



Amano Christian School - Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

Every staff member at Amano has a professional responsibility to behave appropriately towards students and to protect students from abuse by other adults or students in our community. The simplest definition of 'abuse' is when one person misuses a relationship of power over another person to cause harm, whether verbally, physically or sexually. It is not a relevant consideration that the abuse is unconscious or unintended. In this policy, any physical or sexual abuse is seen as being a serious case. However, the school does not tolerate verbal abuse of students or between staff members.

The guidelines in this policy are intended to clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from staff to students. Every staff member has a professional and moral responsibility to intervene in cases where abuse of a student by another student or an adult is observed by or reported to them. In cases where physical or sexual abuse is concerned, the staff member must immediately report the concern to the Child Protection Officer who will be responsible for making sure that all cases are properly followed up in a way that respects the confidentiality of all parties. The staff member should not discuss the issue with the student or with other members of staff apart from the CPO. At the present time, the CPO will be the Head Teacher.

2. Guidelines for staff response to abuse situations

In cases of verbal or emotional abuse, the procedure would be to:

- confront the individual perpetrating the abuse if you feel comfortable to do so
- ensure the student is safe and/or reassured
- make a brief written report of the incident to the Child Protection Officer.

In cases of physical or sexual abuse, the procedure would be to:

- ensure the student is safe and/or reassured
- do not confront the individual perpetrating the abuse
- *inform the student of the* need to pass this information on to someone who can help
- report the issue to the Child Protection Officer verbally as a matter of urgency and then follow up with a written report.

3. General guidelines

3.1. on verbal interactions:

- All public reprimands (of students or colleagues) should be kept to the minimum that is necessary to stop inappropriate, unacceptable or dangerous behaviour, and should respect the dignity of the other.
- Detailed reprimands or corrective comments should generally be made in private.
- Sarcasm is, at best, easily misunderstood, and at worst destructive of dignity. Staff should avoid sarcasm to students and be wary of irony that may be misunderstood, especially by those whose first language is not English. There are unacceptable words that should not be said to a Zambian e.g. silly, stupid, fool. Similarly 'liar' would be offensive to a European.
- Personal comments on an individual's ethnic or social background, racial or gender-based insults, should not be condoned.
- Staff members should generally avoid having conversations alone with students of the opposite sex, and male staff should perhaps be most scrupulous in this regard. It is appropriate to leave a door open, where there are other adults in an adjoining room, or notify a colleague that the conversation is occurring.
- Verbal confrontations that begin to escalate into anger should be terminated and the issue taken up later, or by a senior colleague.
- Conversations or discussions about issues related to sex and sexual behaviour should normally take place only in the context of Health Education, planned talks in dorms (coordinated with the Health Education Programme), appropriate Biology lessons, advisory groups and counselling. Staff members should not make sexual jokes or innuendos to, or in the presence of, students.

3.2. on physical interactions:

- All and any forms of physical punishment, rebuke or correction from staff to students are absolutely impermissible at Amano and may result in termination.
- The physical expression of general affection between staff and students, especially between staff and students of the opposite sex, should be avoided where it could be misconstrued. Young children, especially those boarding, may need a hug or to sit on a lap or pat of encouragement, providing it occurs where it can be observed and is not hidden.
- Staff members should be particularly aware in contact sports of the dangers inherent in weight difference and in sports and games involving students of the opposite sex.
- Staff members should in addition be aware of cultural constraints on physical contact. What may be appropriate for someone from one culture, can be seen as unacceptable in another.
- We are here to love and serve all our students. All should feel that we are concerned for them as unique individuals, avoiding favouritism. However, any and all expressions of sexual attraction from a staff member to a student are impermissible.

4. General statements

- In order to protect the reputation of themselves and the students, staff should avoid situations where they are alone with a single student, whether in school or at their homes for meals or overnight stays. This precaution should be taken whether the student is the same or the opposite sex as the staff member. As a general rule, single staff should not have single students even of the same sex for overnight stays. Exceptions will be granted only by the Head Teacher. Mixed groups always require separate sleeping arrangements *in different homes*.
- The exception to the above rule is when a staff member is asked to supervise a student in their own home in a disciplinary or health-related situation, or in other special circumstances, when written permission must be given by the Head Teacher.
- The school is committed to improving the work environment to reduce the possibility of compromising situations (e.g. by fitting glass panels in doors etc.) and suggestions are welcomed.
- The school will provide training to students on abuse and appropriate skills and techniques to respond to potentially abusive situations.
- These guidelines are intended to protect students and also, in the broader sense, protect colleagues from situations that could undermine the professional work and/or Christian witness of the individual and the school. Any staff member getting into personal difficulty with any of these areas should, for the student's and their own protection, immediately inform the Administrator or the Head Teacher. Examples of this might include: striking a child in anger, or finding yourself in an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation with a student.
- Any member of staff concerned about the conduct of a colleague should confidentially contact the Child Protection Officer.
- Situations that fall outside these guidelines should be dealt with in the spirit of the guidelines or referred to the Administrator or the Head Teacher.
- Staff are encouraged to invite out students to their house in groups of 3 or more. Staff are advised not to have students singly.
- It is inappropriate for a male member of staff to go into a girl's room or a female member of staff into a boy's room. It may be appropriate for male residence staff *when invited* to go into girl's rooms but never alone with a single student and never while the students are changing or are in bed.