

Child Protection policy

Summary

This policy lays out the guidelines for the protection and safety of our students. ALMUROOJ SCIENTIFIC PRIVATE SCHOOL recognizes our moral responsibility to create a safe and supportive environment for all students and to safeguard and promote their welfare. We are fully committed to promoting a safe and welcoming environment for all students, where the students feel respected and valued. All staff are trained to understand the best practices related to protection and safeguarding of all students and appropriate actions to be taken to protect them.

Scope

This policy will apply to all staff, volunteers, managers, and visitors of Almurooj scientific school. This policy is consistent with those of ADEK.

Rationale

This policy exists because as an educational institution it is our obligation and duty to protect our students who have been entrusted into our care. This policy ensures that Almurooj Scientific Private School has student protection measures in place for the following reasons:

- (1) To protect students from all acts and omissions constituting physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, and bullying.
- (2) To identify and support those students who may have suffered such abuse or neglect, as strongly enforced by the UAE Federal Law No.3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law) on Child Rights, Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 on Penal Code, and other relevant UAE laws.
- (3) To accurately report cases of abuse and/or suspected abuse inside and outside the school, in line with ADEK guidelines.
- (4) To define duties and responsibilities of School Principals and school staff for responding to suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

Policy

Definitions

Almurooj Scientific private School defines the following words as follows:

- A **Child** under this policy is a person who is under 18 years old.
- A **Student** is a child that attends Almurooj Scientific Private School.
- **Child protection**, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as all measures, steps and actions that must be taken to protect students from risks that may cause harm or injury while they are in the school's care, travelling to and from the school using school transport, and moving between, waiting for, and taking part in, all activities organized by the school inside or outside the school campus.
- **Abuse** refers to the physical abuse, corporal punishment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and also includes bullying, exploitation, and neglect.

- **Physical Abuse** is the deliberate physical injury to a student, or the intentional neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This involves actions including, but not limited to, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement, or giving the student drugs not prescribed by a physician to control behavior or to cause harm. *Refer to APPENDIX 1 for common signs that indicate physical abuse.*
- **Corporal punishment**, a physical punishment inflicted on a child by a teacher or any adult in authority, such as the guardian, as a form of discipline, and is considered as **Physical abuse**.
- **Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a student such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the student's emotional growth and development. It involves actions such as, but not limited to, conveying to students that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It involves causing students to feel bullied, frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of students. Some levels of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a student, though it may occur in isolation. *Refer to APPENDIX 2 for common signs that indicate emotional abuse.*
- **Sexual Abuse and Exploitation** involves but not limited to forcing or enticing a student to take part in sexual activities. The activities involve actions including, but not limited to, physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They include non-contact activities such as involving students looking at or in the production of pornographic material or, watching sexual activities, sexual hinting or encouraging students to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. *Refer to APPENDIX 3 For common signs that indicate sexual abuse.*
- **Bullying** is unwanted aggressive behavior(s) from a student or more to another student and involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated (or is highly likely to be) multiple times. Bullying, as a form of violence, includes physical (hitting, tripping), verbal (name calling, teasing), relational/social (spreading rumors, leaving out of group), and cyber-bullying aggression (occurs through email, a chat room, instant messaging, a website, text messaging, or pictures or videos sent through cell phones or posted on websites). A student can be a perpetrator, a victim, or both.
- **Domestic Abuse and/or violence** is characterized as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, or threatening behavior, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional forms. Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have serious and long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can occur within their personal relationships as well as in the context of their home life.
- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a student's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. It involves failing of a parent or a guardian to take actions that are considered necessary to care for children including, but not limited to:
 - Providing adequate food, clothing, and shelter
 - Protecting the child from physical harm or danger
 - Providing adequate care and protection
 - Providing healthcare and appropriate medical treatment
 - Providing education and regular school attendance*Refer to APPENDIX 4 for common signs of neglect.*

- **Self-Harm** can take a number of physical and/or emotional forms. There are many reasons why children and young people try to hurt themselves. Once they start, it can become a compulsion. Therefore, it is important for all staff to spot it as early as possible and to do everything possible to help. Self-harm is not usually a suicide attempt or a cry for attention. Instead, it is often a way for young people to release overwhelming emotions and a way of coping. Whatever the reason, it should be taken seriously. The exact reasons why children and young people decide to hurt themselves are not always easy to work out. In fact, they themselves might not know exactly why they do it, but there are links between depression and self-harm. Quite often a child or young person who is self-harming is being bullied, under too much pressure, being emotionally abused, and grieving or having relationship problems with family or friends. The feelings that these issues bring up can include low self-esteem, low confidence, loneliness, sadness, anger, numbness and the sense of a lack of control in their lives. Young people will sometimes go to great lengths to cover self-harm scars or injuries and/or they will explain any indications of self-harm as accidents.

There are some common themes that may help staff identify concerns including:

- Physical indicators such as cuts, bruises, burns and bald patches (where hair has been pulled out).
- Emotional indicators such as depression, sudden weight loss, drinking or drug-taking, unusual eating habits and isolation or withdrawal.

If staff suspect that a student is self-harming this must be referred to the Safeguarding Lead who will consider the next steps. It is likely that this will require discussion with the student involved and their parents/caregivers to agree a course of action or a referral to an organization that may be able to support the student.

- **Sexting** is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others or sends sexually explicit messages. Sexting may also be referred to by students as 'trading nudes', 'dirties', or 'pic for pic'. There are many reasons why a student may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video, or message to someone else:
 - Joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'
 - Boosting their self-esteem
 - Flirting with others and testing their sexual identity
 - Exploring their sexual feelings
 - To get attention and connect with new people on social media
 - May find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent and they like the students often don't realize that in creating and sending these images they are potentially committing a criminal act. Ideally, we would not want to deal with these issues as criminal acts, instead provide experiences of learning and support as these can be a more beneficial way of tackling sexting.

Roles and Responsibilities

ALMUROOJ SCIENTIFIC PRIVATE SCHOOL makes a commitment to the following responsibilities:

- The school's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of students is of paramount importance
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language or religion have equal rights to protection
- Children who are safe and feel safe are better equipped to learn
- The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm at home, in the community, or at school
- If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral will be made to the relevant statutory body and public services. Anybody can make a referral. If the child's situation does not appear to be improving, any staff member with concerns should press for reconsideration. Concerns should always lead to help for the child at some stage. Administrators and the school counselor should always be informed
- Students and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support
- This policy will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident, new legislation, or updated guidance suggests the need for an interim review

Principals will:

- Comply with the provisions of this policy.
- Ensure to publish a Child Protection policy to protect students from any abuse and neglect provided it meets the minimum requirements of what is included in this policy and does not contradict any of its provisions.
- Ensure that procedures to prevent situations that could lead to the abuse or neglect of students are in place and understood by all school staff and leaders
- Ensure the supervision of students at all times while in the school's care.
- Ensure that there is priority emphasis within the school on the protection of the students and for taking immediate actions when there is suspicion of cases of student abuse or neglect.
- Ensure that students can safely report their concerns about abuse and/or neglect without fear of retribution or punishment.
- Ensure that staff and others can safely report their concerns about the potential exposure of any student to abuse and/or neglect without fear of retribution or punishment.
- Gain the opinions of students and parents regarding security and protection within the school.
- Immediately report any case of potential abuse and/or neglect of students as stated by this policy.
- Ensure that all staff and administrators targeted for student protection training are in full attendance and participate in all training sessions.
- Maintain an accurate record of all training undertaken by staff in relation to safeguarding and child protection.

- Conduct orientation sessions for parents/caregivers upon student registration or enrollment and at the start of every school year to promote this policy and to inform them of their roles and responsibilities, and their rights and duties.
- Maintain students' records in compliance with Student Records policy, and ensure confidentiality of open and closed cases.
- Immediately ask any staff member who is suspected of an offence involving student abuse and/or neglect on a temporary basis to work from until the suspicion is adjudicate

Safeguarding Lead will:

- Play a key role in ensuring that the school takes action to support any student who may be at risk.
- Make sure that all staff (teaching and non-teaching) are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and child protection, with the support of the Vice Principals and Principal.
- Have appropriate training in addition to the basic training that all other staff receives.
- Record and keep confidential and accurate records of any child protection concerns.
- Keep up to date on local regulations, procedures, and agencies who can offer support for safeguarding matters.
- Ensure that the entire school community knows who they are (Safeguarding Lead) and how they can be contacted.

All School Staff will:

- Report a suspected case of abuse and/or neglect upon immediate discovery
- Be subject to safe recruitment processes and appropriate background checks prior to starting at the school.
- Supervise students at all times while in school's care.
- Be alert to the signs and indicators of possible abuse. Contact the School Counselor, Social Worker, and/or Safeguard Lead if unsure.
- Understand this policy to address suspected or alleged student abuse or neglect cases.
- Listen to, and take seriously, the views and concerns of students.
- Attend and participate in mandated student protection training.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this document when/if concerned about child protection.
- Support students, staff, and other adults who have concerns, or who are the subject of concerns, to act appropriately and effectively in cooperating with any subsequent process of investigation.

Parents/Legal Guardians will:

- Cooperate with the school administration and staff, answer all inquiries related to the student's behavior, academic performance and respond to their feedback and guidance.
- Attend all scheduled school parent meetings.
- Communicate any concerns, observations, or changes in their child's behavior to the school administration or to the concerned school staff.

Policy Details

This policy is published to protect students from any abuse and neglect. AIMUROOJ SCHOOL and the school principal are guardians of the right of students to not be exposed to abuse and neglect. The school principal agrees to act as the guardian of all students while they are under the school's care and has to take responsibilities that fall under this role.

All students have equal rights for protection, safety, and security at school. AIMUROOJ SCHOOL is fully responsible for the care and protection of students, while students are in the school's care, travelling to and from the school using school transport, and moving between, waiting for, and taking part in all activities organized by the school inside and outside the school. AIMUROOJ SCHOOL also ensures the supervision of students in the drop-off period before the start of the school day and pick-up period after school hours. For safety and life reasons, AIMUROOJ SCHOOL ensures that all school staff shall never leave children unattended at any time.

All staff are authorized and mandated by ADEK to report all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect (conducted by any perpetrator inside or outside of the school) directly to the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center within 24 hours upon suspicion.

If a child is in immediate danger (risk of serious harm), the police will be called using the 999 service, followed by reporting to the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center within one hour upon discovery. In addition, school staff must inform the School Principal immediately when they suspect the exposure of any student to any form of abuse and/or neglect.

No school staff shall impede or inhibit reporting or a suspected case of child abuse and/or neglect by a third party, nor shall they take any actions against the reporter or nor threaten of doing so. For all students, AIMUROOJ SCHOOL staff will raise the awareness of the importance of reporting any suspected case of student abuse and/or neglect inside or outside the school that becomes known to them, as stated in this policy.

In case of a reported incident, the ADEK division in charge of student protection in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center shall provide guidance to school staff for further immediate actions, taking into account confidentiality and privacy of the students and families affected, laws, regulations, and procedures relevant to the incident.

Training & Support

Given the critical importance of understanding and complying with all aspects of this policy to ensure the protection of students, the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center in coordination and collaboration with ADEK, mandates that all schools provide training for their staff. To facilitate this training AIMUROOJ SCHOOL will ensure that:

- All staff and volunteers within AIMUROOJ SCHOOL are provided with appropriate general (basic) safeguarding training on joining the school and then at least every two years thereafter. This training will be available through the school's Safeguarding Lead and will take place virtually or face-to-face. In addition, all staff will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins or staff meetings) to provide them with relevant up-to-date skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. As a minimum, this will be provided annually.

- These procedures and other relevant policies are made available in Arabic and English.
- Staff and volunteers are supported and have the necessary skills to recognize students who are at risk or potentially at risk and take the appropriate action.
- The Safeguarding Lead has appropriate and up-to-date knowledge and access to additional training such as on-line safety and specialist training every two years.
- All staff and volunteers are subject to a full induction which includes an overview of what to do and who to contact if concerned about a student.
- Training for new staff must be complete before any new staff can have unsupervised contact with students.
- Any student who has suffered or is suffering from any form of harm will receive support. Once agreed with any investigating agency (if involved), students can be offered direct support through school counselors or external agency input. AIMUROOJ SCHOOL will hold information on local, regional and national bodies that may be able to offer direct support in these circumstances.

Reporting Procedures

If staff suspect that any student in their care may be a victim of abuse or is at risk of abuse or any other form of harm, they should not try to investigate. Rather, they should inform the Safeguarding Lead (SL) about their concerns as soon as possible.

Staff must disclose any concerns that they have about the possibility of a student being abused or at risk. It is better to share these concerns, which may later prove to be unfounded, than to hold onto information that may have helped to protect a student from actual harm. In many cases a student will not make a direct disclosure but staff will be concerned because of a physical or emotional indicator. When any student makes any form of direct disclosure, the guidelines under the heading 'Dealing with Disclosure' below should be followed.

Dealing with Disclosure

If a child asks to speak to someone in confidence about a problem, staff should be clear that **they cannot promise confidentiality** if what the child discloses or is likely to disclose relates to abuse being suffered by them or another child. Staff should always give this as a health warning before meeting with the child.

The following guidance is based on five key practices for all staff:

Receive

Where possible, always stop and listen to a child who wishes to speak in confidence. We know that children will often find the most inconvenient time to do this but it is important that you make time for the child, even if this is to say, "I can't stop now but come and see me at....". Where possible during any disclosure try to listen, allow silences, and try not to show shock or disbelief.

Reassure

Try to stay calm, make no judgments, and empathize with the child. **Never make a promise you cannot keep.** Give as much reassurance as you can and tell the child what your actions are going to be. Reassure the child that they are doing the right thing by telling you.

React

React to what the child is saying, only as far as you need to for further information. Do not ask leading questions. Keep questions open such as, "Is there anything else you need to tell me?" Try not to criticize the alleged perpetrator as this may be a family member for whom the child may still have feelings for.

Record

Make brief notes about what the child says during the conversation but if this is not possible, make notes as soon after as you can and certainly within 24 hours. **Make sure to record exactly what the child says and not your interpretation of what is said.** Record the time, date, and location of the conversation.

Report

Where a child makes any disclosure, or where you have concerns for any reason, it is very important that the procedures outlined in this document are followed. A written/typed account of the concern should be passed to the Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible and should include, where relevant, vivid descriptions of any bruises or bodily injuries.

Where a child has made a disclosure and alleges abuse, the Safeguarding Lead, should be informed as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Lead will collate any available evidence by ensuring the notes taken from any witnesses are made available to any investigating body. The Safeguarding Lead will then review and where necessary consult on the information available. It is the role of the Safeguarding Lead to make decisions about what action to take next with the counsel of the school Principal. It is important that a full record of all the information and decisions made are recorded and stored confidentially.

Allegations against Staff or Volunteers

An allegation can be made against a staff member or volunteer at any point. It is important that any such allegations are treated seriously and that appropriate procedures are followed.

An allegation is different to a complaint and can be defined as follows:

- Where someone has behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Where someone has possibly committed a criminal offence against a child
- Where someone has behaved in a way towards a child or children that would pose a risk to the child or children

In the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff (or a volunteer/helper), it will always be referred to and investigated by the Principal in coordination with the Safeguarding Lead unless a criminal act has been committed, in which case the matter should be referred to the local authorities where appropriate. If the Principal deems the allegation to be of a safeguarding nature (criminal or not) the Safeguarding Lead will be informed if not already aware of the situation and must be informed as soon as possible and within 24 hours as a minimum. HR must also be informed by contacting the HR Manager as soon as possible. In the case of the allegation being against the Principal, the HR Manager, or the Safeguarding the School Management should be informed and one of the other administrator's will take the lead and ADEK informed.

For serious allegations, the matter must always be reported to the School Management and ADEK should be informed as soon as possible.

No action to investigate the concern should be taken before consultation with the Safeguarding Lead, Principal, HR Manager, and the school's legal advisor and an agreement is reached about how best to approach and investigate the concern. After these initial discussions ADEK will be informed and consulted and If it is felt, after these initial consultations, that further enquiries are needed then the member of staff may be suspended.

Suspension is a neutral act and in no way implies that the person is guilty of any wrongdoing. ***It is acknowledged that this would be distressing for the person concerned and the school will do all it can to balance the interests of any individual with that of the need to keep children safe.*** The school will seek advice from ADEK before acting and will comply with all national and locally agreed guidance on these matters.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Record Keeping

All records of child protection concerns, disclosures, or allegations should be treated as sensitive information and should be kept together securely and separately from the child's general school records. The information should only be shared with those who need to have it to enable them to take appropriate steps to safeguard the child or carry out their own duties but it should not be shared more widely than that.

- Child protection records should be stored in a secure (i.e. locked) filing cabinet or in a secure electronic system, accessible through the Safeguarding Lead and Principal to ensure protected access.
- Records of any child disclosure should be clearly dated and filed without future amendment.
- Child protection records should be separate to the general education file but the child's general school record file should be marked to indicate that a child protection file exists. All staff who may need to consult a child's school file should be made aware of what the symbol means and who to consult if they see this symbol.

- A child protection file (electronic or otherwise) should be started for an individual student as soon as the school is aware of any child protection concerns about that student.
- Members of staff should make a written/typed account of any concern they have regarding the welfare or well-being of a child using the school's disclosure form. This record should be passed to the Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. Concerns, which initially seem trivial, may turn out to be vital pieces of information later so it is important to give as much detail as possible. A concern raised may not progress further than a conversation with the Safeguarding Lead but could also potentially lead to matters being dealt with through a legal system. If there has not been a specific incident that causes concern, try to be specific about what it is that is making you feel worried.
- If any information is removed from a file (electronic or otherwise) for any reason, a dated note should be placed in the file indicating who has taken it, why it was taken, and when.
- The disclosure form should include:
 - A record of the child's details: name, date of birth, address and family details.
 - Date and time of the event/concern.
 - The nature of the concern raised.
 - The action taken and by whom: Name and position of the person making the record.

In the case of disclosure, remember the record you make should include:

- As full an account as possible of what the child said (in their own words).
- An account of the questions the child was asked.
- The time and place of disclosure.
- Who was present at the time of the disclosure?
- The demeanor of the child, where the child was taken, and where they were returned to at the end of the disclosure.

Confidentiality

AIMUROOJ SCHOOL regards all information relating to individual Safeguarding/child protection issues as confidential and treats it accordingly. Information should be passed onto the appropriate person(s) only at the discretion of the Principal and Safeguarding Lead and this should always be based on the need to know.

All records relating to child protection should be secured appropriately. Such information can be stored electronically but notes taken at or shortly after a disclosure should be scanned and kept in original format.

Case reports and student data are strictly confidential. The identities of the student subject to alleged abuse or neglect, the alleged perpetrator, and the person reporting the alleged case must be kept confidential by all parties involved in the case.

The data should be shared only with authorized individuals from the ADEK Division in charge of child protection and the Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center and Social Support Center authorized staff.

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School staff are strictly prohibited from discussing active or closed cases with the media, or any third parties or other staff, unauthorized ADEK staff, with the exception of Investigative and judicial authorities and within the legal responsibilities.

Cross-reference to other policies:

ADEK Private Schools Policy and Guidance Manual - Policy 3: Students Protection

ADEK Private Schools Policy and Guidance Manual - Policy 53: Counseling Services

UAE Federal Law No.3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law) on Child Rights

APPENDIX 1

Possible signs of physical abuse can include:

1. Unexplained bruises or injuries
2. Injuries which have not received medical attention
3. Repeated abdominal pain
4. Withdrawal from physical contact
5. Arms and legs covered in scalds
6. Fear of returning home
7. Fear of contacting caregivers/parents
8. Displaying aggression towards others
9. Repeated running away from home
10. Cigarette burns
11. Human bite marks
12. Broken bones

APPENDIX 2

Possible signs of emotional abuse can include:

1. Regular tiredness
2. Fear of a new situation
3. Low self esteem
4. High levels of anxiety
5. Unusually passive or aggressive
6. Delayed speech
7. Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
8. Running away
9. Lying
10. Neurotic behavior e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
11. Fear of making mistakes
12. Self-harm

APPENDIX 3

Possible signs of sexual abuse can include:

1. Unusual behavior which could be general or sexual
2. Age inappropriate sexual behavior
3. Sexually transmitted diseases
4. Physical indicators in the genital and anal areas
5. Pain or itching in the genital area

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6. Bruising or bleeding near genital area
7. Vaginal discharge or infection
8. Discomfort when walking or sitting down
9. Pregnancy

APPENDIX 4

Possible signs of neglect can include:

1. Stealing
2. Poor social relationships
3. Failure to thrive
4. Poor personal hygiene
5. Frequent hunger
6. Untreated medical complaints
7. Frequent lateness or absence from school
8. Inappropriate clothing
9. Substance or alcohol misuse

School Administration