



Effective From	AY 2024/25 (Fall term)
Compliance From	AY 2025/26 (Fall term)

## SCHOOL POLICY

on

# COEDUCATION



### Introduction

Schools have traditionally been single-gendered in Abu Dhabi, and the expansion of the international school sector has led to the adoption of coeducation as common practice. However, there are certain requirements regarding coeducation or the gender of staff allowed for specific situations for which schools need regulatory clarity in line with local practices, as per the [ADEK School Cultural Consideration Policy](#). This policy sets out the basic requirements for coeducation and the gender of staff in schools.

### Purpose

- Identify requirements for schools regarding the sharing and/or separation of spaces according to gender.
- Identify requirements for schools regarding gender of staff according to school type and student grade level.

## Definitions

<b>Coeducational</b>	Having students of both genders interacting in a defined space.
<b>Cycle</b>	A stage in the primary and secondary educational process and is classified in Abu Dhabi as the following: Kindergarten (Pre-KG/FS1-KG2/Y1), Cycle 1 (G1/Y2-G5/Y6), Cycle 2 (G6/Y7- G8/Y9), and Cycle 3 (G9/Y10-G12/Y13). Private schools teaching Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum may follow MoE cycles: KG, Cycle 1 (G1-G4), Cycle 2 (G5-G8), and Cycle 3 (G9-G12).
<b>Gender Status</b>	The classification of a school depending on its gender mixture, defined as coeducational, shared, or single-gendered.
<b>Nudity</b>	The state of not wearing any clothes.
<b>Physical Education (PE)</b>	The subject concerned with developing students' physical literacy and their ability to use their literacy to perform in a range of activities for the progressive development of their physical health. PE is planned, progressive learning (theory and practice) that takes place in a timetabled class with a documented curriculum that is delivered to all students by a qualified PE teacher. For the purpose of this policy, any reference to PE also includes other physical activity-based subjects where intentional physical contact between genders is possible (e.g., dance, yoga).
<b>Section</b>	An administrative grouping of students (e.g., by cycle, grade, class, bus, or any other dividing parameter). A section can have a different gender status than that of the school (e.g., a school may be coeducational in Cycle 1 but have single-gendered sections for Cycle 2 and above).
<b>Shared</b>	Having both boys and girls on a campus, but with completely separate sections for each gender. Students share common facilities (e.g., labs), but use them at different times to ensure that there is no interaction between genders.
<b>Single-Gendered (SG)</b>	Having students of only one gender in a defined space.
<b>Toilet Block</b>	A structure or designated area within the school or outdoor setting that contains multiple toilets and washbasins.

## Policy

### 1. Gender Status

- 1.1 Communication of Gender Status: Schools shall publish their school’s gender status (coeducational, shared, or single-gendered) on their website and on student registration forms.
  1. Where schools have different gender statuses for different grades or cycles, this should be approved by ADEK and published on their website.
- 1.2 Coeducation in Cycle 1: Regardless of the school’s gender status, all schools are authorized to be coeducational in Cycle 1 (up to and including Grade 4/Year 5).
- 1.3 Permanent Gender Status Conversion (Whole School or Cycle/Grade): Schools are not authorized to change their gender status, whether for the whole school or for a specific cycle/grade without prior approval from ADEK.
  1. Schools shall provide proof of consent from the majority (more than 50%) of parents of students enrolled in the whole school or specific cycle/grade that is being considered for conversion to a coeducational class.
  2. Schools shall ensure transitional adjustments (e.g., informing parents, ensuring adjustments/changes to building facilities such as ensuring sufficient toilets for both genders) are made at least one full academic year in advance of the gender status change for a whole school or specific cycle/grade.
- 1.4 Temporary Gender Status Conversion (Single Class): Schools are authorized to temporarily convert a specific single-gendered class to coeducational for a term/academic year on the following conditions:
  1. Schools with single-gendered and shared status offering specialized tracks (e.g. AP, IB, other) shall inform parents, at the beginning of each academic year, that there is a possibility that courses in such programs may need to be converted to coeducational in case of low enrollment or teacher shortage, and that such conversions will take place in line with the requirements of this policy.
  2. Request to ADEK: Schools shall submit an official request providing justification and evidence for converting a class.
    - a) Majority Parent Consent: Schools shall provide proof of consent from more than 75% of parents of students enrolled in any class being considered for conversion to a coeducational class.
    - b) Class Location: Schools shall select an appropriate location for the class, allowing for the “guest” gender to enter/exit separately and have access to toilets.
    - c) Accommodations: Schools shall demonstrate how accommodations will be provided for students of non-consenting parents (e.g. dividing the class into separate spaces, adding screens, allowing students to sit towards the back of the room, providing online access).

3. Unauthorized Conversion: Even with majority parent consent, conversion to coeducational swimming classes in Grade 5/Year 6 onwards is not authorized in coeducational schools.

## 2. Gender Restrictions

2.1 KG (Cycle): Class teachers and all teaching support staff in KG shall be female only. There are no gender restrictions for teachers in other grades/cycles, except for those covered in Section 2.2 (PE and Swimming).

### 2.2 PE and Swimming

1. Regardless of gender status, schools shall adhere to the gender restrictions required for PE classes and swimming classes as per Table 1. Gender Restrictions for PE and Swimming.

Table 1. Gender Restrictions for PE and Swimming

Class	Grades	Gender Status of School/Section	Teacher/Adult Gender
PE	PKG/FS1-G4/Y5	SG Male	Male or Female
		SG Female	Female
		Coeducational**	Male or Female
	G5/Y6-G12/Y13	Male Section	Male
		Female Section	Female
		Coeducational**	Male or Female
Swimming*	PKG/FS1-G4/Y5	SG Male	Male
		SG Female	Female
		Coeducational**	Female
	G5/Y6-G12/Y13	Male Section	Male
		Female Section	Female

\*Swimming: applies to swimming during PE only. This does not apply to extracurricular swimming activities.

\*\*Running coeducational sections is contingent on ADEK approval (for coeducational schools only).

2. Regardless of school type, students shall be separated by gender (male and female sections) from Grade 5/Year 6 onward for PE and swimming. However, coeducational schools may apply to ADEK for exceptional approval to run coeducational:
  - a. PE classes.
  - b. Swimming classes only until G4/Y5 for schools that have separate changing rooms for each gender, in line with the [ADEK School Buildings and Facilities Policy](#).
  - c. Parental consent should be considered for swimming and any coeducational physical activities, with alternative arrangements or accommodations for physical activity made for non-consenting students (e.g. land training/dryland exercises, screens).

3. During swimming, students and teachers in Grade 5/Year 6 and above shall be of the same gender.

### 2.3 Changing Rooms and Spaces

1. Changing rooms shall be separated by gender or their occupation shall be staggered to strictly ensure use by only one gender at any given time.
2. For existing schools, bathrooms shall be separated by gender for all grades, except KG. For new schools, each Cycle 2 or 3 section shall additionally have at least two gender-separated toilet blocks, in line with the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* (latest version).
3. Nudity is prohibited throughout the campus and schools shall ensure that students adhere to modest changing practices in changing rooms.
4. Schools shall provide completely separated spaces for any activity in the school that requires the changing of clothes to the level of undergarments or beyond (e.g., during costume changes in a dance performance).
5. Changing of clothes to the level of undergarments or beyond is not permitted outside of designated changing rooms or spaces for any activity taking place on school premises.

### 2.4 Prayer Rooms

1. Schools shall have separate male and female prayer rooms with ablution facilities, which can be used by both staff and students.
2. Where this may be challenging, the sharing of prayer rooms is authorized for Cycle 1 only, but usage times shall be staggered to ensure use by only one gender at any given time.

### 2.5 Gender Restrictions for Other Staff

1. Schools shall adhere to the gender restrictions for bus supervisors, cleaners, and nurses as detailed in Tables 2-4.
2. Where schools have both a male and a female nurse, schools shall ensure there are two separate care spaces within the clinic for each gender.
3. Male security guards shall be accompanied by an appointed female staff member when accessing a female single-gendered section due to emergency, to the best extent possible.

Table 2. Gender Restrictions for Bus Supervisors

Grades	Gender Status of School	Staff Gender
G4/Y5 and below	SG Male/SG Female/Coeducational	Female
G5/Y6 and above	SG Male	Male
	SG Female/Coeducational	Female

Table 3. Gender Restrictions for Cleaners\*

Grades	Gender Status of School/Section	Staff Gender
G4/Y5 and below	SG Male/SG Female/Coeducational	Female
G5/Y6 and above	SG Male	Male
	SG Female	Female
	Coeducational	Male and Female (depending on the gender of toilets, changing rooms, and prayer rooms)

\*Gender restrictions for cleaners apply during official working hours and when cleaning outside of working hours is in progress, clear visible signage /notification is required indicating if there is a cleaner of the opposite gender tending to the concerned space.

Table 4. Gender Restrictions for Nurses\*

Grades	Gender Status of School/Section	Staff Gender
PKG/FS1-KG2/Y1	Any	Female
G1/Y2-G4/Y5	SG Male	Male or Female
	SG Female	Female
	Coeducational	Female (as a minimum; but additional male nurses may be employed to cater to male students)
G5/Y6 and above	SG Male	Male
	SG Female	Female
	Coeducational	Female (as a minimum; but additional male nurses may be employed to cater to male students)

\*While it is preferable for students in a coeducational school in G1/Y2 and above to be treated by a nurse of the same gender, if this is not possible due to an emergency, the student is entitled to request the presence of a third-party adult of the same gender.

### 3. Policy Awareness

- 3.1 Awareness sessions shall be organized to ensure all members of the school community (students, staff, parents, visitors) are aware of this policy as applicable in their school.

### 4. Compliance

- 4.1 This policy shall be effective as of the start of the Academic Year 2024/25 (Fall term). Schools are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2025/26 (Fall term).
- 4.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with the ADEK's regulations, policies, and requirements, notwithstanding any other penalties imposed by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations.



## References

- Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). (latest version). *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines*.
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments.

### Publication

2024 (September) ADEK\_School\_Coeducation Policy\_v.1.1

Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Charter Schools. However, any circular issued prior to this policy or issued specifically for Charter Schools thereafter supersedes the requirements of this policy.

Past version:

2024 (January) ADEK\_School\_Coeducation Policy\_v1.0

