

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy



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“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.” – Maria Montessori

Introduction

At Colégio Rainha D. Leonor, we believe that safeguarding children is a fundamental responsibility shared by every member of our community. *Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy* exists to ensure that every child entrusted to our care is safe, respected, and able to thrive in an environment free from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

This policy is built upon international and national frameworks, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As stated in Article 3, *“In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”* Equally, Article 12 highlights that *“Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them, and adults should listen and take them seriously.”*

These guiding principles, along with the right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and the right to non-discrimination (Article 2), form the foundation of our approach. CRDL is committed not only to preventing harm, but also to promoting children’s well-being and empowering them to participate actively in shaping a safe school environment.

1. Values and Principles

Colégio Rainha D. Leonor (CRDL) is fully committed to protecting the rights and well-being of every child in our care. Our policy is grounded in:

- Compliance with Portuguese law on the protection of children and young people. (**Lei de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens em Perigo (Lei n.º 147/99)**).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly:



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1. Non-discrimination (Article 2)
2. Best interest of the child (Article 3)
3. Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
4. Right to be heard (Article 12)

We aim not only to prevent abuse, neglect, or exploitation, but also to respond swiftly and effectively when concerns are raised.

2. Objectives

- To ensure a safe, supportive and protective environment for all students.
- To establish clear procedures for identifying, reporting, and responding to safeguarding concerns.
- To ensure every member of staff understands their safeguarding responsibilities.
- To build trust and transparency with parents and the wider school community.

3. Definitions of Abuse

Children may be abused or harmed by family members, peers, staff, volunteers, visitors, or strangers. Abuse may occur in person or online. At CRDL, the following categories are recognised:

3.1 Physical Abuse

Deliberately causing injury to a child, including hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, poisoning, suffocating, or otherwise physically harming them. Indicators may include unexplained injuries, repeated absences, fear of going home, or flinching at sudden movements.

3.2 Emotional Abuse

Persistent behaviour that harms a child's emotional health and development. This may include humiliation, rejection, constant criticism, threats, intimidation, or isolation. Children who are persistently ignored, belittled, or denied affection may suffer emotional abuse.



3.3 Sexual Abuse

Forcing or enticing a child into sexual activities, whether or not the child understands. This includes both contact abuse (touching, penetration) and non-contact abuse (exposure, indecent images, sexualised online interactions).

3.4 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

A form of sexual abuse where children are coerced, groomed, or manipulated into sexual activities in exchange for money, gifts, affection, or status. It can take place in person or online.

3.5 Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs. This may include lack of food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care, education, or emotional support. Neglect also includes the persistent lack of emotional availability, such as when children are deprived of meaningful time and connection with their parents or carers. While schools and childcare settings support children's learning and development, the responsibility for nurturing, bonding, and ensuring adequate family interaction rests with parents. Excessive delegation of parental responsibilities to institutions, without adequate family care and presence, may be considered a form of neglect.

Neglect often causes long-term harm to a child's health and development.

3.6 Commercial Exploitation and Trafficking

Recruiting, transporting, or harbouring children for exploitation. This includes forced labour, criminal activity, domestic servitude, forced marriage, or sexual exploitation. Children may be trafficked within Portugal or internationally.

3.7 Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Abuse between children, including bullying, physical assault, coercion, sexual harassment, emotional manipulation, and cyberbullying. Such behaviour is treated with the same seriousness as adult-to-child abuse.



4. Response Protocol

1. **Initial Review** – The **Child Safe Team (CST)** reviews the concern on the same day.
2. **Assessment** – The CST may speak with the student and/or staff member for clarification.
3. **Decision-Making** – Possible actions include:
 - Monitoring the student and recording the case.
 - Informal discussion with parents/carers (unless this poses additional risk).
 - Referral to external authorities:
 - **CPCJ (Comissão de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens)**
 - **Polícia Judiciária**
 - **Escola Segura**
4. **Escalation** – If the concern involves:
 - **A staff member** → report directly to the Director.
 - **The Director** → report directly to the **Chair of the Board of Administration**.
5. **Follow-up** – The CST documents all actions and ensures ongoing support for the student.

4.1 Application Beyond the School

- Safeguarding policies apply **on school grounds, during after-school activities, trips, exchanges, and any school-sponsored events**.
- External providers must comply with CRDL safeguarding guidelines.

4.2 Support and Confidentiality

- Students and staff who raise concerns will be supported.
- Confidentiality will be strictly respected; only those directly involved in safeguarding decisions will be informed.

4.3 Child Safe Team (CST)

At CRDL, safeguarding is coordinated by the **Child Safe Team (CST)**, a specialised body that ensures all concerns are addressed in a timely, professional, and confidential manner. The CST is composed of:



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- **School Psychologist** (lead coordinator of the team)
- **Additional Psychologist** (support in assessment and follow-up)
- **Representative of the Pedagogical Council** (ensuring articulation with academic leadership and teaching staff)

Responsibilities of the CST include:

- Receiving, recording and monitoring safeguarding concerns.
- Providing initial support to students and staff involved in a disclosure or concern.
- Advising the Director on appropriate next steps.
- Liaising with external agencies (CPCJ, Polícia Judiciária, health services) when referral is necessary.
- Ensuring safeguarding procedures are applied consistently across the school.
- Promoting awareness and training initiatives for staff, students, and parents.

The CST meets whenever a safeguarding report is filed and ensures follow-up until the case is closed.

5. Safeguarding Structure at CRDL

- **Director** – overall accountability
- **Child Safe Team (CST)** – central safeguarding body (Psychologist, Additional Psychologist, Pedagogical Council Representative)
- **Cycle Coordinators (Nursery, Pre-school, Primary, Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary).**

6. Training and Awareness

- All staff complete mandatory annual safeguarding training.
- Students receive age-appropriate education on safety, respect, digital awareness, and children's rights.
- External staff and contractors receive a safeguarding briefing before working with students.



7. Safer Recruitment

- All employees undergo criminal record checks (Portugal and any other country of residence since age 18).
- At least three professional references are required, one from the most recent employer.
- Interviews include safeguarding-specific questions to evaluate suitability for working with children.

8. Policy Review

- This policy will be reviewed **whenever deemed necessary** by the school leadership or the Board of Administration, in light of changes in legislation, best practices, or school needs.

Last review: 20/08/25

