

EXCEL PUBLIC SCHOOL, MYSORE

'Safety of Children @ EPS'



EPS PROMISE OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Creating a healthy school environment has always been a top priority at Excel Public School. It refers to the provision of an environment that encompasses the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of students where they are protected from abuse of any sort – verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, including indirect forms of abuse such as discrimination, exclusion and isolation by responsible adults or peers. A safe school is one that is free from danger and possible harm, where learning happens in an environment free from hassles of ridicule, intimidation, harassment, humiliation or even academic pressure. We also believe that a safe, clean, and well maintained school is a window to our soul – a positive psychosocial climate and culture can foster school connectedness, which in turn boosts the student and staff health as well as students' educational achievement. Pressurizing the student and to make performing fleas out of them is not the agenda at EPS. To the contrary, we wish to encourage and motivate them to become self -directed learners. Not all children learn at the same speed and no child learns at the same speed all the time. Learning is an inherently creative act, and it requires a system that can move with the individual making of each child. At EPS, the belief in the philosophy of 'one child at a time' is strong, and therefore, we do not set an arbitrarily determined pace of learning towards all learners.

Ensuring the safety of children in the school is a collective responsibility. All the members of the school community, Academic Staff, Administrative Staff and Ancillary Staff (drivers, attenders and security staff) play equally important roles in this process. Keeping in mind the need and importance of creating a secure and safe environment at school, we have adopted the following measures, the efficacy of which is constantly monitored and evaluated.

AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

1. All the members of the Teaching Staff have been sensitized about the need and importance of treating children with utmost sensitivity and care. Special sessions are conducted for the teaching staff to increase the awareness about incidents of child abuse (physical, mental and sexual) and the need and importance of protecting them from any sort of exploitation. Teachers have also been advised to be more vigilant and observant to any change in the child's overt behavior or emotional reactions which might be a reflection of a child's anxiety, stress, discomfort, etc. In the event of any such noticeable changes in children, the teachers may either talk to the child in question, or bring it to the notice of student councilor, Head Mistress of Value Education Teachers for more appropriate intervention.
2. News items and articles, pertaining to the issue of child safety are being circulated among the teachers on a regular basis, and they are encouraged to discuss ways and means to ensure a safe and secure learning environment while children are at school.

Teachers have been strictly instructed to abstain from any kind of abuse on children, physical or emotional, failing which, there is provision to take disciplinary action against violation, including dismissal from service.

3. Administrative staff has been asked to attend to any concerns/complaints/ observations/suggestion from the parent community pertaining to issues of child's safety on top priority. Any communication in this regard (orally or in writing), from any parent, is expected to be brought to the notice of the Principal without any delay.
4. Ancillary Staff have been given instructions through interaction and special sessions about keeping a 'safe distance' and avoiding any physical contact with the children.
5. The parents are also being intimated about the need and importance of providing a safe environment at home as well, to ensure regular communication between the parent and child/ren at home. They are also given the provision to directly contact the Principal to resolve any issue/concern they have. Parent- Teacher meetings also provide opportunities for parents and teachers to address these issues in an open and objective manner.
6. Nobody other than the parents or authorized guardians are allowed to meet or take the children from school. If it is an unknown person, either they have to come with a letter from the parent or the school office validates the credentials of the person through a telephonic interaction with the parents.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

a) In the School Bus:

In most of the buses, lady attenders have been appointed and they have been told to be careful while handling children in the bus, while boarding or alighting from the bus. Teachers in the bus also supervise the measures to ensure the safety of the children. They also report to the Principal/Office about incidents of rash and negligent driving, rude behavior with the parents or students etc. Bus drivers have been given mobile phones to contact the school/parent in case of any emergency. Emergency contact numbers have been displayed behind the school bus for the parents/public to report to the school office about rash and negligent driving.

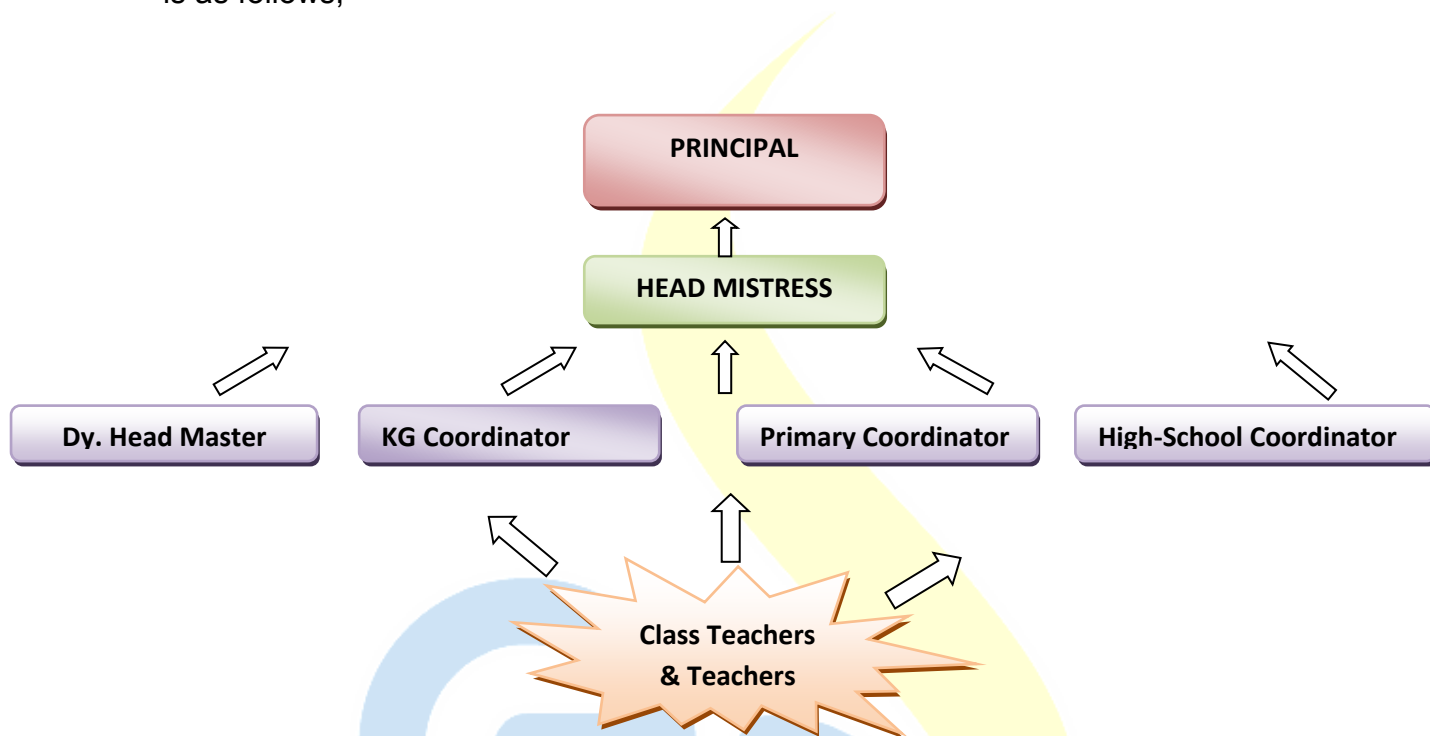
The senior students travelling in the school buses also take care of the smaller children and report to the teachers any undesirable behavior/incidents that happen in the bus during their absence.

Nobody other than the parents or authorized persons is allowed to receive children of lower classes KG and Class 1-4) at the bus stop. If responsible persons are not at the bus stop, those children are usually brought back to school, and their parents have to come and receive them from School. However, children of Class 5 and above are allowed to go home unaccompanied by parents/guardian, unless the parents request otherwise.

All the School Buses have been fitted with GPS to monitor the movement and to alert Officer-in-Charge and the Parents on the whereabouts of the vehicle. Buses have also been fitted with CCTV Cameras as a precautionary safety measures.

b) In the School:

The organizational set-up that takes care of the children and their safety in the school is as follows;



All the members in the ladder are always vigilant about the movement of children while they are in the school campus. Physical education teachers are present and closely monitor the movement of children when they are outside the school building, especially for physical education activities and club activities.

Kindergarten Classes: The students are not left without the Class Teacher/Teacher Assistants at any point of time during their school hours.

Primary Classes: The Class Teachers are present in the classroom itself during the short and lunch breaks. There would be at least two teachers in each corridor, to monitor the movements of the students and to discourage the students from running or playing in the corridors.

Middle and Higher Classes: The Captains, the Vice-Captains and the Class leaders report to the teachers if there are any untoward incidents, whether it's in the school, during field trips or in the school bus.

There are teachers in the corridor to supervise the movement of students during the break times.

There is a **Student Counseling Cell** to attend to the emotional and psychological needs of the children. Mrs. Gubain Mathew and Mrs. Anupam Vittal, both qualified to be Counselors and Ms. Radha Vishwanathan, a trained Life Skill Trainer attend to the needs of the children in general and teenagers in particular. Special sessions are also organized, with the help of both, in-house and external resources, to sensitize the students on self-awareness, self-protection, health and hygiene etc. at frequent intervals.

The **Life-Skill Programme** and the **Quality Circle Time** sessions, conducted in the school, as part of their academic programme, stress on making children assertive, confident, responsible in their thoughts, words and deeds, accepting and respecting their fellow beings and resisting any kind of abuse and exploitation from any quarters by bringing it to the notice of responsible adults without any delay.

The recently launched **Student Police Coprs** programme of the Mysore City Police is expected to train our children on responsible citizenship, social sensitivity, confidence and respect for fellow being. This will help them to behave themselves more responsibly and appropriately intervene if they notice in unacceptable behavior from any person, students or staff.

We have been successfully organizing the **Joy Club Programme of V-Set** in our school for the last five years. These programme, in addition to developing the much needed life-skills in the children, train the youngsters to be more responsible in their attitude, relationships and reactions. The various activities they conduct as part of the programme promote healthy interaction among boys and girls with a sense of mutual respect and acceptance.

c) While on Field Trips and outdoor programmes

Children are taken outside the campus for various out-door learning activities, competitions, field-trips, study tours etc. On such occasions, special care is taken to ensure the safety of children. There would be a Teacher accompanying a group of ten students (1:10). Both male and female teachers will be accompanying the students in the case of middle and higher classes. Field trips are normally organized to places known to us and are safe to the age-group of children visiting. In most cases, children are taken to places which are under the control or contact of persons known closely to School (parents, acquaintances, well-wishers etc.)

VARIOUS PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED (May- September 2014)

- a) On 12th May, 2014, a half day workshop was organized by the Principal for the benefit of the Teachers, both newly joined and existing, on Humane Schooling, one of the core features of Excel Public School. This workshop helped the teachers to recommit themselves to the school's mission of providing a child-friendly and non-threatening learning environment where every adult member of the school community treats every child sent in our direction with utmost love, care and sensitivity.
- b) During the Teachers' Training Programme, a one day session was organized on 26th May, 2014, where the Resource Person, Mrs. Fathima Khader, a Certified Responsible Childcare Trainer, stressed upon 'Positive Discipline' and 'Classroom Management'. This workshop was helpful in understanding the need and importance of handling children with utmost care and providing them a safe and non-intrusive learning environment to facilitate all round development of the children.
- c) A special Staff Meeting was held on 26th July 2013, in the wake of the recent Bangalore child abuse incident, to reaffirm our resolve to avoid abuse of any sort in our school and to intensify our efforts to ensure 'child safety' at all places and at all times. Class Teachers have agreed to spend more time in the class during the breaks, organize quality circle time sessions more frequently and report to the Counseling Cell, if they think their support is required to address the concerns of any child. We have also decided to have more people to manage the corridors, indoor sports areas and sports grounds when children are on the move.
- d) All the students of Classes 3 and above were given special sessions on age appropriate areas related to child abuse and discussions were conducted on a popular video released by Child Line India, on 'Child Abuse'. (<https://www.youtube.com/user/CHILDLINEIndia>). Mrs. Gubain Mathew organized this programme.
- e) During the third week of July, the Principal addressed all the students during the Class Assemblies about the issue of 'Child Safety' in the context of increasing incidents of child abuse. Students were encouraged to report to their parents or teachers about any issues of harassment or attempt of abuse, either in the school or outside the school.
- f) A special meeting of the Ancillary Staff was called to sensitize them on the issue of child safety and to remind them of the 'do's and don'ts' that they need to follow when they are with the children. On 7th August, Monday, a workshop was organized for them in which Mr. Stanley, a Child Rights Activist and Dr. Kumudini Aachchi, a Social Worker, interacted with the supporting staff and sensitized them on the important aspects that they need to keep in mind while trying to help the children on various occasions.
- g) On 22nd July, 2014, Dr. Anupama Rohidekar, a gynecologist, gave a talk to the girl students of Class 6 to 10 stressing on personal health and hygiene. The session also stressed on the ways and means by which children should resist and react to any attempt of abuse. The session was very useful and effective.

- h) PT Meetings conducted during the month of June and July 2014 were occasions for the parents to interact with the Principal on issues concerning the safety of the children. Most of the parents expressed their confidence in the school's approach towards taking good care of their children and shared their sense of gratitude towards the school and teachers for our efforts. The Principal also used this as an occasion to reassure the parents of the school's policy of 'zero tolerance' to abuse of any sort.
- i) The Principal/Headmistress also summons the parents and counsels them if any incident of abuse of children at the hands of parents or any other responsible adults from outside the school is brought to their notice. Needless to say, incidents of physical and emotional abuse of children by the parents and elders in the family are also on the increase. The school considers it as our duty and responsibility to sensitize such parents about 'child's safety'.
- j) It's been proposed to conduct a seminar for the children of Classes 7 to 10 on the potential dangers posed by the cyber world, as it's been found that an increasing number of students have unrestricted access to community sites, social blogs, objectionable contents in the cyber world. The programme would be conducted on 14th August by Prof. Nagalakshmi, Maharani's College, Mysore. This is organized in association with the Inner wheel Club, Mysore Central.

SUGGESTED FUTURE PROGRAMMES

1. It's been proposed to keep a **Suggestion Box** at each building/floor of the school for students to report/suggest/ complain to the Principal issues/incidents that need immediate attention/action.
2. Organize **workshops/seminars** for the benefit of the parents community, where, along with teachers and school community we can discuss and decide on various precautionary and preventive measures to ensure the safety of children, at home, in the school and outside. This will certainly go a long way in instilling the much needed confidence among the parent community about the seriousness that we pay to ensure the safety of our children.
3. Share **frequent communication** with the parents, through circulars, notification, alerts etc. on topics of common interests related to parenting, safe school/home environment etc. Frequent communication will help the school and parent community to be more vigilant and cautious. Parents would certainly appreciate if the school takes such initiatives to sensitize the parent community.

Formation of Child Safety Committee

The proposed Child Safety Committee of Excel Public School will have the power and authority to look into the various issues pertaining to the safety of children while they are at school, in the school bus as well as while they are on field trips or various outdoor learning activities. The committee shall discuss and formulate various policies and review its effective implementation from time to time. It shall also act as a body to propose and plan various programmes and activities to sensitize the teachers, students and parents on various issues pertaining to child safety.

The committee shall meet at least once in two months to discuss issues of general interest and concerns and review the various measures taken by the institution to ensure the safety of children studying at EPS.

Members:

1. Mr. Mathew K G (Principal - Chairman)
2. Mrs. Gubain Mathew (Headmistress-Staff Member)
3. Ms. Anupam Vittal (School Counsellor- Staff Member)
4. Ms. Radha Vishwanathan (Academic Coordinator- Staff Member)
5. Mr. Prashanth H M (Correspondent- Management Representative)
6. Mr. Ravi (Inspector Vijayanagar - Public Servant)
7. Dr. Raveesh (Psychiatrist - Public Servant)
8. Dr.. Kumudini Aachi (Social Worker)
9. Ms. Carolyn Craggs (Parent Representative)
10. Dr. Suma Girish (Parent Representative)

Mathew K G
(Principal)

27th October 2014