حكومة دبي
GOVERNMENT OF DUBAI

Knowledge المعرفة

Keeping Our Children Safe Together

A guide for parents and families



Policy Framework for Safeguarding and Learner Protection in Dubai's Private Educational Institutions

November 2026

Dear parents and families,

At KHDA, we believe every child in Dubai deserves to grow up feeling safe, supported, and heard. That is not just our aspiration; it is our mandate, and it shapes the expectations we set for the educational institutions we regulate.

We have created this guide to help you understand how safeguarding works, what to look for, and exactly what to do if something concerns you. Most children move through their education in Dubai happily and safely, but every parent should feel informed, confident and empowered to speak up when something does not feel right.

You are your child's first safeguard. No one knows your child better than you, and your awareness, your relationships with the people around your child, and your willingness to act make safeguarding real at home.

Knowledge is protection, and safeguarding is strongest when we work together. As a parent, you play an important role in helping create the safe, supportive environments every child deserves.

Safeguarding is everyone's business. And it starts at home.

About this Guide

This guide explains what safeguarding means, in line with the *Policy Framework for Safeguarding and Learner Protection in Dubai's Private Educational Institutions*, what every educational institution in Dubai must have in place, what your role as a parent is, and how to raise a concern if one arises.

Throughout this guide, we use the term **"educational institution"** to refer to all KHDA-regulated settings that educate or care for learners under 18. This includes early childhood centres, schools (across all phases and curricula), higher education institutions, technical and vocational education and training institutions, and music, arts and sports academies.

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding means keeping children safe from harm. It includes keeping children physically safe, protecting them from abuse and neglect, supporting their mental wellbeing, and keeping them safe online.

Learner protection is what happens when a child may be at risk. It means taking prompt, proportionate action to keep them safe.

> **Safeguarding is preventive first.** It focuses on creating environments where harm is unlikely to occur, not just on responding when it does.

Types of Concerns to Know About

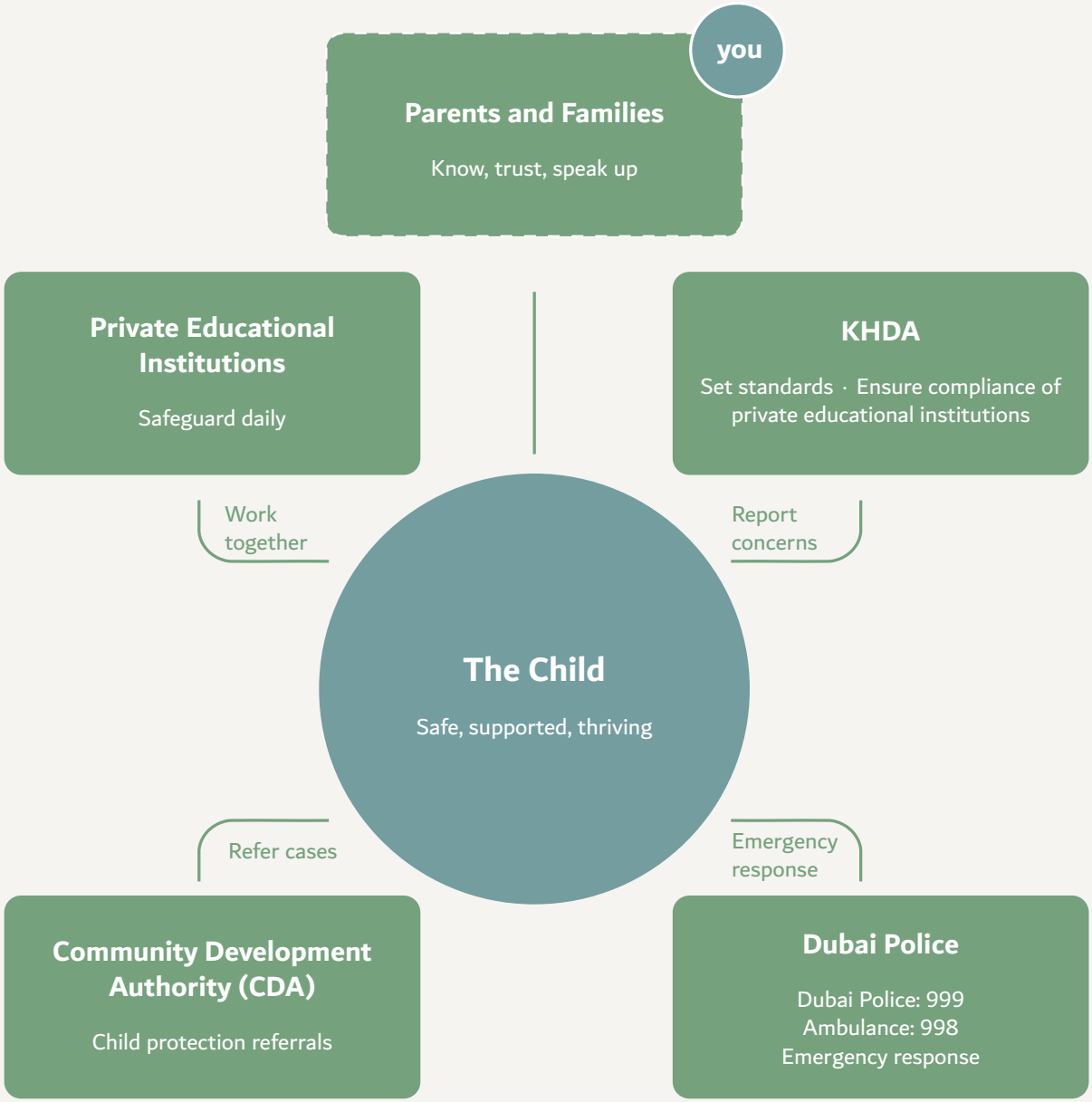
Safeguarding covers a wide range of situations. Recognising these categories helps you notice when something may not be right.

TYPE OF CONCERN	WHAT IT MEANS
Physical harm	Any act that causes physical pain, injury, or hurt to a child.
Emotional harm	Repeated criticism, humiliation, or threats that damage a child's sense of self and wellbeing.
Neglect	Failure to provide adequate care, supervision, or medical attention.
Sexual abuse or exploitation	Any sexual act, contact, or exposure involving a child, whether online or in person.
Digital harm	Cyberbullying, grooming, or harmful online contact or content, including exposure to age-inappropriate material.
Peer harm and bullying	Repeated harmful behaviour directed at a child by peers, online or in person.

The Safeguarding Ecosystem in Dubai

Keeping children safe is not the responsibility of a single person or organisation. Every child in Dubai is surrounded by a network of people and agencies, each with a distinct role, all working towards the same outcome: a child who is safe, supported, and thriving.

The diagram below shows who is part of that network and how they connect. **You, as a parent or carer, are one of the most important parts of it.**



Roles and responsibilities in detail

The table below sets out what each party in the network does and who they work with.

Who	Their role in safeguarding	Who they work with and report to or refer child protection cases to
The child	At the centre of all safeguarding activity. Their safety, wellbeing, and voice matter above all else.	Supported by all other parties
Parents and families	Knowing the child best. Monitor wellbeing, maintain open conversations, and raise concerns without delay.	Educational institution, KHDA, CDA (child protection referrals), Dubai Police 999 (emergencies)
Educational institution	Daily safeguarding, trained staff, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on site, responding promptly to all concerns.	KHDA (regulatory reporting), CDA (referrals), Dubai Police (emergencies)
KHDA	Setting and enforcing safeguarding standards across all regulated settings; receiving low-level reports and being informed of referrals; can require improvements or take regulatory action.	Educational institutions, CDA, Dubai Police
Community Development Authority (CDA)	Statutory authority for formal child protection investigations in Dubai; managing the child protection referral pathway.	Dubai Police, healthcare providers, educational institutions, KHDA
Dubai Police	Criminal investigation and immediate protective action in emergencies. (Emergency line 999)	CDA, other relevant government entities, healthcare providers, KHDA
Healthcare providers	Identifying and reporting physical or psychological indicators of abuse or neglect.	CDA, Dubai Police

Parents are partners, not bystanders. Your knowledge of your child, your relationship with their educational institution, and your willingness to speak up all make a real difference.

What Your Child's Educational Institution Must Have in Place

Every educational institution regulated by KHDA, regardless of its type or size, must comply with the *Policy Framework for Safeguarding and Learner Protection.* Here is what this means in practice for your child, what you can expect from the institution, and how you can help keep your child safe and protected.

Requirement	What this means	What you can expect from the institution
Safeguarding leadership	A trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must always be available. This person is responsible for overseeing safeguarding practice and supporting all staff.	The institution should tell you who the DSL is and how to contact them if you have a concern about your child's safety or welfare.
Staff training	All staff must be trained to recognise and report concerns, so the person your child sees every day knows what to do.	Staff should be trained to recognise safeguarding concerns, know how to report them, and understand the steps they must take when a concern arises.
Safer recruitment	Every adult working with children must undergo a background check before they start. No exceptions.	The institution carries out the required background checks on all adults working with children before they start work.
Safeguarding compliance	A legally compliant safeguarding and learner protection policy framework, formally approved by the governing body and available to parents in plain language.	You should be able to access the institution's safeguarding and learner protection policy framework, understand its requirements, and request a copy if it is not readily available.
Clear procedures	Reporting routes must be clearly documented and known to all staff so that concerns always reach the right person.	The institution should explain how to raise a safeguarding concern and whom to contact, so you know where to turn if you are worried about your child.

Requirement	What this means	What you can expect from the institution
Accurate records	Confidential records of every concern and action taken must be maintained and stored securely.	You can expect the institution to handle safeguarding information confidentially and to store records securely, in accordance with applicable information-sharing requirements.
Prompt response	The institution must act immediately when a concern is raised, using a clear and documented process and without unexplained delays.	The institution takes concerns seriously, responds promptly, and takes appropriate action in line with its procedures and the nature of the concern.
Statutory reporting	Serious concerns must be reported to the Community Development Authority (CDA), Dubai Police (999), or Dubai Ambulance (998) where the law or urgency requires.	The institution will refer serious concerns to the relevant authority when required by law or when the level of risk or urgency warrants it.
Continuous improvement	Regular reviews and evidence-based strengthening of safeguarding practice to ensure standards improve over time.	The institution reviews its safeguarding practices regularly, addresses identified gaps, and strengthens its procedures over time.

KHDA's role and the legal basis

KHDA sets and enforces safeguarding standards across all regulated settings. We inspect institutions against these standards, review how institutions handle concerns, and can require improvements or take regulatory action where standards are not met.

Institutions refer child protection concerns directly to the Community Development Authority (CDA), which holds the statutory authority for child protection investigations in Dubai, and inform KHDA.

Your Role as a Parent

Safeguarding at home and at the educational institution works best when they reinforce each other. Here is what that looks like in practice.

At home and in everyday life

- Have open, age-appropriate conversations with your child about safety, relationships, and what they do online.
- Know who your child's friends are, not to be restrictive, but to notice any unusual or secretive changes.
- Set clear boundaries on screen time, social media, and online contact with people they do not know in person.
- Listen without judgement when your child shares something that worries them. Make it safe for them to keep talking.
- Model the kind of communication you want your child to use when something feels wrong.

With your child's educational institution

- Read and understand the institution's safeguarding policy. It should be available in plain language; ask for it if it is not.
- Know who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is at your child's institution.
- Share relevant information about your child's circumstances that may affect their safety or wellbeing.
- Engage with parents' evenings, workshops, and any safeguarding information sessions the institution offers.
- Raise concerns promptly rather than waiting. Early contact is always better.



Signs that Something May Not Be Right

Children cannot always find words for what is happening to them. Changes in behaviour are often the first sign. The following table is not a checklist. A single sign may have many explanations, but a cluster of changes, or a persistent pattern, is worth attention.

Emotional and behavioural	Physical indicators	Online and relationships
✳ Becoming withdrawn, anxious, or unusually fearful	✳ Unexplained injuries, bruising, or marks	✳ Secretive about online activity or switching screens when you approach
✳ Sudden changes in mood or personality	✳ Flinching when touched or appearing frightened around certain adults	✳ Receiving gifts, money, or devices from someone you do not know
✳ Sleep disturbances or nightmares	✳ Changes in appetite or unexplained fatigue	✳ A relationship with a much older person marked by unusual secrecy
✳ Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities		✳ Referencing content that is age-inappropriate or distressing
✳ Low self-esteem or frequent negative self-talk		
✳ Reluctance to attend the educational institution or to return home		

If you notice several of these signs together, or a sudden unexplained change, trust your instincts. Speaking to someone is always the right step. You do not need to be certain before raising a concern.



How to Raise a Concern

If you notice changes in your child's behaviour, you do not need to be certain or investigate it alone before sharing your concerns. Your job is to share what you have noticed with the right person as promptly as possible.

1

Speak to the institution

Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at your child's educational institution directly. Do not wait for a scheduled meeting.

2

Document what you noticed

Write down what you observed, when, and any words your child used. Exact wording matters more than interpretation.

3

Follow up in writing

Confirm your conversation by email. This creates a record of what you shared. The institution will tell you what it can, in line with its confidentiality duties.

4

Still unresolved? Contact KHDA

If you are not satisfied with the institution's response, contact KHDA directly on 800 KHDA (800 5432). We can review how the concern was handled.

If a child is in immediate danger, do not wait. Call Dubai Police on 999, or Dubai Ambulance on 998. For child protection referrals requiring formal investigation, contact the Community Development Authority (CDA), which has the statutory mandate for formal child protection investigations in Dubai.



Key Contacts

Organisation	Contact	When to use
Your educational institution	**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**	Your first point of contact for any safeguarding concern about your child.
KHDA	**800 KHDA (800 5432)**	If you are not satisfied with how the institution handled your concern, or for general guidance on safeguarding rights.
Dubai Police	**999**	Emergency, where a child is in immediate danger.
Dubai Ambulance	**998**	Medical emergency involving a child.
Community Development Authority (CDA)	**CDA Child Protection Hotline: 800988**	Formal child protection referrals and investigation. The statutory authority for child protection in Dubai.

Safeguarding works best when institutions and families communicate openly.

You bring what no institution can replace: daily knowledge of your child, trust built over years, and the ability to notice when something feels different. We bring regulatory oversight, clear standards, and the authority to act. Together, that is a formidable safeguard.

If you ever feel uncertain about what you have noticed, or unsure about which step to take, contact us. You will never be judged for raising a concern.

Safeguarding is everyone's business.

Dubai
Knowledge المعرفة

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