

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY (Whole-School)

Approved by: Principal / CEO – K. George Mathew

Date approved: April 2025

Effective from: April 2025

Next review: April 2027 (or earlier if required)

Version: 1.0

Policy Owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Student Protection & Wellbeing Team

Applies to: All students, staff (teaching & non-teaching), parents/guardians, volunteers, contractors, visitors, and external providers on campus, on transport, on trips, and in online spaces connected to the school.

1. Rationale

At **GEMS United Indian School (UIS), Abu Dhabi**, we are committed to safeguarding the **physical, emotional, and psychological well-being** of every student. UIS has **zero tolerance** for **bullying, harassment, intimidation, and abuse**. This policy provides a clear **whole-school framework** to **prevent, identify, report, respond, record, and monitor** bullying, ensuring **timely and appropriate intervention and support**.

UIS aims to:

- Create a **safe, supportive environment** where bullying is **identified early** and **addressed promptly**.
- Empower students to **report bullying without fear** and to seek help confidently.
- Implement **preventative strategies** through a comprehensive, school-wide anti-bullying framework.
- Reinforce the school's commitment to **zero tolerance** toward bullying and harassment.
- Ensure **consistent practice** aligned to UAE and Abu Dhabi requirements.

2. Policy Context and Compliance

This policy is aligned with:

- **Ministry of Education (MOE) Ministerial Resolution No. (645) of 2020** – Policy for the Prevention of Bullying in Educational Institutions.
- **ADEK School Student Protection Policy, Student Behaviour Policy** and relevant safeguarding expectations.

- **UIS Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour & Discipline Policy, Digital Safety/Acceptable Use Policy, Inclusion/SEN Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, and School Transport/Bus Conduct procedures.**
- **UAE laws** relating to cyber safety and online misconduct (*as applicable*).

Important safeguarding statement:

Any incident involving **physical harm, sexualised behaviour/sexual harm, serious threats, extortion, hate-related abuse**, or suspected **child protection concerns** will be handled **immediately** under UIS safeguarding procedures, including GEMS UIS Child Protection Committee procedures, and escalated to **external authorities** when required by law/policy.

3. Definitions: Bullying, Teasing, Conflict, and Abuse

3.1 What is Bullying?

Bullying is **intentional, hurtful behaviour** that is usually **repeated over time** and involves a **real or perceived power imbalance**, causing **physical and/or emotional harm**. Bullying may occur **in-person** or **online (cyberbullying)**.

The UIS “Bullying Test” (used in investigations)

Behaviour is likely bullying when most of the following are present:

1. **Intentional** – meant to hurt, frighten, humiliate, or control.
2. **Repeated** – happens more than once
3. **Power imbalance** – age/size/strength/social status/group size/digital reach/authority/vulnerability.
4. **Harm** – physical injury, emotional distress, fear, humiliation, exclusion, loss of confidence/safety.

3.2 What Bullying is NOT (but still may need action)

Bullying is different from:

- **One-off disagreements** or arguments between students of equal power.
- **Mutual conflict** (*both parties upset each other equally*).
- **Accidental harm** without intent.
- **Playful teasing** that stops immediately when asked and does not cause distress.

Even if behaviour is not bullying, it may still be **unacceptable** and managed under the **Behaviour Policy**.

3.3 Abuse and Safeguarding

Abuse includes **physical, emotional, sexual harm, neglect, or exploitation**. Some abusive behaviours can occur between students (**peer-on-peer**). **Sexual harm** is not treated as a “type of bullying”; it is treated as a **safeguarding/child protection matter** requiring **immediate action** under safeguarding procedures.

4. Types and Forms of Bullying (UIS)

Bullying can take many forms:

4.1 Physical Bullying

- Hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, spitting
- Throwing objects, damaging property, forcing unsafe acts
- Physical intimidation, threatening gestures

4.2 Verbal Bullying

- Name-calling, insults, taunting, mocking
- Threats, offensive jokes, humiliating comments

4.3 Social / Relational Bullying

- Deliberate exclusion or isolation
- Spreading rumours, gossiping, manipulating friendships
- Encouraging others to ignore/hate a student

4.4 Written Bullying

- Offensive notes/messages, graffiti, harmful drawings or posters

4.5 Cyberbullying

- Harassment via social media, gaming platforms, email, messaging apps
- Posting/sharing humiliating content, impersonation, threats
- Sharing personal or private material without consent, doxxing, repeated hostile messaging

4.6 Targeted / Protected-Characteristic Bullying (Serious)

Bullying may be linked to (*but not limited to*):

- Nationality, race, ethnicity, language
- Religion/culture
- Disability, medical conditions, SEN/additional needs

- Age
 - Gender/sex
 - Appearance/body image
 - Family circumstances (*looked-after children, young carers, home situations*)
 - Any form of hate-related or discriminatory behaviour
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5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 All Staff (Teaching and Non-Teaching)

- Maintain a **safe, respectful environment** and model expected behaviour.
- **Intervene promptly** when bullying is suspected or observed.
- **Record and report** incidents immediately through UIS reporting systems.
- Follow **safeguarding procedures** for serious concerns (*especially physical/sexual harm*).
- Maintain **confidentiality** on a **need-to-know basis**.

5.2 Class Teachers / Homeroom Teachers

- Receive and act on reports, provide reassurance, and ensure **immediate safety**.
- Inform the relevant pastoral leader/**Academic Supervisor** and **DSL** where required.
- Support follow-up and classroom strategies to prevent recurrence.

5.3 Academic Supervisors / Pastoral Leaders

- Lead investigations (*as assigned*), coordinate meetings, and ensure consistent actions/sanctions.
- Conduct regular class/whole-school assemblies on preventive/awareness theme weeks
- Ensure documentation is complete and placed in appropriate records.
- Monitor patterns/hotspots and initiate preventative actions.

5.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Provide oversight for **child protection** concerns and serious cases.
- Ensure correct escalation and external reporting where required.
- Maintain safeguarding logs and ensure appropriate support plans.

5.5 School Counsellor / Wellbeing Team

- Provide support plans for **victims** and for students who bully.

- Deliver interventions: **SEL**, empathy development, self-regulation, restorative work.
- Conduct check-ins and support reintegration.

5.6 Students

- Treat others with respect, **report bullying**, and support peers safely.
- Do **not retaliate**; use reporting routes.
- Take responsibility for actions and participate in restorative processes when appropriate.

5.7 Parents/Guardians

- Report concerns promptly and support the school's investigation process.
- Encourage respectful online behaviour and safe technology use at home.
- Work with the school to implement behaviour/support plans.

5.8 Bystander responsibility:

- Students who **encourage, film, share**, or do nothing to **stop/report** serious bullying may also be held accountable under this policy and the **Behaviour Policy**

6. Preventive Measures (Whole-School)

UIS will implement prevention through **education, supervision, student voice**, and **culture-building**, including:

- Awareness sessions, assemblies, and curriculum integration on bullying prevention.
- Teaching **social-emotional learning, self-regulation, empathy, safe bystander actions**, and **respect for diversity**.
- Clear communication of **zero tolerance** and consequences to students and parents.
- Student-led initiatives promoting kindness, inclusion, and responsible citizenship.
- Visual reminders/signage throughout the campus supporting positive behaviour.
- Proactive engagement by counsellors and teachers to identify early warning signs.
- Safe supervision plans and patrolling of **hotspots** (*corridors, toilets, stairwells, canteen, bus areas, secluded areas*).
- Buddy/peer mentoring approaches where appropriate (*older-to-younger support, class ambassador systems*).

- Regular staff training (*induction and refresher*) on identification, response, recording, and cyber safety.
 - Periodic student surveys/consultations to identify patterns: **when/where/how** bullying occurs.
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7. How Students Can Respond and Get Help

Students are encouraged to:

- Tell the person to stop (*if safe*) using a clear, assertive voice.
- Move away and seek adult help immediately.
- Confide in a trusted adult: teacher, supervisor, counsellor, **DSL**, or parent.
- Report incidents quickly; UIS will handle the matter appropriately and confidentially.
- Support peers safely (*do not join in, do not share content, report immediately*).

Note: Any incidents involving **physical harm, sexualised behaviour, serious threats, or abuse** will follow **GEMS UIS Child Protection Committee (2024) procedures** and safeguarding escalation.

8. Reporting Routes (Confidential and Accessible)

UIS provides multiple reporting options to reduce fear and barriers:

- Speak to a class teacher/**Academic Supervisor**.
 - Speak to the School Counsellor/Wellbeing Team.
 - Report directly to the **DSL** (*or Deputy DSL where applicable*).
 - Parent reports via official school channels (*email/meeting/communication platforms*).
 - Anonymous reporting routes where available (*e.g., email/text/notes*) — anonymity can limit investigation, but will still be acted upon.
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9. Procedures for Responding to Bullying

9.1 Immediate Response (Same Day)

Any staff member receiving or witnessing a report must:

1. **Stop the behaviour** and ensure immediate safety.
2. **Separate students** where needed and prevent further contact temporarily.
3. Provide **reassurance** to the reporting student.

4. Identify if it is a **safeguarding matter** (for example: *physical harm, sexual harm, credible threats, hate-related incidents*). If yes: inform **DSL** immediately and follow safeguarding procedures.
5. **Record initial facts** promptly and pass to the assigned pastoral leader/committee.

9.2 Investigation (Prompt and Confidential)

An investigation committee will be formed as appropriate, typically comprising:

- **DSL**
- **Vice Principal**
- **Principal**
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**
- **Deputy DSLs**
- *And, where required: Pastoral Leads, Academic Supervisor, Counsellor*

The committee will:

- Investigate promptly and confidentially.
- Collect information from student (Child's Voice) staff witnesses, supervisors, and parents as relevant.
- Interview students **individually**, especially where group allegations exist.
- Request **written statements** when appropriate.
- Collect evidence (*messages/screenshots/video*) in line with privacy and safeguarding protocols.
- Determine whether behaviour meets the UIS "**Bullying Test**" and its severity level.
- Document findings, actions, and outcomes accurately.
- Work as per guidelines in the ADEK Student Behavior Policy.

9.3 Communication with Parents

- Parents of the **victim** and the alleged **perpetrator** will be informed as appropriate, especially for repeated or serious incidents.
- Meetings may be held with parents by the committee.
- Communication will remain **factual, confidential**, and focused on **student safety and resolution**.

9.4 Outcomes and Actions

Actions will be determined by severity, age, intent, frequency, harm caused, and safeguarding risk, and will include:

- Restorative conversations (*where safe and appropriate*)
 - Counselling interventions
 - Behaviour contracts and monitoring plans
 - Adjustments to seating, break/lunch movement plans, supervision
 - Sanctions under the Behaviour/Discipline framework
 - Escalation to safeguarding processes and external authorities where required
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10. Consequences and Sanctions (Aligned to ADEK Student Behavior Policy)

UIS applies sanctions **consistently** and **proportionately**. Examples include (*not exhaustive*):

Level 1 (Low-level / first incident):

- Warning and re-teaching expected behaviour
- Reflection task and restorative conversation
- Parent notification as appropriate

Level 2 (Repeated / moderate impact):

- Behaviour contract; loss of privileges
- Parent meeting
- Counselling referral and monitoring

Level 3 (Serious / persistent):

- Formal disciplinary action
- Internal suspension and structured reintegration plan
- Increased supervision and scheduled check-ins

Level 4 (Severe / safeguarding / criminal risk):

- External suspension or further serious sanctions under school policy
- Immediate safeguarding escalation; external reporting as required (*ADEK/MOE/police, and relevant reporting systems where applicable*)
- Consideration of further action in line with school governance and UAE requirements

False or malicious allegations:

If an allegation is found to be deliberately **false/malicious**, it will be addressed under the Behaviour Policy while still ensuring support to all students involved.

11. Support Systems

11.1 Support for Students Who Are Bullied (Victims)

UIS will provide protection, reassurance, and a support plan, which may include:

- A named trusted adult for regular check-ins
- Safe space access / supervised areas at break times as needed
- Seating/transition adjustments; buddy support
- Counselling and wellbeing support
- Help building confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, and peer support skills
- Follow-up monitoring for a defined period

11.2 Working With Students Who Bully

UIS recognises that students who bully may need support and intervention. UIS will:

- Be clear that behaviour is unacceptable and harmful
 - Apply appropriate sanctions and consequences
 - Provide counselling/interventions to build empathy, regulation, and positive choices
 - Offer opportunities to make amends and repair harm (*restorative practices where safe*)
 - Always involve parents/guardians and implement a behaviour improvement plan
 - Monitor progress and reintegrate carefully after sanctions
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12. Identifying Warning Signs

Staff will be alert to indicators that may suggest bullying:

Possible signs a student is being bullied:

- Becoming withdrawn or unusually anxious
- Isolation, reluctance to participate in group work
- Unusual absence patterns or reluctance to come to school
- Unexplained injuries, torn/dishevelled clothing

- Damage/loss of belongings or repeated missing items
- Sudden drop in confidence or attainment

Possible signs a student may be bullying others:

- Frequent conflict, dominance, intimidation
- Lack of empathy, repeated complaints from peers
- Secretive online behaviour, repeated incidents of disrespect

Any concerns should be recorded and reported promptly.

13. Bullying Outside School Premises and Online

UIS will take action when bullying occurs:

- On school transport, school trips, events, or while representing UIS
- Online or outside school hours when it affects student wellbeing, safety, or the school environment

UIS will investigate and respond in line with this policy and the Behaviour Policy. Serious cyber incidents or unlawful behaviour will be escalated through safeguarding channels and external reporting as required. UIS educates students on safe online behaviour and the seriousness of UAE cyber laws.

14. Record Keeping, Confidentiality, and Data Handling

UIS will:

- Maintain a secure system to **record, track, and analyse** incidents: type, severity, location, frequency, students involved, outcomes, and recurrence.
 - Log incidents within the school's designated safeguarding/behaviour recording systems and retain records in relevant student files where required.
 - Store evidence securely and access on a need-to-know basis only.
 - Ensure confidentiality while recognising that safety may require sharing information with relevant staff and external agencies.
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15. Monitoring, Analysis, and Improving Practice

UIS will:

- Monitor each case for a defined period with scheduled follow-ups.

- Review patterns and hotspots and adjust supervision and prevention strategies.
- Use student voice (*surveys, councils, wellbeing check-ins*) to improve practice.
- Provide staff training regularly and during induction.
- Review the effectiveness of interventions and ensure sustained follow-up action.

16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed **biennially (every two years)** or earlier if required due to:

- changes in ADEK/MOE requirements
- safeguarding updates
- trend analysis indicating policy improvement needs
- major incidents requiring procedural refinement

17. References

- **Ministry of Education (MOE). (2020). Ministerial Resolution No. (645) of 2020** on the Policy of Preventing Bullying in Private and Public Schools that Follow the Ministry's Curriculum.
 - **ADEK School Student Protection Policy and Student Behavior Policy** (*as applicable*).
1. **GEMS UIS Child Protection/Safeguarding** and related policies (*Behaviour, Digital Safety, Inclusion, Staff Code of Conduct, Transport*).

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