SAFETY AND SECURITY OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN
-AN ADVISORY

An initiative of

CHILDREN AND POLICE
A CAP for CARE & PROTECTION

ISSUED IN PUBLIC INTEREST BY KERALA POLICE
Standard Operating Procedure for Ensuring Safety of School Children in Kerala

**Vision:** An Invisible wall of Care and Protection around every school children in Kerala

**Rationale:**

Children are the future of any society. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers, society at large and all agencies responsible for care and protection of children to protect them and ensure that they get the best footing in life. All children have the right to survive, to protection, to be safe, to belong, to be heard, to receive adequate care and to grow up in a protective environment. This is essential for them to survive, grow, learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Kerala, over last many decades has made remarkable advancements in the sector of education. In their formative years, most of the children in Kerala spend more time at school than anywhere else. Presently the state has 88.68% of children between 5 and 17 years in schools. This is indeed a matter to cheer, but it is equally important that our schools provide a secure, positive, and comfortable environment essential for students of all ages, to help them learn and grow.

The issue of school safety has been a major concern in Kerala. Safety of children in schools includes safety from any kind of abuse, violence, neglect, exploitation, disaster, unsafe transportation etc.

Apprehensions regarding school children involving in delinquent and illegitimate activities, either in school premises or in the local vicinities of the school are often voiced from many corners. Presence of anti-social elements around schools, selling or supplying drugs, narcotic substances, pornographic materials, tobacco products and other harmful substances is also shocking. Aberrant persons are repeatedly reported to be camping near schools to befriend children, especially those children who loiter in the vicinity, to lure them to illegal or immoral activities.
School buses or private contract vehicles are frequently found to be carrying students beyond their specified capacity. Drunken driving by school bus drivers is another major concern. Vehicle crew misbehaving with children and private buses not allowing students to board and de-board at designated bus stops are routinely sighted hassles on the roads. Fitness of vehicles transporting children is also a matter to worry. Besides, Kerala has also heard about occasional (few and far between) accidents leading to major injury or death of schoolchildren.

In 817 crime cases reported against children in Kerala, in the year 2016, 88 of them took place in the schools and 406 crimes in public places. Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights revealed that 1,029 children in the 15-18 years age group and 800 in the 10-14 years age group faced sexual harassment in the state last year, indicating that teenagers are the most vulnerable to sexual crimes.

Children in school are also prone to bullying and other forms of verbal or emotional abuse, by teachers, other personnel or peers. Poor infrastructural arrangements can lead to physical harm due to accidents such as slips, falls, contact with equipment etc. Some of the schools in Kerala are located in vulnerable areas and many are at risk of failing to respond adequately to emergency situations.

In this background it is extremely important to strengthen the safety net around every schools of Kerala, by creating an invisible wall of care and protection around every school and children with the collective and responsible participation of everyone responsible for the safety of children.

**Objectives of the SoP**

1. To invest in the safety of school children of Kerala to ensure that they grow up in environments that build confidence, friendship, security and happiness.

2. To chalk out comprehensive guidelines on Safety and Security of children in school.
3. To inform and equip relevant stakeholders in monitoring the measures of school safety and security, so as to ensure the Safe and Secure environment for the children in schools, while at and during travel to and from the school.

**PART I: Securing the school and the school premises**

1. **Safeguards Relating to Staff and Other Employees**

   i. No candidate with a criminal record of sexual and/or physical violence should be recruited for any position within the school. *(Action: Department of General Education/School Authority)*

   ii. At the time of being given the appointment letter, all candidates should be presented with a brief of the school’s safety policy and arrangements and will be required to sign it in acceptance. *(Action: School Head)*

   iii. It is advisable to ensure that at least half of the total number of teaching is female so as to safeguard care and protection of girl students *(Action: Department of General Education/School Authority)*

   iv. All school employees should undergo a 360 degree verification as specified below:

      1. Process: the employee’s complete employment record should be checked with specific reference checks against each employment on the resumé. Any past history of social violations should specifically be checked through police verifications and references at all addresses given in his/her resumé. *(Action: Department of General Education/School Authority & Police)*

      2. Coverage: the term ‘employee’ refers to full-time staff on the rolls of the school, as well as part-time and contractual staff such as contractors and their workers, specifically construction staff, sanitation staff, security guards, cooks, canteen staff, gardeners, etc. It includes staff that is provided
by Facilities management for housekeeping, electrician, plumbers, etc. It specifically includes bus drivers and conductors, whether the transport staff is outsourced to a third party or is on the rolls of the school; in this respect.

v. In case there is no verification record of current employees who have been with the school less than 6 months, this verification procedure must be completed retrospectively and procedure must be strictly followed with all new recruits to the school. **(Action: Department of General Education/School Authority & Police)**

vi. Police verification must be strictly obtained for outsourced activities like canteen **(Action: School Authority & Police)**

vii. A trained personnel should be available to take care of the needs of differently abled children. **(Action: Department of General Education/School Authority and Concerned LSGI)**

viii. Contractual staff such as electricians, plumbers etc;

1. All construction and repair work on school premises must be done only after school hours. **(Action: School Authority)**

2. No entry of plumbers, electricians, carpenters, labourers, etc. is to be permitted on premises during school hours even if a new wing is being constructed, unless it is to attend to an emergency, in which case the person must be accompanied by a school admin person at all times, and entry/exit procedures of signing register and obtaining a visitor pass must be strictly followed. **(Action: School Authority)**

ix. Identity cards:

1. All school staff must be issued with photo identity cards which must be displayed while on the premises. **(Action: School Authority)**

2. Identity cards are a must for drivers and other contractual staff who are on the premises daily. **(Action: School Authority)**

3. For staff such as electricians who may be summoned on a specific basis, a visitor card must be issued and monitored to
ensure due exit of the person after completion of the job. (Action: School Authority)

x. Records of all staff:

1. Bio data with personal details of all staff, permanent or contractual must be maintained as part of school records. Besides a photograph and signature (or thumb impressions), it must also contain past employment details, addresses of local residence, hometown, person’s mobile and landline numbers, family member contact numbers and 2 references. (Action: School Authority)

2. The school should maintain a data base of all staff which must be updated when a person is leaving clearly mentioning the reason for leaving, for both male and female members. In case this is linked to misconduct or abuse of any sort, this must specifically be recorded and intimated to the concerned authorities. (Action: School Authority)

xi. Violations: In case of an employee or other person employed at a school being accused of an offence under POCSO, the JJ Act or any other sexual crime or violence, the person so accused should be removed from active duty with immediate effect pending enquiry as per the due process established by law. (Action: Department Education & School Authority)

2. Recording Entry & Exit

Entry/exit of all persons in the school should be logged clearly with their in and out times specified, so that at any point, there is a clear record of both insiders and outsiders present on the premises.

i. A record of all staff reporting for duty must be maintained, be it electronic swiping or by signing a register, recording both in and out times. (Action: School Authority)

ii. Daily attendance of students should be recorded through the class teachers at the beginning of each day. (Action: School Authority)
iii. A separate register should be maintained for visitors or parents, including the name of the visitor, address, telephone no., purpose and person being met, in and out time, signature. (Action: School Authority)

iv. Schools situated near sea shore or river should undertake adequate measures to avoid easy access by any person (Action: School Protection Group)

3. Securing the Entry / Exit Points and other Vulnerable Areas

i. There should be only one entry/exit point to the premises; side gates are to be avoided. In case there is a side gate, this must be manned by a security guard maintaining a record of every entry and exit in a register. (Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & Concerned LSGI)

ii. Walls around the school must be high enough to prevent any scaling; schools with lower walls must increase height of wall. (Action: Department of General Education/School Authority & Concerned LSGI)

iii. Access to areas like bus area, sports rooms/fields, canteen, and toilets should be confined to persons whose presence in the area is required, loitering in such specific areas by unauthorized personnel should be prevented to reduce chances of problems arising. A list of such restricted areas and names of persons permitted entry, and these must be displayed on an internal notice board on the premises. (Action: School Authority)

iv. Well lit, sufficient and accessible bathrooms and toilets separately for boys and girls. (Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & Concerned LSGI)

v. Parents or other visitors may not have free access across premises during school hours, and if their entry is necessitated they must be accompanied so that their access is limited and monitored. (Action: School Authority)
vi. Students should not have free access to wander around premises during school timings, and should be made to understand which areas are out of bounds and at what times it is permitted for them to be in specific areas. (Action: School Authority)

vii. Specifically for bus drivers and conductors, whether employed by the school or contracted out, access area must be limited to just the bus area, and specific instructions must be given to them on which areas are out of bounds for them. (Action: School Authority)

viii. Special care should be taken to ensure proper sealing and monitoring of areas which are unoccupied or used less often. (Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & Concerned LSGI)

4. Infrastructural Arrangements

i. The school building should be free from inflammable and toxic material which if necessary should be stored away from the school building. (Action: School Authority)

ii. The orientation of the building should be in such a way that proper air circulation and lighting is available with open spaces all-round the building as far as possible. (Department of General Education, School Authority & Concerned LSGI)

iii. School buildings have to be insured against fire and natural calamities with group insurance of school pupils. Department of General Education, School Authority & Concerned LSGI

iv. The class rooms should be white washed at periodic intervals and dusted regularly to maintain the classroom hygiene. Department of General Education, School Authority & Concerned LSGI)
v. The windows should be secured and there should be no broken glass or fittings hanging loose. *(Action: School Authority)*

vi. Black board in the classroom should be hung on a three legged stand. *(Action: School Authority)*

vii. All children must be taught in open classrooms, the doors of which should not be locked under any circumstances *(Action: School Authority)*

viii. Every classroom must have open windows that permit viewing into the classroom. In the absence of windows on the inner corridor, the door must have a clear glass window through which it is possible to view the inside of the classroom from outside. Such window should be open and not covered with newspaper or curtains. *(Action: School Authority)*

ix. The school must demarcate a curtained area for immediate emergencies in case a sick-room is not possible with a necessary first-aid kit in place. This area should also be on the radar for regular supervision by the Admin-in-charge, to ensure no child detained here is at risk of any sort. *(Action: School Authority)*

5. CCTV Surveillance.

i. Cameras must cover all critical areas of the premises. Areas for specific attention are as indicated such as entry and exit points of the school, corridors and staircases, library, infirmary, auditorium, dining halls, sports rooms, computer labs, entrance to classrooms, sports fields, areas where buses assemble and any point on the outer perimeter/wall which is vulnerable, and which could show footage of persons attempting to gain entry to the premises. *(Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & the concerned LSGI)*

ii. The cameras must have point, tilt and zoom capability and the recording capacity of the footage should be at least 45
days. *(Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & the concerned LSGI)*

iii. All vehicles entering and leaving the premises should be caught on camera with at least a 50-metre range with a clear image of the vehicle number. *(Actin School Authority)*

iv. A control panel must be set up, with screens visible in a public place (such as reception) where in addition to the designated viewer, viewing is possible by any passer-by including responsible persons. The knowledge that the screen is in public view is also the best deterrent for offenders from within the system. *(Action: School Authority)*

v. CCTV equipment must be maintained regularly and it must be ensured that once installed, the footage is viewed and the equipment used to bring in a strong control. Cameras that are installed but neither maintained nor viewed, nor action taken, can become an investment with zero impact on safety. *(Action: School Authority)*

vi. The issue of cost of equipment has to be settled in consultation with other stakeholders after discussing costs versus merits. *(Action School Authority)*

**2. Safeguards Relating to Students**

i. Identity cards:

1. The school must issue a set of 2 identity cards for every child, one which will be worn by the child, and the other to be retained by the parent; clearly differentiated from the child’s card with a colour coding. *(Action: School Authority)*

2. The identity cards should have a photograph of the child with name, class & section, blood group, names and mobile numbers of parents. If the child uses a bus, bus
route number should also be indicated. (Action: School Authority)

3. Identity cards must be worn by all children, irrespective of whether they travel by school bus or some other shared transport or cycle or walk to school, or whether they are being dropped and picked up by the parents/other arrangement. (Action: School Authority)

   ii. The school must maintain contact numbers of both parents in its records as well as details of siblings in the school. Additionally, phone numbers of 2 other emergency contacts must be maintained, in case the parents are unable to take the call and it is an emergency. (Action: School Authority)

7. Measures to reduce physical hazards that risk safety of children:
   i. Ensure basic screening of staff for medical ailments/infections at their time of joining by ensuring basic medical check is carried out. Thereafter, the exercise shall be repeated annually for all staff working in the canteen area, and for ayahs/didis/helpers/attendants (by whatever name called) and cleaners who come in daily contact with small children. (Action: Departments of Education and Health, and School Authority)
   
   ii. Basic hygiene and cleanliness should be ensured of any food or liquid items served, as well as of the premises, counters, utensils, crockery etc. The food shop license must be displayed in the canteen. The Inspection certificate which must be obtained annually from the relevant authority, and be available for checking. (Action: Department of Education, School Authority & Commissionorate of Food Safety)
   
   iii. The school building needs to be certified as safe for housing the children by the concerned authority. (Action: Department of General Education & School Authority)
iv. Ensure that there is minimum risk to child safety on account of physical hazards by giving due attention to the following matters:

i. Constructional Hazards: *(Action Department of Education & School Authority)*

1. Schools should exhibit barricades and sign boards in the construction area for prohibiting the movements of students.
2. Water storage sources for constructions must be covered to prevent children from any possible mishap.
3. The construction must be planned during the lean time of student presence in the school.
4. School should obtain NOC from the concerned authorities before starting existing sports facilities.

ii. Electricity-related risks: improper/exposed wiring and open electricity panels resulting in live wires, improper location of panels in areas children frequently pass through, proper installation of MCBs to prevent short-circuits; Areas with improper lighting must also be immediately addressed as such low-light areas become points where incidents of abuse or bullying are more likely to happen; accordingly a weekly check of non-functioning lights must be ensured with immediate replacement. *(Action: School Authority)*

iii. Storage of hazardous/dangerous materials such as acids, kerosene oil, spirits, glass or other inflammable or toxic materials in laboratories, kitchens or other godowns should be stored safety in an area away from children, and must be stored under lock at all times. *(Action: School Authority)*

iv. Gas-related risks: ensuring periodic maintenance of gas burners in canteens/chemistry labs, checking of leakage in pipe and valves, strict procedure to ensure main valves,
stoves etc. are shut after use to prevent gas leakage. (Action: School Authority)

v. Water-related risks: safe drinking water on premises including periodic cleaning of tanks which must be covered, preventing leakage resulting in slippery floor; open sumps, water pits that may pose risk of drowning, ensure adequate safeguards with lifeguard and railings to prevent risk of drowning by unauthorized access of small children. (Action: School Authority)

vi. Fire-related risks: Besides specific checks of vulnerable areas, all fire extinguishing equipment must be regularly maintained, besides adequate standby sand and water supplies. A certificate from the fire department on the school’s fire-worthiness must be obtained every 6 months in accordance with the rules and be available for inspection. (Action: School Authority)

vii. Other physical obstructions: low hanging power lines, improper placing of furniture, obstructions in escape routes of all emergency exits, sharp/heavy objects at a height (such as flowerpots on parapet), etc. must be monitored and rectified periodically, including specific checks for cracked or broken glass. (Action: School Authority)

viii. Disabled-friendly access: to minimize safety risks to those children with special needs who may be in wheelchairs, it must be ensured that they are adequate ramps, railings at appropriate points. It must also be ensured that the toilet can fit in a wheelchair, so that no child with a disability is forced to leave the wheelchair outside the toilet, increasing the risk of injury due to a fall. (Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & concerned LSGI)
ix. Other structural risks: cracks in building, loose false ceilings must be monitored periodically and rectified urgently in case of problems. *(Action: School Authority)*

x. Playground: Care must be taken that there are no physical hazards for children such as sharp edges, rusty rods, broken/faulty play equipment such as swings/slides, no thorny bushes, particularly at lower heights which adults may not notice but could cause injury to children.(Action: School Authority)

xi. Safety of glass installations: Where there are large glass doors/panels on the school premises, these must be highlighted in some way such as placing stickers or coloured tape to ensure children are alerted that there is a glass sheet, to prevent them running into the glass, thereby risking breakage and resultant injury.(Action: School Authority)

xii. Safety during celebrations of festivals: Adequate precautions should be taken with regard to the movement of children inside the campus. Teachers should designated roles and responsibilities to organise the program without happening of any hazards. Special care should be taken to see that children do not move near dangerous points. *(Action: School Authority)*

xiii. Handling calamities such as earthquake, flood etc: there should be a basic process and system in place for evacuation and dealing with such calamities, conducting periodic drills with adequate, well-labelled emergency exits so that ill-effects can be mitigated in the event of such a calamity, and connect with community partners such as Fire-department, area hospitals, etc. so that there is a ready rapport at time of emergency.(Department of General Education and School Authority)
8. Other measures for safety of children while at school:

i. If a child has gone out of the scheduled class (or another other session/ games, etc.) for more time than required, the teacher should enquire within the first 15 minutes to ascertain that there is no mishap. *(Action: School Authority)*

ii. In case children have to stay back for after school activities, there should be a reliable authorized adult in charge, preferably a permanent teacher who takes responsibility to ensure safety of children till the final dispersal. *(Action: School Authority)*

iii. There must be adequate supervision to ensure and curb general roaming around of students in the corridors especially after dispersal time, or in playgrounds when not authorised during school hours. *(Action: School Authority)*

iv. Absence of students: It is recommended that the school puts in place a system to ensure absence of a child from school is noted early in the day which makes it easier in case of accident/kidnapping. If a child is not attending school, the parents must inform the teacher by email or sms not later than 10 minutes after the official start of school. Within 15 minutes after the start of school, each teacher reports the list of names of her/his class who are absent without intimation to the Admin in charge. A school representative then intimates the parent that the child is not present. This will immediately flag a problem case early in the day. *(Action: School Authority)*

v. Random checking of belongings of the students with the help and permission of parents/guardians. *(Action: School Authority)*

vi. Encourage the child to report all allegations or disclosures of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. *(Action: School Authority)*
vii. Report to the concerned authorities when a belief is formed that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed. *(Action: School Authority)*

viii. A safety plan must be prepared by the school and should be circulated exhibited in the school and submitted to the local police station. *(Action: School Authority)*

**PART 2: Securing the school neighbourhood**

i. Unauthorised vendors, carts, shops and other establishments in the immediate area and boundary of schools must be removed. *(Action: Police, Excise, concerned LSGI & School Protection Group)*

ii. Authorised vendors should possess a license which is endorsed by the local police station and the LSGI. *(Action: Concerned LSGI & Police)*

iii. Schools may report any such cases to the local police station to get assistance in this regard. *(Action: School Authority)*

iv. Information regarding selling or supply of tobacco products, drugs, narcotic substances, alcoholic beverages and pornographic materials should be collected and informed to the local police station. *(Action: School Protection Group, Excise and Police)*

v. Action should be taken to ensure traffic safety in the school locality in collaboration with police and motor vehicle department. Traffic safety sign boards, zebra line, speed breakers etc should be maintained properly. Presence of a traffic police person/traffic warden should be ensured near the school especially during inward and outward journey of children. *(Action: Department of General Education, Police, Motor Vehicle Department and School Protection Group)*

vi. School should keep a watch on persons who befriend children with a view to exploiting them for illegal or immoral activities. *(Action: School Protection Group)*
vii. School should a watchful eye to detect truancy among the students. (*Action: School Protection Group*)

viii. Creating a database of small shops and establishments frequented by students. (*Action: School Protection Group*)

ix. Collecting information about availability and sale of illegal material in Internet Cafes and CD shops near the schools. (*Action: School Protection Group*)

PART 3: Transportation of Children to and from school

Many a times, large number of vehicles which are actually engaged in carrying children to school and back are not owned or hired by the schools and do not fall within the purview of the permit conditions applicable to school buses. They include mini buses, van, light vehicles and auto-rickshaws. They are being engaged by the parent independently and there is no effective control over these vehicles regarding over loading, conduct of drivers etc. it is highly essential to regulate the vehicles carrying school children to school and back, be it be school buses or private run vehicles.

1. Exterior of bus

i. All the school buses must be painted with uniform colour preferably Yellow with the name of the school written prominently on both sides of the bus so that these can be identified easily. (*Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority*)

ii. The word "School Bus" must be written on the back and front of the bus if it is hired bus, "On School Duty" should be clearly indicated. (*Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority*)

iii. Telephone numbers of the school and/or telephone numbers of any contact person shall also be written prominently in a prominent place
in each school bus. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority)

2. Fixture and furniture of the Bus
   i. The windows of Bus should be fitted with horizontal grills and with mesh wire. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority)
   ii. The doors of the Bus should be fitted with reliable locks that can be locked. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority)
   iii. All school buses must be fitted with speed control devices so that they do not exceed the speed limit of 40 Km/ph. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority)
   iv. There should be a fire extinguisher in the Bus. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicle Department, Police and School Authority)

3. Manpower in the Bus
   i. Police verification of the staff of the bus should be done before appointing them. (Action: Department of General Education, School Authority & Police)
   ii. There must be a qualified attendant, preferably female in the Bus to attend to Children. (Action: Department of General Education & School Authority)
   iii. Each school should designate one Transport Manager/Coordinator who will ensure the safety of the school children. (Action: Department of General Education & School Authority)
   iv. The provision shall also to be made by the school authorities for travelling of at least one teacher in each school bus, keeping in view the safety of the school students all throughout the journey and no outsider except the conductor or the said authorized
teacher or one person authorized by the guardians shall be allowed to board school bus (Action: Department of General Education & School Authority)

v. Medical check-up regarding the physical fitness of the driver including the eye testing shall be made every year. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicles, Health and School Authority)

4. Facilities in the Bus

i. Bus should have a First Aid Box. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicles, Health and School Authority)

ii. To keep the school bags safely, there should be a space fitted under the seats or as convenient. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicles, Health and School Authority)

iii. The buses should be fitted with alarm bell/siren so that in case of emergency everyone can be alerted. (Action: Departments of General Education, Motor Vehicles, Health and School Authority)

5. Permits

i. The driver should have valid license and at least 5 years of experience of driving heavy vehicles. (Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicles, Police and School Authority)

ii. A driver who has been challaned more than twice in a year for offences like red light jumping, violation of lane discipline or allowing unauthorized person to drive cannot be employed. Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicles, Police and School Authority)

iii. A driver who has been challaned even once for the offence of over speeding, driving dangerously or for the offences under Section 279,337,338 and 304A of the Indian Penal Code cannot be employed. Every vehicle shall carry a suitable photograph of the
authorized driver duly certified by the RTA. (Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicles, Police and School Authority)

iv. Periodical fitness certificate regarding roadworthiness of the vehicle shall have to be obtained. (Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicles, Police and School Authority)

v. Any school authority and/or driver found to have violated the provision of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the rules framed there under as well as of the directions must be penalized. (Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicles, Police and School Authority)

6. Ensuring safety for children using school buses

i. Children reaching school by bus should have a safe passage from the bus to the school premises. Ideally, the bus should stop within the boundary wall of the premises. If access makes this impossible, then there must be school guards present to ensure safe passage of children from bus drop point to school gate. (Action: School Authority)

ii. Once the morning drop-off has been done, the school bus-in-charge must ascertain with the help of guards that every single bus has been emptied and no child has remained in a bus, before the buses move to park or leave the premises as may be the case. This is a situation that can put the child at high risk of abduction or abuse. (Action: School Authority)

iii. Attendance of all children on that route must be taken by the attender in charge of the bus at the start of the journey. (Action: School Authority)

iv. At dispersal time, after attendance is taken, if any child who was present in the morning is missing, the name must be immediately informed by the bus teacher. (Action: School Authority)

v. Care must be taken that at no time should a child (especially a female) remain alone in the bus with the driver and male conductor,
and presence of an adult female is essential, whether at the start or at the end of a journey. (Action: School Authority)

vi. Routing should be accordingly planned so that the first and last child is not a female; also it is a must to have the didi/ teacher present so that the first and last child, even if male, is not left alone with bus driver/conductor, unless the child is a male student aged 14 years or above. (Action: School Authority)

vii. Routing of the bus should be planned so that children are dropped as close as possible to their residence. In case of 5 or more children from the same condominium at a bus-stop, it is essential that the children are dropped at the gate itself and the route altered accordingly. (Action: School Authority)

viii. The bus driver should ensure that the doors of the bus are closed before he begins moving, children are seated and that no child is directly in front of the doors even when closed. Conductor/helper should also ensure that there is no hindrance in passageways and all emergency exits are clear. (Action: School Authority)

ix. At the time the bus begins to move from the spot both on the school grounds as well as at every stop thereafter, the conductor using a whistle shall be present on the ground to check that clear access is available to move, or particularly to reverse, with no children/others in the way, and indicate with a series of short whistles to proceed, or a long whistle as a caution to stop immediately. (Action: School Authority)

x. Where more than 10 buses are assembled together for dispersal on the school premises, at least 1 person for every 10 buses is required to supervise safe movement out of the school. These persons could be from the Administration department or teachers entrusted with this duty. They will supervise safe and smooth movement of children and buses, and also that there is the presence of an adult female on board before the bus leaves the premises. If no adult female is present, the bus should be detained till a quick alternative female presence is ensured. (Action: School Authority)
xi. When children, especially those in Class 5 and below, get off at their busstop at/near their homes, it is imperative that they are not left alone on the road but must be handed over only to the parent/maid or authorized representative upon showing the identify card in their custody. (Action: School Authority)

xii. In case the parent/representative has not reached to pick-up a child of Class 5 or below, under no circumstances should the child be left on the road. In the event there is another known parent in the same complex willing to take responsibility, this may be permitted as an exception after the teacher confirms this with the parent of the child. If there is no one else to pick up the child, the child may not be permitted to alight, and the teacher on the bus will coordinate with the parent for getting off at the next convenient stop. (Action: School Authority)

xiii. Once all children are dropped at their stops, the female teacher or didi, who is the last to get off, must report to the Bus-in-charge confirming that the route is completed and all children safety dropped off. (Action: School Authority)

xiv. The Bus-in-charge will tally all reports and make a call to any bus which has delayed its message reporting completion of route. (Action: School Authority)

xv. Apart from safe passage of children, the School Bus-in-charge is also responsible to ensure that bus-drivers follow the guidelines below for safe loading/unloading of children at their stops: (Action: Police & School Authority)

xvi. Buses shall accordingly stay on the left lane and not block other faster moving traffic; safety of children should not inconvenience other commuters when not required. (Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)

xvii. When the bus stops, the driver should take care that it stops in such a manner that the child need not cross the road, wherever this is feasible. (Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)
xviii. Under no circumstances, should any child be made to get off the bus in the middle of a road forcing him/her to walk through moving traffic. *(Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)*

xix. Stopping of the bus for loading/unloading in a second lane is not permitted as this directly increases safety risk for the child. *(Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)*

xx. The location of the stop should also be such that inconvenience to smooth flow of other traffic is minimized –i.e. it should not stop in front of a gate or bus-stop or block a turning, as more cars/buses piling up also increase safety risk for children besides creating inconvenience for others. *(Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)*

xxi. The location of the stop should also not be a cause for higher risk (such as at or just before a junction) but the bus should instead cross the junction and stop further up as close as possible to the pavement on the left side (minimum 10m after the junction if an inner road, and 50m after the junction if a main road). *(Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)*

xxii. If however the location is such that it is not possible to stop without blocking other vehicles, then under such circumstances, a clear priority shall be given to the bus/vehicle that is loading/unloading school children, while other vehicles may wait their turn to enter/exit/cross the access point till the children are safely out of the way. The conductor with his whistle will play the manual role of ensuring other vehicles wait (which could also be performed by flashing lights or movable yellow arrows fitted on the bus if this more advanced signaling is feasible). *(Action: Police & Motor vehicle department)*

xxiii. There should be a mechanism to give feedback on the school bus and its driver/conductor by parents or by the public. *(Action School Authority, Police and Motor Vehicle Department)*

xxiv. The school bus shall have painted on it valid telephone numbers and mail ids of the bus-in-charge as well as the school
principal/Admin head for feedback in case of improper driving; it should be updated in case of change of number. This information must be displayed even if the bus is a contract bus and it is the responsibility of the Bus-in-charge to ensure this is complied with.  

(Action School Authority, Police and Motor Vehicle Department)

xxv. Parents should also be informed of the telephone number and mail id of the Bus-in-charge to whom such feedback can be directed.  

(Action: School Authority)

xxvi. Such feedback received should be attended to on a priority basis and the matter resolved by ensuring that the driver clearly understands the wrongdoing, and the importance of never repeating the offence is clearly impressed upon him.  

(Action School Authority & Police)

xxvii. Due action must be taken against any driver/conductor where warranted, which may include removal of the driver from services if it is a case of dangerous driving.  

(Action School Authority, Police and Motor Vehicle Department)

xxviii. The person who made the complaint must be informed of the action taken based on the complaint within 3 days.  

(Action School Authority & Police)

xxix. The Bus-in-charge should maintain a record of such complaints, to ensure that repeat complaints against a particular driver are flagged so that appropriate preventive action can be taken in advance rather than result in an accident that could have been avoided with the right measures.  

(Action School Authority, Police and Motor Vehicle Department)

xxx. These complaints must be reviewed by the Head of Admin on a monthly basis.  

(Action School Authority)

xxxi. The school must have a system by which the parents should be in a position to remain connected with the school bus in case of emergency or delay. The simplest system is a text sent out in case of delay in bus timing at the stop of more than 10 minutes. The phone number of the bus driver should not be given to parents to prevent
him from taking calls while driving. Instead, either the number of the conductor, the teacher or the didi on the bus could be shared. Alternately, one or more designated persons from Admin could play the role of connecting parent and bus staff, so that only the really urgent calls are passed through to the staff on the bus; however if the school decides on such a system, then it is critical that such calls are answered/returned urgently to make such a system work. **(Action: School Authority)**

xxxii. In case there is a request during school hours to pick up a child (who normally uses the bus) due to an emergency, such exit should not be permitted if the person is not the parent/guardian him/herself, even if they are carrying the identity card, until and unless this has been specifically verified with the parent. Especially if the person is a driver/maid or any other relative, such pick-up may be permitted only once the school has verified this with the parent. **(Action: School Authority)**

7. **Ensuring safety for children travelling by means other than school bus:**

   i. Children from Class 5 or below should not be allowed to leave the school premises on their own but must be picked up from the designated spot within the premises by the parent/authorized representative. In case the parent who usually picks up the child cannot come to pick up their wards at the last minute for some reason, they must compulsorily inform the school teacher concerned (or the Admin in charge) through SMS or phone, if not informed already in writing through the child by a note or diary where this was known in advance. They may then authorize someone else to pick up their child who must carry the identity card. **(Action: School Authority)**

   ii. In case there is a request during school hours to pick up a child due to an emergency, such exit should not be permitted if the person is not the parent/guardian him/herself, even if they are carrying the
identity card, until and unless this has been specifically verified with the parent. Especially if the person is a driver/maid or any other relative, such pick-up may be permitted only once the school has verified this with the parent. **(Action: School Authority)**

iii. Each morning, the school is responsible to ensure adequate number of security guards are present at the drop-off point for those reaching by cars or on foot/cycles, to ensure that the safety of children is not compromised, and they safely reach the school gate. This is especially important in case the drop-off happens at a distance from the actual school gate and the child has to walk through a public area to reach the school gate. **(Action: Department of Education & School Authority)**

iv. Likewise, at dispersal time as well, the school is responsible to ensure that adequate number of security guards are present at the pick-up point, to ensure that the safety of children is not compromised. **(Action: Department of Education & School Authority)**

v. School guards at dispersal area should not leave till pick-up of the last student to prevent any single case of a child waiting alone on a public road. **(Action: School Authority)**

vi. School guards should be trained at alertness to watch for any undesirable characters who may be loitering in the area, particularly faces seen frequently even if they have no reason to be present. **(Action: Department of Education & School Authority)**

vii. In case of encroachment of pavements on the road leading to the school (by unauthorized parking/ gardens/ shops, etc.) hindering safe walking path of children, it is the school’s responsibility to bring this to the attention of local police station, who will liaise with the concerned authorities to rectify this. **(Action: School Authority & Police)**

viii. Presence of speed-breakers and painted zebra crossings, or table-top pedestrian crossings on both sides of the school entrance on the main road, along with ‘School ahead’ signs are required to facilitate
safe crossing of children and reduce the speed of passing vehicles; if this is not present, your school must inform the local police station, who will liaise with the concerned departments to ensure this. **(Action: Department of Education, School Authority & Police)**

8. **Arrangements in the Schools**

   i. All the affiliated schools will make safe arrangement for boarding and de-boarding of school children from the school bus. **(Action: School Authority)**

   ii. The school authority shall ensure that the doors of the buses remain shut while in running condition. **(Action: School Authority)**

   iii. They will ensure that buses halt only at bus stops designated for the purpose and within the marked area. **(Action: School Authority)**

   iv. Refresher course for driver training so as to fine tune and increase the proficiency of the driver shall be given to the drivers of the school buses periodically, i.e. least twice in a year. **(Action: Department of Education, School Authority, Police & Motor Vehicle Department)**

   v. No person shall be allowed to drive the school bus in drunken condition. Regular check in the respect shall be undertaken by the school authorities and in case of any doubt in that regard such drivers must be subjected to medical test immediately and proper action including the action for cancellation of the license have to be taken. **(Action: Department of Education, School Authority, Police & Motor Vehicle Department)**

   vi. All drivers of the school buses have to be dressed in a distinctive uniform with their names inscribed in it. **(Action: Department of Education, School Authority & Police)**

   vii. In every school bus there shall be another qualified person to keep attending children travelling in such buses, as conductor, who have to be dressed in distinctive uniform with their names inscribed in it. **(Action: Department of Education, School Authority & Police)**
viii. The school authority must provide one set of mobile phone in each school bus so that in case of emergency the bus can be contacted or the driver/conductor can contact the police or State authority as well as the school authority. (Action: Department of Education & School Authority)

ix. The authority shall ensure that the school buses are not permitted to overtake any other four wheelers while carrying the school children in the bus. (Action: Departments of Motor Vehicle & Police)

x. The School authority shall ensure that the students maintain discipline when boarding and disembarking the bus so that no children get hurt. (Action: School Authority)

xi. Effort shall be made by the school to make necessary arrangement for parking the school bus inside the school campus at least at the time of boarding and disembarking. In case it is not possible to park such vehicle inside the school campus, the buses must be parked in such a way so that it does not create any traffic problem for other vehicles. (Action: School Authority)

xii. The school should encourage its children to conduct programmes through play, exhibition etc. during Road Safety Week to create an awareness in public. (Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicle, Police & School Authority)

xiii. Periodic feed-back from students using school Transport facility with regards to driver/conductor be taken and records are to be maintained. (Action: Departments of Education, Motor Vehicle, Police & School Authority)

PART 4: Education and Awareness Building

It is important to create an awareness among all sections of personnel associated with a school, namely Children, Staff (teaching/non-teaching) and Parents about the risks involved with regard to child safety and simple preventive measures that can be taken to reduce these risks.
1. **Education and awareness program for children:**

   Children should be made aware of the dangers they are exposed to, and should give them enough ideas of evils that do lurk and what they can do to prevent them.

   i. Children should be made more confident in dealing with any dangers and honing their safety-skills, especially in public places. *(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, Police & School Authority)*

   ii. Every school should have an Anti-bullying policy. *(Action: Department of Education & School Authority)*

   iii. The School Counsellor along with teachers should educate children of different ages, to give them age-appropriate inputs about simple concepts, covering bullying, internet bullying, internet predators, other forms of victimization, physical abuse but especially sexual abuse, apart from sessions on growing up, avoiding teenage vices, etc. *(Action: Department of Education, Women & Child Development & School Authority)*

   iv. Inputs to be included in the children’s education program: *(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, Police & School Authority)*

      a. Good touch, Bad touch or safe and unsafe touch -
      [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KWan3N-yhM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KWan3N-yhM),
      [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkY0xqtw6W8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkY0xqtw6W8)

      b. Stranger safety: children from a small age, even as young as two, must be trained to be careful of strangers and never talk to strangers, but most importantly, never go anywhere with a stranger. Steps to be taught on stranger safety - Yell, Run & Tell. It explains what to do if someone touches you or comes close to touching you in a way that makes you uncomfortable or scared.

      c. Dangers from known people: Children should also be made aware that it is not only strangers who may cross the line with bad touch, but it is often known persons as
well who could do this, after making them promise to keep the secret. They must be encouraged to share this immediately with a trusted adult.

d. Internet safety and importance of not disclosing personal details to internet strangers, who could in fact be predators living in the area and using a false identity; encouraging them to share with parents any such contacts they are uncomfortable with so that the parent can guide them make sensible decisions.

v. **Breaking the code of silence:** Many children believe that it is better to remain silent rather than report an offence to themselves or others, for the following reasons:

a. They believe they may get into trouble or get a scolding by reporting so prefer to remain silent.

b. They may have been threatened that if they tell, they will be killed/harmed or are blackmailed into silence by some other threat.

c. A lot of children know instinctively that when someone tries to abuse them physically that something is wrong. To their simple minds however, it is not clear who the wrongdoer is. They are not clear that the problem is not with them but with the other person, so mistakenly assume they may be part of the problem and therefore remain silent.

d. Children frequently form an unspoken code of silence by not reporting abuse they may be aware other children are facing (similar to the pact of not sneaking about each other when) when they feel they should stand up for each other against the teacher and not tell. A case of abuse is mistakenly considered by the child’s simple mind as also falling into this category – so s/he feels s/he is protecting his/her friend by not sharing the secret, when in fact he could protect his/her friend better by exposing the abuse. The child must be made to understand
that sharing the secret in this case falls into the category of responsible bystander behaviour, which is quite different from sneaking or telling tales, and s/he should therefore not hesitate to speak up in confidence and help out his/her friend.

e. Children should be taught the importance of sharing because

i. Being abused can only make the problem worse as the perpetrator knows s/he has got away with the misdemeanour.

ii. Already having a depraved mind, such a person will be emboldened to keep trying this again and again.

iii. Children need to be made to understand that the more they keep silent, the more chance for unpleasant events to recur. Also, in that particular case, the longer they wait, the more serious the problem becomes.

iv. The more they report it, the less such incidents will happen. The earlier they report it, the less dangerous will be the consequences.

v. It is in fact considered good citizenship, even heroic to go to a teacher to share that a fellow-student is in trouble and children should be encouraged to do so in complete confidence.

(Action: Departments of Education, Women& Child Development, Police & School Authority)

f. Children should be made to understand the kind of things they should report, which includes,

i. Something that happened to them personally by way of strange behaviour, bad touch, etc.
ii. Something of this nature that happened to another child they may be aware of directly or indirectly.

iii. Something they saw in another person’s belongings/bag (be it another student/any other person on school premises) they should not have such as a knife, gun, cigarettes, etc.

iv. something that tells them another child is in danger – a wound, blood stains, a cut on a wrist, etc. which are unexplained and the child does not want to talk about

(\textbf{Action: Departments of Education, Women& Child Development, Police & School Authority})

g. Children must be reassured that there will be no negative consequence of reporting any incident that makes them uncomfortable, and the only consequence will be the positive one of improved safety for all children/ the child in particular.

(\textbf{Action: Departments of Education, Women& Child Development, Police & School Authority})

h. Children must also be made to realize that they should not feel afraid to approach their parents, elder siblings or other family members in reporting such incidents if they happen in school or even in the society/home; if there is a distinct fear to approach family members or there is at all a possibility that the abuse is happening in the home by a family member/helper/neighbour, then the children should be assured that the teacher will help them resolve this problem and they must not be afraid to approach the teacher or School Counsellor. (\textbf{Action: Departments of Education, Women& Child Development, Police & School Authority})

i. This reporting can happen only if the child is made to feel safe while speaking, has sufficient trust in the person, and is frequently encouraged to speak of even the smallest discomfort, wherever it may be happening, whether at home/society with a
parent, driver, maid, neighbour or at school with a teacher, helper, bully, etc.

vi. **Road Safety:** A basic sense of road safety must be taught to children as early as possible in the classroom. Inputs would be age-appropriate inputs must include

- a. Preferably never to walk on a road without an adult
- b. when walking with an adult, always to walk on the inner side of the road, not on the side of the traffic
- c. wherever possible, use the pavement
- d. never run across a road; while crossing, walking is better so oncoming vehicles find it easier to predict your path
- e. Always use seat-belts; never stand in front seat of a car.
- f. basics of pedestrian safety must be explained including,
  
  i. Always be alert when walking on a road that you are not in the path of any oncoming traffic.
  
  ii. never use headphones or mobiles while walking/cycling on the road; focus completely on traffic and your own safety
  
  iii. never walk behind a vehicle or bus that is reversing; preferably wait till it has stopped moving or cross from the front of the vehicle rather than behind it
  
  iv. If you must move between cars parked on the road, make sure you walk on the inner side rather than the outer side of the parked cars, to reduce proximity to moving vehicles.
  
  v. For children who may cycle or walk to school, basic road precautions must also be explained, including right of way, hand signals, etc.
  
  g. All children must be taught basic traffic rules, so they can influence the adults who drive them, and also imbibe this
discipline for when they begin driving. They must specifically learn to never jump red lights and respect signals, use seat-belts/helmets, never over-speed or drive the wrong way, while using phones or after drinking alcohol.

h. Dangers of underage driving – the school must impress upon older students the dangers of underage driving and driving without a license, either by motorbikes, cars etc. They should be made aware that this is a clear offence and of their responsibilities to abide by these rules from a safety perspective. The school should also make them aware of preventive measures in place to ensure there is no underage driving, as mentioned in

i. Any student older than 18 must be made to understand the critical important of helmets/seatbelts, strict adherence to speed limits, traffic signals, etc. to prevent fatalities common among youngsters.

j. They should be also taught to how to cross a road – look right, then left, then right again

Action: Departments of Education, Police, Motor Vehicles & School Authority)

vii. Self-defence lessons: Many children, especially those of smaller build or girls, tend to feel far more confident if they have exposure to some form of self-defence. It is therefore recommended that the school organize self-defence classes for children of all classes as part of its curriculum and ensure every child is aware of some basic form of self-defence.

(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

viii. Legal Literacy: Students must be made aware of their legal rights and duties under the Constitution of India, Relevant aspects of the school safety policy, the POCSO Act, JJ Act, every other provision of law that covers crimes against women and children, and road safety provisions of the Motor Vehicles act must be discussed with students to make them aware and alert about the subject of safety, their responsibilities to
adhere to the provisions and rights/penalties if any provisions are violated. (Action: Departments of Education, Kerala Legal Services Authority and school authority)

2. Educating Teachers:

Every teacher must be made aware of responsibilities as protector of children in his/her custody, and carry out the same with diligence. Teachers are particularly well-placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse, to recognize and respond to such abuse. They are the main caregivers to children outside the family and have close contact with children on a regular basis and accordingly can play a key role to prevent/detect abuse. Some aspects to ensure this:

i. Responsibilities: Apart from responsibilities relating to education and imparting knowledge and skills to children, every teacher has additional responsibilities as care-giver to the child, specifically:

1. To ensure that the child comes to no harm, especially during the time the children are assigned to him/her

2. To assist the child in developing skills to cope with possible threats to their personal safety, both within and outside the school

3. To encourage a climate of open communication with children so that information about abuse/violence with any child does not remain ‘secret’ till too late, but problems are reported early and can get nipped in the bud. Students are more likely to turn to trusted adults for help in resolving problem in a climate of safety, and the teacher must make children feel safe in their interactions with him/her.

4. To report any aspects that are at risk with regard to arrangements that should have been in place to protect the child from any danger or harm, so that any lapse could be immediately rectified, thereby preventing the dangers from happening/recurring
5. To report any untoward incident that may come to their attention either directly or indirectly.

ii. **Teachers should strictly avoid,**

1. **Seclusion:** Isolating the child or locking him/her alone or in a small group in a room that is dark, small, secluded or unpleasant in any other way. Such seclusion besides being cruel also puts the child at higher risk of being abused, being more vulnerable.

2. **Restraint:** Restricting a child’s freedom of movement such as tying him/her to a chair, to another child, etc. Restraint can become fatal when it prevents a child’s ability to breathe. Even in jest, use of ropes, duct tape, chairs with straps etc. should not be used.

3. **Violence:** Pulling the child’s hair, or physical hitting, punching, throwing a book or chalk at the child or hurting him/her in any way must strictly be avoided.

4. **Humiliation in other forms is also to be strictly avoided such as,**
   a. Denying the child food or water or toilet facilities
   b. Forcing the child to stand in the sun
   c. Removal of any item of clothing of the child and forcing them to stand in front of the class

iii. **Code of conduct:** Every teacher must sign a code of conduct which the school will draft based on the above context and in keeping with its own values and framework. Specifically, this code of conduct is intended to endorse the teachers’ acceptance of responsibility as custodian of children in their care, specifically during the time the children are assigned to them, as they are the first line of contact with children in the classroom; they must be specifically made aware of do’s and don’ts in handling the children and agree to abide by these. The code of conduct
document should be re-signed during the beginning of every academic year

(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

Awareness Sessions:

i. Teachers must be reminded of their responsibilities and expected behaviour by a group awareness session(s) conducted at least once a year for all teaching as well as non-teaching staff. (Action: Departments of Education and school authority)

ii. They should also be made aware of the relevant salient features of the law in this regard (specifically the two existing comprehensive legislations for the protection of children, namely The Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of children) Act 2000 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences, Act 2012). (Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

iii. They should be made aware of behaviour indicators that traumatized children sworn to secrecy by the abuser may demonstrate. Such incidents could be occurring outside the school as well (bus, during private tuitions, in the child’s own home by family members/ helpers/drivers/neighbours, etc.). Being the closest adult contact in school, teachers must be tuned to pick up such signs that could indicate that the child is in danger. (Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

iv. Teachers are bound to bring to the notice of management any incident that they may come to know of, directly or indirectly concerning any child even if not in their class, or any other teacher/ staff. (Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

v. The same code of silence that children feel compelled to follow often traps teachers into silence as well, when the matter impacts a colleague of theirs, or even more than one colleague. It must be impressed on every
teacher that their silence would have a disastrous impact on the other person, and though more convenient to remain silent, their courage to address the issue confidentially will be the best way of curbing and resolving the problem. **(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)**

8. **Educating non-teaching staff**

An awareness session must be held particularly for non-teaching staff, male or female, by a senior staff member and the School Counsellor. The objectives of such a session are:

i. To make them aware that they too have a role to protect children from any harm.

ii. Specific do’s and don’ts must be covered, including listing the kind of accidents/incidents they can help prevent.

iii. Specific areas of the campus linked to the person’s role where access is permitted/not permitted (e.g. sports. Canteen, toilets, labs etc.)

iv. Especially since this group would include toilet attendants, it is important to specify protocols for intimate care (assistance in toileting of smaller children, changing etc.)

v. To make them aware that failure to comply and the punishment it could result in (clearly linking errant behaviour with strict consequences including not just dismissal but criminal arrest including imprisonment; this should clearly be listed as a deterrent for carrying out such behaviour)

vi. They have a responsibility to report any incident they may come to know of, or any suspicious behaviour on part of any other staff; without fear of consequence as their report will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

vii. Again, the abuse may not involve only a child but two other adults, in which case too, they must be encouraged to report this as it is the best way to curb and resolve the matter.
viii. The staff members should be made to sign a summary of what their responsibilities are and their promise to protect the children, so this is a signed document similar to the code of conduct, evolved specially by the school in keeping with its values and the objectives such a code of conduct is intended to achieve.

(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

9. Educating Parents

While it is difficult for the school to be responsible for the way parents behave, it is possible for the school management to communicate clear expectations to parents on policy matters relating to child safety, with the objective that parents and the school can jointly facilitate safety of children by partnering to convey the same messages to the child so there is no confusion in the child’s mind. This could be better addressed through a session conducted specifically for parents for a couple of hours. This should include,

i. Responsibility of adherence to school systems/policies: Clear guidelines to parents on rules for entry/exit/identity cards/pick-up/absentee intimation, etc. which parents must comply with

ii. Communication with children: Requests to parent to have a conversation with their children on specific aspects of safety, especially:

   a. Stranger safety (specific advice to the child that s/he must report any case where a stranger tried to entice him/her with him even if s/he did not go); good touch–bad touch (also safe-unsafe touch) and emphasizing how important it is for the child to report incidents that make him/her uncomfortable in order that the problem is solved and does not recur. Internet safety and importance of not disclosing personal details to internet strangers, who could in fact be predators living in the area and using a false identity; encouraging them to share any such contacts they are uncomfortable with so the parent can guide them make sensible decisions.
b. Telling the child that they must not feel afraid to come to the parent if something is troubling them, and reassuring them that they would not get a scolding but can be sure of help from the parent to solve the problem (this assurance is critical for every parent to give their child, as it could make a big difference in cases especially where the relationship is very formal or distant and the child is more likely to hesitate; having heard such a reassurance could be a motivator for a child to break his silence; not having such a reassurance almost certainly would result in the child not reporting any such incidents and suffering silently).

iii. Safeguarding children and having a conversation at the very earliest.

a. Communication avenues: Parents could use the opportunity of discussing with their children incidents reported in newspapers from time to time in an open manner, with a view to making children comfortable to bring up such topic in discussions (e.g. case of little girl molested by guard in condominium lift). The focus of these discussions should be what constitutes bad touch, what could have prevented such a situation, what would you do in such a situation, etc...

b. Behaviour indicators: Parents must be made aware of behaviour indicators that traumatized children sworn to secrecy by the abuser may demonstrate. They must approach a doctor/counsellor immediately if their child displays any of the following signs, such as:

   i. extremely withdrawn behaviour, not wishing to engage and speak as s/he usually does
   ii. not wishing to go to school (or venue where the abuse has taken place such as bus, tuition, etc.) by feigning illness
   iii. Visible distress after having returned from the specific trouble spot where the abuse is taking place (be it school/tuition/coaching etc.)
iv. Displaying symptoms of pain or more likely trying to hide pain, especially while bathing, sitting, walking etc.

(Action: Departments of Education, Women & Child Development, and school authority)

Part 4 - Implementing the Standard Operating Procedure:

Guidelines regarding Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on ensuring safety and protection should be issued to all schools and stringent monitoring mechanism should be in place to ensure that schools are strictly adhering to the SOP.

Kerala Police has already issued a circular (PHQ Circular No. 16/2011 dated 08-06-2011) regarding formation of School Protection Groups (SPG) in all schools with the following composition.

- Head of Institution - Chairperson
- Members
  - Station House Officer of Police
  - Ward member/ Councillor
  - PTA President
  - Two Student Leaders nominated by the Principal
  - Two willing parents
  - Two willing teachers
  - One respectable merchant of the locality
  - One respectable auto driver
  - One representative of Jagratha Samithi/SPC/NSS/NCC,
  - Some respectable residents of the area

The functions of the SPG as per the circular are the following,

- To take action to ensure traffic safety in the school area and surroundings.
- To collect and communicate information regarding selling of supply of drugs and narcotic substances, pornographic material, sale of tobacco products, pan masala, alcoholic beverages, etc.

- To collect information about students who go away from the school during class hours and loiter in the vicinity.

- To keep watch over persons who befriend children with a view to exploiting them for illegal or immoral activities.

Kerala Police have also commenced a unique initiative named **Children & Police (CAP)** for ensuring better care and protection of children in Kerala. As part of this, six police stations of the state are now functioning as Child Friendly Police stations with necessary infrastructural and attitudinal transformations. Sixty more police stations are soon to follow suit.

‘Our responsibility to Children’ (ORC) program and Student Police Cadet Program (SPC) are the two other programs effectively functioning in Kerala, towards ensuring care, protection and development of children.

**Our Responsibility to Children :** An integral arm of Integrated Child Protection Scheme, Kerala to ensure better protection and development of children through enhancing life skills, nurturing strengths, addressing vulnerabilities, and promoting mentoring and good parenting. The project is a collaborative effort of Departments of Women & Child Development, Education, Health, Police, LSG, SC/ST and Civil Society. The project is currently on in 304 selected schools of Kerala.

**Student Police Cadets Program:** The Student Police Cadet (SPC) Project is a school-based initiative by Kerala Police, implemented jointly by the Departments of Home and Education, and supported by Departments of Transport, Forest, Excise and Local Self-Government. The project trains selected high school students to respect the law, practice discipline and civic sense, and develop empathy for vulnerable sections of society. SPC is currently on in 576 schools.
Both SPC and ORC have a well-designed structural arrangement in the respective participating schools with specially designated nodal team under the school heads. The SPC/ORC nodal team should undertake the responsibility of implementing the SOP, in those schools which run the projects, by activating school level SPGs. In order to extend the implementation of SOP to all schools of Kerala, School Protection Groups should be formed and strengthened in all schools through the collaborative effort of Police and Department of Education, with the support from other relevant departments and agencies. SPGs should be enabled as the overall platform, with necessary updating of the existing circular, to ensure the effective implementation of the SOP throughout Kerala.

The SOP should be piloted in SPC and ORC schools and schools under the jurisdiction of Child Friendly Police Stations (CAP Stations) for a year by assigning responsibilities to the nodal team of the projects.

Sources & References

1. Safety Guidelines for Schools by Gurgaon Police
3. Circulars by DPI, Motor Vehicle Department and Police regarding safe and secure travel of school children.
   a. Circular No.06/2011 – PHQ
   b. Protocol to Educational Institution Buses – MVD
   c. Circular No. M4/89765/2016/DPI
   e. Circular No.M4/35117/17/DPI
   g. No.H1/976/2016/DPI

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