

VISTARA VIDYAANIDHI EDUCATIONAL TRUST

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Approved By: Board of Trustees

Policy Owner: Board of Trustees

Review Frequency: Every Two (2) Years or Earlier if Required

1. PREAMBLE

Vistara Vidyaanidhi Educational Trust ("the Trust") is committed to creating, maintaining, and promoting a safe, secure, respectful, inclusive, and child-friendly environment for every child who participates in, benefits from, attends, engages with, or is otherwise associated with any activity, initiative, project, event, program, scholarship scheme, mentorship platform, educational intervention, awareness campaign, workshop, competition, research activity, outreach effort, training program, digital learning initiative, or community engagement conducted, facilitated, supported, sponsored, funded, or organized by the Trust.

The Trust firmly believes that every child possesses inherent dignity, equal worth, and fundamental rights, including the right to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, violence, intimidation, harassment, coercion, trafficking, and all forms of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, digital, and social harm.

The Trust recognizes that organizations working with children carry a heightened duty of care and a corresponding obligation to establish comprehensive safeguarding systems designed to prevent harm, identify risks, respond effectively to concerns, and promote the welfare and best interests of children at all times.

Accordingly, the Trust adopts this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to establish a formal organizational framework governing child safety, safeguarding responsibilities, standards of conduct, risk management, reporting obligations, incident response mechanisms, accountability requirements, and governance oversight.

This Policy reflects the Trust's unwavering commitment to ensuring that child safety remains a fundamental organizational priority integrated into every aspect of governance, planning, implementation, monitoring, partnership development, volunteer engagement, communication, and decision-making.

The Trust adopts a strict and unequivocal zero-tolerance approach toward child abuse, exploitation, neglect, violence, harassment, grooming, trafficking, discrimination, and any conduct that may compromise the safety, dignity, rights, welfare, or development of a child.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY



The primary purpose of this Policy is to establish a robust safeguarding framework that promotes the protection, welfare, dignity, and rights of children while ensuring that all individuals associated with the Trust understand and fulfill their safeguarding responsibilities.

This Policy seeks to:

- Protect children from all forms of harm.
- Promote safe organizational environments.
- Establish safeguarding standards applicable to all Trust activities.
- Prevent abuse, exploitation, neglect, harassment, and misconduct.
- Ensure early identification of safeguarding risks.
- Establish clear reporting and response procedures.
- Promote accountability at every level of the organization.
- Strengthen awareness and safeguarding capacity.
- Ensure responsible management of safeguarding concerns.
- Support legal and regulatory compliance.
- Foster a culture where child safety is viewed as a shared responsibility.

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding is not limited to responding to incidents after they occur but includes proactive efforts to prevent harm, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen protective factors, and promote the overall well-being of children.

3. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Vistara Vidyaanidhi Educational Trust is fully committed to ensuring that all children participating in or benefiting from Trust-related activities are protected from abuse, exploitation, neglect, discrimination, harassment, violence, coercion, and any other conduct that may adversely affect their safety, welfare, dignity, rights, or development.

The Trust shall take all reasonable and proportionate measures to:

- Create safe and supportive environments for children.
- Minimize safeguarding risks.
- Promote awareness of child rights.
- Strengthen safeguarding culture.
- Encourage responsible conduct.



- Respond promptly to concerns.
- Support affected children.
- Cooperate with competent authorities where required.
- Continuously improve safeguarding systems.

Safeguarding shall be treated as a core governance responsibility and not merely as an operational function.

The Trust further recognizes that safeguarding obligations extend to both physical and digital environments and apply equally to direct and indirect interactions involving children.

4. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all individuals, entities, activities, programs, projects, partnerships, communications, and engagements associated with the Trust.

Without limitation, this Policy applies to:

- Trustees
- Managing Trustee
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Consultants
- Mentors
- Trainers
- Advisors
- Speakers
- Resource Persons
- Program Coordinators
- Research Personnel
- Contractors
- Vendors
- Service Providers



- Partner Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Collaborating Agencies
- Third-Party Representatives

The Policy applies to all Trust-related activities, including:

- Educational programs
- Scholarship initiatives
- School outreach programs
- College engagement activities
- Competitions and events
- Workshops and seminars
- Mentorship initiatives
- Innovation programs
- Research projects
- Awareness campaigns
- Community outreach efforts
- Residential camps
- Field visits
- Educational tours
- Online classes
- Virtual mentoring
- Digital learning platforms
- Social media engagement
- Communication systems
- Any activity involving children

The obligations established under this Policy apply regardless of location, medium, duration, or nature of engagement.



5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING

5.1 Best Interests of the Child

The Trust shall ensure that the best interests of the child remain a primary consideration in all decisions, policies, activities, procedures, partnerships, and actions affecting children.

Safeguarding decisions shall prioritize the safety, welfare, dignity, rights, development, and long-term well-being of children above organizational convenience, reputational concerns, financial considerations, or personal interests.

5.2 Zero-Tolerance Commitment

The Trust maintains a strict zero-tolerance approach toward any form of abuse, exploitation, neglect, harassment, violence, grooming, trafficking, discrimination, coercion, intimidation, manipulation, or misconduct involving children.

No allegation, suspicion, disclosure, concern, observation, complaint, report, or indication of potential harm shall be ignored, minimized, concealed, dismissed, or disregarded.

All concerns shall be assessed and addressed appropriately in accordance with this Policy.

No person associated with the Trust shall engage in, facilitate, encourage, condone, excuse, conceal, or fail to report conduct that may place a child at risk.

The Trust further recognizes that safeguarding failures may arise not only from intentional misconduct but also from negligence, poor judgment, inadequate supervision, inappropriate communication, or failure to follow established procedures.

5.3 Non-Discrimination

Every child shall be treated fairly, respectfully, and without discrimination.

Protection shall be provided equally regardless of:

- Gender
- Religion
- Language
- Caste
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Nationality



- Economic status
- Social background
- Educational level
- Family circumstances
- Any other status protected by law

The Trust shall endeavor to ensure that safeguarding measures are inclusive and accessible to all children.

5.4 Participation and Respect

Children shall be treated as rights-holders and respected as individuals with their own views, experiences, opinions, needs, and concerns.

Where appropriate, children shall be encouraged to express their views regarding matters affecting them and shall be listened to respectfully.

Safeguarding practices shall seek to empower children while ensuring their safety and well-being.

5.5 Accountability

Every individual associated with the Trust shares responsibility for child protection.

Safeguarding shall not be viewed solely as the responsibility of designated personnel but as an organizational obligation applicable to all individuals.

Failure to fulfill safeguarding responsibilities may constitute a violation of this Policy.

6. DEFINITION OF A CHILD

For the purposes of this Policy, a child means any person below the age of eighteen (18) years, regardless of nationality, citizenship, educational status, disability status, social background, or any other characteristic.

The Trust shall apply this definition consistently across all safeguarding activities unless applicable law provides a higher standard of protection.

7. DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse includes any act, omission, conduct, practice, communication, relationship, circumstance, or failure to act that results in actual harm, potential harm, exploitation, neglect, endangerment, or impairment of a child's physical, emotional, psychological, social, educational, or developmental well-being.



Child abuse may occur through action or inaction and may be perpetrated by adults, peers, institutions, groups, or systems.

The Trust recognizes physical abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, online abuse, exploitation, trafficking, grooming, bullying, coercion, and discriminatory treatment as forms of child abuse.

8. RECOGNIZED FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, AND HARM

The Trust recognizes that child abuse may take many forms and may occur in physical environments, educational institutions, homes, communities, workplaces, online platforms, social media environments, residential settings, transportation arrangements, and any location where children interact with adults or peers.

Child abuse is not limited to acts of physical violence. Harm may result from actions, omissions, patterns of behavior, abuse of authority, negligence, exploitation, manipulation, coercion, or failure to provide appropriate care and protection.

The Trust shall treat all forms of child abuse seriously regardless of whether harm is actual, suspected, attempted, threatened, or reasonably foreseeable.

8.1 PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse refers to any deliberate act, reckless behavior, excessive punishment, or inappropriate physical intervention that causes or may cause physical injury, pain, suffering, discomfort, impairment, or endangerment to a child.

Physical abuse may include:

- Hitting, slapping, punching, or kicking;
- Pushing, shaking, or throwing;
- Striking with objects;
- Burning or scalding;
- Choking or suffocation;
- Physical intimidation;
- Violent restraint;
- Forced physical activity;
- Corporal punishment;
- Physical assault of any nature.

The Trust strictly prohibits the use of physical punishment in any form.



No individual associated with the Trust shall use force, intimidation, threats, or physical discipline as a means of controlling, correcting, managing, or influencing a child.

Physical intervention shall only be considered where absolutely necessary to prevent immediate harm to the child or others and must be proportionate, reasonable, lawful, and consistent with safeguarding principles.

8.2 EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

The Trust recognizes that emotional and psychological abuse may have profound and long-lasting effects on a child's development, self-esteem, confidence, emotional health, educational outcomes, and overall well-being.

Emotional abuse includes conduct that undermines a child's dignity, confidence, sense of worth, emotional security, or psychological welfare.

Examples include:

- Persistent criticism;
- Verbal humiliation;
- Insults and degrading language;
- Ridicule and mockery;
- Threats and intimidation;
- Public embarrassment;
- Rejection or exclusion;
- Manipulation;
- Emotional coercion;
- Harassment;
- Excessive control;
- Deliberate isolation.

Emotional abuse may occur even in the absence of physical harm and may be equally damaging to a child's welfare.

Individuals associated with the Trust shall communicate with children in a respectful, constructive, age-appropriate, and supportive manner.

The Trust shall not tolerate any conduct that intentionally causes emotional distress, fear, humiliation, or psychological harm to a child.



8.3 SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The Trust maintains an absolute zero-tolerance approach toward sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, grooming, sexual misconduct, or any inappropriate sexual conduct involving children.

Sexual abuse includes any sexual activity involving a child, regardless of whether force, coercion, manipulation, deception, or apparent consent is present.

Children cannot legally or meaningfully consent to sexual activity with adults in the context of safeguarding obligations.

Examples include:

- Sexual touching;
- Inappropriate physical contact;
- Sexual communication;
- Sexual comments or jokes;
- Exposure to sexual content;
- Sexual exploitation;
- Solicitation of sexual acts;
- Production or distribution of exploitative material;
- Voyeurism;
- Grooming for sexual purposes;
- Any other form of sexual misconduct.

The Trust recognizes that sexual abuse may occur in person, digitally, through social media, messaging applications, educational platforms, video calls, or other forms of communication.

Any allegation, suspicion, disclosure, or indication of sexual abuse shall be treated as a matter of utmost seriousness.

The Trust shall take immediate action consistent with applicable safeguarding procedures and legal obligations.

8.4 GROOMING

Grooming refers to deliberate behavior intended to establish trust, emotional dependency, influence, secrecy, manipulation, or inappropriate relationships with a child for exploitative purposes.



The Trust recognizes grooming as a significant safeguarding risk and acknowledges that grooming may occur gradually over time.

Examples may include:

- Excessive attention toward a child;
- Special treatment or favoritism;
- Isolating a child from peers;
- Secretive communication;
- Inappropriate gift-giving;
- Encouraging secrecy;
- Building emotional dependency;
- Manipulative mentoring relationships;
- Boundary violations.

The Trust strictly prohibits grooming behavior in all forms.

Individuals associated with the Trust shall maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times.

8.5 NEGLECT

Neglect occurs when a child's basic needs, welfare, supervision, protection, safety, education, or developmental requirements are inadequately addressed.

Neglect may be intentional or may result from failure to exercise appropriate care and responsibility.

Examples include:

- Inadequate supervision;
- Failure to respond to safeguarding concerns;
- Ignoring health and safety risks;
- Failure to provide reasonable protection;
- Failure to address known risks of harm.

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding obligations include both preventing abuse and ensuring that reasonable protective measures are maintained.



8.6 BULLYING AND PEER-TO-PEER ABUSE

The Trust recognizes that children may experience harm from other children.

Bullying may occur physically, verbally, emotionally, socially, digitally, or through exclusionary behavior.

Examples include:

- Threats;
- Harassment;
- Intimidation;
- Name-calling;
- Social exclusion;
- Cyberbullying;
- Humiliation;
- Coercion.

Peer-to-peer abuse shall be treated seriously and addressed through appropriate safeguarding procedures.

The Trust shall promote environments where children feel safe, respected, included, and supported.

8.7 ONLINE ABUSE AND DIGITAL SAFEGUARDING RISKS

The Trust acknowledges that digital platforms create opportunities for education and engagement but may also expose children to safeguarding risks.

Online abuse may include:

- Cyberbullying;
- Online grooming;
- Sexual exploitation;
- Exposure to harmful content;
- Identity misuse;
- Harassment;
- Unauthorized sharing of personal information;



- Digital manipulation;
- Coercive communication.

The Trust shall endeavor to implement reasonable safeguards for digital activities involving children.

Online interactions shall be conducted professionally, transparently, and in accordance with safeguarding standards.

Children shall never be encouraged to engage in secretive online communication with Trust representatives.

8.8 CHILD LABOR, TRAFFICKING, AND EXPLOITATION

The Trust opposes all forms of child labor, child trafficking, forced labor, economic exploitation, and practices that compromise the rights, dignity, welfare, or development of children.

No activity conducted or supported by the Trust shall directly or indirectly contribute to child exploitation.

The Trust shall remain vigilant to indicators of trafficking, exploitation, coercion, or abuse and shall take appropriate action where concerns arise.

9. SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Board of Trustees bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring that effective safeguarding systems, policies, procedures, resources, and oversight mechanisms are established and maintained.

Safeguarding shall be treated as a core governance priority and integrated into organizational planning, risk management, partnerships, operations, and decision-making.

The Board shall:

- Promote a culture of child safety;
- Review safeguarding risks;
- Support safeguarding implementation;
- Monitor compliance;
- Ensure accountability;
- Review serious safeguarding incidents;
- Allocate adequate resources for safeguarding activities.

Safeguarding responsibilities extend to all levels of the organization.



No individual shall assume that safeguarding is solely the responsibility of another person or department.

10. RECRUITMENT, SCREENING, AND VETTING OF PERSONNEL

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding begins before an individual commences engagement with the organization.

Accordingly, the Trust shall endeavor to implement safeguarding-conscious recruitment practices designed to reduce the risk of unsuitable individuals gaining access to children.

Reasonable measures may include:

- Identity verification;
- Qualification verification;
- Reference checks;
- Background declarations;
- Interview assessments;
- Safeguarding acknowledgements;
- Code of Conduct acceptance;
- Criminal background verification where appropriate and legally permissible.

The Trust reserves the right to decline, suspend, terminate, or restrict engagement where safeguarding concerns exist.

Failure to disclose relevant safeguarding concerns may result in disciplinary action and termination of association with the Trust.

11. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING AND AWARENESS

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding is most effective when individuals understand their responsibilities and are equipped to identify and respond appropriately to concerns.

The Trust may provide safeguarding orientation, awareness programs, training initiatives, educational resources, guidance materials, and capacity-building opportunities for trustees, staff, volunteers, mentors, consultants, and other representatives.

Training may cover:

- Child rights;
- Forms of abuse;



- Safeguarding responsibilities;
- Reporting obligations;
- Professional boundaries;
- Online safety;
- Incident response procedures.

All individuals are expected to cooperate with safeguarding awareness initiatives and apply safeguarding principles in practice.

12. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding is not limited to responding to incidents of abuse but also requires the establishment of clear standards governing the behavior, conduct, communication, decision-making, and interactions of individuals who engage with children.

All individuals associated with the Trust shall conduct themselves in a manner that promotes the safety, dignity, well-being, and rights of children at all times.

Every interaction with a child shall be guided by professionalism, respect, transparency, accountability, and the best interests of the child.

Individuals shall be mindful that children may view adults associated with the Trust as authority figures, mentors, educators, advisors, role models, or trusted representatives. Consequently, particular care must be exercised to ensure that relationships remain appropriate, professional, and free from exploitation, favoritism, dependency, coercion, manipulation, or abuse of authority.

The Trust expects all individuals interacting with children to exercise sound judgment, maintain professional boundaries, and avoid situations that may create actual safeguarding risks or the appearance of inappropriate conduct.

The standards established under this Policy apply equally to physical interactions, digital communications, educational engagements, social activities, travel arrangements, mentoring relationships, and all other forms of contact involving children.

13. PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Professional boundaries are essential to safeguarding and are intended to protect both children and individuals working with them.

All representatives of the Trust shall maintain relationships with children that are professional, transparent, appropriate, and consistent with the educational, developmental, charitable, and safeguarding objectives of the organization.

Individuals shall not:

- Develop inappropriate personal relationships with children.



- Seek emotional dependency from children.
- Encourage secrecy.
- Establish exclusive relationships with individual children.
- Use their position to gain personal affection or influence.
- Engage in conduct that blurs professional boundaries.
- Form relationships that may compromise objectivity or safeguarding.

Particular caution shall be exercised in mentorship programs, educational guidance initiatives, scholarship programs, competitions, leadership programs, and long-term engagements where regular interaction with children occurs.

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding risks often arise gradually through boundary violations. Accordingly, all representatives are expected to remain vigilant and maintain professional conduct at all times.

14. ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

The Trust recognizes that one-to-one interactions may sometimes be necessary in educational, mentoring, counseling, guidance, research, scholarship, or support contexts.

However, such interactions may also present safeguarding risks if not properly managed.

Accordingly, one-to-one interactions shall only occur where there is a legitimate organizational purpose and where appropriate safeguards are in place.

Whenever reasonably practicable:

- Meetings should occur in visible or open environments.
- Another responsible adult should be aware of the interaction.
- Transparency should be maintained.
- Records should be retained where appropriate.
- Parents, guardians, schools, or authorized personnel should be informed when required.

Individuals shall avoid situations where they are isolated with a child in private or unsupervised environments without legitimate justification.

One-to-one interactions shall never be used to establish personal relationships or communications outside organizational purposes.

15. PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH CHILDREN



The Trust acknowledges that limited physical contact may occasionally occur in educational, safety-related, cultural, ceremonial, sporting, or emergency situations.

However, all physical contact must be:

- Appropriate.
- Necessary.
- Respectful.
- Non-intrusive.
- Consistent with safeguarding principles.

Physical contact shall never be:

- Sexualized.
- Intimidating.
- Punitive.
- Aggressive.
- Coercive.
- Secretive.
- Unwanted.

Representatives shall remain aware that actions intended as friendly or supportive may be perceived differently by children, parents, guardians, or observers.

Accordingly, unnecessary physical contact should be avoided.

Any physical intervention undertaken for safety reasons shall be proportionate, lawful, and limited to the minimum action necessary to prevent immediate harm.

16. COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

Communication with children shall be respectful, age-appropriate, professional, transparent, and consistent with organizational objectives.

Representatives shall communicate in ways that promote learning, participation, inclusion, confidence, and well-being.

Communication shall not include:

- Offensive language.
- Sexualized comments.



- Humiliating remarks.
- Intimidation.
- Threats.
- Discriminatory statements.
- Harassment.
- Manipulative behavior.

Children shall be treated with dignity and respect regardless of age, background, ability, or circumstances.

The Trust encourages constructive, supportive, and educational communication practices.

17. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS

The Trust recognizes that digital communication platforms create unique safeguarding challenges.

All online communication involving children shall be conducted in a manner that is transparent, professional, accountable, and consistent with safeguarding obligations.

Representatives shall not:

- Engage in secret communications with children.
- Request private photographs.
- Share inappropriate content.
- Initiate personal relationships through social media.
- Use personal communication channels where official alternatives exist.
- Engage in conduct that may create safeguarding concerns.

Where communication with children occurs through digital platforms, reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure transparency and oversight.

The Trust encourages the use of official communication channels wherever possible.

The Trust further recognizes that online safeguarding is equally important as safeguarding in physical environments.

18. PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOGRAPHY, AND MEDIA USE

The Trust recognizes the importance of protecting children's privacy, dignity, identity, and personal information.



Photographs, videos, recordings, testimonials, interviews, and other media involving children shall be collected, used, stored, published, and shared responsibly.

The Trust shall endeavor to obtain appropriate consent from parents, guardians, schools, institutions, or authorized persons before capturing or using media involving children where required.

The Trust shall not knowingly publish, distribute, or display content that:

- Places a child at risk.
- Reveals sensitive personal information.
- Causes embarrassment or humiliation.
- Creates safeguarding concerns.
- Exploits a child's circumstances.

Media content shall portray children respectfully and in a manner consistent with their dignity and rights.

The Trust shall take reasonable steps to ensure that media activities are conducted safely and ethically.

19. TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN

The transportation of children in connection with Trust activities shall be planned and managed responsibly.

The safety and welfare of children shall remain the primary consideration during transportation arrangements.

Where transportation is organized or facilitated by the Trust, reasonable measures may include:

- Appropriate supervision.
- Verification of transportation providers.
- Emergency contact information.
- Attendance monitoring.
- Risk assessment procedures.

Representatives shall avoid transporting children alone in private vehicles unless exceptional circumstances exist and appropriate safeguards are implemented.

The Trust shall endeavor to ensure that transportation arrangements support child safety and accountability.



20. EDUCATIONAL TOURS, FIELD VISITS, CAMPS, AND RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

The Trust recognizes that educational tours, field visits, residential programs, camps, competitions, leadership programs, innovation initiatives, and similar activities may present additional safeguarding considerations.

Accordingly, appropriate planning and risk management measures shall be undertaken before such activities occur.

These measures may include:

- Participant registration.
- Emergency planning.
- Consent procedures.
- Supervision arrangements.
- Accommodation protocols.
- Medical information management.
- Transportation planning.
- Safeguarding briefings.

The Trust shall endeavor to create environments that are safe, inclusive, supervised, and supportive.

Individuals responsible for such activities shall remain vigilant to safeguarding risks and respond promptly to concerns.

21. CHILD PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

The Trust is committed to promoting meaningful and safe participation by children in educational, leadership, innovation, research, outreach, and developmental activities.

Children shall be encouraged to participate in a manner that is respectful, voluntary, inclusive, and appropriate to their age and developmental stage.

Participation shall never be obtained through coercion, manipulation, intimidation, exploitation, or improper influence.

Children shall be treated as valued participants whose views and contributions deserve respect and consideration.

The Trust shall endeavor to ensure that participation opportunities are accessible, safe, and supportive.





Failure to report a known or reasonably suspected safeguarding concern may constitute a violation of this Policy.

The Trust encourages a culture in which safeguarding concerns are raised without fear, hesitation, retaliation, intimidation, or adverse consequences.

24. RECEIVING DISCLOSURES FROM CHILDREN

The Trust recognizes that a child may disclose abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment, bullying, or other safeguarding concerns directly to a trusted adult.

Such disclosures may occur unexpectedly and may arise during educational activities, mentoring relationships, outreach programs, workshops, competitions, digital interactions, or informal conversations.

When receiving a disclosure from a child, individuals shall:

- Remain calm and supportive.
- Listen attentively and respectfully.
- Avoid expressing shock, disbelief, anger, or judgment.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
- Avoid making promises that cannot be kept.
- Avoid pressuring the child for additional details.
- Avoid asking leading or suggestive questions.
- Record information accurately and objectively.
- Report the concern promptly in accordance with organizational procedures.

The Trust recognizes that disclosures may be emotionally difficult for children. Accordingly, the child's safety, dignity, emotional well-being, and best interests shall remain paramount throughout the reporting and response process.

25. SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT RESPONSE

Upon becoming aware of a safeguarding concern, the Trust shall take reasonable and proportionate steps to assess the situation and determine an appropriate response.

The primary objective of any safeguarding response shall be the protection and welfare of the child.

Response measures may include:

- Immediate protective actions;



- Risk assessments;
- Internal safeguarding review;
- Referral to appropriate authorities;
- Engagement with parents or guardians where appropriate;
- Medical support;
- Psychological support;
- Educational support;
- Temporary restrictions on individuals under review;
- Additional safeguarding controls.

The nature of the response shall depend upon the circumstances of each case and shall be guided by the principles of proportionality, fairness, confidentiality, legality, and child welfare.

The Trust shall endeavor to act promptly while ensuring that decisions are informed, objective, and consistent with safeguarding obligations.

26. MANDATORY ESCALATION OF SERIOUS SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

The Trust recognizes that certain safeguarding concerns may require immediate escalation to competent authorities.

Serious concerns may include:

- Sexual abuse or exploitation;
- Physical violence causing injury;
- Child trafficking;
- Child labor;
- Grooming;
- Serious neglect;
- Online sexual exploitation;
- Criminal offenses involving children;
- Immediate threats to child safety;
- Any circumstance where legal reporting obligations arise.



The Trust shall cooperate with law enforcement agencies, child protection authorities, educational institutions, regulatory bodies, courts, and other competent entities as required by law or where necessary to protect children.

The Trust shall not attempt to conceal, suppress, delay, or improperly manage serious safeguarding concerns.

The protection of children shall take precedence over concerns relating to organizational reputation, public image, financial interests, or personal relationships.

27. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Trust recognizes the importance of confidentiality in safeguarding matters.

Information relating to safeguarding concerns shall be handled responsibly and disclosed only on a need-to-know basis.

Confidentiality serves several important purposes, including:

- Protecting the child;
- Protecting the integrity of investigations;
- Protecting witnesses;
- Preventing retaliation;
- Supporting due process;
- Promoting trust in safeguarding systems.

Individuals shall not discuss safeguarding concerns with unauthorized persons or disclose information unnecessarily.

Confidentiality obligations shall apply before, during, and after safeguarding reviews and investigations.

However, confidentiality shall not prevent information from being shared where necessary to protect a child or comply with legal obligations.

The Trust shall endeavor to maintain secure records and protect sensitive safeguarding information from unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or misuse.

28. SAFEGUARDING INVESTIGATIONS

Where appropriate, safeguarding concerns may be subject to internal review or investigation.

The purpose of an investigation is to establish relevant facts, assess risks, determine appropriate actions, and support child protection objectives.



Investigations shall be conducted:

- Fairly;
- Objectively;
- Impartially;
- Respectfully;
- Confidentially;
- In accordance with principles of natural justice.

The Trust may seek assistance from:

- Safeguarding professionals;
- Legal advisors;
- Educational institutions;
- Child protection specialists;
- Independent investigators;
- Regulatory authorities;
- Law enforcement agencies.

Individuals involved in investigations are expected to cooperate fully and provide accurate information.

Interference with investigations, destruction of evidence, retaliation against witnesses, intimidation, obstruction, or attempts to influence outcomes may constitute serious violations of this Policy.

29. SAFEGUARDING RECORDS

The Trust shall maintain appropriate records relating to safeguarding concerns, reports, incidents, reviews, investigations, decisions, actions, and outcomes.

Safeguarding records shall be:

- Accurate;
- Objective;
- Timely;
- Secure;



- Confidential;
- Retained in accordance with applicable legal and organizational requirements.

Record keeping is essential for accountability, organizational learning, risk management, legal compliance, and the protection of children.

The Trust shall endeavor to maintain records in a manner that supports safeguarding objectives while respecting privacy and confidentiality requirements.

30. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding risks may arise within collaborative activities involving educational institutions, community organizations, government agencies, NGOs, corporate partners, consultants, and other third parties.

Accordingly, the Trust expects partner organizations involved in child-related activities to maintain standards consistent with child protection and safeguarding principles.

The Trust may consider safeguarding arrangements when establishing partnerships and may require reasonable assurances regarding child safety practices.

The Trust reserves the right to review, suspend, terminate, or decline partnerships where significant safeguarding concerns exist.

Safeguarding responsibilities cannot be delegated or transferred solely through partnership arrangements.

31. PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

The Trust is committed to ensuring that individuals who raise safeguarding concerns in good faith are protected from retaliation.

Retaliation may include:

- Harassment;
- Intimidation;
- Victimization;
- Threats;
- Exclusion;
- Adverse treatment;
- Discrimination;
- Reputational attacks.



Retaliation undermines safeguarding culture and may discourage reporting.

The Trust shall not tolerate retaliation against individuals who report concerns, participate in investigations, provide information, support affected children, or otherwise act in accordance with safeguarding responsibilities.

Reports of retaliation shall be addressed promptly and appropriately.

32. POLICY VIOLATIONS AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The Trust regards violations of this Policy as serious matters.

Where violations occur, the Trust may take appropriate action including:

- Counseling;
- Additional training;
- Written warnings;
- Suspension of responsibilities;
- Restriction of access to children;
- Removal from programs;
- Termination of volunteer engagement;
- Termination of employment or contractual arrangements;
- Removal from organizational roles;
- Reporting to authorities;
- Legal action where appropriate.

The nature of any action shall depend upon the seriousness of the conduct, the level of risk involved, applicable legal obligations, and the best interests of children.

The Trust reserves the right to take immediate protective measures where child safety may be at risk.

33. ORGANIZATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

The Trust recognizes that safeguarding is most effective when it is embedded within organizational culture rather than treated solely as a compliance requirement.

Accordingly, the Trust shall endeavor to:

- Promote safeguarding awareness.



- Encourage responsible conduct.
- Support ongoing learning.
- Strengthen accountability.
- Foster openness and trust.
- Encourage reporting of concerns.
- Continuously improve safeguarding systems.

Every individual associated with the Trust contributes to safeguarding culture through their actions, decisions, communication, and commitment to child safety.

34. POLICY REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

This Policy shall be reviewed periodically by the Board of Trustees to ensure continued effectiveness, legal compliance, relevance, and alignment with evolving safeguarding standards and organizational needs.

The Board reserves the right to amend, revise, supplement, replace, or withdraw provisions of this Policy where necessary.

Review processes may consider:

- Legal developments;
- Regulatory requirements;
- Incident reviews;
- Organizational growth;
- Emerging safeguarding risks;
- Best practices in child protection.

35. BOARD GOVERNANCE DECLARATION

The Board of Trustees of Vistara Vidyaanidhi Educational Trust formally affirms that the protection, safety, dignity, rights, and well-being of children are fundamental organizational priorities.

The Board recognizes that safeguarding is an essential governance responsibility and commits to supporting the implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of safeguarding practices across all areas of organizational activity.

The Board further affirms that child safety shall take precedence over organizational convenience, personal interests, reputational considerations, or operational pressures.



Every person associated with the Trust is expected to uphold the principles and requirements established under this Policy.

