

Al Ittihad Private School
Mamzar



Child Protection Policy
AY 2024-2025

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I. Introduction

The health, safety, and well-being of all our children is of paramount importance to all the adults who work in our school. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school and stay in a positive and healthy learning environment free from any form of violence, anxiety, and fear. All staff employed at Al Ittihad Private School Al Mamzar must report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect whenever the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Reporting and follow-up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with administrative regulations respective to this policy. “Every child has the right to live, be safe, be educated, and be protected from neglect and all forms of abuse” (UAE Child Protection Law).

1.1. Purpose

1.1.1 Ensure Safety and Well-being:

The primary aim is to create a safe environment where children are protected from harm, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect.

1.1.2 Promote Awareness:

Raise awareness about child protection issues among staff, students, and parents to ensure that everyone understands their roles in safeguarding children.

1.1.3 Compliance with Legal Frameworks:

Ensure the school’s practices are in line with UAE laws and international conventions regarding child protection, such as the UAE Child Protection Law and UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

1.1.4 Support Children’s Rights:

Uphold children’s rights as outlined in both national laws and international frameworks, ensuring their access to education, care, and protection from harm.

1.1.5 Develop Preventive Measures:

Implement strategies to prevent abuse, including teaching students how to recognize inappropriate behaviors, setting clear rules, and providing support channels.

1.1.6 Early Intervention:

Ensure the school is able to identify early signs of abuse or neglect and take appropriate action promptly to protect the child.

1.2. Scope

The **Child Protection Policy** applies to all **students, staff, faculty, parents, volunteers, and external stakeholders** involved with Al Ittihad Private School. It establishes a **comprehensive framework** to ensure a **safe, supportive, and abuse-free environment** for all students.

Who is Covered?

- **Students:** Ensuring their safety, well-being, and right to a secure learning environment.
- **Teachers & Staff:** Responsible for recognizing, preventing, and reporting any signs of abuse or neglect.
- **Parents & Guardians:** Encouraged to support child protection efforts and remain informed about school policies.
- **Volunteers & External Partners:** Required to adhere to the policy and undergo necessary training.

Key Areas of Implementation

- **Child Safety & Protection:** Safeguarding students from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect.
- **Awareness & Training:** Equipping staff, students, and parents with the knowledge to recognize and report concerns.
- **Legal & Ethical Compliance:** Aligning with UAE laws and international child protection frameworks (UAE Child Protection Law, ADEK).

- **Prevention & Early Intervention:** Establishing proactive measures, reporting mechanisms, and timely interventions.
- **Mental Health & Emotional Support:** Providing counseling and emotional well-being resources for affected students.
- **Confidentiality & Reporting:** Ensuring child protection cases are handled with sensitivity, discretion, and accountability.
- **Collaboration with Authorities:** Working with government bodies, social services, and law enforcement for child safety enforcement.

This policy is **mandatory** for all school personnel and associated stakeholders, ensuring a **holistic approach to child safety** within the school community.

1.3. Objectives

1.3.1 Establish Reporting Mechanisms:

Set clear procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, including who to approach and the steps involved in reporting any concerns.

1.3.2 Train Staff and Volunteers:

Provide regular training to staff, teachers, and volunteers to help them recognize signs of abuse, understand legal obligations, and act in the best interests of the children.

1.3.3 Create a Child-Friendly Environment:

Foster an atmosphere where students feel safe, supported, and empowered to speak up about any issues they are facing.

1.3.4 Ensure Confidentiality and Sensitivity:

Handle cases of abuse or neglect with confidentiality, ensuring that sensitive information is shared only with authorized individuals involved in child protection.

1.3.5 Collaboration with Authorities:

Work in partnership with local authorities, such as the **UAE Ministry of Education, Social Services**, and law enforcement, to ensure an integrated approach to child protection.

1.4. Alignment with UAE and ADEK Guidelines

The **Child Protection Policy** at **Al Ittihad Private School** is designed to align with **UAE national laws, ADEK (Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge) regulations, and international child protection frameworks** to ensure a **safe, secure, and nurturing learning environment** for all students.

1.4.1 Compliance with UAE Laws and Regulations

Our policy adheres to the following key legal frameworks in the UAE:

- **Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 (Wadeema’s Law)** – Outlines the rights of children, including protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- **UAE Penal Code & Cybercrime Law** – Addresses child abuse, bullying, and online safety.
- **Ministry of Education Child Protection Framework** – Mandates schools to implement policies, reporting mechanisms, and intervention strategies.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** – Ensures alignment with global standards in child protection.

1.4.2 Compliance with ADEK Policies

The policy follows ADEK’s **Child Protection and Safeguarding Guidelines**, which include:

- **Mandatory Reporting** – All school personnel are required to report suspected abuse, with clear protocols in place.
- **Safe Learning Environment** – Ensuring all students are protected from physical, emotional, and online risks.

- **Staff Training & Awareness** – Regular training for teachers, staff, and volunteers on child protection responsibilities.
- **Parent & Community Engagement** – Educating parents on safeguarding and their role in ensuring student welfare.
- **Mental Health & Well-being** – Providing counseling, emotional support, and intervention services for at-risk students.

1.4.3 Implementation & Monitoring

To maintain compliance with **UAE and ADEK guidelines**, the school will:

- Establish a **Child Protection Committee** led by trained staff.
- Implement **strict recruitment policies**, ensuring all school personnel undergo background checks.
- Conduct **regular awareness sessions** for staff, students, and parents.
- Maintain a **confidential reporting system** for suspected child abuse or neglect.
- **Collaborate with authorities**, including ADEK, the Ministry of Education, and law enforcement.

By aligning with UAE laws and ADEK policies, **Al Ittihad Private School** ensures that **child safety remains a top priority**, fostering a secure and supportive learning environment for all students.

II. Monitoring and Review:

Continuously monitor the implementation of the policy, evaluate its effectiveness, and review it periodically to ensure it remains up to date with any changes in laws or best practices.

III. Promote Mental Health and Emotional Support:

Ensure that children have access to counselling or psychological support, particularly if they are dealing with the aftermath of any abuse or trauma.

IV. Involve Parents and Guardians:

4.1 Guidelines

At **Al Ittihad Private School**, we recognize that **parents and guardians play a vital role** in ensuring the safety, well-being, and protection of children. Our **Child Protection Policy** includes measures to actively engage parents in safeguarding efforts, in alignment with **UAE laws and ADEK guidelines**.

4.2 Awareness and Education

- **Workshops & Seminars** – Regular sessions to educate parents on child protection, signs of abuse, online safety, and emotional well-being.
- **Information Resources** – Distributing newsletters, brochures, and online materials about child safety policies and best practices.
- **Parental Agreements** – Parents will acknowledge and sign school child protection policies, ensuring commitment to safeguarding.

4.3 Open Communication & Reporting

- **Safe Reporting Channels** – Encouraging parents to report concerns regarding their child's safety through confidential and accessible channels.
- **Dedicated Liaison** – Assigning a Child Protection Officer as the point of contact for parental concerns and inquiries.
- **Regular Feedback & Meetings** – Creating opportunities for parents to discuss child protection policies and their implementation in the school.

4.4 Collaboration & Support

- **Parental Involvement in Initiatives** – Encouraging parents to participate in school-led child safety programs, anti-bullying campaigns, and well-being activities.

- **Counseling & Family Support** – Providing access to school counselors for parents and students dealing with safety-related concerns.
- **Community Partnerships** – Working together with parents to promote a culture of vigilance, responsibility, and proactive protection of children.

By fostering a **strong partnership between school and home**, we ensure that every child at **Al Ittihad Private School** is supported, protected, and empowered to learn in a **safe and nurturing environment**.

V. Abuse

5.1 Types of Abuse

There are 4 main categories of abuse that all teachers and staff should be aware of.

- **Physical** - any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person by way of bodily contact.
- **Emotional** - characterized by a person subjecting, or exposing, another person to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Sexual** - also referred to as molestation, usually undesired sexual behaviour by one person upon another. (Child molestation)
- **Neglect** - a deficit in meeting a child's basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, clothing, nutrition, housing as well as their physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs.

5.2 Signs of Abuse

- Cuts, burns, harm which causes bruises.
- 2Habit disorders.
- Conduct disorders.
- Behavioral extremes.

- Overly adaptive behavior.
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, behavior.
- Loss of appetite or compulsive eating.
- Regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking, needing previously discarded cuddle toys.
- Becoming withdrawn, isolated.
- Inability to focus.
- Reluctant to go home.
- Bed-wetting.
- Drawing sexually explicit pictures.
- Overreacting to criticism.
- Outburst of anger, irritability.
- Neglect.

5.3 Emotional neglect indicators:

- Low self-esteem.
- Perfectionism.
- Being easily overwhelmed or discouraged.
- Difficulty regulating emotions.
- Self-distraction during classes.
- Low academic achievement.
- Behavior of disrespect to adults.
- Failing to abide by school or class rules.

VI. Reporting Procedures

6.1 Steps for Reporting Abuse

6.1.1 Recognizing the Signs of Abuse

- Staff members should be trained to recognize signs of abuse, which can include:
- Unexplained injuries or a history of frequent hospital visits.
- Withdrawal, anxiety, depression, or changes in behavior.
- Fear of going home or reluctance to engage in school activities.
- Sudden changes in academic performance.
- Unusual knowledge or interest in sexual matters (in the case of sexual abuse).
- Sudden absences or tardiness without explanation.
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits.

If a staff member suspects abuse, they should never investigate the situation on their own, as this could interfere with the legal process.

6.2 Reporting Abuse to a Designated Staff Member

- **Immediate Action:**

If a student discloses abuse or if abuse is suspected, the staff member should take immediate action to ensure the safety of the student. This may involve separating the student from the suspected abuser or moving them to a safe location.

- **Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Child Protection Officer (CPO):**

Al Ittihad school has **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and **Child Protection Officer (CPO)** who are responsible for overseeing all reports of abuse. If abuse is suspected, then the staff member must report the issue immediately to the CPO or DSL. (For the name list of the designated CPO and DSL refer to Appendix B).

The report should include:

- The nature of the concern or disclosure.
 - The student's account of what happened (if available).
 - The time and date of the incident.
 - Any evidence, if available (e.g., physical signs, written materials).
- **Documentation:**
When reporting, it is essential to document the concern in writing, as clearly and objectively as possible. Include:
 - The name and contact details of the reporter.
 - Date, time, and location of the suspected abuse or disclosure.
 - Details of the incident or signs observed.
 - Any actions already taken, such as contacting the students' parents. The documentation should be factual and free from assumptions or individual opinions.

6.3 Reporting to Authorities

- **Child Protective Services (CPS):**
If the DSL/CPO determines that the abuse is significant, they will report the issue to the appropriate child protective services or local authorities immediately. In most cases, mandatory reporting laws require that suspected abuse be reported to the authorities.
- **Law Enforcement:**
If the abuse involves criminal behavior (e.g., sexual abuse or severe physical abuse), the school may need to contact law enforcement directly. This should always be done in accordance with local laws and in consultation with the authorities.

6.4 Involve Parents/Guardians (when appropriate) (designated staff, supervisor or counselor)

- If it is safe and appropriate to do so, inform the students' parents or guardians about the report. However, in cases of suspected sexual abuse, neglect, or situations where informing the parents may worsen the situation, it may not be advisable to contact them immediately. The authorities should make this decision.
- Ensure that communication with parents is managed sensitively and provide information on available resources and support.

VII. Suicide prevention and intervention.

Any child or young person who expresses thoughts about suicide must be taken seriously and appropriate help and intervention should be offered without delay.

Suicide Intervention Steps:

7.1 Immediate Response to a Suicide Threat or Attempt

- **Stay Calm and Listen:** If a student expresses suicidal thoughts or intentions, remain calm and listen attentively. Ensure the student feels heard and supported.
- **Ensure Safety:** If a student is in immediate danger, ensure their safety by removing them from harmful situations and ensuring adult supervision. Contact school supervisor and emergency services if necessary.
- **Involve Mental Health Professionals:** School counsellors should immediately intervene, providing assessment and support. In cases of acute risk, involve parents, guardians, or emergency responders for further action.

7.2 Develop an Action Plan (designated staff, Supervisor or counselor)

- **Create a Support Network:** Work with the students, their family, and mental health professionals to create a comprehensive support plan. This may include counselling, behavioral therapy, or a referral to a mental health specialist.

- **Confidentiality and Respect:** Ensure confidentiality while respecting the student's privacy. Keep the information shared only with necessary parties involved in their care, including the student's family, counsellors, and medical providers.
- **Follow-Up Support:** Provide ongoing support for the student after the crisis is addressed. This includes monitoring their progress, checking in regularly, and offering continued mental health services.

7.3 Involve the Family

- **Notify the Family:** When appropriate and with sensitivity, inform the student's parents or guardians about the situation, the school's response, and the next steps.
- **Collaborate for Support:** Work with the family to ensure they understand the importance of seeking professional help, maintaining a supportive home environment, and following through with mental health care.

7.4 Crisis Intervention Team

- **Establish a Crisis Team:** Schools should have a crisis intervention team that is trained to respond to situations of potential suicide. This team can include counsellors, social workers, administrators, and trusted staff.
- **Provide Immediate Assistance:** In case of an emergency, this team should be ready to provide immediate care, assess the situation, and coordinate with local emergency services as needed.

VIII. Identifying risk factors

If a social counsellor /CPO is concerned that a child or young person is at risk of suicide, they should make a referral to the appropriate agency with responsibility for specialist mental health assessments.

Risk factors give an indication of the potential for serious harm to occur but cannot provide an accurate prediction of what will happen. Risk factors can be seen as ‘alarm bells’ – the more alarm bells that are ringing the greater the concern – however one significant risk factor can also trigger a young person having suicidal thoughts or behavior.

Levels of risk:

- **High Risk**
 - Previous suicide attempts.
 - Frequent suicidal thoughts which are not easily dismissed.
 - Specific plans with access to potentially lethal means, e.g., time, location and method.
 - Evidence of current mental health problems.
 - Significant or increasing drug or alcohol use.
 - The situation felt to be causing unbearable pain or distress.
 - Increasing self-harm, either in frequency or potential lethality or both.
- **Medium Risk**
 - Suicide thoughts are frequent but still fleeting.
 - No specific plan or immediate intent.
 - Known current mental health issue.
 - Use/increased use of drugs or alcohol.
 - Situation felt to be painful but no immediate crisis.
 - Previous, especially recent, suicide attempts.
 - Current self-harm or thoughts of self-harm.
- **Standard Risk**
 - Suicidal thoughts are fleeting and soon dismissed.
 - No plan of how they would attempt suicide.
 - Fewer or no signs of low mood.
 - No self-harming behavior.
 - Current situation felt to be painful but bearable

8.1 Reporting Procedure for Concerns About Suicidal Thoughts or Behavior

- Refer the case to the child protection officer.
- Child protection officer will meet the parent and explain the situation.
- Parents should sign a "Parent Acknowledgment of Notification" form.
- Parents must be requested to seek a medical/mental health consultation immediately from community agencies.
- School will follow up with the recommendation that will be provided from the mental health professionals to support the student's emotional wellbeing.
- If the parent refuses to seek the medical report, the student will be suspended from attending school upon the approval of school vice principal, based on the recommendation of the CPO.
- CPO is authorized to contact community agencies if needed.
- If the parents refuse to seek the mental health report and the school counsellor agreed that there is no high risk, the parents will sign the notification form to acknowledge that the school disclaims any liability in the event a student self-harms during or outside school hours.
- If the student shows verbal or physical signs of causing possible harm to someone, such as a school staff member, a student - appropriate action will be taken to ensure the safety of other students and staff at school.

IX. Supporting students at risk

Our school recognizes that children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth or view the world as a positive place. School may be the only supportive, secure, and predictable element in the life of children at risk. Nevertheless, while at school their behavior may still be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn.

The school will strive to support students through:

- The curriculum by encouraging self-esteem and self-motivation.
- The school philosophy promotes a positive, supportive, and collaborative environment, giving all students and adults a sense of being respected and valued.
- The implementation of the school's code of conduct.

- A consistent approach agreed by all staff which will ensure the students' understanding that some behavior is unacceptable, but s/he is valued.
- Regular collaboration with other professionals and agencies that support the students and their families.
- Commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents, whenever it is in the child's best interest to do so.
- The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff group, trained to respond appropriately in child protection situations.
- Recognition that statistically children with behavioral difficulties and disabilities are most vulnerable to abuse so those who work in any capacity with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and/or emotional and behavioral problems will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse.
- Recognition that in a home environment where there is domestic violence and abuse, children may also be vulnerable and in need of support or protection.

9.1 Divorced Parents Policy

Statement of intent

Al Ittihad Private School strives to provide a safe, caring, and supportive environment for all. We are committed to providing a safe space for students who need support in all situations. When parents get divorced it can be challenging for children to comprehend therefore it is crucial that there are policies in place at school to support students in this situation.

Procedures

The faculty should make sure that students feel safe and comfortable at school. Teachers should encourage students to express all concerns with either the teacher or another member of the faculty. If any teacher is approached by a student who needs guidance through a divorce, they should refer the case to the head of sections and the counselling staff to investigate the matter.

It is vitally important that the students are comfortable and are aware that they are encouraged to reach out to faculty members if they need support.

Parents who are divorced should share the custody document with the school and inform the school which parent will be the contact person of fetching the child from school.

Supervisor and the teachers should be aware of the situation and make sure to give the child to the parent who has the custody document.

9.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. The only purpose of confidentiality in this respect is to benefit the child. A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to a student, nor should they agree to keep a secret, as where there is a child protection concern this must be reported to the Child Protection Representative and coordinator and may require further investigation by appropriate authorities.

Whistleblowing

We recognize that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

If necessary, they should speak to the Head of Section or the school's Child Protection Coordinator.

9.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Child protection is the responsibility of adults and especially those working with children. The development of appropriate school procedures and the monitoring of good practice are the responsibilities of the Health and Safety: Child Protection and Safeguarding committee. All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect and safeguard them. Staff should always follow the procedures concerned with behavior management from the “Staff Handbook” (separate document).

- **Safe Recruiting policy & procedures**

IPSM promotes the welfare of the vulnerable individuals. All children and vulnerable adults deserve to live in a safe environment that promotes their health and development and is free from abuse, maltreatment, and exploitation. School's responsibility is to ensure that unsuitable individuals are not allowed to work with vulnerable groups.

- **Child Protection Committee:**

(DSL) Safeguarding Lead: the school principal is designated as a child protection leader, and he is responsible for reporting the child protection cases to the external agency.

The school principal is responsible for reviewing the policy and procedures.

- **Child protection Officers:**

There are key people within the school and the local authority who have specific responsibilities under safeguarding & child protection procedures. The names of those carrying out these responsibilities for the current year are listed at the beginning of this document. It is the role of the designated Child.

The **Designated Child Protection Officer** will provide a report for the leadership team detailing any changes to the policy and procedures, training undertaken by all staff and any other relevant concerns.

Safe recruiting – School leadership along with the HR team are responsible for ensuring that the school follows safe recruitment processes. As part of the school's recruitment and vetting process, criminal records and background checks will be sought on all staff that have substantial and unsupervised access to children. (Add Link to safe-recruiting policy).

X. Glossary

- **Child Protection**

The term ‘child protection’ refers to any action that aims to prevent, protect and respond to violence, exploitation, and abuse against children. A child protection framework may include legislation and policies that provide specific rights for children, services that support the protection of children within communities. Child protection work also responds to violence by giving medical treatment, and processes to ensure victims can access justice.

- **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is defined as any nonaccidental physical injury to the child and can include striking, kicking, burning, or biting the child, or any action that results in a physical impairment of the child. It also includes acts or circumstances that threaten the child with harm or create a substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare.

- **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse refers to an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of the child as evidenced by an observable or substantial change in behavior, emotional response, or cognition and injury as evidenced by anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving an important level of violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening or not. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect abuse**

Neglect is frequently defined as the failure of a parent or other person with responsibility for the child to provide needed food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision to the degree that the child's health, safety, and well-being are threatened with harm.

- **Suicidal behavior**

is any deliberate action that has potentially life-threatening consequences, such as taking an overdose. It can also include repeated risk taking which constitutes a risk of death.

- **Suicidal thoughts**

imply that someone is thinking about taking their own life. This differs from young people who, as part of normal growing up, might explore the meaning of life. Further conversations will usually establish whether someone is thinking about suicide.

- **Suicide**

is the act of deliberately ending one's own life. It is possible to die unintentionally because of a serious self-harm episode.

- **Self-harm**

is the term used when someone intentionally injures or harms themselves. It is a common pre-cursor to suicide and children and young people who self-harm may kill themselves by accident.

- **Suicide prevention**

is the process of identifying and reducing the impact of risk factors associated with suicidal behavior and identifying and promoting factors that protect against engaging in suicidal behavior.

This **Child Protection Policy** is designed to align with **UAE laws, ADEK regulations, and international child safeguarding standards**. It serves as a **guiding framework** for all students, staff, parents, and stakeholders at **Al Ittihad Private School** to ensure the safety and well-being of children within the school environment.

Limitations & Responsibilities

- **Legal Compliance** – This policy is developed in accordance with UAE child protection laws and ADEK guidelines. Any legal matters beyond the school’s jurisdiction will be referred to the appropriate **authorities, including law enforcement and social services**.
- **Policy Updates** – The school reserves the right to **review and update** this policy as needed to comply with new regulations or best practices in child protection.
- **Implementation & Enforcement** – While every effort is made to enforce child protection measures, the school is not liable for incidents that occur outside of its **supervised premises and jurisdiction**.
- **Confidentiality & Reporting** – The school maintains **strict confidentiality** in all child protection cases, ensuring information is only shared with **authorized personnel and legal entities** when required.

Acknowledgment

By engaging with **Al Ittihad Private School**, all students, staff, parents, and affiliated individuals acknowledge their **role and responsibility** in adhering to this policy and supporting a **safe and secure learning environment** for all children.

For any concerns or clarifications, please contact the **Child Protection Officer** or the school administration.

This policy is subject to annual review and updates to remain aligned with **UAE educational laws, ADEK, and KHDA guidelines**.

For concerns or inquiries, contact the **Well-Being Committee** or **School Administration**.

XII. Disclaimer

Disclaimer

This policy was developed by Al Ittihad Private School-Mamzar. It is intended for use exclusively by school staff and students. Any external use, whether in whole or in part, requires management approval. Any exceptions to this policy must also be approved in advance by the school management.

Child Protection Policy

Date created: September 2019

Date reviewed: February 2025