



Woodland Star School: Child Safeguarding Policy
(Revised February 2024)

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Introduction

Everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play in keeping children safe. In order for Woodland Star School (WSS) to effectively fulfill its safeguarding responsibility, the safety and best interest of every child at WSS will be at the center of its decisions and actions.

This Safeguarding Policy is applicable for all staff, including full- and part-time, volunteers and interns, parents and caregivers, students, and the wider school community.

WSS defines safeguarding as:

- Protecting children from violence, abuse, and neglect
- Ensuring that children grow up with the provision of safe, nurturing and quality care
- Taking action to enable all children to develop in a holistic manner to ensure their overall wellbeing¹

WSS will not tolerate any discrimination or acts of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect against any student at WSS, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, culture, nationality, faith, etc., and including those with special educational needs and disabilities. *Appendices A and B* discuss common safeguarding concerns as well as provide definitions for the school's context.

WSS will strive to keep all students safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
- Appointing a safeguarding team (with a lead) that will oversee school training and implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Incorporating safeguarding procedures and practices at all levels of operation.
- Taking all allegations and suspected cases seriously and responding accordingly.
- Ensuring students know that there are adults whom they can approach if they are worried, and maintaining an environment where children are confident to approach any member of staff if they have a worry or problem.
- Creating a child-friendly version of this policy
- Recording and storing information securely. All exchanges will be handled professionally and confidentially.
- Conducting parent information session(s) and providing other communication regarding the school's child protection and safety education programme. The school will seek parent feedback and will ensure they know who to contact in the school if there are any child protection/safety concerns.
- Instructing children how to stay safe and including opportunities in the curriculum for students to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse. (Refer to Appendix G)
- Assuring appropriate filters and monitoring systems for online usage are in place.
- Following procedures for reporting and/or sharing information with appropriate channels.
- Ensuring that we have a safe physical environment for children to play, learn, and interact.
- Raising the awareness of all staff of the need to safeguard students and of their responsibilities to identify and report possible cases of abuse, or suspected abuse.

¹ NSPCC. "Safeguarding Children: What Organisations Need to Do to Protect Children from Harm." NSPCC, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children., 2018, www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding/.

Legal Framework

All acts of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect are illegal under Kenyan and international law. The Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education, has committed to institutionalizing and mainstreaming school safety across all registered schools in Kenya. The right to access quality education and ensure children are safe and protected in schools are firmly anchored in laws and policies. Specifically, the *Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya* (2008) notes that “safety in schools is critical to facilitating and fostering quality teaching and learning.”²

This policy was developed with the following pieces of legislation in mind:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) 1999
- The Constitution of Kenya 2010
- Children’s Act (2001)
- The Basic Education Act (2013)
- The Kenyan Penal Code

Roles and Responsibility of Staff

All staff, including support staff, have a responsibility to keep children safe and have a role in reporting concerns of potential and actual abuse.

The WSS Advisory Board

- The Advisory Board ensures that the policies, procedures and training in our school are effective and comply with the Kenyan law at all times. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place and that the safeguarding policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed annually.
- The Board ensures there is a named, designated safeguarding lead and safeguarding team in place.
- This policy will be subject to annual review by the Board unless an incident, guidance or new legislation requires an earlier date of review.
- Certain Child Protection and Safeguarding matters are required to be elevated to the Board. For more information in this regard, please refer to [Processes and Protocols: Matters requiring elevation to the WSS Advisory Board](#).

School Leadership

- The school leadership team (with support from the school safeguarding team) ensures that children are taught how to keep themselves safe through instruction and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, including online safety.
- The school leadership team and school HR manager are responsible for ensuring the school follows recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children. It adheres to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and has recruitment and selection procedures in place (see the school’s Human Resource policy for further information). All potential employees and interns are required to submit a police clearance as part of their application

process.

- The school leadership team will ensure that all pictures and information shared for promotional purposes will only be used with parental consent, protecting the dignity of the child at all times.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and Team)

- The designated safeguarding team in school takes lead responsibility for managing child protection referrals, biennial safeguarding training, and raising awareness of all child protection policies and procedures.
- They ensure that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers, and contractors) is aware of these procedures and that they are followed at all times.
- They act as a source of advice and support for other staff (on child protection matters) and ensure timely referrals to the local authority and service and care providers, as required.
- If for any reason the designated safeguarding lead is unavailable, the deputy designated safeguarding lead will act in their absence.
- They are accountable to the school leadership and board. Any concerns in relation to carrying out duties, policy and procedures will be communicated to the school leadership and board on an annual basis; any changes must be approved at the board level.
- The Safeguarding Team will conduct an annual self-audit of this document and their practices.
- The school safeguarding lead (with support from the school safeguarding team) ensures that all staff members undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction and that it is then regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The Principal and School Leadership Team

The Principal and the leadership team work in accordance with the requirements upon all school staff. In addition, they ensure that all safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the board are followed by all staff and volunteers through ongoing professional development and volunteer training.

All School Staff

Everyone at WSS school has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which our children can learn. All staff members are aware of and are held accountable to follow school processes. All staff members are prepared to identify risk factors and signs related to potential abuse, are able to provide appropriate support and will liaise with the designated safeguarding lead to report any concerns.

Procedures for Reporting - Child Safety and Risk Assessment

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will make an accurate record as soon as possible, on the [WSS Student Cause for Concern Form](#), noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This form is submitted to the designated safeguarding lead and school counselor, who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any member of the school community can also make an anonymous report by using one of the school's reporting boxes, found in numerous places around the campus. The anonymous reporting boxes are meant to

allow disclosure without any fear of reprisal or victimization.

In the case of a potential criminal offense, the Safeguarding Team will gather information and record information respectfully and confidentially. An initial risk assessment will be made to determine the current safety of the child and the team will respond accordingly. (This is not a formal investigative assessment which requires a trained social worker or police officer. In line with the *Child Protection Advocacy Network (CPAN)*, it is best practice to have two people in the room when assessing safety. If a concern is verified, the Gender Officer (GO) / Designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) at the respective police station (i.e. Tigoni Police Station) is notified and a report of abuse and/or neglect is made. This person refers the case to the Children's Officer (CO) for a comprehensive formal investigation if warranted.

The safeguarding team's risk assessment will document the following:

- A record of the pupils' details (i.e. name, date of birth, address and family details)
- Date and time of the event / concern
- The nature of the concern raised
- Summary of the action taken and by whom
- Name and position of the person making the record
- Recommended next steps
- Specific request for what input, advice is needed from directors and/or advisory board

In the case of disclosure, the record should also include:

- As full an account as possible of what the child said
- An account of the questions put to the child
- Time and place of disclosure
- Who was present at the time of disclosure
- The demeanor of the child, where the child was taken, and where returned to at the end of the disclosure³

Responding when Students Disclose Abuse

- Do not let a child swear you to secrecy before telling you something. You may need to report, which the child will view as breaking your trust with them.
- If a child asks to speak with you, try to find a neutral setting where you can have quiet and few interruptions.
- Do not lead the child in telling. Just listen, letting him/her explain in his/her own words.
- Don't pressure for a great amount of detail.
- Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story that the child tells you is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm.
- Do not make judgmental or disparaging comments about the abuser - it is often someone the child loves or with whom he/she is close.
- Do not make promises to the child that things will get better.
- Do not confront the abuser.
- If the child does not want to go home, this should be considered an emergency. Report and handle immediately by contacting your school-based Safeguarding Team. Do not take the child home with

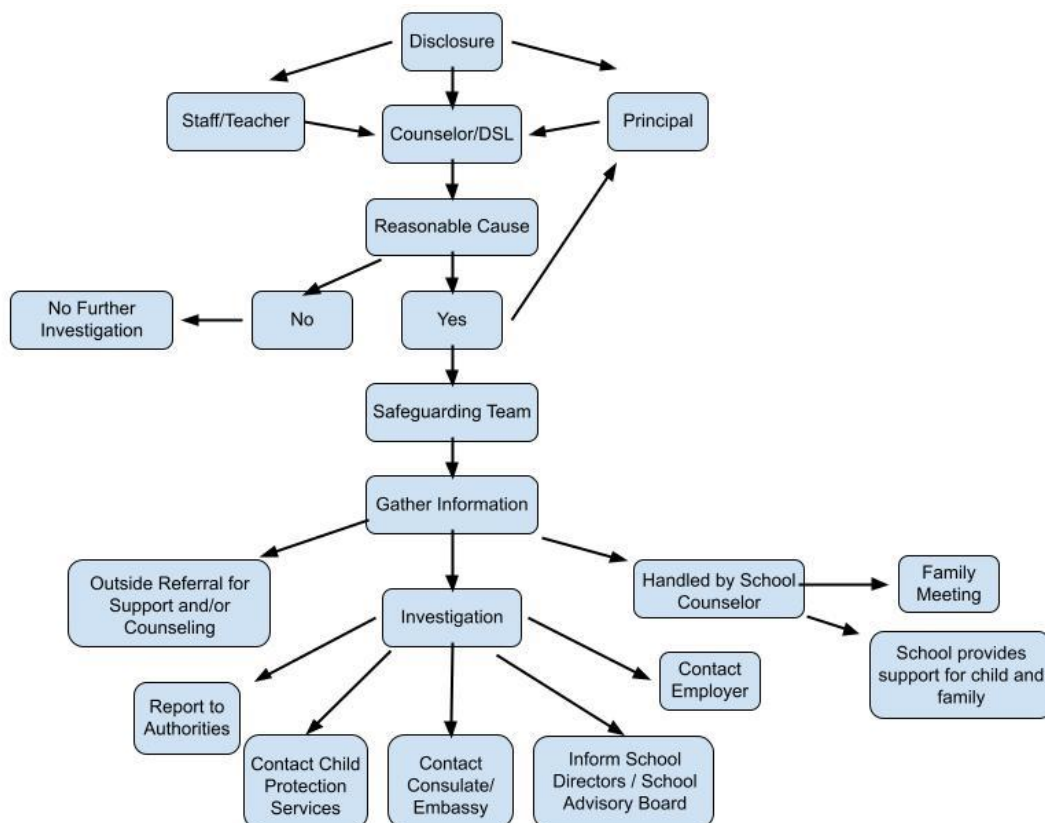
³ "Guidance: Record Keeping & Management of Child Protection Information - Including Guidance on Consent."
www.icmec.org, July 2011, pp. 4.,
doi:<https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/UK-Record-Keeping-Guidance-for-Child-Protection-2011.pdf>.

you.

- Respect the child's confidence. Share with the Safeguarding Team, but limit information from and with other staff.
- Explain to the child that you must tell someone else to get help.
- Try to let the child know that someone else also will need to talk with him/her and explain why
- Empower the student by as much as possible allowing the child a part in the process.

Reporting and Actions Taken After Disclosure

Where there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report their suspicions to the school counselor, designated safeguarding lead or to the school principal. In all cases, the school principal will be notified. All staff, faculty and administrators are mandated to report incidences of or suspicion of abuse and neglect within 48 hours for immediate response.



Records and Information Sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practice. WSS is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school, the status of such records and when these records should be shared with other agencies. Any records related to child protection are kept in a child protection file (which is separate to the pupil and staff member file). All safeguarding records are stored securely and confidentially.

Use of Reasonable Force and Restraining Students

To ensure the safety and well-being of students, physical contact may be necessary for care, instruction, control or restraint, but staff must be able to provide full justification for such contact. The nature of the contact should be limited to what is appropriate, and any restraining of students should only use the minimum

force necessary to prevent harm to themselves, others, or property. It is important to summon colleagues to assist where possible and record any details of such incidents to report to the school's safeguarding lead. It is never acceptable to hit a student, and the use of reasonable force must not be used as a punishment or to search a student. The use of corporal punishment is strictly prohibited.

Allegations of Members of the WSS Staff

The school will take all allegations and disclosures of child abuse seriously. It will be reported and investigated appropriately and confidentially, with the safety of the child being of the utmost consideration. All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behavior and conduct as well as the duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of staff in line with the same. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in employment contracts.

The school has processes in place for reporting any concerns about a member of staff (or any adult working with children). Any concerns about the conduct of a member of staff will be referred to the Principal and safeguarding lead (or a school director in their absence). This role is distinct from the designated safeguarding lead as the named person should have sufficient status and authority in the school to manage employment procedures. The school also provides numerous confidential reporting boxes in numerous places around the campus. The anonymous reporting boxes are meant to allow disclosure without any fear of reprisal or victimization. Accusations of misconduct of staff will be handled on a case-by-case basis. This may result in immediate dismissal or suspension of duties until a thorough investigation takes place.

Safe Recruitment

Woodland Star School is dedicated to utilizing safe recruitment practices during the hiring of new staff. This involves undertaking background checks on all paid staff and volunteers, verifying employment history and references, and confirming that candidates possess the required qualifications and abilities for the position. Interview procedures include questions(s) to all candidates on Child Protection and Safeguarding. By performing these procedures, we strive to avoid employing individuals who may endanger children and guarantee that our staff are capable, knowledgeable, and committed to safeguarding.

Safeguarding Training and Audit Requirements

The safeguarding team is responsible for conducting an annual [safeguarding audit](#) and implementing necessary changes as identified within the audit.

All school staff and advisory board members are required to complete basic international school's safeguarding training within their first year of appointment, and biennially thereafter (every 2 years).

The safeguarding team is required to complete relevant international school's safeguarding training annually.

The school principal is responsible for ensuring that a suitable safeguarding budget is in place annually for the purposes of safeguarding training and resource acquisition or development.

Designated Safeguarding Team Contact Details

Name:	Phone:	Email:
Mr. Jeffery Hennessy (Safeguarding Lead)	0742 279 299	jeffh@woodlandstarkeny.com
Mr. Heather Adkins (Safeguarding Deputy)	0702 416 746	heathera@woodlandstarkeny.com
Mrs. Dorinah Osabinyi Koli (Head of Early Years)	0722 980 883	dorinahk@woodlandstarkeny.com
Mr. David Mungoma (Head of Learning Support)	0738 220 070	davidm@woodlandstarkeny.com
Mrs. Tesni Anderson (School Counselor)	0114 219 995	counselor@woodlandstarkeny.com
WSS Advisory Board (for Child Protection matters that need to be addressed at a higher level than the School Safeguarding Team)		advisoryboard@woodlandstarkeny.com

Appendix A

Common Safeguarding Concerns

Common threats to children's protection and safety in schools usually fall into the following categories:

Violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect

Being exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect can impact on children's ability to thrive and remain in school, as well as on children's physical and mental health. Often, acts of violence are not isolated, and, if not responded to immediately, can escalate to result in more hurtful and harmful forms. Sustained exposure to violence, whether adult-on-learner or peer-on-peer, has long-term negative impacts on a child's physical and mental health.

WSS recognizes that stable, secure and safe environments, including both at home and at school, are crucial for reducing children's risk to harm. WSS recognizes that some children may have challenging or defiant behavior, be withdrawn, or may display abusive behavior towards other children at school. Peer-on-peer abuse will be managed the same way as other child protection concerns and will follow the same procedures. Children showing signs of defiant, withdrawn or aggressive behavior will be discussed with parents/caregivers to agree upon how the home and school setting can best support the child. Peer-on-peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways, and may include bullying (including cyber bullying), online abuse, gender-based abuse, 'sexting' or sexually harmful behavior. WSS understands that different gender issues may be prevalent when dealing with peer-on-peer abuse.

Through safeguarding and child protection training, WSS staff are aware of the signs of potential abuse and are able to identify children who may be in need of support or care. Any harmful behavior in school will not be tolerated. Swift intervention will take place when this occurs. The school will use classroom lessons and assemblies to help children understand, in an age-appropriate way, what violence is and encourage them to tell a member of the safeguarding team if someone, be it an adult staff member or peer, is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Violence can take on the following forms:

- grooming (refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of establishing an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual exploitation or abuse. Children can be groomed face-to-face or on-line).
- physical violence (such as hitting, slapping, pinching, twisting/pulling of ears, caning),
- sexual abuse (such as inappropriate touching, using sexually inappropriate language, indecent exposure, rape),
- verbal abuse (such as bullying or use of inappropriate or obscene language),
- psychological and emotional abuse (such as soliciting inappropriate favors in exchange for something, intimidation, humiliation),
- exploitation (such as engaging children in activities that physically, mentally, and emotionally excessive), and
- neglect (such as not meeting learner's physical, mental and emotional needs).

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Our school understands that children with diagnosed special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. This can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behavior, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- children with SEN and disabilities can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying- without outwardly showing any signs;
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

Appendix B

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect

- 1. Neglect:** Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.
- 2. Physical Neglect:** This includes failing to provide a child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. It may also include leaving a child unsupervised or without appropriate care for extended periods of time.
- 3. Emotional Neglect:** This type of neglect involves failing to meet a child's emotional needs, such as providing love, support, and guidance. It may also involve ignoring a child's emotional distress or exposing a child to chronic conflict or violence.
- 4. Educational Neglect:** This occurs when a child's educational needs are not being met, such as failing to ensure regular school attendance or providing appropriate learning resources and support.
- 5. Medical Neglect:** This occurs when a child's medical needs are not being met, such as failing to seek medical attention for an illness or injury or not administering medication as prescribed.
- 6. Supervisory Neglect:** This involves leaving a child in the care of an inappropriate caregiver or failing to supervise a child in situations where supervision is necessary to ensure their safety.
- 7. Environmental Neglect:** This occurs when a child is exposed to unsafe or unsanitary living conditions, such as living in a home with hazardous materials or without adequate heating, cooling, or ventilation.
- 8. Abandonment:** This involves leaving a child without any support or care, such as leaving a child at home alone for extended periods of time or abandoning a child altogether.
- 9. Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, FGM or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- 10. Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, sexting, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- 11. Sexual Exploitation:** Child sexual exploitation occurs when a child or young person, or another person, receives "something" (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of the child/young person performing sexual activities, or another person performing sexual activities on the child/young person. The presence of any significant indicator for sexual exploitation should trigger a referral to children's social care.

12. Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may also involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment.

13. Commercial Exploitation: Commercial exploitation refers to the use of children or young people for financial gain or other benefits. Commercial exploitation may refer to a range of activities, including child labor, child trafficking, or the sexual exploitation of children. We have a duty to protect students from harm and prevent commercial exploitation. Members of the community should respond to suspected signs of exploitation by reporting concerns to the safeguarding lead.

14. Inappropriate Behavior of Children Towards Other Children: Inappropriate behavior of children towards other children refers to any action or behavior that is harmful, abusive, or inappropriate between children. This can include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, bullying, harassment, or discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, or sexuality.

Appendix C

Code of Conduct for Interacting with Children at Woodland Star School

The following are general guidelines that all adults interacting with children at WSS are expected to adhere to:

Treat all children with respect: Adults should always treat children with respect and dignity. This includes speaking to them in a calm, patient and understanding manner, and listening attentively to what they have to say.

Maintain appropriate physical boundaries: Adults should maintain appropriate physical boundaries with children at all times. This means not hugging, kissing, or touching a child in a way that could be misconstrued or make them feel uncomfortable.

Avoid 'closed' or non-visible spaces: Adults should avoid being isolated in a one-on-one context with a learner unless in an open, public and visible space (i.e. there are others present). This also pertains to times in the natural environment (e.g. forest walk) or when off-campus (e.g. field trips).

Avoid behavior that can be interpreted as grooming: Adults should avoid any behavior that can be interpreted as grooming, such as giving excessive attention or gifts, making inappropriate comments or jokes, or discussing personal topics that are not appropriate for children.

Refrain from using physical or verbal discipline: Adults should never use physical or verbal discipline with children. This includes hitting, spanking, yelling, or using any other form of physical or emotional abuse.

Report any suspicions of abuse: If an adult suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, they should immediately report it to the school's safeguarding lead. The safety and well-being of the child should always be the top priority.

Follow school policies and procedures: Adults should follow all school policies and procedures when interacting with children. This includes following appropriate channels of communication, adhering to the Village Agreements, and respecting the privacy of all students.

Be a positive role model: Adults should strive to be positive role models for children. This includes modeling appropriate behavior, demonstrating a commitment to learning, and treating others with kindness and respect.

For external service providers at WSS, please see [Code of Conduct Policy for external service providers](#).

Appendix D

Guidance for Interviewing a Child

Tip 1 - Make the interview enjoyable: Children are experts in their own views, but they may need help expressing themselves. To make the interview fun, consider activities that children enjoy such as coloring, games, quizzes or crafting.

Tip 2 - Be clear and obtain consent: It is essential to communicate clearly to the child why they are being interviewed. Use simple language and visuals, and make sure the child understands and agrees to participate. Obtaining full, informed consent is crucial, and you should respect the child's decision if they decline to participate.

Tip 3 - Create a comfortable atmosphere: Ensure the interview venue is a comfortable and safe environment for the child, free from distractions. Use a playful approach to build rapport and help the child feel at ease. Keep eye contact with the child, not your paperwork, and use a digital recorder to focus fully on the child.

Tip 4 - Use visuals: Children may find it challenging to express their feelings and thoughts, especially in the context of abuse or trauma. Visual aids such as storyboards, flip charts, or communication systems like flannel graphs can help the child communicate more effectively.

Tip 5 - Consider who else is present: Some children may feel more comfortable with another person present, such as a trusted adult or pet. Ensure that their role is clear and that they do not interfere with the interview process, which could compromise data accuracy.

Appendix E

Safeguarding Class Lessons

Lessons where Child Safeguarding Topics are Addressed in our Rights, Respect, Responsibility Curriculum

- Kindergarten
 - My Space, Your Space
- Grade 2
 - Bullying is never ok
 - Cut it out! Making teasing and bullying stop
 - Seeking help
 - Respect for all
- Grade 3
 - teasing, harassing, bullying
 - Feeling SAFE
- Grade 4
 - Your body, your rights
 - Taking a stand against bullying
- Grade 5
 - What is love anyway?
 - Being clear with your friends
- Grade 6
 - Gender roles, gender expectations
 - Understanding boundaries
 - Communicating about a sensitive topic
 - Liking and loving - now and when I'm older
- Grade 7
 - I am who I am
 - Making SMART choices; Being the change you want to see in the world
 - Being smart, staying safe online
- Grade 8
 - Creating a safe school, celebrating all
 - The world around me; Healthy or unhealthy relationships?
 - Choose your words carefully
 - We need to talk
 - Warning signs - understanding sexual abuse and assault
- Grade 9
 - It wasn't my fault
 - Sexual orientation, behavior and identity

Appendix F

Important Contact Information

In the case that a child is in need of more psychological support than the school can provide, a network of counselors and psychologists in Kenya has been established for timely referral:

[Counselors and Psychologists Referral List Kenya 2023](#)

Woodland Star School remains connected with the Child Protection Advocacy Network (CPAN) and the Multi-Disciplinary Team Network (MDT). The networks consist of representatives of multiple departments including psychology, law, social work, children's services, therapeutic services and police:

[MDT Contact List 2022-2023](#)