

Child Protection Policy

Rationale

Children are entitled to a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment that promotes their holistic development and protects them from all forms of harm. In accordance with the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, as well as UAE federal laws including Wadeema's Law, Universal Philippine School is committed to upholding the highest standards of child safety, wellbeing, and dignity.

We recognize that safeguarding children is not only a statutory obligation but also a moral responsibility shared by the school community. Every student has the right to feel secure, valued, and respected, and to learn in an atmosphere free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and violence. This responsibility extends to all school personnel, parents, volunteers, and partners who interact with students.

This policy ensures proactive protection systems, clear reporting procedures, and timely interventions to safeguard students' physical, emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It reinforces our commitment to raising awareness, building capacity, and nurturing a culture of vigilance, empathy, and accountability. Through preventive education, collaboration with families, and strong alignment with ADEK guidelines, we strive to create a safe and inclusive school community where every child can thrive, participate fully, and reach their highest potential.

Declaration of Policy

Universal Philippine School commits to enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying. The school ensures that students are cared for, protected, and supported within a safe and child-friendly learning environment that fosters their confidence, abilities, and wellbeing within a diverse and multicultural context.

Goal

To effectively implement and uphold a zero-tolerance policy against child abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying, discrimination, and other forms of harm, and to establish proactive measures to promote student safety and wellbeing.

Guiding Principles

- The best interest of the child is the primary consideration in all decisions.
- Children have the right to be heard and to participate in matters affecting their wellbeing.
- All allegations of abuse will be handled promptly, confidentially, and in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.
- Staff are expected to model positive behavior and maintain professional boundaries with students.
- Collaboration with parents, guardians, and regulatory authorities is essential.

Definitions

Child	– Any individual below 18 years of age or as defined by UAE and ADEK regulations.
Child Abuse	– Any act or failure to act which results in harm, threat of harm, exploitation, or neglect to a child.
Safeguarding	– Proactive measures to protect children’s wellbeing and prevent abuse.
Neglect	– Failure to meet a child’s basic needs including physical, emotional, medical, educational, and supervision needs.
Confidentiality	– Ensuring information about child protection cases is shared only with authorized personnel.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse** – Injuring a child by physical force (e.g., hitting, kicking, shaking, burning).
- **Emotional/Psychological Abuse** – Behaviors that harm a child’s emotional wellbeing (e.g., humiliation, threats, isolation).
- **Sexual Abuse/Exploitation** – Involvement of a child in sexual activities, exploitation, exposure, or pornography.
- **Neglect** – Failure to provide basic needs resulting in harm to the child’s health or wellbeing.

- **Cyber Abuse/Online Exploitation** – Online threats, grooming, exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying.
- **Bullying (including Cyberbullying)** – Repeated aggression, intimidation, or harassment.
- **Discrimination and Harassment** – Unfair treatment or prejudice causing emotional or physical harm.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All enrolled students
- All school employees (academic, administrative, support staff)
- Volunteers, contractors, and service providers
- Visitors and external stakeholders engaged in school programs

Duties and Responsibilities of the School

1. Develop, adopt, and implement a comprehensive Child Protection Policy.
2. Establish a Child Protection Team (CPT) and ensure capacity building through training.
3. Promote awareness of child rights, protection protocols, and reporting procedures.
4. Maintain confidential records of reported cases, actions taken, and follow-up.
5. Coordinate with government agencies and external specialists as needed.
6. Respect and uphold the participatory rights of children.

Child Protection Team (CPT)

Members

- **Chairperson:** Principal
- **Vice-Chairperson:** School Guidance Counselor
- **Members:**
 - Prefect of Discipline
 - Health & Safety Officer
 - School Doctor/Nurse
 - Designated Teachers
 - Parent Representative
 - General Director – Adviser/Consultant

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Conduct awareness campaigns on child protection.
2. Establish processes for identifying children at risk.
3. Monitor implementation of safeguarding measures.
4. Ensure reporting and documentation are accurate and confidential.
5. Respond promptly to reported cases.
6. Provide support and referrals to appropriate agencies.
7. Train staff and promote safe school practices.

Reporting Process

1. Any student, staff, or community member may report suspected abuse or neglect.
2. Reports must be submitted immediately to the CPT Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, verbally or in writing.
3. The victim is assessed promptly by CPT.
4. CPT convenes immediately to determine actions.
5. The Prefect of Discipline conducts an investigation.
6. Final decision and actions follow CPT recommendations and Adviser/Consultant approval.

Procedures for Handling Student Protection Cases

1. Report case to Principal or Guidance Counselor immediately.
2. Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson orders investigation.
3. Refer student to clinic if medical intervention is necessary.
4. If perpetrator is a student, school disciplinary policy applies.
5. If perpetrator is a staff member, administrative procedures apply.
6. Maintain confidentiality of victim and respondent identities.
7. Ensure documentation and follow-up.

Preventive Measures

1. Screen and hire qualified school personnel.
2. Maintain safe physical learning environments.
3. Provide staff training on child protection and student wellbeing.
4. Develop guidelines for identifying and reporting abuse.
5. Provide counseling services to victims.
6. Issue student handbooks with safety and behavior policies.
7. Conduct counseling and guidance programs.

8. Communicate information via newsletters and advisories.
9. Establish partnerships with government agencies and NGOs.

Child-Friendly School Practices

- Supervision of students during school hours and activities.
- Safe transportation and pickup/drop-off procedures.
- Digital safety and responsible use of technology.
- Anti-bullying and positive behavior support programs.
- Inclusive education practices supporting students of determination.

Confidentiality

- Information regarding cases shall be treated confidentially.
- Only authorized personnel may access case files.
- Student identity and dignity shall be protected at all times.

Referral

The CPT may refer the victim or offender to external agencies for further intervention, assessment, or legal processing as required.

Procedural Flowchart (Reporting & Response)

Step 1: Incident suspected or reported

Step 2: Report to Principal/Guidance Counselor (CPT)

Step 3: Immediate safety assessment & documentation

Step 4: CPT meets to evaluate case

Step 5: Investigation by Prefect of Discipline

Step 6: Medical/psychological support if needed

Step 7: Decision & action plan approved by Adviser/Consultant

Step 8: Confidential documentation & follow-up

Step 9: Referral to external authorities if required

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as per ADEK updates to ensure compliance, effectiveness, and relevance.

Reviewed Date:	September 2025
Next Review Date:	September 2026
<u>Sgd. Paul Benedict N. Yacap</u> School Principal	