

Dear Rutindo Parents, Personnel and Community,

Rutindo School has adopted the following Child Protection Policy to guide everyone in the school community in regards to the protection, health and safety of children enrolled at Rutindo. This policy is shared annually so that all members of the community understand the values we place in ensuring all children of our school community are protected to the best of our ability. The Rutindo Child Protection Policy is centered around the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Uganda is a signatory, Uganda's Ministry of Education guidelines, and the Rutindo Mission and Philosophy.

All adults associated with Rutindo are expected to be role models to the students, to support the students in reaching their full potential and to help them become responsible global citizens active in shaping the future. Every student has a right to be free from harm, live, grow up and develop in a safe and supportive environment. Thus an effective home-community-school partnership is essential, bearing in mind that difficult home or community or school situations affecting the health and safety of a student can impact learning.

By enrolling your child at Rutindo, you agree to work in partnership with the school and abide by all school policies. At Rutindo we genuinely value our partnership with you in providing for the safety and care of your children. As part of our overall educational programs and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children and to ensure a safe environment in which all children can learn and grow Rutindo will:

1. Provide age appropriate lessons for all grade levels to help students understand personal safety, needs and rights.
2. Provide parents materials and information sessions to help the Rutindo community to better understand our programs and policy.
3. Annually train faculty to recognize and report issues of abuse and neglect.

Child protection is everyone's responsibility: I thank you for your support of our efforts and invite you to contact your school headmistress or me regarding any specific question you may have.

With kind regards,

Andrew Amara
Director / Ag. Head of Policy Development team

RUTINDO PAKANYI PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Child Protection Policy

Written by

Ratified by Board of Governors

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1.0 About Rutindo
Background

Many factors have hampered education in Pakanyi area, Miirya sub-county, Masindi district. One major factor is poor numeracy and literacy skills among primary school children.

Majority of primary going age children lack spoken and written English language skills yet these enable children to understand in class since English is the official media of communication in Uganda schools at most levels. Also, the relevance and relation to numerical skills and concepts is prevalently lacking.

In urban areas, children gain these skills at the ages 4, 5, and 6. For some, English is their first language since it is used at home. Such children have a big advantage over those raised in rural setting who start formal education in primary one, without the early childhood foundation.

On these grounds, Rutindo schools were started in relation to the dialect meaning of the word “rutindo” meaning a bridge. Rutindo therefore is a non-profit organisation working to bridge literacy and numeracy education gaps for rural disadvantaged children and build a foundation for better opportunities.

Vision

To offer children of nursery and primary school going age skills in numeracy, literacy and language skills leading to a firm foundation of their schooling.

Mission

To prepare children of pre-primary going age in reading, writing and numerical skills. To assist children already in primary to acquire reading, writing and skills.

We also promote the following values:

- Education is a collaborative process between home, school and the community, therefore we nurture this 3way partnership.
- Respecting all cultures.
- Acting with integrity and respect for the various individuals, groups and communities.

2.0 Purpose of the Child Protection Policy

Protection is one of the 4 foundation principles of the United Nations. Uganda has signed on the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some of the relevant articles:

Article 19 – Protection from abuse and neglect - The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 34 – Sexual exploitation The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse including prostitution and involvement in pornography (Child Rights International Network).

A Child Protection Policy can be defined as ‘a statement of commitment and intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children’. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously

Rutindo School has a responsibility to protect all students enrolled in the school. Rutindo recognizes that, because of its day-to-day contact with children, school staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The school will therefore:

- i. Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to;
- ii. Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach and trust if they are worried;
- iii. Ensure that all school staff (all individuals involved in working with students) understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the appropriate person in charge;
- iv. Implement links with relevant and available agencies within the country, and cooperate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters;
- v. Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately;
- vi. ensure all records are kept securely and in locked locations;
- vii. Follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff, volunteer, or a member of the Rutindo Community (see procedures).

This policy aims to guide every inter-personal interaction taking place on campus between adults and students. It is meant to model and raise awareness about the need of mutual respect in every interaction and to highlight the important role that student's emotional and physical well-being plays for Rutindo as an educational institution.

The policy applies on campus, in our facilities and during on and off campus events, programs and projects of the school. This policy also extends to our partners as defined below.

3.0 Principles on Child Protection

Principle 1: Rutindo does not tolerate the abuse of children. Child abuse / exploitation will be followed up with disciplinary action and depending on the nature of the allegation criminal proceedings

Principle 2: Rutindo believes that all children have the right to be safe at all times. We will proactively work to provide safe activities and environments. We will do this by assessing and managing child protection risk and impact, through careful identification, reduction, and mitigation of risks to the children.

Principle 3: Child protection is a shared responsibility. All Rutindo staff and partner organisations should commitment to and have responsibility of protecting children from abuse.

Principle 4: Rutindo will always apply fair process when managing complaints, concerns and allegations of child abuse or exploitation.

Principle 5: The best interest of the child will be the primary consideration in all decisions and actions concerning the wellbeing of children attending Rutindo and participating in Rutindo supported programs.

4.0 Scope of the Policy

The Rutindo Child Protection Policy applies to all staff (including part-time and volunteers) and personnel, partners and other participants engaged in projects / programs being run by the school

5.0 Communication/awareness raising on the Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy is available as hardcopy on admission at the school, in the teacher's dossier, and on the website.

The policy forms part of the orientation process for new staff to Rutindo. All staff members are given access to a copy of the policy.

Every new employee, and project personnel as well as existing staff will undergo training on child protection and the school's children protection policy at least once every 18 months, and whenever the policy is revised. This training will involve how to conduct an assessment of risks that children face, the code of conduct, responsibilities of the staff and personnel, how to report concerns, course of action and the overall guiding principles of this policy.

6.0 How we assess and manage risks of children protection

Rutindo will proactively assesses and manage child protection and safety risks by conducting a child protection risk assessment on all programs and activities involving or impacting children. Identified risk and mitigation measures will be monitored and new or emerging risks identified and addressed.

Rutindo staff and partners are responsible for being continually alert to and actively minimizing opportunities and situations where children can be harmed.

These risks and decision-making processes will be documented in an assessment as part of the activity planning and risk management processes.

7.0 Working with partners

Rutindo requires its partners (organisations that are implementing projects with or on Rutindo's behalf) to apply the minimum child protection standards in this policy as appropriate to their engagement with Rutindo, the activities they are implementing and their level of contact with children. As a minimum, Rutindo would expect that partners:

Have or develop their own child protection policy or sign onto and adhere by the Rutindo Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Implement agreed child protection measures as outlined in MOU's with Rutindo. These measures will be informed by a child protection capacity and risk assessment.

8.0 Child Protection Team

A Child Protection Team will be formed at the beginning of every school year. Its members will be a senior teacher, a junior teacher, counselor, a nurse, headmistress and a parent. The team will meet two times a year to review policies and practices concerning child protection and possible critical situations. The team will also be in contact with the school's external referrals. The current Contacts of the referrals will be maintained by the Head Teacher.

The Board or Head teacher will seek assistance from a qualified counselor / child protection expert where necessary when dealing with reports.

9.0 Safe Personnel Recruitment

Rutindo is fully committed to using child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. These practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people to work in our school/programs.

Our child safe practices include:

- Assessing all positions for the level for risk in relation to contact with children.
- Conducting at least referee checks that involves discussing child protection with referees.
- Undertaking criminal history checks.
- Requiring statutory declarations where criminal history checks are not available.
- Requiring applicants to disclose whether they have been charged with child abuse/exploitation offences.
- Requiring applicants to read and sign into the Rutindo Child Protection Code of Conduct.
- Including questions on child protection during interviews.
- Including child protection in performance appraisals.

Rutindo will not permit any person to work or have contact with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing.

Rutindo employment contracts include a provision for suspension or transfer to other duties of any employee who is under investigation and provisions to dismiss an employee after an investigation.

10.0 Responsibilities of Staff and Personnel

Every staff member at Rutindo has the responsibility to:

- Actively supervise students and generally take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of students under their supervision
- Follow the school's child protection policies and safety procedures
- Abide by the Child Protection Code of Conduct
- Respect the rights of students, families, and colleagues to confidentiality and therefore only discuss students' or colleagues' performance with people who need to be involved professionally.
- Report any concerns with regard to child abuse or neglect using the reporting procedures

11.0 Parents and Visitors on Campus

- Parents and visitors on campus are expected to interact with Rutindo students in an appropriate way in line with the Child Protection Policy of the school. Inappropriate interaction between a parent and another parent's child on the school campus and facilities will lead to the administration being informed and a possible campus ban for the offending parent.
- All visitors to the campus must report to the administration office upon arrival.

12.0 Child protection Code of Conduct

Rutindo School has developed a Child Protection Code of Conduct to provide clear guidance to personnel and partners about ways to minimise risk to children and make clear the standards of behaviour and practice expected of them when engaging with children at Rutindo School.

All Rutindo personnel and partners are required to read and sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct which is located at (Appendix B).

13.0 Reporting a Concern

Who should report?

All Rutindo staff and associates including people in the community and partner organisations.

What should be reported?

- Any disclosure, concern or allegation from a child, community member, staff or associate regarding the safety, abuse or exploitation of a child (this includes actual, suspected, or risk of abuse or harm to a child)
- Any observation or concerning behaviour exhibited by Rutindo staff, volunteer or other associate that breaches the Rutindo Child Protection Code of Conduct.

When to report?

Child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

Who to report to?

Child abuse reports should be made to Headteacher or Board of Governors

How should it be reported?

Verbally and by completing the Rutindo child abuse incident reporting sheet (see appendix B)

What will happen next?

The Headteacher and/or Board of Governors in consultation with an external child protection advisor will discuss the allegations and then decide upon the next step. This will involve one or more of the following:

- Interviewing the person/persons who made the allegations and/or other witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision about the allegation;
- Reporting to local police and or child protection authority when it is suspected or becomes clear a crime has been committed;
- Referring the child to local support services if necessary
- Handling the concern internally if it is not a criminal matter
- No further action taken
- Providing support to all stakeholders (including reporter) as necessary.

Rutindo will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties will be treated fairly and the principles of natural justice will be a prime consideration. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and expediently.

All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interests of the child regardless of the outcomes of any investigation. Rutindo will ensure that the interests of anyone reporting child abuse in good faith are protected.

The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance. Every effort will be made to protect the rights and safety of the child throughout the investigation.

Children and community members with whom Rutindo works will be provided with information about how to report any child protection concerns about Rutindo staff members and associates.

In all steps, follow up activities will be conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually, and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

14.0 Confidentiality.

Confidentiality is a key principle of reporting and managing child protection concerns. All information regarding a child protection concern must only be shared with the designated Headteacher and/or member of Board of Governors. The names of people involved and the details of the report will remain confidential. Information will only be released on a “need to know” basis or when required by law or when a report to police or child protection support services is made.

15.0 Responding to disclosure by a child.

When a child/young person tells you that he or she has been abused, they may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes disbelief.

If a child discloses abuse, whatever the outcome, the child must be taken seriously. It is important for you to remain calm and in control and to reassure the child/young person that something will be done to keep him or her safe.

When a child or young person discloses they are being harmed you can show your care and concern for the child/young person by:

- Listening carefully
- Telling the child/young person you believe him or her
- Telling the child/young person it is not their fault and he/she is not responsible for the abuse
- Telling the child/young person you are pleased he/she told you.

You will not be helping the child/young person if you:

- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone
- Push the child/young person into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what the child/young person wants to tell you and not to conduct an investigation (beware of asking any leading questions as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation)
- Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the child/young person with others not directly involved.

16.0 Follow up

Disciplinary Action

If any member of staff employed by Rutindo is accused of child abuse then that member of staff must be suspended from duties, on full pay, whilst the investigation takes place. This is not an admission of guilt, but simply allows the incident to be investigated in a way that protects both the child and the staff member should the allegations turn out to be unfounded.

A breach of or failure to comply with the Code of Conduct will result in the implementation of disciplinary procedures which may result in disciplinary actions up to:

- In the case of a staff member – suspension or dismissal;
- In the case of a consultant or intern – suspension or termination of their services;
- In the case of a partner – up to and including suspension or termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements with Rutindo
- In the case of a parent or visitor – a warning or direction to leave the school;

In addition, depending on the nature of the allegation, cases may result in legal action; and/or criminal investigation and prosecution.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any Rutindo personnel found to:

- Have failed to report a child protection concern
- Have intentionally made a false allegation

Appendix A Definitions

Child or Children

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'child' means every human being under the age of 18 unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. For the purposes of this policy, Rutindo considers a child to be a person under the age of 18 years

Child protection

An activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly that arising from child exploitation and abuse

Child abuse

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by knowingly not preventing harm. Precedence and past cases in Uganda indicates that schools whether in urban or rural communities are as prone to child abuse as any other community. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the need of the more powerful person. Children may be abused in a family, the community, an institutional setting, or more rarely by a stranger. Most young people who are abused know their abuser.

Child exploitation

One or more of the following:

- Committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child
- Possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material
- Committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming
- Using a minor for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage

Bullying and Peer-to-Peer Conflict

Bullying can be defined as 'unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.'

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An imbalance of power: children who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

For issues with regard to Cyber-Bullying, also refer to New “Data Policy” policy which addresses use of social media, internet and computers in the school.

Partners

Partners are organisations that are Rutindo engages to participate in, or execute project and program activities. Partners must understand and should act on their obligations to manage risks to children.

Personnel:

Personnel are either employed by Rutindo School, or, engaged by an organisation on a subcontract basis, or engaged by an organization on a voluntary or unpaid basis on a project of Rutindo School. Personnel can include paid staff, volunteers, interns, trustees, board members

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or caregiver fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

“Emotional abuse is any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical in nature. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased”. *University of Illinois, counseling center*

It is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects to the child’s emotional development. It may involve the persistent use of verbal aggression, conveying to children they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may cause the child to feel frightened, in danger, insecure or to be exploited or corrupted.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. It may involve physical contact, penetrative or non-penetrative acts and also includes children in the production of or watching sexual online images, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs which is likely to result in serious impairment to their health and development. It may involve a parent or caregiver failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing; failing to protect from physical and emotional harm or danger; or failing to allow access to medical care or treatment. It may also include the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

APPENDIX B Child Protection Code of Conduct

Rutindo personnel and partners are responsible for maintaining a professional and caring role when working with or interacting with children associated with Rutindo School. This Child Protection Code of Conduct aims to keep children safe and serves to protect everyone from misunderstandings by providing clear behavioural guidelines and expectations for interacting with children.

I agree that while working or interacting with children associated with Rutindo School I will:

- Treat all children with respect.
- Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, humiliating or culturally inappropriate.
- Not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for and exchanging gifts or grades for sexual services.
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working near children.
- Not invite unaccompanied children into private residences, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children or family).
- Not seek to or make contact with any student, outside school/program times. This includes direct contact or any contact via social media platforms.
- Not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor's permission must be obtained, and ensuring that another adult is present if possible (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children).
- Never use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass children, or access child exploitation material through any medium.
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with Rutindo not use physical punishment on children or youths.
- Not hire/recruit children or youths for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or development stage; which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities; or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- Comply with all child protection legislation of Uganda, including Uganda's labour laws in relation to child labour: be aware of behaviour and avoid actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as child or youth exploitation and abuse.
- Take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child.
- Obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing, filming or documenting personal details of a child. An explanation of how the photograph or film will be used must be provided.

- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner. Children and youths should be adequately clothed and not posing in a way that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child or youth when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

Note: These behaviours are not intended to interfere with normal family interactions.

Please sign here:

I, _____ (*insert name*)
acknowledge that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the Rutindo's Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Code of Conduct; and Child Protection Reporting Process.
I understand that Rutindo School reserves the right to terminate my position and/or take legal action against me if I breach the Child Protection Code of Conduct

Date:

Position/relationship with Rutindo School:

Appendix C - Rutindo Child Protection Reporting Form

Please complete this form to document and report any child protection concerns, a breach or potential breach of the Child Protection Code of Conduct. All child protection concerns should be reported immediately. This report must be made in strict confidence.

IMPORTANT! It is your responsibility to report any allegations – NOT to investigate. You do not have to have proof of your concern or answers to all of the questions in order to complete this form.

What is your name? _____

What is your Telephone Contact? _____

And Email? _____

What is the name of the Child / victim? _____

What is the name of suspected offender?
(if applicable) _____

How do you know the child / victim? _____

Describe in detail the nature of your concern? (Time / date/s / any witnesses/ location of incident/ behaviour or signs observed / any other details that outlines your concern)

Provide details of any conversation with the child. Please describe exactly what the child said with his/her own words

Are there any immediate safety or medical concerns for the child? If so, what are they?

Have you contacted anyone else about this concern? If so, who have you contacted?

What other steps have you taken (if any)?

Please sign and date this report

Signed: _____

Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

Name of person who received incident report: _____

Date received: _____