

## (Child Protection Policy) – Based on ADEK Policies.

### **Definition & General Responsibilities**

**Students' protection** is here defined as all those measures, steps and actions that must be taken to avoid subjecting students while at School or outside it, during any School activities and their transportation, to any danger or harm. Harm may be in the form of exploitation, violence, physical injury, sexual abuse, any verbal insult, moral threat or harm of any kind. It is every student's right to be in a safe School environment that is free of any form of abuse and that continuously offers caring, support and protection to all students without discrimination.

All our students under the age of 18 will now benefit from the newly implemented Child Protection Policy, which has been developed by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) for the first time in response to the UAE Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 on Child Rights and in the interest of ADEC to apply international standards in student protection against all forms of abuse and neglect.

ADEC's unified Child Protection Policy has been designed to identify and support students who may have suffered any form of abuse or neglect, as per the UAE Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 on Child Rights, which has been benchmarked against international standards on child protection.

The Principal, school staff, administration and facilitators, and parents are all responsible of reporting suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

The school principal, as per the Policy, acts as the guardian of all students while they are under the school's care.

School staff, facilitators and administrators must inform the school principal immediately when and if they suspect the exposure of any student to any form of abuse and/or neglect, as well as raise the awareness of students on the importance of reporting any suspected student abuse and/or neglect case/s inside or outside the school that becomes known to them.

Additionally, all school staff are authorized and mandated to report all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect conducted by a perpetrator inside or outside a school, by directly contacting the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center within 24 hours upon suspicion.

Parents and legal guardians play a huge role in protecting their children through cooperating with the school administration and staff. They are expected to answer all inquiries related to the individual student's behavior, academic performance, while responding to feedback and guidance.

### **Purpose**

1. To guide Private Schools in the Emirates to prepare comprehensive School policies and procedures to:
  - *Protect students and prevent the exploitation, bullying, physical and sexual abuse, insult or harm of any other kind which students may face, and to identify those who may have suffered harm. Promote students' cultural, social, and mental growth to enable them to become strong, self-confident members of society.*

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2. School Staff, facilitators and administrators are fully responsible for the care and protection of students while they are in the School's care, or traveling to and from the School using School-provided transportation means, and while moving between all activities organized by the School.
3. School Staff, facilitators and administrators must take all possible measures to protect students from any form of exploitation, abuse, oppression, and insult and any other physical, sexual or emotional threat, danger or harm. School Staff, facilitators and administrators must exercise the utmost care over the security of students in their care.
4. Adheres to and aligns with all the relevant laws and regulations issued by ADEC and the relevant authorities in the UAE. This policy shall include, for example, the following:
  - The safety of School buildings, transportation, and School activities.
  - Students' health, welfare, and well-being.
  - Conduct and discipline of students.
  - Confidentiality of students' data.
  - Security of School IT systems.
  - Supervision of students at all times during schoolday hours and related School activities.
  - Counselling and School support services, enabling students to have access to a trusted professional counselor, or a social worker, or someone in an equivalent position.
  - Conducting the necessary background checks on all School personnel in association with the relevant authorities.
  - Reporting procedures in respect of any incident affecting the security of students within the School to Parents/Guardians, ADEC and other related government entities.
  - Confidentiality of reports and investigations related to any student abuse and communications when dealing with the Council and relevant government entities.
  - Communicating with students and their Parents/Guardians to hear their opinion through a variety of means, which may include surveys, group discussions, and opportunities for them to express their views while ensuring their privacy. Additionally, Parents/Guardians shall be continuously informed of and given clarification regarding the roles and responsibilities they share with the School to protect their children.
5. The Administration, Facilitators and staff of Al Etihad International Private School are fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom it works. The school undertakes to promote the rights of the child, including the participation of children and young people in matters that affect them.
6. Our school aims to create a safe and healthy environment for the young people with whom it works and is committed at all times to ensuring their safety and welfare.
7. A set of child protection guidelines is operated by the school based on international best practice. An ADEC updated guidelines. This policy also helps to provide safeguards and support for staff when they are working with children and young people.

## **Defining and Recognizing Child Abuse**

1. Child abuse can be categorized into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. All staff members have a duty to report any concerns they may have about a child to the school's Administration. Such concerns may be shown in a change in the child's mood or behavior, noticeable bruising or injuries, etc. Such concerns must be reported as soon as they are noticed.

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2. The school's Administration must decide, if necessary in consultation with the school Nurse and Social Worker, whether it is appropriate to see these changes in behavior/injuries as significant, taking into account the school's overall knowledge of the child and the family.
3. All members of staff must be prepared to report on their observations and concerns. It would be helpful to record details of these observations and dates of occurrence. Only facts must be registered, without speculating on the cause.
4. The school will keep parents and guardians informed of all aspects of the school's activities that their child is involved in. It is our policy to share information relating to the curriculum, extra-mural activities, trips away, transport to and from events, etc. with the parents/guardians. It is our practice to inform parents/guardians first in the case of a child disclosing an incident of abuse unless this could put the child in danger.
5. The school will ensure that no child is collected from the school by an unauthorized person. Every child will be seen to leave the school under the care of (a) the school transport and designated drivers and conductors; or (b) a parent/guardian or other adult authorized by the parent to collect the child. This is the responsibility of all staff on duty at the end of the day, the front-entrance security guard, and the Vice Principal during the school day.
6. Access to the school by unauthorized visitors will be limited to securing all entrances during school hours, between 07:55 am and 3:00 pm. A security guard stationed at the front entrance will screen all incoming visitors by recording their name and contact details, as well as the purpose of visit and person being visited in the school.
7. The following guidelines will also be observed:
  - a. All adults working with young people directly, including those providing transport supervision, will have received a police clearance.
  - b. Staff and facilitators show respect and understanding for the rights, safety, and welfare of the children and young people;
  - c. Inappropriate behavior/language by the children/young people will not go unchallenged;
  - d. A system is in place for recording any incidents or accidents while the child is in the care of the school (see Clinic reports);
  - e. A clear system of registration and departure of participants is in place at all events;
  - f. There are clear channels of communication and access to staff in the Administration if parents/guardians or children/young people wish to voice their concerns if there is something they are not happy about;
  - g. The school will make every effort to ensure that during all of its planned curriculum, the physical surroundings will be comfortable, fully accessible and appropriate for the work being undertaken;
  - h. Employees should not take one young person alone in a car on journeys. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full consent and knowledge of the parents/guardians and a senior member of the staff in the school;
  - i. While we recognize that sometimes it is appropriate for staff to work on a one to one basis with a child or young person, staff should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with an individual child/young person. Where an adult needs to meet with a child/young person alone, the door should be left open and another adult informed of the meeting;
  - j. There should be no unnecessary physical contact between an adult and a young person although there are times when for example, placing a hand on a

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distressed child/young person's shoulder to comfort him/her would be appropriate. Physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be suitable to the age and the level of development of the child.

- k. The school respects and promotes the principles of equality and diversity and works with all children in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the UAE constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
8. Bullying behavior can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others.

Examples of bullying include:

- Teasing
  - Taunting
  - Threatening
  - Hitting
  - Extortion
  - Exclusion
- The school will not tolerate any bullying behavior by children/young people or adults and will deal with any incidents immediately by the school's Code of Discipline.

## **Recognizing Child Abuse**

### **Definition and Possible Physical and Behavioral Indicators of Child Abuse**

#### **Neglect**

Neglect can be defined regarding an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or lack of medical care. Neglect becomes apparent in different ways over a period rather than at one specific point.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent minor or serious injuries
- Untreated illness
- Hunger, lack of nutrition
- Tiredness
- Inadequate and inappropriate clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of peer relationships

#### **Emotional**

Emotional abuse is usually to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency, and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested regarding physical signs or symptoms.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Unreasonable mood and behavioral changes
- Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I do not care attitude'
- Lack of attachment
- Low self-esteem
- Attention seeking
- Depression or suicide attempts
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed
- A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, babysitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents/carers
- Panic attacks

#### **Physical**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries
- Torn clothing
- Bite marks burns or welts
- Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin
- Undue or unnecessary fear

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- Aggressiveness or withdrawn
- Absconding frequently from home

## **Sexual**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behavior
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge given the child's age, which is often demonstrated in language, play or drawings
- Fondling or exposure of genital areas
- Hints about sexual activity
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming

### **Indicators of Abuse are Not Facts**

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Signs must also be considered in the child's social and family context as child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. It is important always to be open to alternative explanations for possible physical or behavioral signs of abuse.

### **Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

The statutory authorities should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of ill-treatment. A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of violence or neglect would not constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- i. the specific indication from the child that s/he was abused;
- ii. an account by the person who saw the child being abused;
- iii. evidence such as injury or behavior which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way;
- iv. An injury or behavior, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of ill-treatment. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of mistreatment, dysfunctional behavior;
- v. Consistent indication, over a period, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

A suspicion, not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, does not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

## **How to report an alleged child abuse/neglect:**

ADEC in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Centre, has implemented a unified child abuse and neglect reporting process that ensures immediate intervention to protect all students under the age of 18 who attend schools in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western Region.

According to the policy it is mandated to report cases via telephone hotline (116111) and the electronic reporting link available on ADEC's website:

<https://www.adec.ac.ae/ar/Pages/childabusereportingabu-dhabiedusector.aspx>

If a child is in immediate danger (risk of serious harm), the police should be contacted directly using the 999 service, followed by reporting to the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center within one hour upon discovery. In addition, school staff must inform the School Principal immediately.