.
3. In very urgent cases, a child may need to be taken to the emergency department who will contact SOS Enfants.
4. It is important to remember that there is no hierarchy among the types of abuse.

The school plays an important role in protecting children. The school has a duty to act to protect the well-being of its pupils.

In very serious cases involving physical integrity (sexual abuse, physical ill-treatment, assault and battery, etc.) on school premises or in a school activity, the school has a duty to inform the police. In such cases, EEB3 will make a report to the Ixelles Police.

The following chart explains the flow of information.

Flowchart of information



IV.8. Parental suspicion of Child Abuse

If a parent suspects that their child is being abused, they may consider the following steps:

1. Seeking legal advice.
2. Reporting the case to the police
3. If the situation is linked to the school, they may consider referring the case to the school management. In this situation, it is best to communicate directly with the Deputy Director responsible for the cycle.
4. Refer the case to outside agencies in Belgium such as SAJ.

IV.9. Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse regarding School Employees

When the allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, also including in this context unpaid volunteers, and where 'abuse' is meant as described earlier in this document, the most important consideration is the protection of children, and their safety and well-being must be prioritised. EEB 3 also has a duty and responsibility, as an employer, in respect of its employees.

It is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed:

- (1) the reporting procedure in respect of the allegation/suspicion as explained above. In cases involving members of school employees, it will be the Deputy Director of the cycle where the person is employed who is ultimately responsible for the reporting procedure.
- (2) if the abuse is established, then the procedure in accordance with the employee's statute (seconded staff, locally recruited or Administrative and Auxiliary Staff) is initiated. It is here the Director's responsibility to initiate procedures, including disciplinary ones, in line with the employee's statute.

If the allegations are against an employee of the school, the parents/legal representatives are informed and they are also informed of their right to seek legal advice and taken any legal action necessary, including referring the case to the police. The school management will implement the disciplinary proceedings established in the employment statutes.

In the context of allegations or suspicions of child abuse regarding school employees the primary goal is to protect the children within the school. However, school employees can be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. The employee shall be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair process and as applicable, in accordance with the relevant disciplinary policy.

At all stages it should be remembered that the priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. The employer shall as a matter of urgency ensure that any necessary protective measures are taken, including where there is an urgent child safeguarding requirement to immediately absent an employee from the school, always in accordance with their employment regulations.

IV.10. Retention period of records

When child abuse or neglect is suspected, it is essential to have a written record of all the information available. The Director shall retain a copy of every report submitted about cases referred. All records created shall be regarded as highly confidential and placed in a secure location.

The retention period for such documents are 10 years after the pupil departs from EEB3.

The Director shall record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to his or her attention, and the actions taken following receipt of a concern or allegation of child abuse. The Director shall retain a copy of every report submitted by the school and shall keep a record of any further actions to be taken and of any further communications with national authorities. All records created shall be regarded as highly confidential and placed in a secure location.

Directors' child protection overview report shall be given to the Administration Board as established in the Pupils Wellbeing Framework Policy.

V. Follow-up of child protection matters

Professional handling of child abuse involves conducting investigations, and supporting the child with medical care, psychological therapy, and social work with the family. The school will cooperate with the relevant agencies tasked with each case. The school does not carry out investigation or offer therapy, however, the school will continue to follow up on the child once the abuse has been alleged, during investigation and after this as the child remains with us at school.

It is also necessary to evaluate, review and update the EEB3 Child Protection Policy. This will be done every two years.

VI. Features of Abuse

Features of each type of abuse can be found in Annex 1. The lists are by no means exhaustive but give an indication of signs and symptoms to look out for.

The Annex also includes circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to abuse and neglect and concerns in relation to an adult who may pose a risk to children.

VII. Conclusion

It is important to note that most children are not abused. Most children have happy, safe, and serene lives. However, child abuse is a reality that we cannot escape from.

As educators we are duty bound to play our part in protecting children from any form of abuse. The aim always needs to be that the child can continue with their education in a serene manner.

Annex I

A. Neglect

- ▶ Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision.
- ▶ Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food, or erratic food intake patterns.
- ▶ Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e., a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation.
- ▶ Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation.
- ▶ Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture.
- ▶ Lack of adequate clothing
- ▶ Inattention to basic hygiene
- ▶ Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- ▶ Persistent failure to attend school.
- ▶ Abandonment or desertion

B. Emotional Abuse

- ▶ Rejection
- ▶ Lack of comfort and love
- ▶ Lack of attachment
- ▶ Lack of proper stimulation (e.g., fun and play)
- ▶ Lack of continuity of care (e.g., frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- ▶ Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- ▶ Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child.
- ▶ Conditional parent/legal representative in which care or affection of a child is made contingent on their behaviours or actions.
- ▶ Extreme over-protectiveness
- ▶ Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g., locking child in bedroom)
- ▶ Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- ▶ Suicidal thoughts
- ▶ Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to their age and stage of development

C. Physical Abuse

- ▶ Physical punishment
- ▶ Beating, slapping, hitting, or kicking
- ▶ Pushing, shaking, or throwing
- ▶ Pinching, biting, choking, or hair-pulling, burning.
- ▶ Use of excessive force in handling
- ▶ Deliberate poisoning
- ▶ Suffocation
- ▶ Fabricated/induced illness.
- ▶ Genital mutilation

D. Sexual Abuse

- ▶ Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child.
- ▶ An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- ▶ Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- ▶ Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal, or anal

- ▶ Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
 - * Inviting, inducing, or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography (for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification, or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape, or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means).
 - * Inviting, coercing, or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent, or obscene act.
 - * Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse.
 - * Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
 - * Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person.

E. Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to abuse and neglect

School personnel dealing with children need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children with whom they come in contact. A child needs to have someone they can trust to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and that they will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent/legal representative with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to abuse.

The following list is intended to assist in identifying the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. It is important to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.

Parent/legal representative or Caregiver Factors increasing vulnerability:

- ▶ Drug and alcohol misuse
- ▶ Addiction, including gambling.
- ▶ Mental health issues
- ▶ Parent/legal representative disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability.
- ▶ Conflictual relationships
- ▶ Domestic violence
- ▶ Adolescent parent/legal representatives
- ▶ Poor motivation and poor willing of parent/legal representatives to engage such as:
 - ▶ Non-attendance at appointments
 - ▶ Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected.
 - ▶ Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change.
 - ▶ Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services.
 - ▶ Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans.

Child Factors increasing vulnerability:

- ▶ Age
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Sexuality
- ▶ Disability
- ▶ Mental health issues including self-harm and suicide.
- ▶ Communication difficulties
- ▶ Trafficked/Exploited
- ▶ Previous Abuse
- ▶ Young carer

Community Factors increasing vulnerability:

- ▶ Cultural, ethnic, religious, or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction.
- ▶ Culture-specific practices, including:
 - * Genital mutilation
 - * Forced marriage.
 - * Honour-based violence.
 - * Radicalisation.

Environmental factors increasing vulnerability:

- ▶ Housing issues
- ▶ Children who are out of home and not living with their parent/legal representatives, whether temporarily or permanently
- ▶ Poverty/Begging
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Internet and social media-related concerns

These factors should be considered as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing serious concerns to the attention the management.

Concerns in relation to an adult who may pose a risk to children

In most cases, concern for the welfare or safety of a child develops from one's own observation or knowledge of a particular child or their family. However, sometimes concerns arise in relation to whether an adult may pose a risk to children, even if there is no specific child named in relation to the concern.

For example, on the basis of known or suspected past behaviour, a concern could exist about the risk an individual may pose to children with whom they may have contact. Any such serious concerns should be reported to the management, who will try to establish whether or not any child is currently at risk from the individual in question. If school personnel are concerned that an adult may pose a risk to children, even if no specific child is identified, and are unsure whether to report the matter, the Director or Deputy Director should seek guidance from the national authorities.

Annex II

Child Protection Report Template

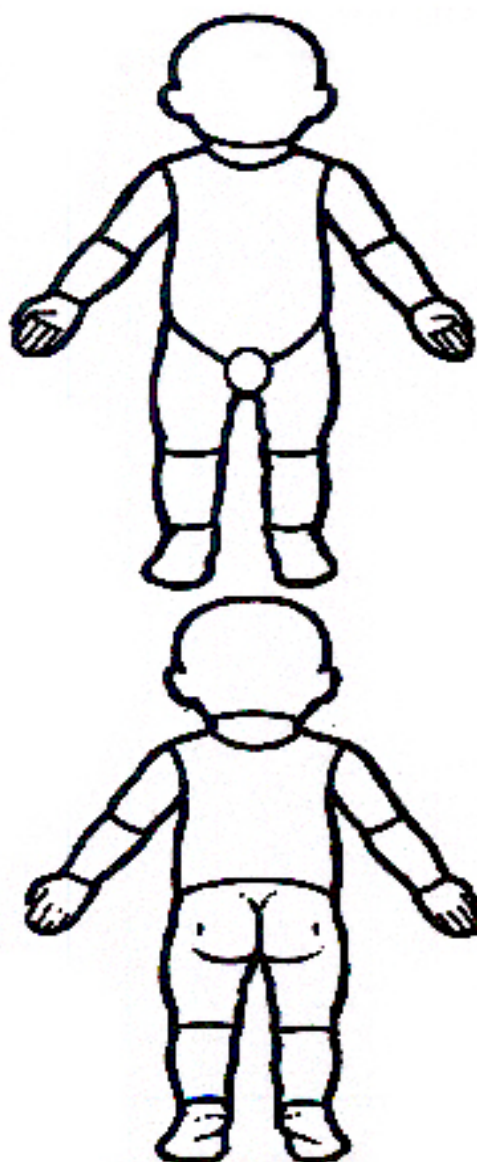
EEB3 | Recording Form for Child Protection Concerns

EEB3 Staff are required to complete this form and pass it to the Deputy Director of the concerned cycle, if they have a child protection concern about a child in our school.

Information Required	Enter Information Here
Full name of child	
Date of birth	
Class	
Your name and position in the school	
Nature of concern/disclosure <i>Please include where you were when the child made a disclosure, what you saw, who else was there, what did the child say or do and what you said.</i> <i>[Ensure that if there is an injury this is recorded (size and shape) and a body map is completed]</i> <i>See attached document.</i> <i>[Make it clear if you have a raised a concern about a similar issue previously]</i>	
Time & date of minor reporting the incident:	
Name and position of the person you are passing this information to.	
Your Signature	
Time and date form completed	

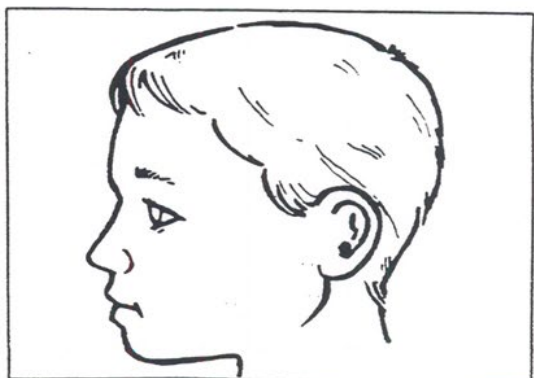
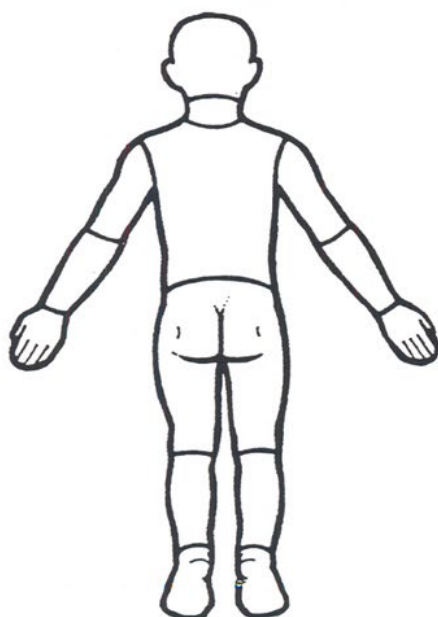
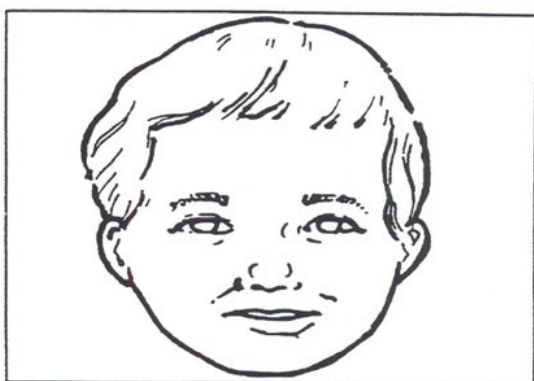
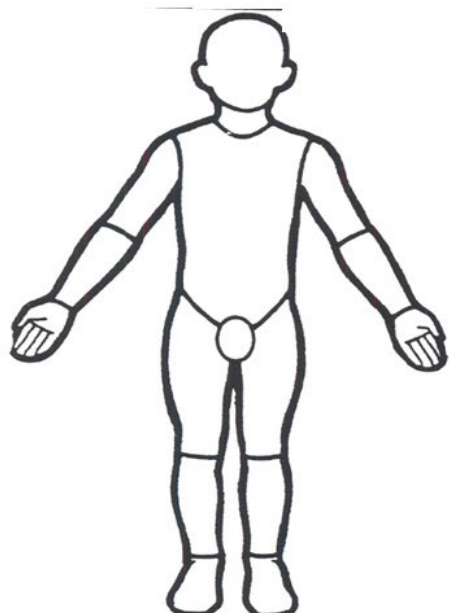
Body Map - Young Child

Young Child



Indicate clearly where the injury was seen and attach this to the report form.

Body Map - Older Child



Indicate clearly where the injury was seen and attach this to the report form.

Annex III

Child Protection Action Plan Meeting Template

Child Protection Action Plan Meeting

Information required	To be completed
Pupil name	
DOB	
Class/Form	
Location of meeting	
Date	
Time	
Reason for meeting	
Professionals present (include name and job title)	
Key points discussed	
Agreed actions (include person responsible and timescales)	
Date & time of next meeting	
Name of Chairperson DD or ADD	
Signature of DD or ADD	

Annex IV

Useful Links

- [Équipes SOS Enfants - Public - Office de la naissance et de l'enfance](#)
- <https://cpvs.belgium.be/fr>
- [Maltraitance | Yapaka](#)
- <https://www.aidealajeunesse.cfwb.be/ajss-pro/contacts-coordonneesnbspde-ladministration-etdes-services/saj-services-de-laide-a-la-jeunesse/>
- <https://www.vertrouwenscentrum-kindermishandeling.be/brussel/>
- <https://www.nupraatikerover.be/>
- [1712 Hulplijn geweld, misbruik en kindermishandeling](#)
- [Kind en Gezin](#)