St. Joseph's School

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SJS Student Protection Policy

Policy Reference: SJS/PEP/2025
Approved By: School Leadership Team
Updated Date: 29th September, 2025
Next Review Date: 31st March, 2026

(Aligned with ADEK Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

At Saint Joseph's School, we are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for all students. We believe that every student has the right to learn in an environment free from any form of harm, abuse, or neglect. Our Student Protection Policy is designed to safeguard the well-being of our students by establishing clear guidelines and procedures to prevent and address any incidents of abuse or neglect. This policy reflects our dedication to creating a nurturing educational atmosphere where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Purpose

- Protect students while in school's care from all acts and omissions constituting maltreatment
- Identify and support students who are at risk of harm, as enforced by the UAE Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights, Federal Law No. (3) of 1987on penal Code , and other relevant UAE laws.
- Emphasize that all ADEK employees and school staff are mandated reporters of cases of abuse and /or suspected abuse inside and outside the school.
- Define duties and responsibilities of school principal and other school staff for responding to suspected cases of child abuse and /or neglect.

Definitions

Child: Child is any resident of the UAE under 18 years of age.

Student: Student is any person under 18 years of age who is enrolled in an educational institution in Abu Dhabi.

Child Protection Coordinator: Child Protection Coordinator is an appointed member of staff at the school who is professional relevant trained and equipped with the skills to act upon child protection concerns that arise within the school and is the key contact for staff and authorities where a concern is identified. They are also the people who makes reports to FCA/MOI/MOE/ ADEK and leads the Child Protection Team meetings.

Child Protection Unit: A Child Protection Unit (CPU) is the organizational unit at ADEK aimed at developing and implementing student protection mechanisms and measures for educational institutions under its regulatory jurisdiction, in line with Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights and bylaws.

Mandated reporter: Mandated reporter is a person that is required by law to report student concerns of maltreatment to relevant authorities. This includes the educators in educational institutions, or any adult on institution premises or outside the institution premises from which the student requests assistance in notifying the authorities (e.g., Family Care Authority, the Police, MoI-CPC, and ADEK) about their suffering or any other student's suffering.

Safeguarding: Protecting students from all risk of harm, including maltreatment and other types of risks that impact their overall health and development, wellbeing, and safety. **Child Protection**: Child Protection is when we respond to harm, actual or potential, disclosed or suspected.

Parent: The person legally liable for a child or entrusted with their care, defined as the custodian of the child as per the Federal Decree Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights (Wadeema's Law).

Student Maltreatment: Synonymous with child maltreatment, refers to abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), and includes neglect, exploitation, bullying, and cyberbullying of a student.

Invited Visitor: An individual visiting the educational institution on a temporary basis to interact with students (e.g., a speaker, career fair representative, etc.).

Types of Student Maltreatment

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Exploitation
- Bullying

Signs of **<u>physical abuse</u>** are the actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. Signs of physical abuse may include:

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Running away

Sexual abuse: Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. Possible signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour or school performance
- Displays of affection in a sexual way inappropriate to age
- Tendency to cling or need constant reassurance
- Tendency to cry easily
- Regression to younger behaviour, such as thumb-sucking, playing with discarded toys or acting like a baby
- Complaints of genital itching or pain
- Distrust of a familiar adult, or anxiety about being left with a relative, baby-sitter or lodger
- Unexplained gifts or money
- Depression and withdrawal

Neglect: Neglect is the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger – resulting in significant impairment of the child's health or development including non-organic failure to thrive. Signs of **neglect** may include:

- Constant hunger

- Poor personal hygiene

- Constant tiredness

- Poor state of clothing

- Emaciation

- Frequent lateness or non-attendance

- Untreated medical problems

- Destructive tendencies

- Low self esteem

- Neurotic behaviour

- No social relationships

- Running away

- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

Emotional abuse can be thought of as the actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse. Signs of **emotional abuse** will include:

- Physical, mental and emotional development lags

- Admission of punishment which appears excessive

- Over-reaction to mistakes

- Continual self-depreciation

- Sudden speech disorders

- Fear of new situations

- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations

- Neurotic behaviour (for example, rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)

- Self-mutilation

- Fear of parents being contacted

- Extremes of passivity or aggression

- Drug/solvent abuse

- Running away

- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

Exploitation: Use of the student in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, student labor and exploitation of students in prostitution or involvement of the student in gangs, militia or military. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social development.

- Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where there is abuse of power by a youth, adult, or group who may coerce, manipulate, or deceive a student into sexual activity by physical contact and/or use of technology for monetary, social, or political profits.
- Economic exploitation is the use of a student who is below the minimum age of labor in the workplace or related activities for the benefit of others through the production, distribution, and consumption of goods or of a particular service delivered by the student

Bullying: Repeated physical, social, or verbal aggression exercised by students who feel they are in a position of power against other students who are perceived weaker or powerless, to achieve specific gains or draw attention, in a way that hurts the student physically and/or emotionally. Bullying can be committed by groups or individuals, in online (cyberbullying) or offline settings.

- Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Online bullying can follow the bullied student wherever they go via social networks and mobile phones and has a wider reach than bullying in the real world

<u>Principles upon which the Safeguarding Policy Statement is based:</u>
- We recognize that children have a right to feel secure and cannot learn effectively unless they do so. Parents, carers and other people can harm children either by direct acts or failure to provide proper care, or both. Children may suffer neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse or a combination of such types of abuse. All children have a right to be protected from abuse.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of children is everyone's responsibility. All adults who come into contact with children and families are responsible for and legally compelled to respond to a child at or at potential risk of abuse, neglect or maltreatment. Safeguarding and child protection underpin all relevant polices and operate with the best interests of the child as paramount
- All students have the right to be:
    a) Heard and express their voice/opinion and participate in select decision making processes in the educational institution (to be determined by institution staff).
    b) Treated with dignity and respect.
    c) Treated with fairness and justice.

d) Supported by an advocate and provided with necessary support when required.

e) Safe, protected from harm, and aware of what constitutes risk and harm.

- Zero tolerance of all forms of maltreatment is to be implemented and upheld in all actions and environments pertaining to students.

Legal Obligations

- All educational institutions comply, develop and publish a Student Protection Policy.

- All educational institutions comply with the Handling Student, maltreatment Concerns within Educational Institutions guide, liaising with authorities relevant to the emirate in which the school is located.

- All educational institutions ensure the policy has been communicated, understood and agreed by all within the institution, stakeholders and students.

- The educational institution and principal are guardians of student rights to protect against being exposed to maltreatment.

- All students have equal rights to care, protection and safety in all educational institutions.
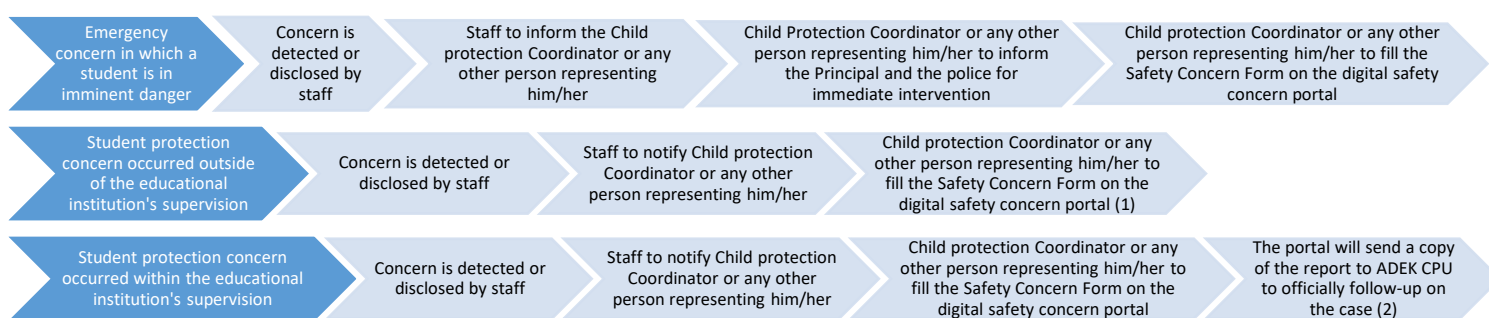
Reporting of Concerns of Maltreatment

1. If a member of staff suspects abuse or neglect e.g. through observation of physical injury, behavioral change etc. they must:
   - Record their concerns
   - Report it to the ADEK CPC / Child Protection Team within 24 hours upon suspicion.
   - Consider if there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention and if so, assistance must be called for.
2. All concerns of student maltreatment, whether it took place inside or outside of the institution, should be notified to the CPC.
3. School should have a Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) and a Child Protection Team (CPT), and these appointments shall be reported to ADEK annually.
4. The CPC shall undergo ADEK-mandated CPC training and would preferably be a senior member who has experience working with students at educational risk.
5. If any staff, including volunteers, receives an allegation or has a concern that a student may have been maltreated, shall report the matter to the CPC, or any other person representing him/her or any other member of the CPT immediately. This includes concerns of maltreatment taking place inside or outside of the educational institution's premises.

6. In case the reporter is unable to reach the CPC, they should inform the CPU at ADEK and/or the FCA directly by filling out the Safety Concern Form online on the digital safety concern portal.

7. Emergency cases, where the student is in imminent danger, should be reported without delay by the CPC to the Police (999) and the principal, with a copy of the Safety Concern Form online on the digital safety concern portal.

Procedures for reporting student maltreatment concerns

- Once a concern of student maltreatment is raised in school, should be reported directly to the CPC, or any other person representing him/her.

- Emergency concerns, where the student is in imminent danger, should be reported immediately to the Police and the Principal

- For maltreatment concerns which occurred outside of the supervision of the institution, the CPC, or any other person representing him/her if the CPC is not present, should then fill the Safety Concern Form online on the digital safety concern portal.

- The Safety Concern Form will automatically be shared with the ADEK CPU, the FCA and the MoI CPC. FCA will review the case and follow the required procedures for case management.

- Maltreatment concerns which occurred under supervision of the school, the staff should inform the CPC or any other person representing him/her if the CPC is not present. The CPC should then complete the Safety Concern Form on the digital safety concern portal. Once submitted, a copy of the Safety Concern Form will then be automatically shared with the FCA, the ADEK CPU and the MoI CPC. The ADEK CPU will review the information first before referring to the FCA for case management, who will take the necessary procedures for follow-up on the cases after receiving the report.

- ADEK CPU reserves the right to conduct or to designate qualified institutional personnel to conduct the initial safety and risk assessment before reporting the concern to the FCA.

- If the ADEK CPU refers the concern to the FCA, the concern would then be managed by the CPS at the FCA.

- If the ADEK CPU does not report the case to the FCA, the concern is returned to the school with the justification, and the school is asked to collect additional information before submitting another Safety Concern Form.

Safety Concern Referral

Emergency concern in which a student is in imminent danger	Concern is detected or disclosed by staff	Staff to inform the Child protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her	Child Protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her to inform the Principal and the police for immediate intervention	Child protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her to fill the Safety Concern Form on the digital safety concern portal
Student protection concern occurred outside of the educational institution's supervision	Concern is detected or disclosed by staff	Staff to notify Child protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her	Child protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her to fill the Safety Concern Form on the digital safety concern portal (1)	
Student protection concern occurred within the educational institution's supervision	Concern is detected or disclosed by staff	Staff to notify Child protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her	Child protection Coordinator or any other person representing him/her to fill the Safety Concern Form on the digital safety concern portal	The portal will send a copy of the report to ADEK CPU to officially follow-up on the case (2)

1. After submitting the Safety Concern Form on the digital concern portal, a copy of the report is automatically shared with FCA,ADEK CPU, and Mol CPC.

2. For cases occurring within the educational institutions' supervision, the ADEK CPU will review the information first before referring to the FCA for case management.

Relevant contact details are as follows:

- Abu Dhabi Police: 999
- Family Care Authority (FCA): 800444 icm@adfca.gov.ae
- MoE Child Protection Unit (CPU)*: 80085 cpu@moe.gov.ae
- Safety Concern Portal: https://daasafetyconcern.abudhabi/

Confidentiality and sharing information

Case reports and student data are strictly confidential, including the identity of the student subject to alleged abuse and or suspected maltreatment. All staff must maintain privacy and confidentiality of the students, subject to alleged abuse or neglect, the alleged perpetrator and the person reporting the case. Data should only be shared with authorized individuals in the Ministry of Interior, Family Care Authority, or Education regulator Child Protection Units and/or the police. All requests should be in writing and stamped by the relevant authority, and transferred or accessed in a manner ensuring the safety and security of the data. All individuals are strictly prohibited from discussing active and or closed cases with the media, any third parties or other staff with the exception of investigative or judicial authorities as part of their legal responsibilities.

Staff Training

All teaching staff, learning support staff, and administration staff receive annual training on the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, and the reporting procedures within the school. This will be repeated on a yearly basis. The Designated Safeguard Lead / Child Protection Officer and Deputy CPO, will receive

Advanced CP training to support their role. The purpose behind staff training is to ensure that everyone in the school is aware of procedures to be followed and the signs of possible child abuse. All members of staff will develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse. All members of staff will know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse. All new members of staff will be given a copy of the Child Protection procedures as part of their induction into the school and be briefed by the Child Protection Officer. All teaching and non-teaching staff shall complete any ADEK-mandated student protection policy and safeguarding training sessions and sign of that they have received training and understand their responsibilities.

Vetting, Hiring and Monitoring School Staff and Volunteering and Invited Visitors

Staff, volunteers, and invited visitors shall be properly vetted and screened prior to working in or accessing any locations where students are present. This will be monitored in school by the Child protection Coordinator and Team and apply to all adults working in or around the school who come in contact with children. This includes robust shortlisting, criminal reference and reference checks, probing and critically examining CV's and candidates during interview, and removing staff who may pose a risk to students, preventing access and where appropriate enacting suspension or dismissal.

Acceptable Adult Behaviors

Appropriate Behavior are expected at all times, with all staff signing a professional and ethical code of conducted which outlines expected behaviors to protect the rights of students and create a culture of safety. Staff and volunteers are required to report any incidents (from self or others) of behaviors against students. Serious allegations of sexual misconduct by staff and volunteers will be directly reported to the police and FCA, and the staff member immediately suspended without prejudice, and removed from the school site pending investigation.

Student Protection Learning Resources

Age-appropriate student protection learning resources to be delivered to students to support their knowledge and ability to understand personal safety and wellbeing and what actions they can take to report any violations and seek help. Student education relating to personal safety, healthy living (physical and mental health), and child rights and responsibilities, shall be taught, using developmentally and age-appropriate concepts and language), in the classroom and in counselling sessions, and may include story books, illustrations, posters, reading content that can be discussed wither individually or within a group setting.

Roles and Responsibilities

Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK):

1. Develop, monitor and enforce student protection policies and safeguarding measures.
2. Support educational institutions in developing their student protection policies where needed.
3. Introduce a broad range of student protection standards to the inspection framework, and monitor and work with educational institutions falling below expectations by providing the necessary support.
4. Collaborate with relevant entities on the design and implementation of safeguarding programs.
5. Receive and filter reports of concern of student maltreatment (neglect, physical, and emotional abuse) and notifications (sexual abuse and exploitation) happening within educational institutions and take necessary actions.
6. Refer concerns involving a maltreatment suspicion of a staff of an educational institution towards a student to the relevant entities.
7. Activate procedures related to bullying in alignment with relevant entities.
8. Cooperate with and facilitate sharing of education-related information for student maltreatment comprehensive assessments and/or investigations being conducted by the relevant entities.
9. Follow up, if needed, with the relevant entities on the referrals made to them for cases in educational institutions.
10. Document all notifications and/or reports received in confidential records that can be accessed only by the CPS or any other concerned agency(ies), where needed, based on established information sharing protocol.

Principal/Child Protection Officer and Deputy CPO :
Ensure that the school staff are fully aware of and understand their responsibilities and obligations under this policy.

- Ensure that whole school training occurs annually so that every member of staff and volunteers can fulfil their child protection responsibilities effectively and to comply with the policy.
- Ensure every member of staff and all volunteers know the name of the designated person CPO, their role and how to contact them.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and neglect, and responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated person CPO
- Ensure that students know how, where, and to whom to safely report their concerns about alleged and/or suspected maltreatment without fear of retribution or punishment

- Immediately suspend any staff who is suspected of an offense involving student maltreatment on a temporary basis until the suspicion is adjudicated.
- Ensure that students have a safe and confidential opportunity to report any concerns they may have in regarding their rights to safety and wellbeing.
- Ensure the vetting, hiring, and monitoring of all staff, volunteers, and invited visitors according to this policy and relevant safeguarding measures.

All Staff and Volunteers:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried about any problems.
- Follow the procedures set out by the Ministry of Education, UAE Educational Regulator (ADEK) and take account of guidance issued by the Ministry of Interior and Early Childhood Authority
- Treat all disclosures with the strictest confidence.
- Ensure that parents understand the responsibility placed on the school and its staff for child protection.
- Notify the Social Support Centre and where required the Education Regulator (ADEK) of any cases of alleged or suspected child abuse.
- Ensure that all records pertaining to CP concerns are treated with the highest level of confidentiality and maintained in a secure location.

Parents:

- Cooperate with the school principal and staff, answer all inquiries related to the student's behavior, academic performance, and respond to their feedback and guidance
- Attend all scheduled parent meetings with the school.
- Communicate any concern, observations or changed in their child's behaviour to the school and principal.
- Support the educational institution in ensuring safe online practices during distance learning and homework.

<u>Monitoring, Evaluation and Review</u>

This policy shall be reviewed annually to ensure the efficiency of the child protection procedures and practices in the educational institution.

Next Review Date: 31st March 2026

Sr. Suranjana

Principal

Approved by;

Prestina Rocha

Principal
St. Joseph's School

29th September, 2025