

Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement

Knowledge International School is deeply committed to the welfare and safety of all its students. The school endeavors to cultivate an environment where students feel secure, are valued, and have their voices heard and taken seriously. This commitment extends to ensuring a nurturing atmosphere conducive to both their educational and personal growth.

Aims

Our objective is to safeguard and enhance the welfare of children at KIS, adhering to the national educational standards set forth by the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and the Health Authority – Abu Dhabi (HAAD), alongside strict compliance with UAE Law. Our policies draw upon significant legislative frameworks and guidelines, including:

- **UAE Federal Law No. 3 of 2016** on children's rights, known as Wadeema's Law, which emphasizes the fundamental rights and protection of children.
- **UAE Department for Health, School Health Guidelines** for Private Schools, ensuring health standards are met within the educational environment.
- **UAE School Inspection Framework 2016**, specifically Section S, which focuses on the protection, care, guidance, and support of students.

In line with these standards, our policy appoints a designated safeguarding practitioner responsible for leading and coordinating child protection efforts within the school and working with local agencies.

Practice and Procedure Guiding Principles

1. **Awareness and Reporting:** All staff are trained to be vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect, understanding clearly the channels for reporting concerns or suspicions.

2. **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** A specifically appointed person with expertise in recognizing and addressing child protection concerns serves as the primary contact for staff and parents regarding any safeguarding issues.
3. **Training:** All staff with child protection responsibilities undergo rigorous and regular training to equip them with the necessary skills to manage and act on child protection concerns effectively.
4. **Anti-bullying Policy:** The implementation of a robust school-wide policy against bullying to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment.
5. **Safe Recruitment Practices:** Comprehensive security checks, including police clearances and local security screenings, are mandatory for all employees—whether full-time, part-time, peripatetic, supply, or volunteer—before their engagement at the school.
6. **Responsive Action:** Immediate and effective action is taken to address any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements.

Teaching and Learning Responsibilities of the Designated Person

The DSL is tasked with several critical responsibilities:

1. **Communication:** Keeping the Principal fully informed of any concerns related to child protection.
2. **Awareness:** Ensuring that all staff are conversant with the child protection procedures.
3. **Compliance:** Guaranteeing that safeguarding procedures are consistently followed throughout the school.
4. **Support and Training:** Facilitating appropriate training and support for all staff on safeguarding issues.
5. **Investigation:** Addressing concerns raised about a student, staff member, parent, or group of students.
6. **Action Decisions:** Assessing specific concerns to determine the need for further action.
7. **Confidentiality:** Maintaining a high level of confidentiality and ensuring sensitive information is securely stored.

8. **Guidance and Support:** Offering necessary guidance to both parents and staff on how to access support related to child protection concerns.
9. **Immediate Reporting:** Staff must immediately report any concerns to the DSL.
10. **Principal Notification:** The DSL informs the Principal and any relevant persons about the concerns as needed.
11. **Documentation:** Staff are required to document any concerns on the same day they arise, ensuring the records are clear, concise, and factual.
12. **Referral Decisions:** The DSL, after consulting with the Principal, decides whether concerns should be escalated to external agencies.

Child Protection Training

1. **Comprehensive Training for All Staff:** All teaching personnel, including instrumental teachers, learning support staff, bus monitors, and bus drivers, undergo annual training. This training covers the identification of signs and symptoms of abuse, understanding the specific child protection procedures at LISF, and how to effectively respond to safeguarding issues.
2. **Policy and Conduct Acknowledgment:** Every staff member is required to sign an acknowledgment form confirming that they have received and understood the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct. This ensures that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and the school's expectations regarding child safety.
3. **Extended Training for Volunteers and Parents:** Volunteer staff and parents who frequently interact with students receive targeted child protection training to ensure they are equipped to recognize and respond appropriately to child welfare concerns.
4. **Formal Educational Programs:** Regularly scheduled educational sessions on child protection are conducted by knowledgeable faculty members or external experts. These sessions are designed to keep staff updated on the latest practices and developments in child protection.

Recognizing Child Abuse - Indicators of Concern

It is crucial for all members of the school community, including both paid and unpaid visiting staff, to be vigilant and educated about the indicators of child abuse and neglect. Key signs to watch for include:

1. **Unusual Injuries:** Injuries that are not typical of common accidents associated with children's activities, or injuries where the explanations given do not match the severity or pattern of the injury.
2. **Repeated Injuries:** Frequent injuries, even those with plausible explanations, can be a red flag and should be noted and monitored.
3. **Behavioral Changes:** Sudden or drastic changes in a child's behavior, performance, or attitude can indicate distress and potential abuse.
4. **Psychological Signs:** Signs of anxiety or low self-esteem, which may be out of character for the child.
5. **Inappropriate Sexual Knowledge or Behavior:** Any knowledge or behavior related to sexual matters that is inappropriate for the child's age, or overtly explicit sexual behavior.
6. **Verbal Disclosures:** Any disclosure by a child of an experience in which they were harmed or felt uncomfortable should be taken seriously.

Guidelines for Dealing with a Disclosure

When a child discloses any information that could indicate abuse, staff should follow these guidelines:

1. **Listen Carefully:** Listen to the child without showing shock or disbelief.
2. **Accept the Disclosure:** Accept what the child is saying without judgment.
3. **Encourage Free Expression:** Allow the child to talk freely, asking minimal, open-ended questions rather than direct or leading questions.
4. **Offer Reassurance:** Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by talking, but avoid making promises that might not be kept, such as promising confidentiality.

5. **Explain the Next Steps:** Clearly explain to the child what will happen next, to prepare them and to maintain trust.

Assessment and Record Keeping

1. **Immediate Documentation:** Make detailed notes as soon as possible after the disclosure using the designated Concerns Form (Appendix 2). Record the date, time, and context of the disclosure or observation, along with the child's exact words when possible.
2. **Preserve Original Notes:** Keep the original notes secure, as they may be needed for legal purposes.
3. **Use of Body Map:** For any physical signs of abuse, use a body map (Appendix 3) to record the location of injuries. Photographs should not be taken.
4. **Confidentiality and Security:** Maintain all records within a confidential file, securely stored either in a locked cabinet or through a password-protected digital file.

UAE Regulations and Support

Our Child Protection Policy aligns rigorously with UAE regulations and established protocols for handling suspicions and reports of child abuse. Upon identifying a case of suspected abuse with sufficient evidence:

1. **Documentation:** The Child Protection Officer (CPO), in consultation with the Principal, ensures all evidence is comprehensively documented, maintaining strict confidentiality.
2. **Reporting to Authorities:**
 - o **Ministry of Interior:** The CPO reports the case directly via the Ministry's hotline (11611).
 - o **ADEK Reporting:** The case is also reported electronically to the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) through their designated online reporting system.
3. **Confidential Filing:** All documentation related to the case is securely filed and access is strictly controlled to ensure confidentiality.

Allegations Involving School Staff

If allegations are made against school staff, volunteers, or the Designated Person:

- **Initial Reporting:** The allegation should be reported to the Principal unless the Principal is the subject of the allegation. The Designated Person should be informed in every instance, except if they are implicated.
- **Procedure for Suspicion:** Any staff member who suspects a pupil has been abused by another staff member must immediately report their concerns to the Designated Person, who will then inform the Principal. A detailed concern form (Appendix 2), including any witness statements, must be filled out.
- **Internal Investigation and Reporting:** If a staff member is found unsuitable after an internal investigation, the incident is reported to ADEK's Private Schools and Quality Assurance (PSQA) division. Subsequent actions may include revoking ADEK approval and taking necessary steps to terminate the staff member's employment and ability to work in the UAE educational sector.

Guidelines for Staff

This guidance forms part of the policy designed to protect staff and pupils alike, emphasizing the ethical responsibilities inherent in educational roles:

- **Mandatory Reporting:** Do not ignore suspicions, disclosures, or allegations of abuse. Ensure they are reported and recorded as per school policy.
- **Open Communication:** Always be available for pupils to express any concerns they may have.
- **Activity Planning:** Ensure activities involve multiple individuals or take place within sight or hearing of others whenever possible.
- **Interactions with Pupils:** If it is necessary to speak to a pupil alone, inform another staff member of your location and keep the door open during the discussion.
- **Sensitive Counseling:** Exercise caution during sensitive discussions on topics like bullying, bereavement, or abuse.
- **Residential Trips:** Ensure separate sleeping accommodations for pupils and staff.

- **Physical Contact and Boundaries:** Be aware of the boundaries in physical contact; it should only occur as necessary for instructional purposes or the safety of the pupil.
- **Transportation:** Avoid transporting a pupil alone in a vehicle, unless it's an emergency.
- **Misinterpretation of Actions:** Be mindful that actions can be misinterpreted, regardless of intention.
- **Appropriate Conduct:** Avoid any physical or verbal interactions that could be deemed inappropriate or suggestive.
- **Fact-Checking:** Do not make assumptions or jump to conclusions without verifying the facts.
- **Personal Reputation:** Do not rely solely on your reputation for protection; always adhere to professional standards and ethical behavior.

School Contact Telephone Numbers

Role	Name	Contact Number	Extension
Team Leader	Keith Powell		
Child Protection Officer			
OSH Officer	Iman Matar	0542001240	
Social Worker	Amany Hussein		
Member	Tamer		

External Contact Details for Child Protection:

Agency	Contact Number
Al Ain Community Police	03 715 1870
MOI Child Protection Unit	80085 icm@moe.gov.ae
Child Helpline	800 700
Family Care Authority	800444 icm@adfca.gov.ae
Safety concern portal	http://daasafetyconcern.abudhabi/