

Al Ittihad Private School
Al Mamzar



Child Protection Policy

AY 2025-2026

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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 (IPSM) 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 (Federal Law No. 3 of 2016, Wadeema’s Law)

1.1 Purpose

- **Ensure safety and well-being** – Create a safe environment where children are protected from harm, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect.
- **Promote awareness** – Raise awareness about child protection issues among staff, students, and parents so that everyone understands their role in safeguarding children.
- **Compliance with legal frameworks** – Ensure the school’s practices are aligned with UAE laws and international conventions on child protection, including the UAE Child Protection Law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- **Support children’s rights** – Uphold children’s rights as outlined in both national laws and international frameworks, ensuring access to education, care, and protection from harm.
- **Develop preventive measures** – Implement strategies to prevent abuse, including teaching students to recognise inappropriate behaviour, setting clear rules, and providing accessible support channels.
- **Early intervention** – Identify early signs of abuse or neglect and take appropriate action promptly to protect the child.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, faculty, parents, volunteers, and external stakeholders involved with IPSM. 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 and staff** – Responsible for recognising, preventing, and reporting any signs of abuse or neglect.
- **Parents and guardians** – Encouraged to support child protection efforts and remain informed about school policies.
- **Volunteers and external partners** – Required to adhere to the policy and undergo necessary training.

Key areas of implementation:

- **Child safety and protection** – Safeguarding students from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect.
- **Awareness and training** – Equipping staff, students, and parents with the knowledge to recognise and report concerns.
- **Legal and ethical compliance** – Aligning with UAE laws and international child protection frameworks (UAE Child Protection Law, KHDA).
- **Prevention and early intervention** – Establishing proactive measures, reporting mechanisms, and timely interventions.
- **Mental health and emotional support** – Providing counselling and emotional well-being resources for affected students.
- **Confidentiality and 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

- **Establish reporting mechanisms** – Set clear procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, including who to approach and the steps involved.
- **Train staff and volunteers** – Provide regular training to help staff recognise signs of abuse, understand legal obligations, and act in the best interests of children.
- **Create a child-friendly environment** – Foster an atmosphere where students feel safe, supported, and empowered to speak up about any issues they are facing.

- **Ensure confidentiality and sensitivity** – Handle cases of abuse or neglect with confidentiality, sharing sensitive information only with authorised individuals involved in child protection.
- **Collaboration with authorities** – Work in partnership with the UAE Ministry of Education, KHDA, social services, and law enforcement to ensure an integrated approach to child protection.

1.4 Alignment with UAE and KHDA Guidelines

This policy is designed to align with UAE national laws, KHDA (Knowledge & Human Development Authority) 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

This 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 and Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 on Combating Rumours and Cybercrimes – Address 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 KHDA Guidelines

The policy follows KHDA’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 and awareness** – Regular training for teachers, staff, and volunteers on child protection responsibilities.

- **Parent and community engagement** – Educating parents on safeguarding and their role in ensuring student welfare.
- **Mental health and well-being** – Providing counselling, emotional support, and intervention services for at-risk students.

1.4.3 Implementation and Monitoring

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

- Maintain 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 KHDA, the Ministry of Education, and law enforcement.

II. Monitoring and Review

The school continuously monitors the implementation of this policy, evaluates its effectiveness, and reviews it periodically to ensure it remains up to date with changes in UAE law, KHDA guidance, and international best practice. Findings from incident reviews, audits, and surveys inform annual policy updates.

III. Mental Health and Emotional Support

IPSM ensures that children have access to counselling and psychological support, particularly if they are dealing with the aftermath of abuse, trauma, or other significant adverse experiences. School counsellors provide confidential individual sessions and coordinate with external mental health professionals where the level of need exceeds school provision.

IV. Parent and Guardian Engagement

Parents and guardians play a vital role in ensuring the safety, well-being, and protection of children. This policy includes measures to actively engage parents in safeguarding efforts, in alignment with UAE laws and KHDA guidelines.

4.1 Awareness and Education

- **Workshops and seminars** – Regular sessions to educate parents on child protection, signs of abuse, online safety, and emotional well-being.
- **Information resources** – Newsletters, brochures, and online materials about child safety policies and best practices.
- **Parental agreements** – Parents acknowledge the school’s child protection policies, demonstrating commitment to safeguarding.

4.2 Open Communication and Reporting

- **Safe reporting channels** – Parents are encouraged to report concerns about their child’s safety through confidential and accessible channels.
- **Dedicated liaison** – The Child Protection Officer serves as the point of contact for parental concerns and inquiries.
- **Regular feedback and meetings** – Structured opportunities for parents to discuss child protection policies and their implementation.

4.3 Collaboration and Support

- **Parental involvement in initiatives** – Parents are invited to participate in school-led child safety programmes, anti-bullying campaigns, and well-being activities.
- **Counselling and family support** – Access to school counsellors for parents and students dealing with safety-related concerns.
- **Community partnerships** – Working with parents to promote a culture of vigilance, responsibility, and proactive protection of children.

V. Abuse

5.1 Types of Abuse

There are four main categories of abuse that all teachers and staff should be aware of:

- **Physical abuse** – Any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person by way of bodily contact.
- **Emotional abuse** – Subjecting or exposing another person to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress.
- **Sexual abuse** – Any undesired or coerced sexual behaviour, including contact and non-contact acts (also referred to as child molestation).

- **Neglect** – A deficit in meeting a child’s basic needs, including failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, clothing, nutrition, housing, or physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs.

5.2 Signs of Abuse

- Cuts, burns, or bruising of unclear origin.
- Habit disorders.
- Conduct disorders.
- Behavioural extremes.
- Overly adaptive behaviour.
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, language, or behaviour.
- Loss of appetite or compulsive eating.
- Regressive behaviours such as thumb-sucking or returning to previously discarded comfort objects.
- Becoming withdrawn or isolated.
- Inability to focus.
- Reluctance to go home.
- Bed-wetting.
- Drawing sexually explicit pictures.
- Overreacting to criticism.
- Outbursts of anger or irritability.
- Signs of 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.
- Disrespectful behaviour towards adults.
- Failing to abide by school or class rules.

VI. Reporting Procedures

6.1 Recognising the Signs of Abuse

Staff members are trained to recognise signs of abuse, which may include:

- **Law enforcement** – If the abuse involves criminal behaviour (e.g., sexual abuse or severe physical abuse), the school contacts law enforcement directly, in accordance with UAE law and in consultation with the authorities.

6.4 Involving Parents and Guardians

Where it is safe and appropriate, parents or guardians are informed of the report. However, in cases of suspected sexual abuse, neglect, or where informing the parents may worsen the situation, it may not be advisable to contact them immediately; the authorities make this decision. Communication with parents is managed sensitively, and information on available resources and support is provided.

VII. Suicide Prevention and Intervention

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

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, maintain adult supervision, and contact the school supervisor and emergency services if necessary.
- **Involve mental health professionals** – School counsellors intervene immediately, providing assessment and support. In cases of acute risk, parents, guardians, or emergency responders are involved for further action.

7.2 Action Plan

- **Create a support network** – Work with the student, their family, and mental health professionals to create a comprehensive support plan that may include counselling, behavioural therapy, or referral to a mental health specialist.
- **Confidentiality and respect** – Ensure confidentiality while respecting the student’s privacy. Share information only with the necessary parties involved in the student’s care.
- **Follow-up support** – Provide ongoing support after the immediate crisis is addressed, including regular check-ins, monitoring of progress, and continued mental health services.

7.3 Involving 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** – The school maintains a crisis intervention team trained to respond to situations of potential suicide. This team includes counsellors, social workers, administrators, and trusted staff.
- **Provide immediate assistance** – In an emergency, the team is ready to provide immediate care, assess the situation, and coordinate with local emergency services as needed.

VIII. Identifying Risk Factors

If a counsellor or Child Protection Officer is concerned that a child or young person is at risk of suicide, a referral is made to the appropriate agency with responsibility for specialist mental health assessments. Risk factors give an indication of the potential for serious harm but cannot provide an accurate prediction. The more risk factors present, the greater the concern; however, one significant risk factor alone can also trigger suicidal thoughts or behaviour.

Levels of risk:

- **High risk** – Previous suicide attempts; frequent suicidal thoughts that are not easily dismissed; specific plans with access to potentially lethal means (time, location, method); current mental health concerns; significant or increasing substance use; situation felt to be causing unbearable distress; increasing self-harm in frequency or severity.
- **Medium risk** – Frequent but fleeting suicidal thoughts; no specific plan or immediate intent; known current mental health concern; use or increased use of substances; 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; fewer or no signs of low mood; no self-harming behaviour; situation felt to be painful but bearable.

8.1 Reporting Procedure for Concerns About Suicidal Thoughts or Behaviour

- Refer the case to the Child Protection Officer.
- The CPO meets the parents and explains the situation.
- Parents sign a Parent Acknowledgement of Notification form.
- Parents are required to seek a medical or mental health consultation immediately from a licensed community agency.
- The school follows up on the recommendations provided by the mental health professional to support the student’s emotional well-being.
- If parents refuse to seek the medical report, the student may be suspended from attending school upon the approval of the school Vice Principal, based on the recommendation of the CPO.
- The CPO is authorised to contact community agencies when needed.
- If parents refuse to seek the mental health report and the school counsellor agrees there is no high risk, parents sign the notification form acknowledging that the school disclaims liability in the event the student self-harms during or outside school hours.
- If the student shows verbal or physical signs of potentially harming others, appropriate action is taken to ensure the safety of all students and staff at school.

8.2 Definition of a High-Risk Case

A high-risk case may include, but is not limited to:

- A suicide attempt or interrupted attempt.
- Expression of suicidal ideation, intent, or plan.
- Severe emotional distress indicating risk of self-harm.
- Hospitalisation or emergency intervention related to mental health.
- Concerns raised by staff, parents, or external professionals.

8.2.1 Immediate Safeguarding Response

When a student is identified as high risk:

- The student must not be left unsupervised at any time.
- Continuous adult supervision is maintained until safe handover.
- The student is placed in a safe, supervised environment.
- Any immediate environmental risks are mitigated.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead, School Counsellor, and Section Leadership are informed immediately.

- Parents or guardians are contacted on the same day and required to collect the student if deemed necessary.

8.2.2 Medical Assessment Requirement

- The school requires an official assessment and report from a licensed psychiatrist or approved medical facility.
- Online therapy or informal consultations alone do not constitute sufficient clearance in high-risk cases.
- Medical documentation must clearly indicate risk level, fitness to attend school, and recommended safeguards or accommodations.

8.2.3 Return-to-School Procedure

A student may return to school only when all of the following conditions are met:

- Written medical clearance is submitted.
- A Parent Safety Agreement is signed.
- An Individual Student Safety Plan is developed by the School Counsellor.
- Approval is granted by school leadership.

8.2.4 Ongoing Safeguarding and Monitoring

Following return to school:

- Regular check-ins with the School Counsellor are scheduled.
- Relevant staff provide monitoring feedback.
- Adjustments to timetable, workload, or supervision are implemented as required.
- Any re-emergence of concern results in immediate escalation.

8.2.5 Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- All information is handled confidentially and stored securely.
- Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Records are maintained in line with Child Protection documentation standards.

8.2.6 Emergency Escalation

Emergency services are contacted immediately if:

- The student presents an immediate risk.
- A suicide attempt occurs on campus.

- The student cannot be kept safe within the school environment.

8.2.7 Safeguarding Priority

Safeguarding and student well-being take precedence over attendance, assessment, and academic expectations at all times.

IX. Supporting Students at Risk

The school recognises 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 a child at risk; while at school their behaviour may still be challenging, defiant, or withdrawn.

The school will strive to support students through:

- A curriculum that encourages self-esteem and self-motivation.
- A school philosophy that promotes a positive, supportive, and collaborative environment, giving all students and adults a sense of being respected and valued.
- Consistent implementation of the school's code of conduct.
- A consistent approach agreed by all staff which ensures students understand that some behaviour is unacceptable, but the child is still valued.
- Regular collaboration with other professionals and agencies that support students and their families.
- A commitment to developing productive, supportive relationships with parents, whenever it is in the child's best interest to do so.
- The development and support of a responsive, knowledgeable staff group trained to respond appropriately in child protection situations.
- Recognition that children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities are statistically more vulnerable to abuse; staff who work with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment, or emotional and behavioural difficulties must be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse.
- Recognition that children living in homes with domestic violence and abuse may also be vulnerable and in need of support or protection.

9.1 Divorced Parents

IPSM is committed to providing a safe, caring, and supportive environment for all students. When parents separate or divorce it can be a challenging time for the child; the school maintains clear procedures to support students in this situation.

Faculty ensure that students feel safe and comfortable expressing concerns to the class teacher or any trusted staff member. Where a student raises concerns about a family separation, the teacher refers the case to the Head of Section and the Counselling Department to investigate the matter and provide support.

Divorced parents are required to share the custody document with the school and inform the school which parent will be the designated contact for collecting the child. Supervisors and teachers must be aware of the arrangement and ensure the child is handed over only to the parent named on the custody document.

9.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. The only purpose of confidentiality in this context is to benefit the child. Staff must never guarantee confidentiality to a student, nor agree to keep a secret, since a child protection concern must be reported to the Child Protection Officer or Designated Safeguarding Lead and may require further investigation by the appropriate authorities.

Whistleblowing: children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. All staff have a duty to raise concerns about the attitudes or actions of colleagues; where necessary, they should speak to the Head of Section or the school's Child Protection Officer.

9.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Child protection is the responsibility of all adults, especially those working with children. The development of appropriate school procedures and the monitoring of good practice are the responsibilities of the 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 concerning behaviour management set out in the Staff Handbook.

Safe recruiting policy and procedures: IPSM promotes the welfare of vulnerable individuals. All children and vulnerable adults deserve to live in an environment that promotes their health and development and is free from abuse, maltreatment, and exploitation. The school's responsibility is to ensure that unsuitable individuals are not permitted to work with vulnerable groups.

Child Protection Committee:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** – The School Principal is designated as the safeguarding lead and is responsible for reporting child protection cases to external agencies. The Principal also reviews the policy and its procedures.

- **Child Protection Officers (CPOs)** – Key staff with specific responsibilities under safeguarding and child protection procedures. Current names are listed at the front of this document. The Designated CPO provides a report to the leadership team detailing any changes to policy and procedures, training undertaken by staff, and any other relevant concerns.
- **Safe recruiting** – The Senior Leadership Team and HR 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 are sought for all staff who have substantial and unsupervised access to children. (Refer to the Safe Recruitment Policy.)

X. Glossary

- **Child protection** – Any action that aims to prevent, protect from, 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, medical treatment for victims of violence, and processes to ensure victims can access justice.
- **Physical abuse** – Any non-accidental physical injury to a child, including striking, kicking, burning, biting, or any action resulting in a physical impairment. 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** – Injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of the child as evidenced by an observable or substantial change in behaviour, emotional response, or cognition, and indicators such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behaviour.
- **Sexual abuse** – Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts, or non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect** – The failure of a parent or other person with responsibility for a 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 behaviour** – Any deliberate action that has potentially life-threatening consequences, such as taking an overdose. It can also include repeated risk-taking that constitutes a risk of death.

- **Suicidal thoughts** – Thinking about taking one’s own life. This differs from young people exploring the meaning of life as part of normal growing up; further conversation usually establishes whether someone is thinking about suicide.
- **Suicide** – The act of deliberately ending one’s own life. It is possible to die unintentionally as a result of a serious self-harm episode.
- **Self-harm** – When someone intentionally injures or harms themselves. It is a common pre-cursor to suicide; children and young people who self-harm may also die by accident.
- **Suicide prevention** – The process of identifying and reducing the impact of risk factors associated with suicidal behaviour and identifying and promoting factors that protect against engaging in suicidal behaviour.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** – The senior staff member with overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection at IPSM.
- **Child Protection Officer (CPO)** – A trained staff member with specific responsibility for receiving, recording, and acting on child protection concerns.
- **KHDA** – Knowledge & Human Development Authority, the regulatory body for private education in Dubai.

XI. Disclaimer

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

Limitations and responsibilities:

- **Legal compliance** – This policy is developed in accordance with UAE child protection laws and KHDA 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 and 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 and reporting** – The school maintains strict confidentiality in all child protection cases, sharing information only with authorised personnel and legal entities when required.

Acknowledgement: by engaging with IPSM, 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 was developed by Arabian Development Education Company. 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.

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