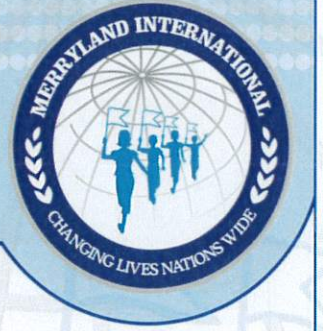




SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Merryland International School is unwavering in its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every student. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility across the entire school community, and all adults working with or around children must act in the best interests of the child at all times.

The school adopts a **child-centred, preventative, and proactive approach**, ensuring that:

- Children are listened to, respected, and taken seriously
- Concerns are acted upon immediately
- Staff maintain professional curiosity
- Safeguarding is embedded in all aspects of school life

The school complies with:

- UAE Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law)
- ADEK Student Protection Policy
- ADEK Wellbeing Policy
- ADEK Inclusion Policy
- ADEK Digital Policy
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026*

The school maintains a culture of vigilance where all staff understand that **safeguarding concerns can arise at any time** and that **"it could happen here."**

2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Protect students from all forms of harm, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and online risks
- Promote student welfare, wellbeing, and safety
- Establish clear safeguarding procedures and reporting pathways
- Ensure compliance with ADEK and UAE legislation
- Provide guidance for staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, and governors

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- Ensure early identification and intervention for vulnerable students
- Promote a whole-school culture of safeguarding
- Ensure students know what to do when they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or worried

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students
- All staff (teaching and non-teaching)
- Senior leaders and governors
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors
- External providers

It applies:

- On school premises
- During school transport
- During educational visits and trips
- During extracurricular activities
- During online learning
- During any school-organised activity

4. Safeguarding Principles

The school is committed to:

- **Putting children first** in all decisions
- **Listening to students** and valuing their voice
- **Acting immediately** on concerns
- **Maintaining professional curiosity**
- **Working collaboratively** with parents and agencies
- **Providing early help** to prevent escalation
- **Maintaining confidentiality** on a need-to-know basis
- **Ensuring timely and proportionate action**



- **Embedding safeguarding as a standing agenda item** in SLT, staff, and governor meetings

5. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Principal appoints:

- A **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**
- At least one **Deputy DSL**

A **Safeguarding Lead Chart** is displayed:

- At reception
- In staff rooms
- On the school website
- In safeguarding training materials

Responsibilities of the DSL

The DSL will:

- Lead safeguarding across the school
- Manage referrals to ADEK and external agencies
- Maintain secure safeguarding records
- Monitor vulnerable students
- Deliver safeguarding training
- Support staff in managing concerns
- Ensure policy implementation and compliance
- Oversee online safety and digital safeguarding

DSLs receive **enhanced safeguarding training every two years and annual updates.**

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board

The Governing Board ensures that:

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- Safeguarding remains a strategic priority
- Policies are reviewed annually
- Adequate resources are allocated
- The school complies with statutory requirements
- Safeguarding is monitored through reports, audits, and data

Principal

The Principal:

- Promotes a strong safeguarding culture
- Ensures implementation of safeguarding procedures
- Supports the DSL
- Ensures staff receive appropriate training
- Ensures allegations against staff, parents, or any individual are reported immediately
- Ensures safeguarding is part of performance management

All Staff

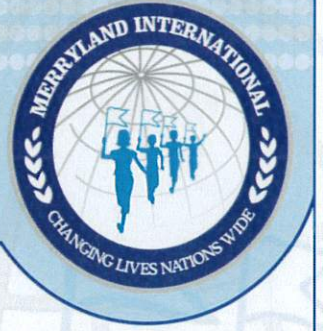
All staff must:

- Read and understand safeguarding policies
- Report concerns immediately
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Record concerns accurately and promptly
- Attend mandatory training
- Understand that **any allegation must be reported immediately**
- Participate in ongoing monitoring and refresher training

Volunteers

Volunteers must:

- Complete safeguarding induction
- Understand reporting procedures
- Never work unsupervised
- Follow the Staff Code of Conduct



7. Types of Abuse & Child Protection

Staff must be aware of:

- **Physical Abuse**
- **Emotional Abuse**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Exploitation** (criminal, financial, online, labour)
- **Domestic Abuse**

Child Protection Definition

Child Protection refers to:

“Actions taken to protect a child who is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.”

This includes:

- Immediate safeguarding measures
- Reporting to ADEK and authorities
- Emergency interventions
- Multi-agency collaboration

8. Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse includes:

- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual violence
- Upskirting
- Hazing and initiation rituals
- Image-based abuse
- Online abuse

The school ensures:



- All reports are taken seriously
- Students are supported sensitively
- Parents are informed where appropriate
- Incidents are recorded and monitored
- Preventative education is embedded in the curriculum

Students are taught how to recognise unsafe behaviour and how to report concerns.

9. Online Safety

Online safety is integral to safeguarding.

The school will:

- Operate filtering and monitoring systems
- Teach safe online behaviour
- Address cyberbullying
- Monitor emerging risks
- Teach AI misuse awareness
- Address grooming and exploitation risks

Online Safety in Classrooms

Teachers must:

- Supervise internet use
- Use approved platforms only
- Teach digital literacy
- Monitor online activity
- Report concerns immediately

10. Students with Additional Vulnerabilities

Additional measures apply to:

- Students of Determination
- Students with learning needs
- Students with mental health concerns



- Students facing family difficulties
- Students at risk of exploitation
- Students with prolonged absence

The school ensures:

- Tailored support
- Multi-agency collaboration
- Individual risk assessments where needed

11. Mental Health and Wellbeing

The school recognises that mental health concerns may be indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma, or other safeguarding concerns.

Staff will:

- Identify early warning signs
- Refer concerns appropriately
- Provide support through counselling and wellbeing services
- Work collaboratively with parents and external professionals

12. Early Help and Intervention

Early intervention is essential.

The school will:

- Identify concerns at the earliest opportunity
- Work with families to provide support
- Engage relevant external agencies
- Monitor the effectiveness of interventions

13. Attendance and Children Missing Education

The school will:

- Monitor attendance daily



- Investigate unexplained absences
- Follow up persistent absence
- Report concerns to ADEK
- Monitor sudden withdrawal from school

14. Low-Level Concerns

Low-level concerns include:

- Boundary issues
- Inappropriate communication
- Favouritism
- Unprofessional conduct

All low-level concerns are:

- Recorded
- Reviewed
- Investigated where appropriate
- Monitored for patterns

Repeated concerns may indicate a more serious issue.

15. Allegations against Staff

Any allegation involving:

- Staff
- Parents
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors
- External providers

must be reported **immediately** to the Principal and DSL.

Staff must not investigate independently.

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16. Safer Recruitment

The school ensures:

- Identity verification
- Qualification checks
- Employment history checks
- Reference verification
- Criminal record checks
- Child protection declarations
- Contractor vetting
- Volunteer screening

17. Professional Conduct and Boundaries

Staff must:

- Maintain professional relationships
- Avoid inappropriate communications
- Use only approved communication systems
- Follow procedures regarding physical contact
- Avoid one-to-one situations that place themselves or students at risk

Monitoring Staff

The school monitors staff conduct through:

- Observations
- Appraisals
- Communication logs
- Low-level concerns
- Feedback from students and parents

18. Security, Visitors and CCTV

The school maintains:

- Secure access controls



- Visitor management systems
- CCTV coverage in approved areas
- Emergency response procedures
- Lockdown procedures

CCTV is never installed in areas where privacy is expected.

19. Educational Visits and Off-Site Activities

The school ensures:

- Risk assessments
- Appropriate supervision ratios
- Emergency procedures
- Medical information availability
- Safeguarding measures during transport and overnight visits

20. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school maintains:

- Secure safeguarding records
- Chronological case files
- Restricted access
- Secure transfer procedures

Confidentiality is maintained except where disclosure is necessary to protect a child.

21. Whistleblowing

Staff must report:

- Unsafe practices
- Professional misconduct
- Safeguarding failures

Whistle-blowers are protected from retaliation.



22. Training

All staff receive:

- Safeguarding induction
- Annual safeguarding updates
- Online safety training
- Child-on-child abuse awareness
- Low-level concerns training
- Behaviour management training

Termly Safeguarding Training

Covers:

- ADEK updates
- Emerging risks
- Online safety
- Mental health indicators

Regular Refresher Training

Delivered through:

- Briefings
- Staff meetings
- Bulletins
- Scenario-based discussions

Volunteer Training

Volunteers receive safeguarding induction and must follow reporting procedures.

23. Monitoring and Review

The policy is reviewed annually and updated when legislation changes. Safeguarding effectiveness is monitored through:



- Audits
- Training records
- Incident reviews
- Student wellbeing data

24. Parent Awareness & Website Safeguarding

The school promotes safeguarding awareness through:

- Newsletters
- Website updates
- Parent workshops
- Online safety guidance

The website includes:

- Safeguarding policy
- DSL contact details
- Reporting procedures
- Whistleblowing information

25. Student Awareness of Safety

Students are taught:

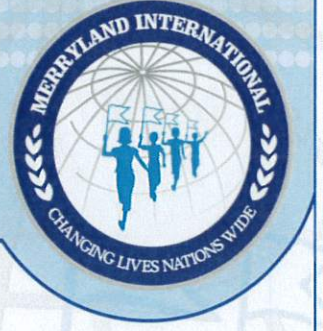
- How to recognise unsafe situations
- How to say no
- How to report concerns
- How to use school reporting systems
- How to stay safe online

This is reinforced through:

- Assemblies
- PSHE lessons
- Posters
- Digital platforms

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References

- Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights (Wadeema's Law).
- Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 Concerning Private Education.
- ADEK School Safeguarding Policy.
- ADEK Student Protection Policy.
- ADEK Wellbeing Policy.
- ADEK Inclusion Policy.
- ADEK Digital Policy.
- ADEK Health and Safety Policy.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Principal



Reviewed on 15 June 2026

Merryland International School is an outstanding, ISO 9001-certified, British Curriculum K-12 school located in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. providing high quality education to pupils of more than 40 nationalities. Merryland has been a pioneer in education for the last four decades remaining true to its motto 'Changing lives...Nations wide'.



APPENDIX 1

SAFEGUARDING REPORTING FLOWCHART

Immediate Danger

If a student is at immediate risk of harm:

1. Ensure the student's immediate safety.
2. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.
3. Inform the Principal.
4. Contact emergency services or relevant authorities where necessary.
5. Record all actions taken.

Safeguarding Concern Identified

Any member of staff who:

- Observes concerning behaviour.
- Receives a disclosure from a student.
- Suspects abuse or neglect.
- Receives information from another person.

Must:

Step 1

Listen carefully.

- Remain calm.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Do not investigate.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Reassure the student that they have done the right thing by speaking up.

Step 2

Record the concern immediately.

Include:

- Date and time.
- Exact words used where possible.
- Observations made.
- Names of witnesses.
- Actions taken.



Step 3

Report immediately to:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or
- Deputy DSL if DSL is unavailable.

Step 4

DSL assesses the concern and determines:

- Early Help intervention.
- Internal monitoring.
- Parent involvement.
- Referral to ADEK.
- Referral to external agencies.
- Emergency intervention.

Step 5

DSL maintains confidential records and monitors outcomes.

Allegation Against Staff

If the concern involves a staff member:

1. Report immediately to the Principal.
2. If the concern involves the Principal, report directly to the Governing Board Chair and relevant authorities.
3. Do not investigate independently.
4. Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

Low-Level Concern

If a concern does not meet the harm threshold:

1. Report to the Principal or DSL.
2. Record in the Low-Level Concerns Register.
3. Monitor patterns and trends.
4. Take action where concerns accumulate or escalate.



APPENDIX 2

SIGNS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

Physical Abuse

Possible indicators:

- Unexplained injuries.
- Frequent bruising.
- Burns or bite marks.
- Fear of physical contact.
- Wearing clothing to conceal injuries.
- Reluctance to go home.

Emotional Abuse

Possible indicators:

- Low self-esteem.
- Excessive anxiety.
- Withdrawal.
- Extreme behaviour.
- Self-harm.
- Developmental delay.
- Constant criticism of self.

Sexual Abuse

Possible indicators:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge.
- Sudden behavioural changes.
- Fear of a specific person.
- Self-harm.
- Depression.
- Sexualised behaviour.
- Unexplained gifts or money.



Neglect

Possible indicators:

- Poor hygiene.
- Persistent hunger.
- Inappropriate clothing.
- Untreated medical needs.
- Frequent absence.
- Fatigue.
- Poor supervision.

Child-on-Child Abuse

Possible indicators:

- Sudden withdrawal from peers.
- Fear of attending school.
- Changes in friendship groups.
- Reluctance to participate in activities.
- Emotional distress after using devices.

Online Abuse

Possible indicators:

- Secretive internet use.
- Receiving unexplained gifts.
- Distress after online activity.
- Exposure to harmful content.
- Sharing personal information online.

Criminal or Sexual Exploitation

Possible indicators:

- Missing episodes.
- Possession of unexplained money.
- Association with unknown adults.

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- Increased secrecy.
- Declining academic performance.
- Evidence of coercion or control.

Mental Health Concerns

Possible indicators:

- Persistent sadness.
- Anxiety.
- Self-harm.
- Eating difficulties.
- Significant behavioural changes.
- Expressions of hopelessness.

Mental health concerns should always be considered alongside possible safeguarding concerns.

Additional Vulnerability Factors

Students may be at increased risk where they:

- Have additional learning needs.
- Are students of determination.
- Experience domestic abuse.
- Experience parental conflict.
- Have poor attendance.
- Are socially isolated.
- Have experienced trauma or bereavement.



APPENDIX 3

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT AND LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS GUIDANCE

Professional Conduct

All staff are expected to:

- Act in the best interests of students.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Treat students with dignity and respect.
- Uphold the school's values.
- Promote student welfare at all times.

Communication with Students

Staff must:

- Use only school-approved communication systems.
- Avoid personal messaging platforms.
- Maintain professional language.
- Ensure communication is transparent and appropriate.

Social Media

Staff must:

- Maintain professional online conduct.
- Not communicate privately with students through personal social media accounts.
- Protect the school's reputation.
- Follow school social media guidance.

Physical Contact

Physical contact should:

- Be appropriate.
- Be necessary.
- Be proportionate.
- Be in the student's best interests.

Any incident that could be misinterpreted should be recorded.



One-to-One Situations

Where possible:

- Meetings should occur in visible locations.
- Doors should remain open or have visibility panels.
- Another adult should be nearby.
- The meeting should be recorded where appropriate.

Photography and Images

Staff must:

- Use school-approved devices.
- Follow parental consent requirements.
- Store images securely.
- Never use personal devices to photograph students.

Transporting Students

Staff shall not transport students in personal vehicles unless specifically authorized by the Principal and approved according to school procedures.

LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

Definition

A low-level concern is behaviour by an adult that:

- Is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Does not meet the threshold for referral to external agencies.
- May indicate emerging safeguarding risk.

Examples

- Over-familiar behaviour.
- Inappropriate jokes.
- Favouritism.
- Unprofessional communication.
- Unnecessary private contact.

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- Breaches of school procedures.

Reporting

All staff have a responsibility to report low-level concerns immediately.

Reports should include:

- Date.
- Time.
- Location.
- Description of behaviour.
- Witnesses.
- Actions taken.

Recording and Monitoring

The Principal shall:

- Maintain a Low-Level Concerns Register.
- Review patterns of behaviour.
- Take appropriate action.
- Escalate concerns where necessary.

Repeated low-level concerns may indicate a more serious safeguarding issue and will be addressed accordingly.

