



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

SCHOOL POLICY

on

BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES



Introduction

It is important that the physical space housing a school is healthy, safe, inclusive, sustainable, and supports the educational provision in line with the vision and mission of the school. This policy sets out the requirement that school buildings and facilities are designed and constructed in compliance with the specifications defined by the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* and all other relevant government entities, and that they are periodically maintained and inspected to ensure that they remain in a good and safe condition.

Purpose

- Ensure that school buildings and facilities comply with all relevant planning, design, and construction specifications, all relevant occupational health, safety, and environmental requirements, and any other requirements defined by ADEK and other relevant government entities.
- Ensure that schools operate on land designated for educational purposes.
- Set out the requirement that schools plan and implement periodic maintenance and repair, and that schools cooperate with inspections of school buildings commissioned by ADEK or any other relevant government entity.
- Describe the procedure through which schools can, with approval from ADEK, allow external parties to use their buildings and facilities.
- Describe the procedure for the temporary leasing of former government school buildings for the operation of a school in the short-term until the construction of a new permanent school building is completed.

Definitions

Additional Learning Needs	<p>Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within a school setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by students of determination and those who have special educational needs and/or additional barriers to learning, access, or interaction in that specific context (e.g., dyslexic, hearing or visually impaired, twice exceptional, or gifted and/or talented).</p> <p>For example, a student with restricted mobility may require lesson accommodations to participate in Physical Education and building accommodations to access facilities but may not require any accommodations in assessments. Equally, a student with hearing impairment may require adaptive and assistive technology to access content in class and may also require physical accommodations (e.g., sit in the front of the class to be able to lip read) to access learning.</p>
Bathroom	<p>A room that contains facilities for bathing and personal hygiene. It typically includes a bathtub or shower, a toilet, and a washbasin.</p>
Buildings and Facilities	<p>All places located within or outside of the school boundaries that are under the school's operational control and that are used for school purposes and contribute to the school's operation.</p>
Dual Flush WC	<p>A type of toilet equipped with a dual flush mechanism, allowing the user to select between two flushing options: a lower volume flush for liquid waste and a higher volume flush for solid waste.</p>
External Parties	<p>Individuals or organizations who do not work in the school system.</p>
Request for Proposal (RfP)	<p>A document through which ADEK attracts bids for the lease of ADEK assets (e.g., ex-government school buildings, educational lands), and which specifies the conditions in relation to the same.</p>
Risk Assessment	<p>A systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in an activity or undertaking.</p>
School Premises	<p>The area or property used by a school including the school building, grounds, recreation area, sports field, or any other facilities used for school activity or administration.</p>
Staff housing	<p>Buildings or other premises designated for the residential purposes of school staff.</p>
Toilet	<p>A small, enclosed space within a larger toilet block that contains a single enclosed WC. It may include washbasin or PoD accessories.</p>

Toilet Block	A structure or designated area within the school or outdoor setting that contains multiple toilets and washbasins.
UAE National Symbols	National emblems of the UAE, including official photographs of UAE leaders, the UAE flag, and the national anthem.
Washbasin	A basin or sink typically found in toilet blocks, used for washing hands, face, and other usage. It is usually equipped with faucets and may include a countertop or pedestal.
WC (Water Closet)	Specifically refers to the toilet fixture itself, including the bowl, seat, and flushing mechanism. In schools, the size of the WC should be appropriately scaled to match the size of the students, with smaller WCs provided for younger children.



Policy

1. Land Use

- 1.1 Designated Educational Land Use: Schools shall only operate on land that is designated for school use by the Abu Dhabi Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT). Schools shall not operate from buildings intended for residential or commercial usage.
1. Closure of Non-Compliant Schools: As per Federal Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments, ADEK may close any school that operates from buildings intended for residential or commercial usage without the need for any judicial rule or resolution, and it may resort to any component executive authority.
- 1.2 Temporary Lease of Former Government School Buildings: ADEK may, at its discretion, grant a temporary lease of former government school buildings for the operation of a private school in the short term, till the construction of a new permanent school building is completed. Leases shall be granted either through direct allocation by the Chairman of ADEK or based on the findings by the Procurement Committee; the process shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. Lessees shall undertake relevant construction and maintenance to ensure that the building meets the requirements, in line with this policy.
1. Allocation Through Tender: Where a tender process is used to grant a lease, a Request for Proposal (RfP) shall be issued by ADEK. Participants in this process shall demonstrate the following:
 - a. Their educational experience in managing and operating schools.
 - b. Their financial capability to develop and operate a school on the site.
 - c. Their ability to meet ADEK policies in relation to the construction and operation of a school.
 - d. Their ability to construct and operate a new permanent school building by the end of the duration of the lease.
 2. Duration of Lease: The duration of the lease shall be determined by ADEK on a case-by-case basis. Schools are authorized to apply for an extension of the lease; however, ADEK is not obligated to provide this extension.
 - a. Where an extension of the lease is obtained, the school shall commission a structural assessment with an ADEK-approved consultancy firm and ensure the ongoing maintenance of the buildings in compliance with ADEK standards.
- 1.3 Expansion of Building and Facilities: Schools shall apply for ADEK's approval prior to any expansion of their buildings, land, or facilities. Schools seeking expansion of existing buildings or building renovations are subject to the latest editions of the Abu Dhabi Capital Development Code (DMT, 2022) and the Abu Dhabi International Building Code. The application shall include, but not be limited, to the following:
1. Building floor plans (as per building drawings) of existing buildings and facilities.

2. Proposed expansion designs and their compliance, in line with this policy.
3. The impact on the student capacity of the school.
4. Justification for the expansion.
5. Financial viability of the expansion and associated construction requirements.
6. Measures to ensure that the continuity and quality of educational provision are maintained during the period of expansion.

2. Design and Construction Standards

2.1 Compliance with Standards:

1. Schools shall ensure that their buildings and facilities are designed, constructed, and maintained in line with this policy and the following standards:
 - a. Abu Dhabi Capital Development Code (DMT, 2022).
 - b. *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* (latest version).
 - c. Estidama Pearl 1 requirements in relation to sustainability.
 - 1) This includes, but is not limited to, the use of systems that minimize energy consumption. Additionally, ADEK encourages schools to pursue higher sustainability ratings than Estidama Pearl 1, at the same time as ensuring adherence to best practices to enable suitable acoustics and high indoor air quality, essential to promoting students' health and enhancing learning environments.
 - d. Standards specified by any other relevant government entities (e.g., DMT, Abu Dhabi Department of Health (DoH), Abu Dhabi Civil Defense Authority (CDA) and Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO)).
2. Schools shall demonstrate compliance with these requirements or proposed means to meet these requirements during their application for a Provisional License Letter (PLL), in line with the [ADEK School Licensing Policy](#). Schools shall ensure that the scale of their buildings and facilities is sufficient to meet the requirements of their proposed capacity and their curriculum.
3. Existing school buildings that are unable to fulfill accessibility requirements are authorized to seek exemption, with justification, from ADEK. However, existing school buildings seeking to renovate/expand are subject to the general accessibility requirements.
4. Gender-Separated Buildings and Facilities: Schools shall ensure that their buildings and facilities are gender-separated, where applicable, in line with their license category, as per the [ADEK School Licensing Policy](#) and the [ADEK School Coeducation Policy](#).
 - a. Schools shall ensure that toilets, changing rooms, and prayer rooms are gender-separated, regardless of their license category.

2.2 Compulsory Facilities: Schools shall ensure that the following facilities are a part of the school premises and in use, in addition to the spaces and facilities listed in the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines*:

1. Classrooms, toilets, changing rooms, and prayer rooms with appropriate ablution facilities.
2. Clinics, in line with the requirements of the [ADEK School Health and Safety Policy](#) and the Department of Health (DoH).
3. Outdoor spaces (see [Section 2.3.4 Outdoor Spaces](#)).
4. Designated area(s) for student drop-off and parking spaces for school buses and staff vehicles (see [Section 2.3.5 Parking and Entrances](#)).
5. Appropriate rooms and resources to accommodate students with additional learning needs (see [Section 2.3.6 Accessibility and Inclusion](#)).
6. Special classrooms such as art studios, music rooms, and laboratories, in line with the requirements of the school's curriculum.

2.3 Design Specifications of Facilities:

1. Classrooms:
 - a. Student Capacity: Schools shall adhere to the maximum permitted class size of 25 students each in KG, and 30 students each in Cycles 1, 2, and 3. Schools shall obtain written approval from ADEK to change these limits to accommodate teaching programs that require larger class sizes.
 - b. Classroom Area: Schools shall ensure classroom areas meet the minimum requirements set out in the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* for KG, Cycle 1, 2, and 3 classrooms.
 - c. Classroom Set-Up: Schools shall ensure that classrooms include, at a minimum, desks, chairs, a green/white/smart board, a teacher's table with a chair, and a cupboard for essential learning resources.
 - d. Classroom Location: Schools shall ensure that KG classrooms are located on the ground floor or at the level of exit discharge.
2. Sanitary Facilities and Changing Rooms: Schools shall ensure the following in relation to sanitary facilities and changing rooms:
 - a. Dual flush WCs, low flow and high efficiency plumbing fixtures shall be used.
 - b. Toilets shall be appropriately distributed throughout the instructional, ancillary, and administrative areas.
 - c. All WCs and plumbing fixtures shall be age appropriate.
 - d. Provide plumbing fixtures per the building code. At a minimum provide:
 - 1) One toilet is required per every 30 students, and one water fountain per every 75 students of grades 1 to 12. Provide 2 washbasins per 3 toilets.
 - e. One toilet is required for every 25 students of kindergarten.
 - f. At least one toilet for students of determination shall be provided on every floor.

- g. For students above the kindergarten age, all toilets within the toilet block should be designated for the same gender, in line with the [ADEK School Coeducation Policy](#).
 - h. Drinking fountains are constructed in accordance with the latest version of the Abu Dhabi Capital Development Code, and local DMT codes and requirements, whichever is more stringent.
 - i. Toilets and changing rooms shall provide privacy for users.
 - j. Toilets for staff and students are separate, and the number of staff toilets is in line with the requirements of the Abu Dhabi Capital Development Code.
 - k. Classrooms for KG students include at least a toilet block with one toilet and one washbasin, which is accessible internally from the classroom, unless otherwise approved by ADEK.
- 3. Science Laboratories:** Schools shall ensure that science laboratories:
- a. Meet the minimum requirements as per the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines*.
 - b. Are equipped for emergencies and have a separate, lockable chemical storage room and a preparation room, in case they have hazardous chemicals.
 - c. Have appropriate ventilation and emergency shut-off controls.
- 4. Outdoor Spaces:** In relation to outdoor spaces, schools shall ensure that:
- a. The minimum requirements for outdoor spaces specified in the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* are met. In cases where it is not feasible to meet the requirement internally, schools are authorized to use indoor spaces or spaces of external parties, subject to prior written approval from ADEK.
 - b. Outdoor spaces are designed to minimize injuries, allow for easy supervision of students, and ensure that students' recreational needs and interests are catered to.
 - c. Outdoor spaces provide sufficient drainage and are free of hazardous objects and harmful plants (e.g., cactus plants, and objects with sharp edges).
 - d. The outdoor temperature shall be monitored to avoid students engaging in outdoor recreational activities during extreme heat.
 - e. Outdoor spaces shall have an adequate shaded area to protect students from direct sunlight.
 - f. Objects made of thermal conductors (e.g., metal or plastic) are placed in shaded areas to avoid direct sunlight to prevent the risk of burning upon human contact with heated objects.
 - g. Fresh and cool drinking water is provided near outdoor play areas and is accessible to students.
 - h. To prevent injuries from collision, sharp edges and hard equipment (e.g., basketball posts, flagpoles) shall have padding with a minimum height of 1.2 m.
 - i. The external school boundary wall shall protect the school campus, ensuring the safety of students, staff, and facilities, in line with the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines*.
 - j. All external doors and gates to the school building shall be equipped with lockdown capabilities using control methods, in line with the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines*.

5. **Parking and Entrances:**
 - a. **Compulsory Parking:** Schools shall have designated parking areas within school premises for school buses and staff vehicles, in line with the [ADEK School Transportation Policy](#).
 - b. **Design Requirements:** Schools shall adhere to the design requirements stipulated by the Integrated Transport Center (ITC) and the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* in relation to parking, drop-off, and entrances. Schools shall ensure that bus stops within the school premises are such that school buses do not need to drive in reverse. Schools shall ensure that KG students board and disembark from the school bus on the right side of the road, adjacent to the school entrance.
6. **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Schools shall adhere to the accessibility requirements set out in the Abu Dhabi Capital Development Code, the Abu Dhabi International Building Code and the [ADEK School Inclusion Policy](#) in the design and construction of facilities. Schools shall make reasonable adjustments to their buildings and facilities to ensure that students with additional learning needs have access to all school facilities, for example through the provision of lifts and ramps for students with mobility difficulties.

2.4 UAE National Symbols:

1. **Display of Official Photographs:** Schools shall prominently display all official photographs of UAE leaders in line with the photograph and placement requirements of *Positions of Their Highness Pictures and Placements and Uses of Flags Manual*.
2. **Hoisting of the UAE Flag:** Schools shall ensure that the UAE flag remains hoisted prominently inside the school building (where the morning assembly is usually conducted) and in front of the school building on all days of the week, unless instructions have been given otherwise by ADEK or other relevant government authority. In line with the *Positions of Their Highness Pictures and Placements and Uses of Flags Manual*, schools shall ensure the flag:
 - a. Is flown freely and close to the top of the flagpole.
 - b. Is not faded or damaged.
 - c. Does not touch, fall, or lie on the ground.
 - d. Is lowered to half-mast in cases of an official mourning announcement in the UAE.
 - e. Meets all other requirements of the *Positions of Their Highness Pictures and Placements and Uses of Flags Manual*.

2.5 **Fire Safety:** Schools shall ensure that they are equipped with fully functioning fire prevention and protection systems in line with the requirements of the CDA. Schools shall appoint specialized companies approved by the CDA to maintain their firefighting and alarm systems. Schools shall ensure that all certifications required by the CDA (e.g., Hassantuk and Preventive Safety Certificate) are valid.

2.6 **Residential Accommodation:** Schools are not authorized to provide residential accommodation for staff within the school campus unless prior approval has been obtained from ADEK.

- 2.7 Security Guard's Room: Schools shall locate the security guard's room in a location which ensures the highest security oversight inside the school premises. The security guard's room shall only include utilities, without any permanent sleeping facilities.
- 2.8 CCTV Cameras: Schools shall install CCTV cameras in line with the requirements of the *Manual of Standards for Surveillance Devices* (MCC, 2023) and the [ADEK School Digital Policy](#), [ADEK School Health and Safety Policy](#), and [ADEK School Safeguarding Policy](#).

3. Use of School Facilities by External Parties

- 3.1 Use of Non-Classroom Facilities by External Parties: Schools are authorized to allow external parties to use facilities other than classrooms (e.g., auditorium, playground, outdoor spaces, swimming pool, changing rooms).
 1. Approval from ADEK: Schools shall obtain approval from ADEK prior to allowing the use of facilities by external parties. Applications for approval shall include the details of external parties that will use the space, the facilities that will be used, corresponding risk assessments, and measures to ensure that the safety of the school community is maintained.
 2. Student Health and Safety and Safeguarding:
 - a. Schools shall ensure such usage takes place outside of school hours and at times when the facilities are not in use by school students for extracurricular activities or events.
 - b. Schools shall have measures to prepare such facilities for student use post usage by external parties. This includes measures to clear hazardous and prohibited materials.
 - c. Schools shall ensure that external parties are aware of relevant ADEK policies relating to student safeguarding and protection, in line with the [ADEK School Safeguarding Policy](#) and the [ADEK School Student Protection Policy](#).
 3. Usage Fees: Schools are authorized to charge external parties for the use of school facilities. Schools shall disclose such charges to ADEK as part of their financial report, in line with the [ADEK School Reporting Policy](#) and the [ADEK School Financial Auditing and Reports Policy](#).

4. Maintenance, Inspections, and Documentation

- 4.1 Maintenance: Schools shall develop and implement a plan for periodic maintenance and repair of buildings and facilities to ensure that they remain in a safe and satisfactory condition, as per manufacturers and industry standards (e.g., maintaining a clean building appearance, and hence contributing to a positive school climate).
- 4.2 Buildings and Facilities Inspections: Schools shall undergo inspections conducted by ADEK, any external bodies appointed by ADEK, and other relevant government entities to ensure compliance with this policy and the overall safety and quality of the

school's buildings and facilities. Schools shall facilitate such Inspections, in line with the [ADEK School Compliance Policy](#).

4.3 Required Documentation:

1. Schools shall maintain documentation confirming that:
 - a. Its buildings and facilities are in line with this policy and are safe and fit for purpose throughout the license period.
 - b. Its buildings and facilities comply with all applicable legislation throughout the license period.
 - c. The school has undergone periodic maintenance inspections.
 - d. The school has conducted any safety assessments required by ADEK or other government entities (e.g., fire safety assessments).
2. Display of Licenses and Certificates: Schools shall post copies of any valid licenses or certificates issued by ADEK or other government entities in relation to the school's buildings and facilities on a display near the school's main entrance.

5. Insurance

5.1 Insurance of Buildings and Facilities: Schools shall insure their buildings and facilities through insurance companies licensed in Abu Dhabi. Schools shall ensure the insurance covers:

1. Damages to the school buildings, facilities, and equipment, and any liabilities incurred by the school in relation to the same.
2. Any building-related liabilities incurred by users of the school's buildings and facilities (e.g., injuries or casualties due to structural damage).

6. Compliance

6.1 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).

6.2 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*.
- Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). (latest version). *Positions of Their Highness Pictures and Placements and Uses of Flags Manual*.
- Department of Municipality and Transport (DMT). (2022). Abu Dhabi Capital Development Code.
- Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments.
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments.
- Monitoring and Control Center (MCC). (2023). *Manual of Standards for Surveillance Devices (Version 2.0)*.

Publication

2024 (September) ADEK_School_Buildings and Facilities Policy_v.1.1

Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Private and Charter Schools in Abu Dhabi. 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_Buildings and Facilities Policy_v.1.0

