



Student Protection Policy

2024-2025

Reviewed and approved by	Position	Signature
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1. Introduction

In Emirati society, children are recognized as independent individuals with inherent rights and age-appropriate responsibilities. The United Arab Emirates prioritizes the best interests of children in all circumstances, ensuring their well-being remains an overriding concern. To uphold the dignity and human rights of children, the government, in collaboration with relevant authorities, has established comprehensive measures to protect children through the implementation of this policy across all public and private schools.

Aligned with this national commitment, **Al Ittihad National Private School - Shakhbout** has developed a policy tailored to safeguard students' rights and ensure their protection. This policy aligns with applicable laws, regulations, and related policies, guaranteeing that every student fully enjoys their rights in accordance with the legal framework of the UAE (refer to the "References" section).

2. Purposes

This policy establishes a framework to ensure the school adheres to the requisite procedures for safeguarding students, with the following objectives:

- Ensuring their safety and well-being while under the school's care, shielding them from any actions or negligence that could lead to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, exploitation, or bullying.
- Emphasizing the shared responsibility of caregivers, including both family members and school staff, in respecting and protecting the rights of children as guaranteed by applicable laws.
- Detecting and providing assistance to students who may have experienced abuse or neglect, in accordance with Federal Law No. [3] of 2016 on Child Rights, Federal Penal Code No. [3] of 1987, and other pertinent UAE legislation, such as Law No. 18 of 2020.
- Reaffirming the legal obligation of all school staff to report any instances or suspicions of abuse, whether occurring on or off school premises, promptly and accurately.
- Defining the duties of school principals and staff in addressing, managing, and responding to suspected cases of abuse or neglect to ensure a systematic and effective response.

This policy underscores the school's commitment to maintaining a safe, supportive, and legally compliant environment for all students.

3. Definitions

<i>Child</i>	Any resident of the UAE under 18 years of age.
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
Student Protection	Synonymous with child protection, all measures, steps, and actions that must be taken to prevent, protect, and support students from risk of maltreatment while they are under the supervision of the educational institution.
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).
Mandated Reporter	A person who is required by law (under Article 42 of Federal Law No. 3) to report student maltreatment concerns related to students to the Child Protection Specialist. 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.
Child Protection Coordinator	A Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) is an appointed staff member at the educational institution who is professionally trained and equipped with skills to act upon child protection concerns that arise within their institution and is the key contact for staff and authorities where a concern is identified within the institution. They should also be the point of contact for the institution to respond to emergencies, report to the CPU and other authorities involved, liaise with parents, and provide ongoing support to the child.
Student Maltreatment	Synonymous with child maltreatment, refers to abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), and includes neglect, exploitation, bullying, and cyberbullying of a student.
Supervision	The state of being responsible, having the duty of care, and keeping watch over an individual in the interest of their and others’ security while utilizing its systems and taking part in all activities organized by the school, inside or outside its premises, including travelling to and from the school using its transportation, and moving between and waiting for activities.
Child Protection Specialist	A Child Protection Specialist (CPS) is the ADEK-appointed person authorized and charged by the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department/Ministry of Community Development and ADEK to preserve the rights of the child and protect the child within the limits of the CPS’s powers, in accordance with Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights and bylaws.

4. ACRONYMS

ADEK	Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge
CPC	Child Protection Coordinator
CPS	Child Protection Specialist
CPT	Child Protection Team
CPU	Child Protection Unit
FCA	Family Care Authority
MOE	UAE Ministry of Education
Moi-CPC	UAE Ministry of Interior – Child Protection Center

5. Student Rights

Fundamental Rights	The child's right to life, safety, care, lineage, nationality, and expression of opinion in accordance with their age, provided it does not conflict with public morals and laws.
Family Rights	The child's right to be cared for by a cohesive and supportive family that assumes the responsibility of guiding and advising the child in the best possible manner, while ensuring the provision of adequate food, clothing, and shelter.
Health Rights	The right to access health services, care, and appropriate medical treatment, as well as the protection of the child from physical harm or danger.
Social Rights	The provision of an adequate standard of living to support the child's physical, mental, social, and psychological development.
Educational and Cultural Rights	The right to education and equal opportunities for all children, as well as the right to participate in programs that encourage innovation and creativity, along with recreational and artistic activities appropriate to their age.
Child Right of Respect	Respecting the child's privacy in accordance with regulations and public morals, while considering the rights and responsibilities of their caregivers as stipulated by law.

6. Principles

- The educational institution, including the school principal and all staff, is responsible for identifying, responding to, and managing student protection risks and their impacts to the best of their ability.
- All mandated reporters, educational institution staff, and volunteers bear responsibility and accountability for ensuring the implementation, enforcement, and support of student protection measures.
- All mandated reporters, staff, and volunteers within the educational institution will be protected and shall not face any hindrance or penalty for fulfilling their responsibilities in reporting and safeguarding students from all forms of abuse.
- All students are entitled to the following rights:

- To be heard, express their voices and opinions, and participate in select decision-making processes within the educational institution (as determined by institutional staff).
- To be treated with respect and dignity.
- To be treated with fairness and equity.
- To receive necessary support when needed.
- To be provided with all means of safety and protection (a secure environment where they are safe, protected from harm, and aware of what constitutes danger and harm).

The principle of zero tolerance for all forms of abuse must be implemented and upheld in all actions and environments concerning students.

7. Types of Student Maltreatment

Physical Abuse	An intentional physical act which results in, has a high likelihood of resulting in, or poses a threat of resulting in immediate and/or long-term physical injury or harm to the student's health, survival, and development.
Emotional Abuse	An act, whether consistent or inconsistent, used to make a student feel unloved, worthless, and of no value and integrity, interfering with the student's positive mental and emotional development.
Sexual Abuse	Involvement of a student in sexual activity that they may or may not fully comprehend, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Student sexual abuse is evidenced by the activity between an adult and a student, or between a student and another student, who by age or development, is in a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power. The intent of the activity is to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.
Neglect	Failure of a parent or any adult supervising a student to provide for the basic needs and rights of a student towards their physical safety, development, and wellbeing, which may lead to a failure to thrive in the context of the resources reasonably available to the parent and causes or has a high probability of causing significant harm to the student's health and/or physical, social, educational, mental, spiritual, or moral integrity.
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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1. Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge (ADEK)

- Develop, monitor, and enforce student protection policies and safeguarding measures.
- Support educational institutions in developing student protection policies when necessary.
- Incorporate a broad range of student protection standards into the inspection framework, monitor educational institutions falling below expectations, and work collaboratively with them by providing the required support.
- Collaborate with relevant other bodies in the design and implementation of safeguarding programs.
- Receive and assess reports related to student maltreatment (neglect, physical, and emotional abuse) and notifications (sexual abuse and exploitation) occurring within educational institutions and take appropriate actions.
- Refer concerns involving suspected maltreatment of a student by an educational institution staff member to the relevant authorities.
- Activate procedures related to bullying in coordination with the concerned entities.
- Facilitate collaboration and the exchange of educational information concerning comprehensive assessments and/or investigations conducted by relevant entities regarding student maltreatment.
- Follow up, if necessary, with the relevant entities regarding referrals submitted to them for cases within educational institutions.
- Document all notifications and/or reports received in confidential records accessible only by the Child Protection Specialist (CPS) or other relevant agencies, as required, based on the established information-sharing protocol.

8.2. The School Principal

The school Principal responsibilities include:

- Adhering to this policy and following the procedures outlined within it.
- Ensuring that school staff and leaders understand and comply with procedures designed to minimize instances of student abuse or neglect.
- Guaranteeing proper supervision of students during all times they are under the school's care.
- Prioritizing student protection and taking immediate action when there is suspicion of abuse or neglect.
- Empowering students to report their concerns regarding abuse and/or neglect safely, without fear of retaliation or punishment.
- Enabling staff and others to report concerns about potential abuse and/or neglect of any student safely, without fear of retaliation or punishment.
- Taking into consideration the perspectives of students and parents regarding safety and protection within the school.
- Directly reporting any suspected cases of student abuse and/or neglect in accordance with this policy.
- Ensuring all targeted school staff and administrators attend and participate in all child protection training sessions.
- Conducting orientation sessions for parents at the time of student registration or enrolment and at the start of each academic year to disseminate this policy and inform them of their roles, responsibilities, rights, and obligations.
- Maintaining student records while ensuring the confidentiality of both open and closed cases.
- Immediately and temporarily suspending any school staff member accused of assaulting a student until the accusation is investigated.

8.3. Staff

All school staff are responsible for the following:

- Respect and protect the rights of all students, refraining from any actions that may expose them to the risk of abuse.
- Immediately report any suspected cases of abuse and/or neglect upon discovery, in accordance with this policy.
- Provide full supervision of students throughout the school day.
- Understand this policy to effectively address suspected or alleged cases of student abuse and/or neglect.
- Attend and actively participate in all assigned training sessions.

8.4. Parents

Parents are responsible for the following:

- Ensure the fulfilment of all child rights as stipulated by law and detailed in the policy.
- Cooperate with the school administration and staff by responding to all inquiries regarding the student's behavior and academic performance and adhering to their feedback and guidance.
- Attend all scheduled parent meetings organized by the school.
- Communicate any concerns, observations, or changes in their child's behavior to the school administration or the relevant staff member at the school.

9. Policy

- The policy ensures that all students are granted equal rights to protection, safety, and security across all educational levels within the school. The school assumes full responsibility for the care of students during their presence on campus, with the school principal acting as the guardian of student rights while they are at school.
- The school ensures proper supervision of students from the time they enter school till they leave it. Staff members must not leave students unsupervised at any time during the school day for reasons related to security and safety.
- If a child is in immediate danger (such as facing the risk of severe harm), the police must be contacted immediately at 999, followed by notifying the Ministry of Interior's Child Protection Center within one hour of discovering the incident.
- School staff must promptly report any suspected case of student abuse and/or neglect to the school principal. Refer to the attached document outlining the five steps for reporting suspected child abuse in schools.
- The Ministry of Interior's Child Protection Center receives reported cases, communicates directly with parents, conducts investigations, and refers affected children and families for treatment and rehabilitation when necessary.
- Article 272 of Federal Penal Code No. [3] of 1987 states that "Any employee tasked with investigating or apprehending crimes who neglects or delays reporting a crime shall be subject to imprisonment or a fine. Any employee not tasked with investigating or apprehending crimes who neglects or delays notifying the competent authority of a crime they became aware of during or because of their duty shall be subject to a fine."
- School staff must raise awareness among students about the importance of reporting any cases of abuse and/or neglect they experience inside or outside the school.

9.1. Data Confidentiality

- Case reports and student data are strictly confidential. The identities of the student subjected to maltreatment and the individual reporting the suspected case must remain confidential and protected by all parties involved in the matter.
- Data must only be shared with authorized individuals from the ADEK Child Protection Unit (CPU), the Financial Control Authority (FCA), investigative teams, and the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department.
- Authorized individuals are strictly prohibited from discussing active or closed cases with the media, third parties, other staff, and/or unauthorized ADEK personnel, except for investigative and judicial authorities within the scope of their legal responsibilities.

9.2. Training

- The Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) and the Child Protection Team (CPT) must complete all student protection policies and safeguarding training as mandated by ADEK. This includes signing an affidavit attesting to adherence to the highest ethical standards and the code of conduct in case management.
- All staff in educational institutions are required to complete ADEK-mandated student protection policies and safeguarding training courses and confirm their participation by signing acknowledgment of their understanding of the responsibilities outlined.
- Volunteers must receive proper orientation and training on student protection policies and safeguarding procedures. Additionally, all invited visitors must attest to having read and understood the school's student protection policy.
- Any staff member providing counselling, support, advocacy, or maintaining close personal contact with students must undergo continuous training in student protection and safeguarding. They must also be appropriately supervised by the school principal.
- Any Child Protection Specialist (CPS) working in the Child Protection Unit (CPU) of ADEK must hold a certification issued by the Ministry of Community Development.

9.3. Vetting, Hiring, and Monitoring of Staff, Volunteers, and Invited Visitors

- The school adheres to all procedures related to the recruitment and background verification of staff, volunteers, and visitors in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- Staff, volunteers, and invited visitors must undergo proper screening before working in or accessing any areas where students are present. This includes conducting criminal record checks from the countries where the applicant has been employed or resides.
- The school principal is fully responsible and accountable for all personnel working within the educational institution. The principal must ensure their suitability and compliance with all student protection and safeguarding requirements, including preventing any individual from working with students if they pose a risk to the safety and well-being of students.
- The school principal must ensure the continuous monitoring of all staff and report any alleged inappropriate behavior or suspected actions that may harm or pose a risk to a student's safety immediately.

9.4. Acceptable Adult Behavior

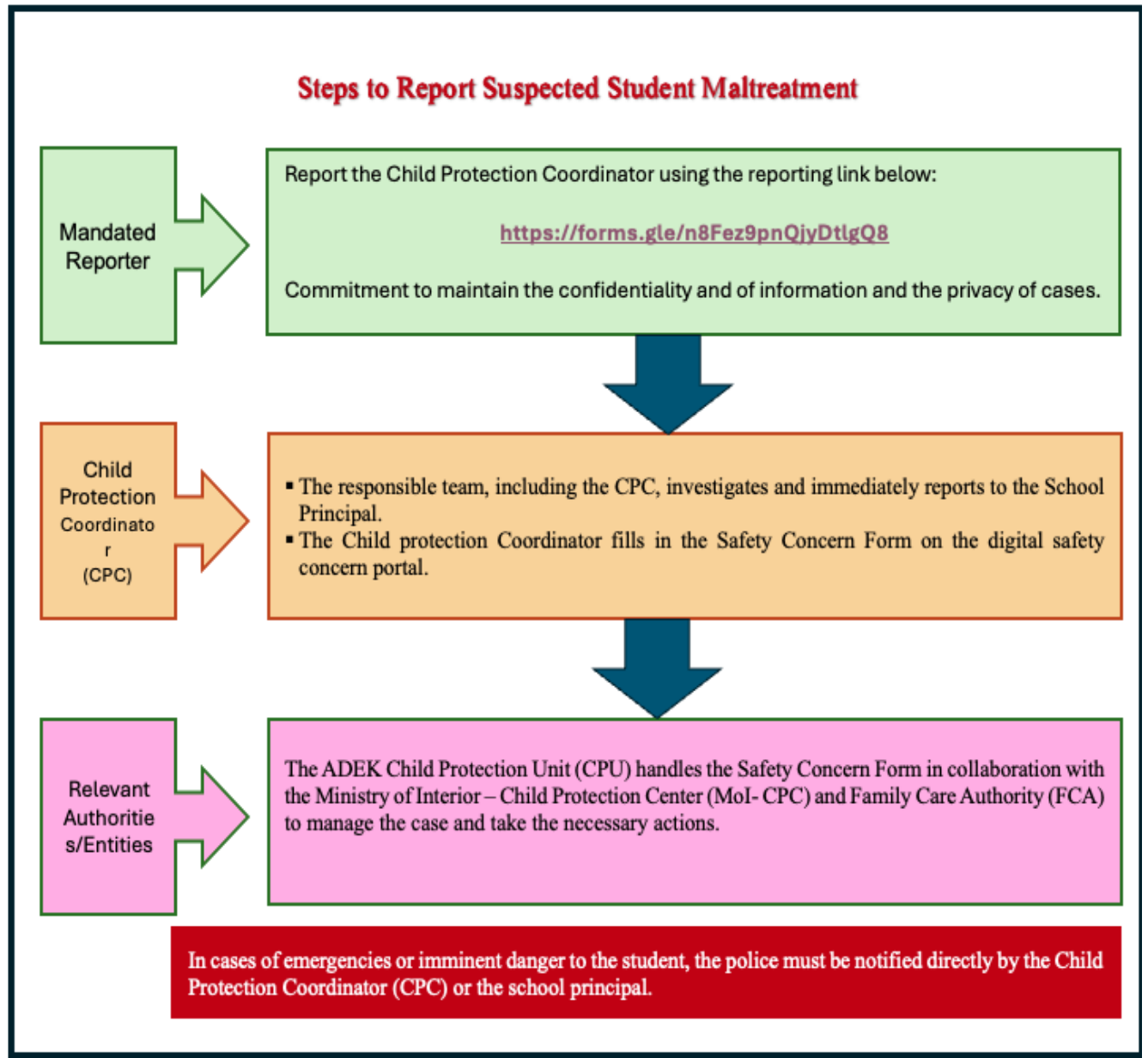
- Staff and volunteers shall respect and protect the rights of all students and take no actions that may put the student at risk of maltreatment.
- Staff and volunteers shall not undertake any inappropriate behaviors towards the student and/or in the presence of the student.
- Staff and volunteers are required to report any incidents of inappropriate behaviors against students.
- Serious allegations of sexual misconduct by staff, volunteers, and/or invited visitors will be directly reported to the Police and FCA and the concerned staff/volunteer/invited visitor will be immediately removed from the educational institution's premises.

9.5. Reporting of Concerns of Maltreatment with Educational Institutions

- Staff of educational institutions – including any person who, in the performance of their duties, has regular or temporary contact with students and who provides services to students or the institution – are mandated by Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 concerning Child Rights to report all cases of alleged and/or suspected maltreatment (conducted by any alleged/suspected perpetrator inside or outside of the educational institution) directly to the ADEK Child Protection Unit (CPU) within 24 hours upon suspicion. Staff should follow the procedures outlined in Figure 1. Safety Concern Referrals in Abu Dhabi Educational Institutions and the guide on Handling Student Maltreatment Concerns within Educational Institutions (ECA, 2024).1.
- All concerns of student maltreatment disclosed in educational institutions, whether the maltreatment took place inside or outside of the institution, should be notified to the CPC or any other person representing him/her.
- The MoE has put in place the National Policy for the Prevention of Bullying in Educational Institutions (n.d.) for handling bullying cases. Therefore, all cases of bullying should be handled in accordance with the procedures defined in that framework. Exceptions related to bullying cases include severe bullying (cases of bullying that have or risk having a significant physical and emotional impact on the student would be considered as maltreatment), which should be handled according to the procedures defined in this policy.
- All educational institutions shall appoint a Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) and a Child Protection Team (CPT), and these appointments shall be reported to ADEK annually.
 1. The CPC shall undergo ADEK-mandated CPC training and would preferably be a senior member of staff or any other member of staff who has experience working with students at educational risk.
 2. The CPT shall undergo any ADEK-mandated training as announced and would typically include 3-5 members consisting of the counsellor and/or social worker as well as relevant members of the senior leadership team, any of whom may or may not take on the role of the CPC. In educational institutions where such a team cannot be formed, the CPC would be responsible for case management within the educational institution, and a delegate should always be nominated in case the CPC is unavailable/unable to perform their duties.
- 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.

- Emergency cases are detailed in the guide on Handling Student Maltreatment Concerns within Educational Institutions (ECA, 2024).
- **How should identified concerns of maltreatment within educational institutions be addressed?** Identified concerns of student maltreatment should follow the outlined procedures for proper documentation, reporting, and resolution, as specified in the guide. This ensures a systematic and effective response to safeguard the well-being of students.

9.6. The process of Reporting suspected Student Maltreatment / Neglect



9.7. Learning resources

The school follows a clear policy for selecting and reviewing all approved learning resources, including books available in the school library and all resources used in lessons and activities. Additionally, the school has established a clear policy and procedures for reporting any violations related to this matter. The school's policy ensures that all resources are age-appropriate for students and align with the cultural considerations of the country:

- Age-appropriate student protection learning resources shall be developed/procured and distributed 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 protection learning resources shall be taught in the classroom and in counselling sessions and include any media (story books, activity books, illustrations, posters, reading content, etc.) that can be discussed either individually or within a group setting.
- Student protection shall be taught by trained staff who are skilled in understanding student protection and student development.
- All content shall identify easy-to-use references on where to seek assistance if needed.

Indexes: Indicators of Abuse

Index 1	
Physical Abuse	1. Untreated wounds or injuries that have not received any medical attention.
	2. Avoidance of physical contact.
	3. Presence of cuts or bruises on the arms and legs.
	4. Fear of returning home.
	5. Unexplained wounds or bruises.
	6. Fear of interaction with parents or the caregiver responsible for the child.
	7. Recurrent abdominal pain.
	8. Tendencies toward self-harm.
	9. Displaying aggression toward others.
	10. Unusual absenteeism.
	11. Frequent running away from home.
	12. Burns on the child's body caused by cigarettes.
	13. Bite marks on the child's body inflicted by someone else.
	14. Broken bones.
	15. Deliberate burns on the child's body characterized by defined, clear edges.

Index 2	
Emotional Abuse	1. Persistent feelings of fatigue and exhaustion.
	2. Fear of changes or new circumstances.
	3. Lack of self-esteem.
	4. High levels of stress and anxiety.
	5. Unusual negative or aggressive behaviors.
	6. Delayed speech development.
	7. Atypical emotional responses to pain.
	8. Running away.
	9. Frequent lying.
	10. Angry behaviors, such as frowning, hair-pulling, or throwing objects.
	11. Fear of making mistakes.
	12. Self-harm tendencies.
	13. Delayed emotional development.

Index 3	
Sexual Abuse	1. Sexual behavior inappropriate for the child's age.
	2. Fear of physical contact or excessive, unwelcome physical interaction.
	3. Presence of sexually transmitted diseases.
	4. Physical indicators in the genital or anal areas.
	5. Pain or itching in the genital areas.
	6. Signs of sores or bleeding in the genital areas.
	7. Use of sexually explicit language inappropriate for the child's age.
	8. Discomfort while walking or difficulty engaging in physical activities.
	9. Pregnancy.

Index 4	
Neglect	1. Theft.
	2. Weak social relationships.
	3. Delayed mental or physical development, or underdeveloped social skills.
	4. Poor personal hygiene.
	5. Persistent hunger.
	6. Untreated medical issues.
	7. Frequent tardiness or absenteeism from school.
	8. Inappropriate or unkempt appearance.
	9. Use of drugs, psychoactive substances, alcohol, or tobacco in any form.

References

1. Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA). (2024). Handling Student Maltreatment Concerns within Educational Institutions.
2. Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA). (2024). Student Protection Policy for Educational Institutions.
3. Executive Council Chairman Decision No. (26) of 2013 Regarding the Regulation of Private Schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
4. Federal Decree Law No. (11) of 1972 Concerning Compulsory Education.
5. Federal Decree Law No. (9) of 1976 Concerning Juvenile Delinquents and Vagrants.
6. Federal Decree Law No. (35) of 1992 Concerning the Criminal Procedural Law.
7. Federal Decree Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights (Wadeema's Law).
8. Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 Concerning Private Education.
9. Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law.
10. Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Concerning the Regulation of Nurseries.
11. Ministry of Education. National Policy for the Prevention of Bullying in Educational Institutions (MoE, n.d.).
12. UNCRC. (1991). The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.