**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School
Suspected Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Policy**

It is the goal of THE SCHOOL to promote healthy, safe relationships. We believe that a relationship with Jesus Christ as well as participation with and accountability to the community of believers is essential in developing and maintaining healthy relationships.
We take very seriously both the acts and accusations of abuse or sexual misconduct, and are committed to training school personnel(staff and volunteers) to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse. In the event of abuse, it will be our goal to promote healing for the abused and repentance, accountability, and restoration for the offender.

**I. Suspected Abuse of a Child/Minor**

As a school in accordance with GA state law, a child is defined as any person under 18 years of age. The majority of students attending THE SCHOOL are considered children. As mandated reporters, school personnel acknowledge their responsibility to report abuse if there is a reasonable cause to believe.

THE SCHOOL recognizes the need to protect children from the damaging effects of abuse, and will attempt to do so in a thorough manner that identifies both substantiated and unfounded claims.
The following means are recommended in determining if indicators of abuse constitute a reasonable cause to believe.
1. Know the signs and symptoms of abuse.
2. Listen for an appropriate explanation of a child’s physical injuries or behavior indicators that may confirm or dismiss the suspicion of abuse or neglect. Do not try to get all the details. Listen attentively and ask him/her if he/she wants to say anything else.
*The school administrator will provide relevant educational training and resources to school personnel to assist them in recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse and in understanding their responsibility as mandated reporters. This will include training available from the GaDOE and/or the GOCF.*

**II. Reporting Procedures for Abuse or Neglect**

If there is an emergency situation or immediate threat to an individual, school personnel should notify the local police department by dialing 911. If personnel suspect suicide, cutting, or other forms of self-injury, notify the administrator. If symptoms indicate an emergency, dial 911.

Should a member of the school’s personnel conclude that there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred, they shall report the matter to THE SCHOOL’s designated delegate. The SCHOOL Board has designated the school administrator as the delegate to whom reports of abuse or neglect shall be made.

Reports made by the administrator shall be in accordance with GA Code 19-7-5. The SCHOOL Board recommends that the school administrator contact the SCHOOL board chairman prior to submitting a report. Should the board chairman determine that further counsel is needed, he will notify the advisory committee of THE SCHOOL.

Should personnel have reasonable cause to believe a fellow member of the school faculty has perpetrated abuse, they are advised to consult with the chairman of the school board and/or the chairman of the advisory committee prior to submitting a report in accordance with GA Code 19-7-5.

TO REPORT ABUSE OR NEGLECT DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS, CALL **GEORGIA’S CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICE** AT **(404) 657-3400**.
BETWEEN 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AND ON WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS, CALL **1-855-GA CHILD (1-855-422-4453).**

THE SCHOOL is committed to practicing confidentiality where possible as well as taking steps that are consistent with the safety of the student.

 **III. Staff Guidelines for Interpersonal Relationships**

THE SCHOOL recognizes the importance of communication and interaction between the teacher and the student. THE SCHOOL also recognizes the value of clear boundaries for teacher-student relationships. Staff members and volunteers can protect themselves from misunderstanding and false accusations by maintaining clear boundaries. Staff members should be aware of behaviors that can be associated with inappropriate conduct, including:
-Being alone with a student and out of view of others.
-Conducting ongoing private conversations that are unrelated to school activities or the well-being of the student
-Inviting student(s) for a home visit without informing parents
-Visiting the homes of students without informing parents
-Transporting a student using a personal vehicle without informing the parents
-Attempting to conceal communication or behavior from parents or the administration

**IV. Communication Between Teachers and Students**

Personal contact between teachers and students must always be nonsexual, appropriate to the circumstances, and unambiguous in meaning. Staff members should respect boundaries consistent with their roles as educators. Guidelines for these boundaries include:
-Avoid any physical contact with a student that could be interpreted as sexual.
-Avoid initiating or pursuing a romantic relationship with a student.
-Supervise private activities in pairs (e.g. changing clothes).

 *Adopted by the SCHOOL Board on 9-11-19*