Approved by: Principal	Date: 30 January 2026

Last reviewed on:	Date: 26 January 2026

Next review due:	Date: 22 June 2026

#	Description of Changes	Rev. No	Date of Issue
1	First Issue	00	21 June 24

ICS Vision
The "School of Choice" inspiring, challenging and empowering a 21st century learning community through an ethical and innovative education system.

ICS Mission
Provide a safe, friendly learning environment where lifelong learners follow an international curriculum which promotes academic excellence and nurtures key values and competencies in our global minded, future leaders.

Introduction

International Community School (ICS) is deeply committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students. This commitment is rooted in the belief that all children have the right to grow up in a safe environment, free from harm, exploitation, and abuse. This Safeguarding Policy outlines the responsibilities, procedures, and actions required to protect students at ICS from harm, ensuring their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. The policy is aligned with ADEK guidelines and UAE law and is integral to the school's mission of providing a secure and supportive learning environment.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define the safeguarding responsibilities of all staff members, volunteers, and external partners associated with ICS.
- Establish a robust framework for identifying, reporting, and responding to safeguarding concerns, ensuring prompt and effective action.
- Ensure compliance with ADEK's safeguarding regulations, UAE child protection laws, and international best practices.
- Foster a culture of vigilance, transparency, and accountability where the welfare of students is prioritized, and safeguarding issues are addressed without delay.
- Promote awareness among students, staff, and parents about safeguarding issues, ensuring that everyone in the school community understands their role in protecting children.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals involved in the operations of ICS, including:

- All teaching and non-teaching staff
- School leadership and management teams
- Volunteers, interns, and sessional workers
- External contractors and service providers
- Governing board members
- Parents, guardians, and visitors to the school
- Students themselves, as active participants in their own safety

The policy covers all school-related activities, including those that occur off-campus, such as field trips, sports events, and any other extracurricular activities organized by the school.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following UAE laws, ADEK regulations, and international guidelines:

- **Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights (Wadeema's Law)**: Establishes the legal framework for child protection in the UAE, including the obligations of institutions to safeguard children from harm.
- **Article 274 of the UAE Penal Code (Federal Law No. 3 of 1987)**: Outlines the penalties for individuals who fail to report crimes, including those related to child abuse or neglect.
- **ADEK Student Protection Policy and Safeguarding Guidelines**: Provides specific requirements and standards for safeguarding practices in schools within Abu Dhabi.
- **Ministry of Interior Guidelines on Child Protection**: Sets out the responsibilities of schools and other institutions in reporting and preventing child abuse and neglect.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**: An international treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children, ratified by the UAE in 1996.

Definitions

- **Child**: For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as any individual under the age of 18.
- **Safeguarding**: Encompasses all measures and actions taken to protect students from risks of harm, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, and bullying (both in-person and online).
- **Maltreatment**: Refers to any form of abuse or neglect that causes harm or distress to a child. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- **Duty of Care**: The legal and moral obligation of school staff to ensure the safety, welfare, and well-being of students while they are under the school's supervision.
- **Authorized Personnel**: Individuals granted access to the school premises by ADEK or other relevant government entities for the purpose of inspections, audits, or other official duties.
- **Supervision**: The responsibility of staff to monitor and oversee students' activities to ensure their safety during all school-related events and activities.

Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

Principal's Responsibilities:

The Principal of ICS holds ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within the school. Their key responsibilities include:

- **Policy Implementation**: Ensuring that this Safeguarding Policy is effectively implemented throughout the school, and that all staff members are familiar with and adhere to its provisions.
- **Acting In Loco Parentis**: Accepting the responsibility of acting as a guardian for students during school hours and all school-related activities, ensuring their safety and well-being.
- **Safeguarding Lead Oversight**: Appointing a qualified Safeguarding Lead or establishing a Safeguarding Committee to oversee the day-to-day implementation of safeguarding practices. The Principal must ensure that these roles are carried out effectively and that any concerns are promptly addressed.
- **Training and Awareness**: Facilitating regular training for all staff on safeguarding issues, including how to recognize signs of abuse, how to respond to disclosures, and the procedures for reporting concerns.
- **Incident Management**: Ensuring that any safeguarding concerns or incidents are reported to the relevant authorities immediately, including ADEK and the Ministry of Interior, as required by UAE law.
- **Confidentiality**: Maintaining the confidentiality of all safeguarding concerns and related records, ensuring that information is only shared with authorized individuals on a need-to-know basis.
- **Parental Communication**: Ensuring that parents are informed about the school's safeguarding policies and practices, and that they understand their role in safeguarding their children.

Safeguarding Lead/Committee Responsibilities:

The Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Committee is responsible for:

- **Policy Implementation**: Leading the implementation of safeguarding policies and practices across the school and ensuring that these practices comply with ADEK guidelines and UAE law.

- **Incident Reporting**: Serving as the primary point of contact for all safeguarding concerns raised by staff, students, or parents, and ensuring that these concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities.
- **Training and Support**: Providing ongoing training, support, and guidance to staff on safeguarding matters. This includes organizing workshops, refresher courses, and briefings on recent developments in child protection laws and best practices.
- **Monitoring and Review**: Regularly monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding practices within the school and reviewing the Safeguarding Policy annually to ensure it remains current and effective. Any changes to the policy must be communicated to all staff, students, and parents.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Liaising with external agencies, including ADEK, law enforcement, and child protection services, to ensure coordinated responses to safeguarding concerns. The Safeguarding Lead also works with parents to educate them on safeguarding issues and to reinforce the school's expectations for student safety.
- **Record Keeping**: Maintaining accurate and confidential records of all safeguarding concerns, incidents, and actions taken. These records must be securely stored and accessible only to authorized personnel.

Staff Responsibilities:

All staff members at ICS have a duty to:

- **Promote Student Welfare**: Actively promote the welfare and safety of students in all aspects of school life, ensuring that the school environment is safe and supportive.
- **Recognize and Report**: Be vigilant in recognizing the signs of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and report any concerns to the Safeguarding Lead or Principal immediately. This includes concerns related to physical injuries, behavioral changes, and disclosures made by students.
- **Participate in Training**: Attend mandatory safeguarding training provided by the school, including initial induction training and regular refresher courses. Staff must stay informed about the latest developments in safeguarding practices and legal requirements.
- **Maintain Confidentiality**: Handle all safeguarding information with the utmost confidentiality, sharing it only with those authorized to receive it. Staff must not discuss safeguarding cases with unauthorized individuals, including colleagues who are not directly involved in the case.
- **Support Students**: Provide appropriate support to students who may be affected by safeguarding issues, ensuring that they feel safe and listened to. Staff should be approachable and responsive to any concerns raised by students.

Safeguarding Practices

Identifying and Reporting Maltreatment:

ICS is committed to preventing and responding to all forms of maltreatment, including:

- **Physical Abuse**: Physical abuse refers to any non-accidental injury or harm inflicted on a child. This includes hitting, shaking, burning, or using excessive physical force. Staff should be aware of signs such as unexplained bruises, burns, or fractures, and report any concerns immediately.
- **Emotional Abuse**: Emotional abuse involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, leading to severe and lasting adverse effects on their emotional development. Signs may include

severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior. Staff must report any observations of such behaviors, especially if they are recurrent or escalate over time.

- **Sexual Abuse**: Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This includes non-contact activities such as exposure to pornography. Indicators may include difficulty walking or sitting, knowledge of sexual topics beyond their age, or sudden changes in behavior. All suspicions of sexual abuse must be reported immediately and handled with the utmost sensitivity.
- **Neglect**: Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious harm. Signs of neglect may include poor hygiene, inadequate clothing, frequent absences from school, or malnutrition. Neglect can be harder to identify but must be reported as soon as any concerns arise.
- **Exploitation**: Exploitation refers to the use of a child for someone else's advantage, often for economic gain, and can include child labor, trafficking, or forced participation in illegal activities. Staff should be aware of signs such as fatigue, injuries, or reluctance to discuss their home life, and report any suspicions immediately.
- **Bullying and Cyberbullying**: Bullying includes any repeated, intentional actions aimed at causing physical, emotional, or psychological harm to another student. Cyberbullying refers to bullying that occurs through digital platforms. Staff must be vigilant in monitoring interactions among students, both in-person and online, and take immediate action if bullying is suspected or reported.

All staff members must be trained to recognize these forms of maltreatment and understand the specific signs that may indicate a child is at risk. Reporting procedures must be followed rigorously to ensure that concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately.

Reporting Procedures

When a safeguarding concern arises, the following procedures must be followed:

- **Immediate Response**: If a staff member suspects that a child is at risk of harm, they must immediately report their concerns to the Safeguarding Lead or Principal. In cases where a child is in immediate danger, staff should contact the police and report the case to the Ministry of Interior Child Protection Centre within one hour.
- **Documentation**: The staff member who reports the concern must document the details in writing, including the date, time, nature of the concern, and any observations made. This report must be submitted to the Safeguarding Lead or Principal as soon as possible.
- **Confidentiality**: All reports and documentation related to safeguarding concerns must be treated as confidential and stored securely. Access to these records is restricted to the Safeguarding Lead, Principal, and authorized personnel.
- **Follow-Up**: The Safeguarding Lead or Principal will conduct a follow-up investigation, which may involve interviewing the child, consulting with other staff members, or contacting external agencies. The findings of this investigation will determine the next steps, which may include contacting child protection services, law enforcement, or other relevant authorities.
- **Parental Involvement**: In most cases, parents or guardians will be informed of the safeguarding concern unless doing so would put the child at further risk. The decision to inform parents must be made in consultation with the Safeguarding Lead or Principal, and in some cases, with external agencies.

Confidentiality and Data Protection:

Maintaining the confidentiality and security of safeguarding information is critical to protecting the welfare of students and ensuring that sensitive information is handled appropriately.

- **Secure Storage**: All safeguarding records, including reports, investigation notes, and communications with external agencies, must be stored securely. Digital records must be encrypted and stored on secure servers, while physical records must be kept in locked cabinets accessible only to authorized personnel.
- **Access Control**: Access to safeguarding records is strictly limited to the Safeguarding Lead, Principal, and authorized personnel who require the information to perform their duties. Unauthorized access to these records is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.
- **Data Protection Compliance**: ICS complies with UAE data protection laws, including Federal Decree Law No. (45) of 2021 Concerning the Protection of Personal Data, to ensure that all personal data related to safeguarding is protected. This includes obtaining consent where appropriate and ensuring that data is only shared with relevant authorities in compliance with the law.
- **Information Sharing**: When sharing safeguarding information with external agencies, such as ADEK, law enforcement, or child protection services, ICS ensures that only the necessary information is shared and that the confidentiality of all parties involved is maintained.

Training and Awareness:

Training and raising awareness about safeguarding are key components of this policy. ICS is committed to ensuring that all staff, students, and parents understand the importance of safeguarding and know how to identify and respond to concerns.

- **Staff Training**: All staff members are required to complete mandatory safeguarding training during their induction and at regular intervals thereafter. This training covers topics such as recognizing signs of abuse, reporting procedures, confidentiality, and the legal framework for child protection. Refresher training is provided annually to ensure that staff are up-to-date with the latest developments in safeguarding practices.
- **Specialized Training**: Staff who work directly with students in vulnerable groups, such as those with additional learning needs, are provided with specialized training to address the specific risks and challenges these students may face.
- **Student Awareness Programs**: ICS integrates safeguarding education into the school curriculum, teaching students about their rights, how to recognize inappropriate behavior, and how to report concerns. Programs are age-appropriate and designed to empower students to take an active role in their own safety.
- **Parental Involvement**: Parents are provided with information and resources on safeguarding through workshops, newsletters, and the school's website. ICS encourages parents to be proactive in discussing safeguarding with their children and to communicate any concerns they may have with the school.

Security Measures and School Environment:

Creating a safe physical and online environment for students is a priority at ICS. The school implements a range of security measures to protect students from harm and to ensure that they feel secure at all times.

- **CCTV and Surveillance**: The school employs a comprehensive CCTV system to monitor key areas of the campus, including entrances, hallways, playgrounds, and common areas. CCTV footage is reviewed regularly to ensure that safety protocols are being followed, and any incidents captured on video are investigated promptly. Access to CCTV footage is restricted to authorized personnel, and recordings are stored securely.
- **Visitor Management System**: All visitors to the school, including parents, contractors, and external service providers, must sign in at the security gate and wear a visible access pass while on campus. Visitors are escorted by staff members and are not allowed unsupervised access to students or restricted areas. Any unauthorized individuals on campus are immediately reported to security.
- **Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures**: Strict procedures are in place to ensure that students are only released to authorized individuals during drop-off and pick-up times. Parents and guardians must provide written authorization if someone other than the usual caregiver is picking up their child. Staff members are trained to verify the identity of individuals collecting students and to follow up on any discrepancies.
- **Online Safety**: ICS promotes a safe online environment by implementing robust cybersecurity measures and educating students about online safety. The school's IT infrastructure is protected by firewalls, anti-virus software, and secure access controls to prevent unauthorized access and cyberattacks. Students are taught about the risks of cyberbullying, online predators, and the importance of protecting their personal information online.

Handling Security Breaches:

Despite the best preventive measures, security breaches may occur. ICS has established protocols to respond swiftly and effectively to any breaches of security.

- **Security Breach Protocol**: In the event of a security breach, such as unauthorized access to the school premises, a lockdown, or a fire, the school's security team will activate the appropriate emergency response plan. This may include locking all doors, securing the perimeter, contacting law enforcement, and communicating with parents.
- **Regular Drills**: To prepare staff and students for potential security incidents, ICS conducts regular emergency drills, including fire drills, lockdown drills, and evacuation drills. These drills are designed to ensure that everyone knows how to respond quickly and safely in an emergency.
- **Incident Reporting and Documentation**: All security breaches, including near misses, are documented and reported to ADEK and other relevant authorities. Detailed records of the incident, the response actions taken, and any follow-up measures are maintained for future reference and auditing purposes. The school reviews all incidents to identify areas for improvement in security protocols.

Inclusion and Support:

ICS is committed to ensuring that all students, including those with additional learning needs, are protected from harm and have equal access to support services.

- **Inclusive Safeguarding**: The Safeguarding Lead collaborates with the Head of Inclusion and other relevant staff to ensure that safeguarding practices are inclusive and consider the unique needs of students with disabilities or learning difficulties. This includes making reasonable adjustments to accommodate these students and ensuring that they are not subjected to discrimination or exclusion.
- **Counseling and Mental Health Support**: ICS provides accessible counseling services to support students' mental health and well-being. Trained counselors are available to assist students who may be experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges. The school also offers workshops and programs focused on resilience, emotional regulation, and coping strategies.
- **Peer Support Programs**: The school encourages peer support initiatives, such as buddy systems and mentoring programs, to promote a sense of community and belonging among students. These programs help students build positive relationships and provide a network of support for those who may be struggling.

Whistleblowing:

ICS is committed to fostering an environment where concerns about safeguarding and malpractice can be raised without fear of retribution.

- **Whistleblowing Mechanism**: ICS has established a confidential whistleblowing mechanism that allows staff, students, and parents to report concerns about malpractice, abuse, or any other safeguarding issues. Reports can be made anonymously, and the identity of the whistleblower is protected throughout the investigation process.
- **Non-Retaliation Policy**: ICS strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports a concern in good faith. The school ensures that whistleblowers are not subjected to harassment, discrimination, or any other adverse consequences as a result of their report.
- **Investigation and Resolution**: All whistleblowing reports are thoroughly investigated by the Safeguarding Lead or an appointed investigator. The findings of the investigation are documented, and appropriate actions are taken to address the concern. The whistleblower is informed of the outcome of the investigation, where appropriate.

Compliance and Monitoring:

To ensure the effectiveness of its safeguarding practices, ICS engages in continuous monitoring and compliance activities.

- **Policy Review**: The Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Committee or Lead to ensure that it remains current and effective. The review considers feedback from staff, students, parents, and external agencies. Any updates to the policy are communicated to all members of the school community.
- **Monitoring Compliance**: ADEK and ICS regularly monitor compliance with safeguarding policies through audits, inspections, and self-assessments. Any instances of non-compliance are addressed promptly, and corrective actions are implemented to prevent recurrence.

- **Continuous Improvement**: ICS is committed to continuously improving its safeguarding practices. The school actively seeks feedback from stakeholders and uses this information to enhance its policies, training programs, and support services.

Linked Policies

This Safeguarding Policy is interconnected with the following ICS and ADEK policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Student Protection Policy
- Digital Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Inclusion Policy