

Child Protection Policy 2018

Avehi Public Charitable
(Educational) Trust initiated

Avehi Abacus Project



Second Floor, K.K. Marg Municipal School,
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www.avehiabacus.org





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1. Overview of Avehi Abacus Project

The Avehi Public Charitable (Educational) Trust¹, founded in 1981, is a non-profit organisation dedicated to continuing education and critical social intervention through use of media resources. Avehi initiated the Avehi Abacus Project (AAP) in 1990. AAP believes in improving and strengthening the public education system by making it qualitatively better, to reach out to the most marginalized sections of society and to impact mainstream policy on education.

Important contribution of AAP can be recognized in the rich and relevant content that has been accepted by children, teachers and policy makers alike. National and state level policy making bodies have taken a serious note of its sustained and spread out work with teachers and children in public schools. Members of AAP have played a key role in shaping various syllabi and textual material developed at national and state levels.

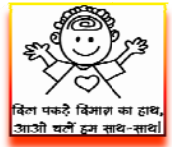
The following set of goals have guided the work of the Avehi Abacus Project:

- To influence the quality of teaching-learning in schools with particular focus on strengthening the public education system.
- To build awareness in children, teachers and educational planners regarding issues related to social justice and environmental sustainability.
- To equip children with the skills and values that will help them contribute positively to society and achieve their own potential.
- To empower teachers to become active participants in the educational process.
- To actively participate towards influencing policies to institutionalize meaningful and creative teaching-learning curricula within schools.
- To build public opinion and influence policy towards redefinition of the quality aspects of education.
- To influence policy towards the formulation, acceptance and implementation of equal quality free education to all children from 0 to 18 years.
- To foster values that promote harmony and to celebrate diversity.

The organization has developed various resources and has implemented the following educational programmes on a large-scale, in the formal sites like schools as well as in some slums and *bastis*.

- **Sangati** (togetherness/harmony): This is a thought-provoking and interactive enrichment curriculum package comprising of a series of 6 teaching-learning kits with interlinked themes which are usually drawn from sciences and social sciences. This programme is implemented in school and non-schools settings with the age group of 11 to 14 years. The *Sangati* curriculum basically attempts to make school education relevant and vibrant. *Sangati* is being used in all (900+) Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) and has reached more than 10,000 teachers and more than 2,50,000 children. Since 2015 *Sangati* has also reached 36 'Ashram schools' of Tribal Development Department in Thane district of Maharashtra.

¹For details, visit the URL: www.avehiabacus.org



- **Manthan**(Churning): A foundation course for trainee teachers who have enrolled for the Diploma in Teacher Education (D.T. Ed.), this programme is currently being used in 6 colleges in Palghar, 6 colleges in Thane and 4 colleges in Mumbai districts of Maharashtra.
- **Saath-Saath - Living together in harmony**: This is a curriculum package developed for use in schools as well as community organisations in order to contribute to the resurgence of awareness about gender justice and equality.

From 2015 AAP's **Sangati, Manthan and Saath Saath** programmes have also found new avenues of partnership. AAP has been playing the role of a resource organisation for other establishments and organisations like Earthian initiative's (Wipro) Continuous Engagement Programme. Centre for Environment Education (CEE) uses materials from **Sangati** and **Manthan** to develop and strengthen components of Education for Sustainable Development in about 20 schools spread in the states of Gujrat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi and Haryana. AAP has also been playing the role of a resource organisation mentoring grassroots partners in north India (Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) by introducing **Saath Saath** and some aspects of **Sangati** and **Manthan** programmes. AAP's contribution in creating awareness about the most crucial but widely neglected elements of formal schooling is appreciated by many researchers and scholars. For example, in the context of **Sangati**, a recent article comments - "(W)e also need to realize and acknowledge the efforts of those who have been trying to put forward counter narratives, challenging and questioning the process of fabricating history and providing an alternative vision, that is based on the principles of enquiry rather than a final word...Avehi Abacus Project and '**Sangati**' are the living embodiments of such a vision." A similar vision of a 'counter narrative' with a focus on basic values enshrined in Indian Constitution, especially equality, acts as the fundamental building block of **Saath Saath**.

Hence, besides being committed to preventing child abuse through this Child Protection Policy, the Avehi Abacus Project is also involved in positive interventions in the public school education system working directly with children in the above capacity.

2.Introduction to the Policy

2.1 The wellbeing of all children is fundamental to Avehi Abacus Project's activities.

Avehi Abacus Project is engaged in education of children through direct and indirect means. Avehi Abacus Project works directly with children in Municipal and Aashram schools, and indirectly through teachers who are trained by Avehi Abacus Project staff to work on the AAP programme with children using participatory methodology.

2.2 Child abuse is a global phenomenon. It occurs in all countries and in all societies. It involves the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children. It is nearly always preventable. We believe that

- children have the right to a happy, healthy and secure childhood
- the abuse of children is an abuse of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- child abuse is never acceptable



Through this Policy, we endeavor to eliminate all risks to children and ensure their safety and well-being.

3. Need for the Policy

3.1 Avehi Abacus Project's engagement with children is governed by the Child Protection Policy. The Policy reflects Avehi Abacus Project's philosophy, which includes values, ethics and code of conduct for staff, management, staff of partner NGOs, student social workers placed with Avehi Abacus Project, school teachers, children, support staff in schools, parents, and volunteers. It identifies strategies and plans to minimize the risk of harm to children, abuse, ill-treatment, and neglect. This Child Protection Policy demands the highest standards of professional practice in work with children.

3.2 Avehi Abacus Project's Child Protection Policy covers all contact with children across India and ensures that staff, volunteers, students, and other representatives of Avehi Abacus Project and partners, staff and representatives of the partners:

- are aware of the problem of child abuse
- safeguard children from abuse through positive practice
- respond appropriately when abuse is discovered or suspected
- report all concerns about possible abuse

All Avehi Abacus Project's workers and projects strictly adhere to child protection standards so that children are not exposed to exploitation or abuse at any level at any time. Visitors and volunteers **must** also adhere to this Policy.

4. Terminology used in the Policy

This section briefly discusses the working definitions for some of the terminology used in this Policy.

4.1 Child

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 1) a child is every human being below the age of 18 years.

(source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child>)

4.2 Child Protection

Child protection is the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

(source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_protection)

4.3 Child Abuse

According to the World Health Organization, child abuse constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other



exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Child abuse can be categorized into four different types: Neglect, Emotional abuse, Physical abuse and Sexual abuse.

(source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_abuse#cite_ref-WHO_abuse_and_neglect_10-0)

4.4 Child Neglect

Child neglect is the failure of parents, caregivers, [or society at large] to meet the needs that are necessary for the mental, physical, and emotional development of a child.

(source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_neglect#Definition)

Child neglect constitutes abandonment of the child by parent, institution or guardian. It is depriving the child of care by not providing appropriate and necessary food, shelter, clothing, medical care and supervision. Education neglect includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs. Psychological neglect includes lack of emotional support and love.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy, Mumbai)

4.5 Child Emotional Abuse

Child emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment that would adversely affect 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. This may be expressed verbally or non-verbally or via electronic or written communication or any other form.

Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment. This can include parents / caretakers using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishments, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or being tied to a chair for long periods of time or threatening or terrorizing a child. Less severe acts, but no less damaging, are belittling or rejecting treatment, using derogatory terms to describe the child, habitual tendency to blame the child or make him/her a scapegoat.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy, Mumbai)

4.6 Child Physical Abuse

The Ministry of Women and Child Welfare in its study on Child Abuse defined Physical abuse as inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, beating or otherwise harming a child even when the parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child. It may, even be the result of over disciplining or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy, Mumbai)

4.7 Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse, also called child molestation, is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Forms of child sexual abuse include engaging



in sexual activities with a child (whether by asking or pressuring, or by other means), indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.), child grooming, or using a child to produce child pornography.

(source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sexual_abuse)

According to 'Child Abuse: India 2007', Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behavior with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation. To be considered 'child abuse', these acts have to be committed by a person responsible for the care of a child (for example: a baby sitter, a parent, a day care provider, teacher) or related to the child. When these acts are committed by a stranger it is considered as sexual assault.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy, Mumbai)

4.8 Child Exploitation

Child exploitation is using a child unfairly for one's advantage. This involves befriending the child through gifts, online chat rooms, social networking websites, email, mobile, telephone messaging, gaining their trust, and stalking their online activities.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy)

Child labour is also considered a form of child exploitation.

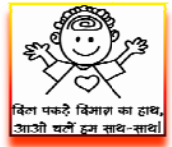
5. Implementation of the Policy

5.1 Staff recruitment and behaviour

- The recruitment and selection of staff, care-takers, and volunteers will be done with utmost care. It will be checked to see that they do not have a criminal history.
- The staff must under no circumstances hurt a child physically, mentally. or sexually They cannot use abusive language when speaking to children.
- Anyone (staff / volunteer / other persons) suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with severely, action that may include criminal investigation as well as severance of employment or relationship.

5.2 Care during Programmes

- There are several occasions like camps, events, picnics and educational visits organized for and during which children are taken out. When children are taken away from their homes or schools for camps, events or visits, they will be taken only with the prior permission of the concerned authority and the consent of the parent/guardian. They will be dropped back to the school at the agreed timing.
- As far as possible, children mustn't be subjected to long distance travel. If this is unavoidable, care must be taken to see that it is safe and comfortable. Children mustn't be taken to too far off places more than 3 times in the year. As far as possible, night travel should be avoided.



- The person escorting the children to and fro as part of Avehi Abacus Project activities should have a record of children's contact details and of any health problems the child may be facing. Children and their parents must be pre-informed and aware of where they are going, how far and how.
- Care must be taken to ensure that children are not be subjected to any form of physical, mental or sexual abuse. The attire of the person accompanying must be appropriate. During the process of a camp, etc. the accompanying person will speak to and behave with the children with extreme respect. He/she will not speak rudely to the child or ask the child to do work of any kind. He/she will neither speak in a way that can hurt a child emotionally or physically. The child will not be subject to any form of sexual abuse or even use language that hints at sexual flirtation. If there is a girl among the children, then the escort must be female.
- During an event or rally where a large gathering of children will be present, the police must be informed to provide police protection so that no untoward incident should occur.
- No unannounced visits to children or their homes will be allowed.
- In no circumstances will a child be allowed to be alone in the company of a staff member in the office premises. The staff must not give their telephone numbers or addresses to the children.
- A suggestion box must be kept at the event/camp site so that children have a forum to express their feedback and make suggestions. These suggestions given by children must be attended to immediately and action be taken on it.
- Child-friendly location must be chosen as venue for the camp or event. i.e. either a school or a resort which is equipped with all facilities of toilets and having supply of clean drinking water. If it is a residential event, then there must be separate arrangements for male and female children and teachers. Children should be accommodated in a safe and hygienic location for sleeping and all other activities, and must be provided hygienic, healthy food and nourishment during their stay.
- If there are riots or floods or any situation which is unsafe, then camp/events/workshops must be cancelled even if pre-planned.
- During programmes with children, Avehi Abacus Project's staff must have a first-aid box and fire-extinguisher.
- Children's insurance must be taken.

5.3 Prohibition of Child Labour

Avehi Abacus Project prohibits child labour.

- Child labour must not be allowed in any form. As a policy, Avehi Abacus Project will not allow child labour even outside of the client group. If it be observed that the chai-walla (tea-seller) coming to sell tea in the office is a child, it must be notified to the child and his employer that the child must not be made to work. Something to the effect that the child and his employer understand that the child
- Avehi Abacus Project's staff must also not buy things made by children. Positive steps must be taken to prevent all forms of child labour.



- During camps, events, picnics, the children must not be asked to do any kind of labour like sweeping the floor, etc.

5.4 Written Communication

Avehi Abacus Project will ensure that all communication about children will portray them as dignified citizens of the country. No attempt will be made to portray them as victims unwarrantedly, neither will any communication exaggerate or glamorize the poverty and challenges faced by the children. Written permission must be taken from children when publishing their photographs in any printed material.

6. Code of Conduct

6.1 It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- as far as possible, be transparent in working with children
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised or discussed
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists for staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem

6.2 It is inappropriate to:

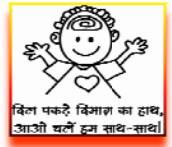
- spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you

6.3 Staff and others must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse

6.4 Staff and others *must* avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, they should never:

- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive



- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

6.5 The staff should immediately attend to any issues that children may face without any delay. It must be the first priority to help children in distress.

6.6 The policy is not simply there to respond to specific incidents, but is about promoting good and safe practices with children that respects and promotes their rights.

6.7 Annexure B contains the Code of Conduct form that is required to be filled in by all staff members.

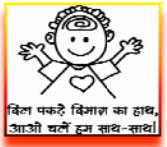
7. Procedures in Dealing with Child Abuse

7.1 Child Protection Committee

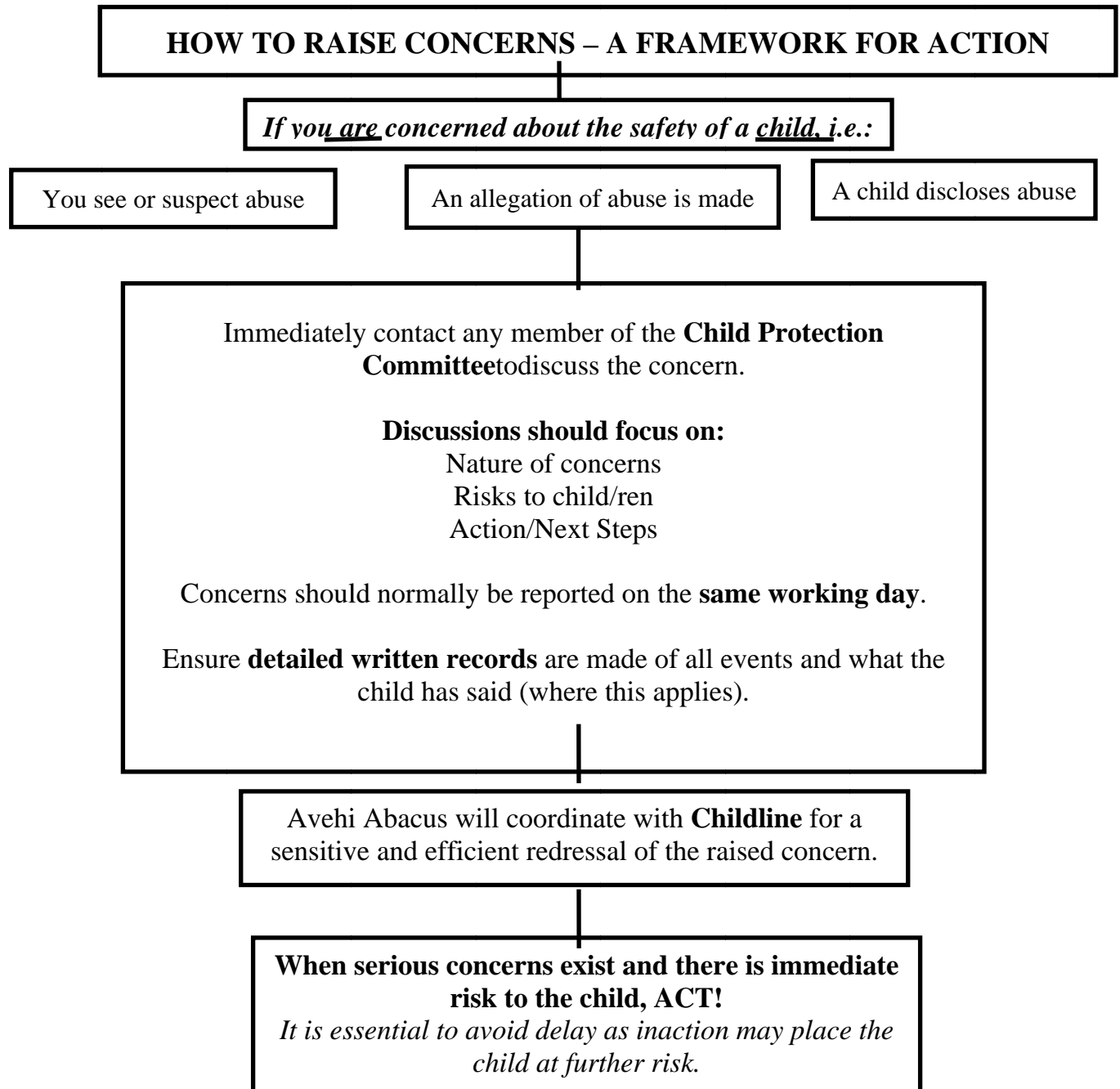
A Child Protection Committee is constituted for our Organization by the management to look into the matters concerning child abuse. The Committee consists of one person at each of the following positions at the Avehi Abacus Project:

- Director
- Chief Project Coordinator
- Field Coordinator (in consultation with Avehi Abacus Core Team members or trustees)
- Field Representative (in consultation with Avehi Abacus Core Team members or trustees)
- Another core team member (in consultation with Avehi Abacus Core Team members or trustees)

A complainant can approach any member of the Child Protection Committee with his/her written complaint.



7.2 Raising Concerns



Acknowledgement: Child Protection Policy, PROTECTING CHILDREN, PREVENTING ABUSE by Save the Children Bal Raksha Bharat (SCBR)



7.3 Proceeding with the Investigation

7.3.1 As the first step in furthering the investigation, the Child Protection Committee should interview the victim. Where the complainant is not the victim, the Child Protection Committee shall, after informing the complainant, seek a written statement from the victim with the help of the parents or guardians or skilled child experts. However, the Child Protection Committee shall not make arrangements to interview the victim without first discussing the matter with the complainant. When a child has to be interviewed, the Child Protection Committee shall get the services of someone professionally recognized as skilled in interviewing children.

7.3.2 If the facts are disputed, and it is not possible to interview the person who has been victimized or there is no written statement from the victim, then it may not be possible to proceed any further in dealing with the complaint unless relevant information from other reliable sources is available.

It may also happen that in the course of the investigations the complainant does not pursue the case or does not show the interest in the case after initial complaint. In such a situation the investigation may be not initiated and it is considered as officially closed three months from the day the complaint was accepted.

7.3.3 The Child Protection Committee shall inform the accused of the nature of the complaint if it is possible to do so. The accused needs to be given enough details about the complaint and the complainant to be able to make a response. The accused shall be entitled to information about the process for dealing with the complaint. The accused will be offered the possibility of choosing a support person, if needed.

7.3.4 The Child Protection Committee shall seek a response from the accused within a specified time limit in order to determine whether the facts of the case are significantly disputed.

7.3.5 The Child Protection Committee shall arrange an interview with the accused if the person is available and willing to speak to any member of the Child Protection Committee.

7.3.6 If the accused does not wish to cooperate with the process, the process will continue and reach a conclusion concerning the truth of the matter so that an appropriate response to the complainant can be made. The accused has a right to obtain independent legal advice. The accused is entitled to have one support person of his/her choice during any interview.

7.3.7 A written record shall be made of all interviews. If the Child Protection Committee decides to reject the complaint, then it must provide reasons for its decision. The records of the interview and all other documents are to be treated as confidential.

7.3.8 As the assessment process is a difficult and trying time for all concerned, particularly the complainant and the accused, the process of assessment shall be undertaken and concluded as quickly as possible (not exceeding three months).



(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy)

7.4 Actions to be taken when found Guilty

If the accused is a staff member and admits guilt, does not contest guilt, or there is a finding of guilt, with regard to a grave act of abuse of a child, his / her services are immediately terminated without prejudice to exiting State/Labour Laws.

For the criminal act committed and the legal consequences that arise from it, he/she alone is responsible.

He/she is exhorted to own his/her responsibility and to cooperate fully with any further investigation that may be initiated.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy)



8. Annexes

Annexure A: Application Form for All Staff Members

[All staff members must complete and sign this form]

Name of the Institution: _____

Name: _____ Surname: _____

Male: Female: : [Tick one]

Date of Birth: _____

Home address: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Details of previous work experience: _____

Details of qualifications: _____

Character references:

Please give the names and addresses of two persons who can provide information on your suitability to work with children:

1. _____

2. _____



Personal statement by staff:

I have no history of abuse of children and no record of convictions relating to offences against children or for violent crimes, and consider myself suitable to work in this institution.

I have read the Child Protection Policy of the Avehi Abacus Project and promise to abide by it.

Signature of the staff member: _____

Signature of the Director: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

N.B. In case a history/incidence of past sexual abuse or conviction comes to be discovered, the candidate alone will be held responsible and his/ her services will be terminated, entertaining no claims whatsoever towards any benefits or compensation.

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy)



Annexure B:Child Protection Code of Conduct

I, [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understand Child Protection Policy of the Avehi Abacus Project, Mumbai 2018, and agree that in the course of my association with the _____ school I must:

- Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts.
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in proximity of children.
- Not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium.
- Not use physical punishment on children.
- Not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or development stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- Comply with all relevant Indian and State legislation, including all child related laws and labour laws in relation to child labour.
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with the _____ school that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

Sign: _____

Date: _____

(source: Archdiocesan Board of Education Child Protection Policy)