GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Child Protection Policy

Revised 2026

The purpose of GCA's Child Protection Policy is to:

1. protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm;
2. promote the welfare and best interests of every child;
3. ensure that every member of staff understands their safeguarding responsibilities;
4. provide a simple procedure for identifying and reporting concerns;
5. ensure that concerns are reported promptly to the appropriate authority;
6. ensure that staff do not investigate suspected abuse themselves;
7. provide appropriate support to children;
8. ensure that safeguarding concerns are recorded accurately and securely; and
9. establish clear lines of responsibility within GCA.

For the purpose of this policy, **"students"** refers to all children and young people enrolled at and attending Grace Christian Academy. **"School"** refers to all phases of GCA, including Early Years, Elementary and Secondary education.

1. Our commitment and who this policy applies to

Grace Christian Academy believes that every child has the right to be safe, protected and listened to. Protecting children is **everyone's job** – teachers, assistants, office staff, drivers, cleaners, volunteers, and board members.

This policy states what to do, who to tell, and what happens next. It applies to all pupils and to everyone who works, volunteers or visits at our school, on school premises, on trips, on school transport and online.

Our students' safety and wellbeing come first. Therefore, every concern is taken seriously however small it seems. Early action prevents harm. We do not investigate, we notice, record, report and support. Information is kept confidential and shared only with people who need to know. Every member of staff is trained and knows what to do.

2. The law and national policy we follow

Source	What it means for us
Children Act (Cayman Islands) – formerly the Children Law (2012 Revision)	**Section 32A** – people who work with children, including teachers, must report to the authorities when they have a **reasonable suspicion** that a child has been or is being abused or neglected. Failing to report can be an offence. **Section 32B** – a person who reports suspected abuse or neglect is protected from legal liability for doing so.
Ministry of Education national policies (2016)	• National Child Abuse Neglect Reporting Policy • National Safe Environment Policy • National Staff Safeguarding Policy (Staff Code of Conduct) All Cayman schools, including private schools, must have a child protection policy in line with these.

Source	What it means for us
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	The national point where child safeguarding referrals are received and assessed. MASH brings together the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) Child Safeguarding Investigations Unit, and the Department of Education Services (DES).
Department of Education Services and Ministry of Education	Provide guidance and Cayman-specific child safeguarding training. All staff complete the Ministry's training, which is renewed every three years.

If the law or national policy changes, the national documents take priority and this policy will be updated.

3. What is abuse and neglect? (Signs to look for)

Reasonable suspicion means a genuine worry, based on something you have seen, heard or been told, that would make a sensible person think a child may be at risk of being, abused or neglected. You do not need proof.

Type	What it is	Possible signs (one sign alone does not prove abuse)
Physical abuse	Hitting, shaking, burning, biting, or any act that causes or could cause physical harm.	Unexplained or repeated injuries; bruises in unusual places; injuries that do not match the explanation; flinching; wearing long sleeves in hot weather; fear of going home.
Emotional abuse	Constant criticism, threats, humiliation, rejection, or exposing a child to violence at home.	Very low confidence; extreme anxiety, withdrawal or aggression; delays in development; fear of making mistakes; self-harm.

Type	What it is	Possible signs (one sign alone does not prove abuse)
Sexual abuse	Any sexual activity with a child, including non-contact abuse such as showing pornography, sexual images or online grooming.	Sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond the child's age; pain or injury to private areas; sudden fear of a person or place; secrecy about online activity or gifts.
Neglect	Failure to meet a child's basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision or affection.	Constant hunger; poor hygiene; clothes unsuitable for the weather; untreated medical or dental problems; frequent absence; left alone; always tired.

Look for changes and patterns, for example a cheerful child who becomes quiet, repeated lateness or absence, or a child who does not want to go home. Children with disabilities or special educational needs may be less able to tell us, so staff must be especially alert.

Other welfare concerns (not necessarily abuse) include a family crisis, bereavement, bullying, parental illness, or a child who seems unhappy.

4. Who does what

Role	Responsibilities
Every member of staff and volunteer	• Be alert to signs of abuse or neglect. • Report any concern to the DSL **the same day** and complete the Concern Report Form (Appendix A). Call 911 if a child is in immediate danger. • Keep information confidential and follow the Staff Code of Conduct.

Role	Responsibilities
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	• First point of contact for all child protection concerns. • Decides, with the staff member, what action to take (Section 7). • Makes referrals to MASH/DCFS and is the school's link with MASH, DES and the Ministry. • Keeps the confidential child protection records securely. • Makes sure all staff are trained and know this policy. • Reports to the Principal/Director on all safeguarding issue each month.
Deputy DSL	• Acts in the DSL's absence, with the same responsibilities and training. • Takes the concern if the DSL is the subject of it.
Principal	• Makes sure this policy is followed and the DSL has time, training and resources. • Leads on any concern about a member of staff or volunteer (Section 9). • Ensures safe recruitment and a safe environment.
Director	• Receives concerns about the Principal or the DSL. • Oversees the review of this policy and receives the termly safeguarding report.
MASH / DCFS / RCIPS	• Receive and assess referrals; carry out welfare checks and investigations. • Advise the school on next steps. **Only MASH, DCFS and the Police investigate.**

5. How concerns are handled – at a glance

Situation	What happens	Who	When
Child in **immediate danger** or seriously hurt	Call 911. Keep child safe. Tell DSL. DSL refers to MASH.	Any staff member, then DSL	**Immediately**

Situation	What happens	Who	When
Suspected abuse or neglect, **no immediate danger**	Staff member records and tells DSL. DSL refers to MASH using the MASH Referral Form.	Staff member → DSL	**Same day**
Welfare worry, **no reasonable suspicion** of abuse	School support plan and monitoring. DSL may ask MASH for advice.	DSL with class teacher	Plan within **2 school days**; review in **2 weeks**
Child **tells** you something	Listen, reassure, record, tell DSL.	Staff member → DSL	**Immediately**
Concern about **an adult**	Tell Principal or Director. Consult MASH. Follow MASH direction.	Principal / Director	**Immediately**

6. Child in immediate danger

A child is in **immediate danger** if they are seriously injured, at risk of serious harm right now, being abused now, or at risk of being taken or sent somewhere unsafe.

Step 1	**Make the child safe.** Call **911** (police and ambulance). Give first aid if trained. Stay with the child. Do not leave them alone.
Step 2	**Tell the DSL** (or Deputy, or Principal) at once, by phone or in person. They will take over.
Step 3	**DSL contacts MASH** (MASH@gov.ky; or phone) straight away, and keeps 911 informed. Out of hours, 911 is the contact.
Step 4	**Do not** confront the suspected person or contact the family unless the police or MASH say it is safe. Do not let the child leave with anyone you believe may harm them – wait for the police.

Step 5	**Write it down** the same day on the Concern Report Form. Write what happened, times, who was present and what you did.
Step 6	**DSL sends the written MASH Referral Form** as soon as possible after the first call, and records the reference number and who they spoke to.

7. Worried about a child but NO immediate danger

Most concerns will start small: a bruise you are not sure about, a change in behaviour, a comment from a classmate, repeated hunger, or a feeling that something is not right. **Always act. Never assume someone else has noticed.**

Step 1 Notice and write it down	Write down **facts only**: what you saw or heard, the date, time and place, and the child's exact words if they spoke. Do not guess or give opinions. Do not take photos of injuries. Do not question the child beyond asking gently if they are okay ("I noticed… are you alright?").
Step 2 Tell the DSL the same day	Speak to the DSL (or Deputy) in person, the same school day. Then complete the Concern Report Form (Appendix A) and hand it directly or email to the DSL within 24 hours.
Step 3 DSL and staff member decide	The DSL reviews the form and talks to you. The DSL may check the child's file for earlier concerns (patterns matter). The DSL then chooses an outcome and records the reasons in Part 2 of the form.
Step 4 Take action	Carry out the outcome (below). All actions are recorded with dates.

Step 5 Monitor and review	Staff who teach or care for the child keep watching and record any new concern on the same day. The DSL reviews at the date set and records the result in the Monitoring Log (Appendix B). New or growing worries mean going back to Outcome A.
Step 6 Feedback	The DSL tells the staff member what has been decided, as far as it is appropriate.

8. If a child tells you something (disclosure)

DO	DO NOT
• Stay calm and listen. • Find a quiet, safe place but stay visible to others. • Tell the child they were right to tell you and it is not their fault. • Use the child's own words. Ask only open questions such as "Can you tell me more?" • Explain honestly what you must do: "I have to tell someone whose job it is to keep you safe." • Write it down as soon as possible, including exact words, date, time and who was there. • Tell the DSL immediately.	• Do not promise to keep it secret. • Do not ask leading questions or suggest answers ("Did he touch you?"). • Do not push for details or ask the child to repeat it. • Do not show shock, anger or disbelief. • Do not confront the person named. • Do not tell the parents unless MASH or the police say so. • Do not discuss it with other staff, children or on social media.

9. Concerns about a member of staff, volunteer or another adult

This includes any allegation or suspicion that an adult connected to the school has harmed a child, behaved inappropriately towards a child, or may be unsuitable to work with children. It also covers behaviour outside school that raises concern about suitability. Tell the Principal straight away. If the concern is about the Principal or the DSL, tell the Director. Do not tell the person concerned, and do not investigate.

10. Other situations

Situation	What to do
Child-on-child concerns (bullying, sexual behaviour, physical harm between pupils)	Treat both children as children who need protection. Separate them if needed. Tell the DSL the same day. Do not dismiss it as 'just play'. The DSL decides whether to refer to MASH and supports both the child harmed and the child who caused harm.
Online and phone safety (sexual images, grooming, cyberbullying)	Do not forward, copy or show images. Secure the device if safe to do so and give it to the DSL. Tell the DSL immediately. Online grooming and sharing sexual images of a child are reportable to MASH and the police.
Unexplained or repeated absence	Follow up with the family the same day. If you cannot reach the family, or there is any worry about safety, tell the DSL.
Unauthorised or unsafe collection	Do not release a child to someone not authorised, or to someone who appears intoxicated or unsafe. Call the DSL; call 911 if there is any danger.
Pupil at risk of self-harm or suicide	Stay with the child, do not leave them alone, and tell the DSL at once. If there is immediate risk, call 911.

11. Records, confidentiality and sharing information

- **Records:** Concern Report Forms, MASH referrals and monitoring logs are kept by the DSL in a **locked cabinet or password-protected file**, separate from the child's general school record.
- **Write facts:** Use clear, factual language. Sign and date every entry. Never alter or destroy a record.
- **Who can see them:** Only the DSL, Deputy DSL, Principal and, where necessary, the Director, MASH, DCFS and the Police.
- **Sharing:** Share on a need-to-know basis only. The law protects people who make reports, and MASH/DCFS keep the reporter's identity confidential.
- **Moving schools:** When a child with a child protection file moves school, the DSL passes the file securely and directly to the new school's DSL (not through the parents) and records this.

- **Keeping:** Records are kept securely until the child reaches the age required by law or national policy; the DSL will confirm this with DES.

12. Working with parents and carers

- We aim to work openly with families and will tell parents about concerns whenever it is safe to do so.
- We will **not** tell parents first if it could put the child at greater risk, interfere with a police or MASH investigation, or if the concern involves a family member. In these cases, the DSL asks MASH for advice before speaking to the family.
- Parents are told about this policy at admission, and it is available in the school office and on request.
- Parents who disagree with a decision may speak to the Principal, but the school will always follow its legal duty to report.

13. Keeping our school safe

- **Safe recruitment:** Application forms, interviews, references, identity checks, police clearance (and checks from previous countries of residence where relevant) and an interview question on child protection for **all** staff and volunteers. Anyone unsuitable to work with children is not appointed.
- **Staff Code of Conduct:** All staff follow the National Staff Safeguarding Policy / Staff Code of Conduct. This includes avoiding being alone with a child out of sight; no private social media or messaging with pupils; no inappropriate physical contact; no taking or sharing photos of pupils on personal phones.
- **Visitors and volunteers:** All visitors sign in, wear a badge and are escorted. Volunteers are checked and are never left alone with a child.
- **Supervision and premises:** Toilets, changing areas, transport and trips have clear supervision rules. Doors to rooms used for one-to-one work have a window or are left open.
- **Online safety:** School devices and internet use are monitored, and pupils are taught how to stay safe online.
- **Teaching children:** Age-appropriate lessons teach children about body safety, healthy relationships and who to tell if they are worried. Children know who the DSL is.

14. Training, review and approval

Who	Training
All new staff and volunteers	This policy and the Ministry of Education child protection training (online module).
All staff	Ministry of Education Child Protection training refreshed **every three years**, plus a short annual update from the DSL each September, and whenever the policy changes.
DSL and Deputy DSL	Advanced safeguarding training for school leaders, refreshed at least every **two years**. Contact the Ministry (EduChildProtection@gov.ky) for available training.
Board members	Safeguarding briefing every year.

Review: This policy is reviewed **every year**, after any serious incident, or when the Children Act, Ministry or DES guidance changes. The DSL reports to the Board each term on the number and type of concerns and referrals (without naming children) and on training completed.

Approval

Principal	DSL	Board Chair
Signature: Date:	Signature: Date:	Signature: Date:

APPENDIX A

INTERNAL CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN REPORT FORM

Grace Christian Academy | STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL – hand to the DSL only

Use this form for ANY concern. If the child is in immediate danger, CALL 911 FIRST and complete this form afterwards.

Write facts only. Use the child's own words. Sign and hand it to the DSL **in person**. Do not copy or email it. Do not leave it in a pigeonhole.

PART 1 – To be completed by the staff member

Date of this report		Time	
Your name		Your role	
Child's full name		Age / date of birth	
Class / grade		Parent / carer name & phone	

Date, time and place you saw / heard / were told about the concern:

Type of concern (tick all that apply):

☐ Physical ☐ Emotional ☐ Sexual ☐ Neglect ☐ Online / images

☐ Child told me something (disclosure) ☐ Child's behaviour / appearance changed

☐ Concern about an adult ☐ Concern about another pupil ☐ Other: _____

Is the child in immediate danger? ☐ YES – I called 911 at _____ ☐ NO

Has the child been taken to a doctor or hospital? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

What I saw, heard or was told (facts only – what happened, who said what, what the child looked or acted like):
The child's own words (write exactly what the child said, in quotation marks):
Any marks or injuries seen (describe where on the body, size, colour – do not photograph):
Who else was present or knows? (names) **What did I say or do in response?**
Anything else the DSL should know (earlier worries, patterns, family circumstances):
Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____ Time: _____

PART 2 – For the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) use only

Date / time received		Received from	
Reference no.		Previous concerns on file?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Risk level: ☐ Immediate danger ☐ Concern – no immediate danger ☐ Low concern
Outcome chosen (see Section 7): ☐ **A. Referred to MASH** – Date: _____ Time: _____ Method: ☐ Email ☐ Phone ☐ 911 Spoke to / MASH reference no.: _____ MASH Referral Form sent: ☐ Yes Date: _____ ☐ **B. School support and monitoring** – Review date: _____ (MASH advice sought? ☐ Yes ☐ No) ☐ **C. Record only – no further action**
Reasons for the decision:
Actions agreed (who will do what, by when):
Parents / carers informed? ☐ Yes – date: _____ ☐ No – not safe / on MASH advice ☐ Not yet Reason / who advised:
Others informed: ☐ Principal ☐ Board Chair ☐ Class teacher ☐ DES / Ministry Other: _____ **Feedback given to staff member:** ☐ Yes – date: _____ ☐ Not appropriate

DSL signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

APPENDIX B

MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP LOG

Attach to the child's confidential child protection file. Use after Outcome A or B. Record every new observation, contact and review.

Child's name:	Reference no.:

Date	Recorded by	Observation / action / review outcome	Next step & date	DSL initials