



The International School
of Choueifat – Dubai

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



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All employees will read, and understand, this policy in conjunction with our Safeguarding-Child Protection Policy, Inclusion Policy, Behaviour Management Policy and The Employee Handbook.

Applies to all staff (teaching and administration) working in the School.

Designated Members of Staff responsible for Bullying Prevention: The School's Child Protection Officer, The Student Life Coordinator, Head Supervisors (Infants, Primary & Secondary)

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the School Management, who will undertake a complete annual review of this policy and procedures, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. This discussion will be formally documented in writing. All staff will be informed of the updated/reviewed policy, which will be made available to them electronically, or by hard copy on request.

Signed:

ISC DUBAI
School Director

This policy will be reviewed by the School Management no later than August 2027 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements occur or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines are required.



POLICY OBJECTIVES

This policy outlines how the School will endeavour to build an inclusive, safe and positive environment in which Bullying will not be tolerated.

SCHOOL ETHOS

At ISC DUBAI, the welfare, wellbeing and best interest of the child operate as the primary and guiding focus of all dealings with each student. The School aims to create a healthy environment whereby students feel secure, valued, encouraged, listened to, and protected against any occurrence that may threaten the development of the child's learning journey and school experience.

This Bullying Prevention policy aims to ensure that students learn in a supportive, caring, and safe environment without fear of being bullied, harassed, or exploited. In line with The National Child Protection Policy in Educational Institutions in the United Arab Emirates (September 2022), ISC DUBAI will respect social diversity and differences of all types: race, colour, gender, religion, expatriates, mental, psychological, and physical capabilities of each student. We will endeavour to achieve justice and equality in the treatment of all students.

The SABIS® community acknowledges that all forms of Bullying, especially if left undetected, can have a detrimental effect on individuals; it may hinder their ability to learn and negatively impact a person's physical and mental health and overall wellbeing.

It is our School's responsibility to prevent and combat Bullying to create a safe and disciplined environment in which all students can achieve their full potential academically and socially. We aim to create a positive teaching and learning environment that is enjoyable and encourages good behaviour, respect and tolerance.

Staff must always be prepared to address negative behaviour, as this can lead to bullying, and report patterns of negative behaviour, as this may indicate bullying or the possibility of future bullying. Teachers are expected to arrive in good time for class and other activities; to be a vigilant presence around School; and to report any concerns to the Head Supervisors, Social Workers, AQCs, and any other Senior administrator.

We are a 'TELLING SCHOOL.' We encourage all those who face Bullying or witness Bullying to tell a trusted staff member or a designated SLO member immediately, and the appropriate action will be taken promptly.



BULLYING: CHILD PROTECTION-RELATED ISSUES

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm- a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern. Staff should discuss the case with the School's Child Protection Officer. ISC DUBAI may need to draw on a range of external services to support the student who is experiencing Bullying or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in Bullying. In such cases, the School reports its concerns to the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children or the Community Development Authority (Child Protection Centre).

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can be defined as behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms, for instance, cyberbullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of text, images and video.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the School's priority, but emotional Bullying can be equally, if not more, damaging than physical; the School will judge based on the particular circumstances of each case. Bullying also involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could include perpetrators of Bullying having control over the relationship, which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways; it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derived from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group or the capacity to isolate socially. It can intimidate a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can, in itself, have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay, it can lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. ISC DUBAI ensures early intervention to help set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours from escalating.

Bullying can occur between student and student, staff and staff, and staff and student. We consider the pastoral care of the students and staff to be of prime importance. This role largely rests with the class teacher and the Social worker. It is school policy that any misdemeanour will also be passed onto the Supervisor/Head Supervisor as soon as possible after it occurs, whether in the playground, classroom, during an extra-curricular activity, on school transportation, or any part of the school premises. A common code of behaviour is expected from everyone at ISC DUBAI (please refer to our Behaviour Policy).



All staff at ISC DUBAI are expected to treat each other and students with a professional level of respect and tolerance as per the Ministry of Education's Code of Conduct (September 2022).

How does a victim (or the parent of a victim) find help?

Students are encouraged to talk to someone reliable, whether a friend, a prefect, a teacher, the School Clinic team, the school social workers, a parent, the supervisors or Head Supervisors. This message is reiterated on the School's noticeboards. The School Clinic team is also alert to signs and symptoms of Bullying. Parents who have concerns about their child should always contact the Head Supervisors, AQCs, Social Workers or other administrative staff at the earliest opportunity so that the matter can be promptly investigated.

BULLYING CAN BE

- Emotional (indirect bullying) including isolation of others by a refusal to co-operate with them and exclusion - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures), deliberately excluding from social groups or an activity by refusal to sit next to/ talk to/ work/ co-operate with others and refusal to follow staff instructions to do the above, or malicious rumours, e-mails or text messages, and also exclusion from play/discussions etc. with those whom they believe to be their friends.
- Physical harm or its threat including the abuse of personal property – jostling, fighting, pushing, kicking, hitting, taking or hiding belongings, punching or any use of violence; deliberately destroying or damaging work or possessions or removing personal property, use of weapons/threatening use of weapon (or any object which could be used as a weapon), intimidation through physical gestures and actions.
- Cyber – not occurring face to face but rather through electronic means including, but not limited to, social networking sites, internet and intranet sites, email, instant messaging, by mobile phone including through text messages and phone calls, photographs both real and manipulated and so on (please refer to the note at the end of this document).
- Racist - Bullying directed at individuals of any race, culture, ethnicity, language, faith, community, national origin or national status. The distinctive feature of racist bullying is that the victim is attacked not as an individual but as the representative of a family, community or group.
- Cultural – focusing on and/or playing off perceived cultural differences or similar.
- Sexist – covers a wide range of behaviour from name calling to physical sexual assault. It is the use of sexual language or negative stereotyping on the basis of gender.
- Sexual - is unwanted or inappropriate physical contact or sexual innuendo.



- Religious – Attacking faith, belief, religious practice or custom.
- Students of Determination– remarking upon, drawing attention to, or discriminating against people of determination.
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, making snide comments, teasing, humiliating others, threatening others, inciting others to humiliate and threaten others.
- Written - spreading rumours, writing, printing unkind or malicious comments on paper or excluding someone from social groups.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING

If a member of staff receives a report of Bullying or suspected Bullying, the following steps should be taken:

- The employee who has been approached, or witnessed Bullying, will address the matter immediately. The member of staff with the information will discuss the issue with the relevant Head Supervisor, and they will report the case/incident to the School Director. A thorough investigation will ensue. The handling of a bullying incident is given careful thought to ensure that the facts are fully known, agreed, and understood by the bully/ies and the victim(s).
- In order to ensure that the person being bullied does not suffer immediate harm, the School will provide the appropriate support and intervention in a timely manner and involve the individual in any decision-making processes, if necessary.
- An interview with all parties involved will be conducted by the Director/Child Protection Officer (CPO) or another member of the leadership staff.
- In accordance with the School's Child Protection and confidentiality policies, parents or guardians of all parties involved will be informed about the concern/incident and the action taken.
- In consultation with all parties involved, sanctions and support will be implemented as outlined in the school behaviour policy. There is no one fixed course of action; it will depend on the mitigating circumstances, and it will be fair and proportionate. Disciplinary actions will be judged on a case-by-case basis by the Director and in consultation with all parties concerned. It may range from a warning to suspension or expulsion after aligning with the local education authorities (KHDA's school-parent contract)
- If a child is at risk of significant harm, other external support agencies may be consulted or involved, such as the police, if a criminal offence has been committed.
- The School will fully investigate Bullying that occurs off-campus or outside of school hours (including cyberbullying). The CPO may require collaboration with other schools. In accordance with this policy and the School's behaviour policy, appropriate action will be taken, including providing support and implementing sanctions.



- The School will record bullying incidents in a clear and precise manner. Records outlining the incident, actions taken, consequences and further action/ support required will be recorded by the Head Supervisors (CPOs). The Child Protection Champion should also be included and aware of any reports of Bullying.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED:

- Ongoing pastoral care, support and reassurance shall be given to the student by a trusted staff member (such as the Social Worker/Head Supervisor/SLC- depending on the child's needs and wishes), Supporting the restoration of the child's self-esteem and confidence in order to rebuild their sense of security and trust in the school community.
- Providing the opportunity for immediate discussion of the experience with their teacher, the CPO, or another member of staff of their choosing; only if the student feels comfortable doing so and if it will bring them a sense of security and reassurance. The School will involve parents and guardians in the overall support process; this may include meetings with relevant staff members and supporting the parents to find effective in-house and/or external support if required.
- Provide follow-up support, and further or specialist advice and guidance, where necessary, in consultation with the broader community and local/national organizations.

STUDENTS WHO HAVE PERPETRATED BULLYING.

- It is important to acknowledge and discuss what happened in a transparent manner and highlight and explain the concern and the need for change.
- Be clear with the perpetrator that there are consequences for their actions and explain these from the point of view of all involved parties, the victim, the perpetrator, the School and possibly an external agency.
- Assisting parents/guardians in understanding and changing their child's attitude and behaviour
- Providing ongoing support, education and guidance to examine the underlying reason why this happened. Provide follow-up support to change the student's mindset/actions to prevent further bullying incidents in the future.
- Removing online content and reporting accounts/content to service providers/ authorities if required
- The School may sanction students according to its behaviour/discipline policy and in line with the KHDA/Parent contract. This can include official warnings, advising sessions, removal of privileges (including online access if cyberbullying problems arise), and temporary or permanent exclusions in coordination with the local education authorities.
- Provide advice and guidance to the wider community and local/national organizations, including referrals to outside services or involvement from the authorities.



PREVENTING BULLYING

ENVIRONMENT

The school community will:

- Establish a culture of respect, care, and consideration for others in an inclusive environment
- Be continually aware, watchful, and available, promoting good behaviour and tolerance and encouraging the care of others.
- Ensure students are appropriately supervised.
- Be aware that Bullying can occur amongst and to adults and children alike.
- Provide additional pastoral support to children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities, as needed. Recognize that Bullying could negatively impact children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities in a disproportionate manner.
- Encourage students to challenge practices and language (such as 'banter'/'teasing') which do not reflect the values of tolerance, non-discrimination, and respect.
- Encourage responsible and positive use of technology, particularly mobile devices and social media.
- Prevent, and address prejudice-driven Bullying by working with students and staff and cooperating within the community, and outside agencies.
- Safe spaces, such as the 'Happiness Centres', should be available for students.
- Building a positive school ethos requires celebrating success and achievements.
- Bullying instances are reported and recorded so that patterns can be identified, and future instances of Bullying may be prevented with early intervention.

POLICY AND SUPPORT

- Staff, students, and parents will be made aware of reporting procedures, and support will be readily available to all school community members.
- Provide advice and education highlighting positive online behaviour to all community members on an ongoing basis, taking into account technological developments.
- When Bullying is brought to the School's attention, it should be handled appropriately, proportionately, and reasonably, in accordance with existing school policies, whether the Bullying involves or affects students on or off school premises, such as using school transportation or online.
- To reinforce the School is committed to preventing bullying, following a thorough investigation, disciplinary measures will be implemented if and when necessary; the consequences will reflect the severity of the incident.
- Accusations of the bullying of a student(s) by a teacher or a staff member will be investigated thoroughly. Each student will be treated fairly and with respect.
- All disclosures, whether from a student, a parent, a member of staff or a volunteer will be taken seriously and treated with sensitivity.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

To prevent Bullying, there are a variety of techniques and approaches that the School will follow. The school community will:

- Educate all staff, including teaching staff and support staff (for example, admin staff, lunchtime support staff and pastoral staff), on how to identify Bullying and take the appropriate action in line with the school policy and procedures. This includes the reporting and recording of incidents.
- Train staff to ensure that the principles of the Bullying Prevention policy are understood, the legal responsibilities are known, action is defined to resolve and prevent problems, and sources of support are known and available.
- Utilize various approaches and learning opportunities to prevent and highlight Bullying in all its forms, such as Visual Aids, informative displays, projects, SLO initiatives and schoolwide campaigns...
- Ensure that the principles of Bullying prevention have a high profile throughout the year through systematic awareness campaigns such as 'Bullying Prevention week' and the schoolwide ***Manners Maketh Man*** campaign.

INVOLVEMENT AND LIAISON WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

The School will:

- In the event that a parent/guardian is concerned about Bullying, ensure they know who to contact and where they can obtain reliable advice and guidance.
- Address bullying-related issues beyond the school gates with all parents/guardians and the local community.
- Provide parents/guardians with information about our complaints procedure and how to use it effectively in line with the local education authorities.

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT LIFE ORGANISATION (SLO)

The SABIS Student Life Organization is a fundamental part of ISC DUBAI, and the SLO® Program is firmly committed to detecting and stopping Bullying and, most importantly, to proactively preventing Bullying from happening. One of the nine departments of the SLO® is committed to the Discipline of the School, including a Bullying Prevention sub-department. The SLO is overseen at ISC DUBAI by the Student Life Coordinator and the School Director, yet at its heart; it is an organization run by students for students. Students volunteer to be part of Student Life, and prefects are chosen to fulfil particular roles, including a Bullying-Prevention Prefect.

The intention is that a culture is fostered amongst students which deters silence and/ or turning a blind eye when witnessing bullying/ harmful behaviour. On the contrary, we seek to promote a culture in which the victim and anyone else who hears of an incident are prepared to "Tell". We embed that culture by reiterating that helping one's peers and friends is a positive action.



NOTE REGARDING CYBER-BULLYING AND CYBER HARASSMENT:

Cyber Bullying and Cyber Harassment, like other forms of bullying and harassment, imply a relationship where an individual has some influence or advantage that is used improperly over another person or persons, where the victim(s) is subjected to a disadvantage or detriment, and where the behaviour is unwarranted and unwelcome to the victim.

Cyberbullying occurs when technology is used to convey the bullying message to the victim and to those around the victim. Mobile phones are the preferred medium for these acts, and the proliferation of apps such as WhatsApp as well as app based social media platforms make it increasingly easy to spread negative messages much further than was possible before. In addition, secondary perpetrators can readily forward and share the negative material, resulting in its rapid and widespread dissemination. The message may be viewed multiple times by a larger and more diverse audience – it could be sent to the victim's parents, siblings, teachers, neighbours, and broader social groups.

The UAE's Child Rights Law (Federal Law No. 3 of 2016) affirms that all children have the right to education and basic protection in the UAE. Defamation, which is often at the core of cyberbullying, is a criminal offence in the UAE. Article 138 of the Penal Code stipulates that a punishment of jail and a fine (determined at the discretion of the judge) "shall be inflicted on any person who publishes through any means of publicity news, pictures or comments pertaining to the secrets of people's private or familial lives even if the same is true."

AN EXTRACT FROM THE SCHOOL- PARENT KHDA CONTRACT

"The school has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying in all its forms. Bullying is the intentional and deliberate intimidation of another person through emotional, physical, psychological and/or cyber means. Instances of proven and intentional bullying may result in immediate expulsion of the aggressor from the school. The matter will be referred to KHDA for ratification. Aligned with the above, the school will not tolerate any form of defamation or intentional harm practiced through social media forums (by parents or students). Parents and students in all grade levels using any social media forum must, at all times, demonstrate respect for the school as well as members of the school community (including all staff members, students and personnel); Parents and students must not breach confidentiality, defame or make threats to any person in the school community; Instances of proven and intentional breach of the above will result in sanctions that may include suspension from the school."