

## KHDA POLICY GUIDELINES

### Distance Learning and Student Registration Requirements for Early Childhood Centres





## 1. Purpose and Scope

These policy guidelines establish new expectations for Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in the Emirate of Dubai.

It applies whenever KHDA or the Ministry of Education (MoE) requires physical settings to close and activates distance learning for Dubai's private education sector, regardless of the reason for the activation (including but not limited to public health emergencies, severe weather events, or security situations).

The policy guidelines address three areas:

1. An expectation for ECC owners to maintain a duty of care and provision of education for all children aged 3 and above through distance learning, Centre-Led Home-Based Learning (see separate policy guidelines) or a combination of both<sup>1</sup>.
2. The requirement for issuing Transfer Certificates (TCs) and withdrawal procedures for children with any record of previous registration at an ECC or school operating under a valid KHDA permit.
3. Formal withdrawal and re-registration procedures to protect parents and providers, aligned with KHDA's approved refund policy.

### Applicability

- These guidelines apply to all children registered in ECCs operating under a valid KHDA permit in Dubai. They do not apply to informal or unlicensed childcare arrangements.
- Where a child has never been registered at any ECC or school in Dubai operating with a valid KHDA permit and holds no previous enrolment records, their enrolment shall be treated as a new registration. No Transfer Certificate or Withdrawal Letter will be required.
- Where a child holds any record of previous registration at an ECC or school (including cases where the academic year was not completed), a Transfer Certificate or completed Withdrawal Letter must be submitted before registration at a new provider.

<sup>1</sup> The mandate to offer distance learning to families of children aged 3+ aligns with equivalent expectations in schools.

- The terms of any withdrawal must be consistent with KHDA's approved refund policy<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>ECC</b>	Early Childhood Centre – a licensed facility providing education and/or care to children from birth up to Year 1 (approximately age 6).
<b>FS1/PreKG</b>	Foundation Stage 1 – children aged 3–4 years (equivalent to Pre-KG / Nursery in some curricula).
<b>FS2/KG1</b>	Foundation Stage 2 – children aged 4–5 years (equivalent to KG1 in some curricula).
<b>Year 1/KG2</b>	Children aged 5–6 years (equivalent to KG2 in some curricula). Some ECCs provide education up to this level.
<b>Transfer Certificate (TC)</b>	An official document issued by the current educational provider confirming that a child is eligible to transfer to another provider – into a grade compliant with current legislation - and that all financial obligations have been settled.
<b>Withdrawal Letter</b>	A formal document confirming that a parent has withdrawn their child from an ECC or school in accordance with the provider's policy, and that all outstanding fees have been settled.
<b>Distance Learning Activation</b>	A directive issued by KHDA requiring or permitting private schools and/or ECCs to transition from in-person provision to distance learning.

<sup>2</sup> Link to KHDA's approved refund policy [\[Link\]](#)

### 3. Distance Learning Requirements

#### 3.1 Applicability

When KHDA activates distance learning, the following provisions apply.<sup>3</sup> :

Age Group	Requirement
<b>Below 3 years</b>	No distance learning required. ECC-located care and education services are suspended for the duration of the distance learning period. ECCs may seek approval to offer centre led home based learning and care during the distance learning period. Separate policy guidelines are available for this.
<b>3 years and above (FS1, FS2, Year 1)</b>	Distance learning expected. ECCs should aim to offer structured daily learning opportunities in accordance with the minimum standards set out in Section 3.2.  In addition, ECCs may seek approval to offer home-based learning as indicated above for this age group.

As with schools, all licensed ECCs serving children aged 3 and above should now aim to provide distance learning whenever it is activated by KHDA.

#### 3.2 New Distance Learning minimum standards for ECCs

##### Synchronous (Live) Sessions

- ECCs should aim to meet the following minimum daily requirements for synchronous (live, interactive) learning during any period of distance learning activation.
- For children, attendance at these sessions is monitored but optional. For all ages 3-6, either the parents themselves, a nominated, checked adult (e.g., nanny), or an ECC-based visiting educator MUST accompany the child(ren) in support.

<sup>3</sup> A separate policy proposal is available to facilitate ECCs in setting up centre led home based learning, deploying their own staff.



Stage	Age Range	Minimum Synchronous (Live) Time	Session Format
FS1 / PreKG	3–4 years	30–45 minutes per day	2–3 sessions of 10–15 minutes each, with breaks between sessions
FS2 / KG1	4–5 years	45–60 minutes per day	2–3 sessions of 15–20 minutes each, with breaks between sessions
Year 1 / KG2	5–6 years	60–90 minutes per day	3–4 sessions of 15–25 minutes each, with breaks between sessions

### Asynchronous (Pre-prepared/Pre-Recorded)

In addition to these synchronous sessions, ECCs are expected to provide age-appropriate online (pre-prepared, and/or pre-recorded) learning activities.

### Published, Additional Learning Activities for Parents/Carers to Lead

- ECCs should also publish appropriate offline learning activities – particularly for older children (e.g., creative play, physical activities, reading) that parents/carers can facilitate at other times.
- ECCs must share daily or weekly plans with parents outlining both synchronous and offline activities.
- These activities should be designed with the recognition that parents may be managing multiple commitments, including work obligations and the care of other children.

### 3.3 Platform and Delivery

- ECCs may use any secure, KHDA-approved video conferencing or learning management platform (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Seesaw, ClassDojo Etc.,).
- They must ensure that the selected platform is accessible to all enrolled families and must provide technical support or guidance to parents who experience difficulties.
- All online sessions must be delivered by qualified teaching staff employed by the provider.
- They must signpost their safeguarding/child protection policy with reference to distance learning and maintain a record of daily attendance for all online sessions.

### 3.4 Communication with Parents

- ECCs must notify parents within 24 hours of distance learning activation, providing a schedule of online sessions, platform details, and any login credentials required.
- ECCs must designate a point of contact for parents to raise questions or concerns during the distance learning period.

## 4. Transfer Certificate Requirements

### 4.1 When a Transfer Certificate is required

A Transfer Certificate (TC) will be <sup>4</sup> required in the following circumstances:

Any enrolled child is:

- transferring from one licensed ECC to another licensed ECC, or from one school to another school.
- transferring from a licensed ECC to a licensed private school; or
- transferring from a licensed private school to a licensed ECC, or between any combination of licensed providers.

<sup>4</sup> Previously required for only children in year 3 (grade 2) and above – and once the KHDA service is put in place and ECCs are notified.

This requirement applies at any point during the academic year, not just when distance learning is invoked.

Note: Transfer Certificates will be *required* for all children moving from one setting to another.

#### 4.2 Process for Issuing a Transfer Certificate

1. The parent submits a written request for a TC to the current ECC or school.
2. The provider (current ECC/school) verifies that all outstanding fees and financial obligations have been settled by the parent.
3. Only upon confirmation of fee settlement, the provider issues the TC immediately
4. The TC is issued electronically to the parent, who submits it to the receiving ECC or school as part of the enrolment service.

#### 4.3 Transfer Certificate Fee

- For schools, the fee for issuing a Transfer Certificate is AED 120. However, until ECCs are notified that this has been added to the ECC Fee Schedule, there will be no cost involved in issuing a transfer certificate.
- Providers may not charge any additional fees beyond the approved TC fee for processing a transfer other than any payments, as per the KHDA approved refund policy.

#### 4.4 Obligations of the Receiving Provider

- Any licensed ECC or school enrolling a child who was previously enrolled at another licensed provider must require a valid Transfer Certificate as part of the admissions process.
- Enrolment should not be completed without a TC, except where a Withdrawal Letter is presented (see Section 5).

## 5. Withdrawal Process

### 5.1 Right to withdraw

- Parents have the right to withdraw their child (if they are below compulsory school age) from an ECC or school at any time, including during a period of distance learning.
- However, withdrawal must follow a formal process to protect both the parent and the provider.

### 5.2 Withdrawal procedure

1. The parent submits a written withdrawal request to the ECC or school, specifying the intended last day of attendance (or engagement in distance learning).
2. The provider reviews the parent's account and confirms whether all fees up to the withdrawal date are settled, in accordance with the provider's published fee and refund policy.
3. Upon settlement, the provider issues a formal Withdrawal Letter to the parent within 3 working days.
4. The Withdrawal Letter confirms: the child's name and date of birth, the date of enrolment and date of withdrawal and that all financial obligations have been settled.

### 5.3 Use of the Withdrawal Letter

- If a parent who has withdrawn their child from an ECC or school wishes to enrol the child at a new provider at a later date (e.g., in September for the following academic year), the new provider should accept a Withdrawal Letter in place of a Transfer Certificate.
- *The Withdrawal Letter serves as evidence that the child's previous enrolment was formally concluded and that no outstanding fees remain.*

### 5.4 Fee obligations on withdrawal

- Parents who withdraw their child are responsible for paying fees up to the effective date of withdrawal, as set out in the provider's published terms and conditions.

- Providers may not withhold a Withdrawal Letter if fees have been settled up to the withdrawal date.
- Providers *may refuse* to release a child's records, report cards or other documentation in an effort to recover legitimate fees.
- Any fee disputes should be raised through the appropriate KHDA complaints mechanism.

## 6. Registration Requirements (New and Returning Students)

### 6.1 New students (No prior enrolment in Dubai)

- A "new student" is a child who has genuinely never been enrolled at any educational provider in Dubai.
- New students who have no previous provider follow the standard KHDA registration process and are not required to present a TC or Withdrawal Letter.
- The receiving provider should record in the child's enrolment file that the child has no prior educational history.

### 6.2 Students transferring from another Dubai provider

A child who is currently enrolled at (or was most recently enrolled at) another licensed ECC or private school in Dubai must present a valid Transfer Certificate from the previous provider before enrolment can be completed at the new provider.

This requirement ensures that:

- The child's previous provider is formally notified of the transfer.
- All outstanding fees at the previous provider have been settled.
- The child's educational records are properly maintained.

### 6.3 Students returning after withdrawal

- A child who was formally withdrawn from a previous provider without transferring to another setting (and whose parent holds a Withdrawal Letter) may be enrolled at a

new provider upon presentation of the Withdrawal Letter in lieu of a Transfer Certificate.

- The receiving provider should retain a copy of the Withdrawal Letter in the child's enrolment file.

#### 6.4 Summary of documentation requirements

Student Status	Required Document	Notes
New student (never enrolled at a Dubai provider)	None (standard registration)	The provider must record that the child has no prior educational history in Dubai.
Transferring from another Dubai provider	Transfer Certificate (TC)	TC must be from the most recent Dubai provider. Confirms fee settlement.
Returning after formal withdrawal for a period of time.	Withdrawal Letter	From the previous provider. Confirms formal withdrawal and fee settlement.

## 7. Monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring

KHDA will monitor the ECC's approach to implementing what is set out in these policy guidelines through:

- Review of attendance records and parent communications.
- Analysis of complaints received from parents.
- Routine visits and quality assurance activity.

KHDA recognise that some providers may require support to meet these requirements, particularly smaller ECCs. The KHDA relevant team is available to provide advice and guidance to any provider that requests assistance in implementing this policy.

## 8. Rationale

These policy guidelines have been developed in response to the following identified needs:

### 8.1 Continuity of education:

When distance learning is activated, children in FS1, FS2, and Year 1 at ECCs have historically been left without educational provision. This creates an inequity between children in schools (who receive distance learning) and those in ECCs (who may not). Mandating distance learning for all licensed ECCs serving children aged 3 and above ensures consistent educational continuity for all young learners.

### 8.2 Protection for families:

During previous distance learning periods, provision at ECCs was suspended, leaving parents - including essential workers such as healthcare professionals - without childcare or educational support. Some parents withdrew their children and refused to pay outstanding fees, creating financial disputes. The TC and formal withdrawal processes established in this policy provide clarity and protection for both parents and providers.

### 8.3 Fee recovery and financial fairness:

By requiring a Transfer Certificate or Withdrawal Letter before a child can be enrolled at a new provider, this policy ensures that providers can recover legitimate fees owed to them. At the same time, it prevents providers from holding children's records hostage or imposing unreasonable barriers to transfer.

### 8.4 Alignment with school-sector practice:

Private schools in Dubai already require Transfer Certificates for student transfers and have established fee and withdrawal processes regulated by KHDA. This policy formalises

these protections and obligations across both the school and ECC sectors, ensuring consistency across Dubai's education system.

## 9. Effective Date and Review

- This policy takes effect on March 24, 2026, and applies immediately to all licensed ECCs in Dubai.
- All ECC providers are expected to be in full compliance from the date of issue.
- This policy will be reviewed 12 months from the effective date, or earlier if circumstances require.
- Any amendments will be communicated to all ECCs and published on the KHDA website.