حكومة دبي
GOVERNMENT OF DUBAI

هيئة المعرفة والتنمية البشرية
KNOWLEDGE & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



Student Placement Guidelines for

Dubai Private Schools and Early Childhood Centers

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Introduction

Dubai's private education sector is characterised by a diverse range of curricula, each with distinct year and grade structures and progression pathways. While this diversity offers rich learning opportunities, it also presents challenges in ensuring that students are placed in the correct grade level in alignment with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) regulations and best international practices.

These Student Placement Guidelines provide a structured framework to support schools and Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) in making informed and equitable placement decisions. They ensure that all students are placed according to their age, prior academic experience, and level of developmental readiness, while maintaining compliance with ministerial decisions and KHDA policies. These guidelines also clarify the methodology used to determine exceptional student placement cases, as described in this document, ensuring that each student's unique circumstances are considered.

By defining the roles and responsibilities of schools and ECCs, parents, and KHDA, this document promotes a transparent, fair, and consistent approach to student placement. It aims to support students in their educational journey, ensuring they receive the right level of academic challenge and opportunities for personal development.

Purpose

These guidelines aim to:

- Ensure that all admissions are in line with the updated admission and age policy for enrolment.
- Prioritise targeted support, intervention, and inclusion in line with the KHDA Inclusive Education Policy Framework as the primary response to learning gaps, ensuring every student remains engaged and supported in their current year group.
- Make grade adjustment an exceptional measure, only permitted after sustained, documented interventions where evidence demonstrates that the current placement will significantly harm the student's education, development, or wellbeing.
- Ensure that KHDA reviews all exceptional student placement requests, as defined in this document, giving due consideration to each student's individual circumstances.

Scope

These guidelines apply to placement decisions for students enrolled in all private schools and Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) operating in Dubai. They outline the procedures, criteria, and responsibilities for the exceptional

student placement process to ensure that all students are appropriately assigned to their educational levels in line with established guidelines and best practices.

All private schools and ECCs operating in Dubai are legally required to follow the grade and year progression outlined in Appendix 1 from Pre-KG/FS1 onwards. No student may be advanced, retained, or placed in a grade outside the placement established under the Primary Placement Rule or their chronological age group except in accordance with the Exceptional Placement Rule and with prior written approval from KHDA.

This requirement is mandated under:

- The updated Admission Age Guide for KG and Grade 1 Students announced by the Education, Human Development and Community Development Council (2025), and issued in line with the Ministry of Education's detailed study on admission age;
- Ministerial Resolution No. 24 of 2021 on Changing the Student's Admission Age in Public and Private Schools, and updates issued in this regard;
- Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017 Regulating Private Schools in the Emirate of Dubai;
- Age-Grade Comparison Chart (Appendix 1)

These guidelines are effective from the 2026–27 academic year and apply to all private schools and ECCs in Dubai whose academic year commences in either August/September or March/April.

These guidelines apply equally to mid-year admissions and student transfer cases. Where baseline data is missing or incomplete, schools and ECCs must use internal assessments, observations, and parent interviews to develop a provisional support plan to inform placement and intervention until complete data are available.

This document does not address the specific needs of high-ability learners or of students identified as gifted and/or talented. A dedicated policy to support the optimal growth and development of such students is in the making.

Primary Placement Rules

Pre-KG through KG2 (FS1 to Year 1) - students under six

Chronological age is the default basis for placing students under six who have not previously completed a recognised educational stage at a school or ECC regulated by KHDA.

Where a student has successfully completed a recognised educational stage, placement must reflect the student's progression from that stage as follows:

- **Transfer within KHDA-regulated schools or ECCs**: the Transfer Certificate (TC) is the primary placement reference.
- **Transfer from outside KHDA-regulated schools or ECC's, with a valid TC available**: the TC is the primary reference document for placement.
- **Transfer from outside KHDA-regulated schools or ECCs where a TC is not available**: other accepted official documentation may be used, provided it clearly confirms successful completion of the previous stage and the student's results, in line with the Evidence Requirements mentioned in this Guide. A student who has successfully completed an educational stage must not be required to repeat it merely to align their placement with the age placement shown in the Age-Grade Comparison Chart in Appendix 1.

Any placement that requires a student to repeat a completed stage must be supported by clear educational justification and documented evidence of the student's academic attainment, readiness, and wellbeing.

Grade 1 (Year 2) and above - students aged six and above

The last grade or year successfully completed is the default criterion for placing students aged six and above, regardless of whether it was completed at a school or an ECC inside or outside KHDA's regulation.

Where a student has successfully completed a grade or year elsewhere, placement must reflect the student's progression from that grade or year as follows:

- **Transfer within KHDA-regulated schools or ECCs**: the Transfer Certificate (TC) is the primary placement reference.
- **Transfer from outside KHDA-regulated schools or ECCs, with a valid TC available**: the TC is the primary reference document for placements, and the student progresses to the next grade or year unless placement is determined under the Exceptional Placement process.
- **Transfer from outside KHDA regulated schools or ECCs, where a TC is not available**: other accepted official documentation may be used, provided it clearly confirms successful completion of the previous grade or year and the student's results, in line with the Evidence Requirements mentioned in this Guide.

Where the documentation does not establish successful completion, placement is established as follows:

- Where the documentation shows the student attended a grade or year but did not complete the required curriculum, credits, or completion requirements: placement must be based on a documented readiness

assessment conducted by the receiving school or ECC and confirmed through the Exceptional Placement process.

A student must not be required to repeat a grade or year they have already successfully completed solely because their chronological age indicates a different placement.

Any placement that would require a student to repeat a grade or year must be supported by clear educational justification and documented evidence of the student's academic attainment, readiness, and wellbeing. It must also be confirmed through the Exceptional Placement process.

Checking against the Age-Grade Comparison Chart (Appendix 1)

Once placement has been established, the school or ECC must check it against the chart:

- **Where the placement matches the chart**, the school or ECC may confirm the placement
- **Where the placement does not match the chart** due to the students' previous education - for example, they started school earlier or later than the chart indicates or moved between systems with different year structures - the school or ECC must apply to KHDA for **Exceptional Placement Approval** before confirming the place.
- **Where the placement is below the chart** because a readiness assessment found the student needs to repeat a grade or year or be placed below it: **Exceptional Placement Approval** is required before the placement is confirmed, however many years the difference is.

Evidence Requirements

Any documentation used to establish successful completion or to determine placement in place of a TC must be officially issued, authentic, and verifiable.

Acceptable documentation includes:

- An official report card confirming the grade or stage successfully completed and the student's results;
- An official completion letter confirming the same; or
- Other formal documentation from the previous education provider that clearly confirms successful completion and the relevant results.

An enrolment letter alone is not sufficient. It may support other evidence but must not be used on its own to determine placement unless it also confirms successful completion and results.

If authenticity is unclear, the school or ECC must take reasonable steps to verify the documentation directly with the issuing provider. Documentation that cannot be authenticated or independently verified must not be the sole basis for a placement decision.

Regulatory Update: Age Cut-Off Implementation (Effective AY 2026-27)

From the 2026–27 academic year, a new age cut-off applies to children registering in the KHDA system for the first time. A separate, one-off set of rules also applies to a specific group of children born in 2021 and 2022, whether or not they are already registered — these are explained below in the Transitional Cohort Provisions section. Both routes require a documented readiness assessment where relevant."

Age Calculation Cut-off Date

- For schools and ECCs whose academic year begins in August or September: the minimum age is calculated as of December 31 of the admission year.
- For schools and ECCs whose academic year begins in April: the minimum age is calculated as of March 31 of the admission year.

Implementation

The updated age cut-off applies only to students registering for the first time in the KHDA system. Currently enrolled students admitted with the requirements in force at the time of their original admission will continue their normal grade progression under these guidelines. The updated cut-off does not apply retroactively to this cohort. "Already registered" or "already enrolled" means the student holds an active KHDA registration in any capacity, including school or ECC attendance, regardless of whether a confirmed admission decision exists for a specific future grade. This includes students transferring between KHDA-registered institutions within Dubai, who are not treated as first-time registrants.

This protects the student's existing pathway. It does not permit a request to place the student ahead of that pathway; any such request must follow the Exceptional Placement process in full. This document does not prescribe the internal age-band structures used by ECCs for children under the age of three; KHDA may issue separate guidance on this in due course.

Transitional Cohort Provisions - AY 2026-27 Only

The following arrangements apply only for schools and ECCs with an August/September start and only for academic year 2026–27, as a one-off transition following the change to the age cut-off date.

Previously, placement for these year groups was based on a child's age as of **August 31**. Under the revised Ministry of Education guidelines, the cut-off date moves to **December 31**, aligning placement with the child's age within the calendar year. This creates a one-year transition for some children born between September and December, who would otherwise move into a different year group under the new rules than under the old ones.

These transitional arrangements exist to provide an appropriate placement route for affected children. They apply only to the 2026–27 academic year, do not set a precedent for subsequent years, and will not apply from the 2027–28 academic year onwards.

These arrangements apply whether or not the child was previously registered in the KHDA system, regardless of curriculum. Placement under this section is determined solely by these provisions. The Age-Grade Comparison Chart in the Primary Placement Rule does not apply here.

(a) Children born between September 1 and December 31, 2021

Already enrolled in a school or ECC:

- **Automatic progression:** FS2 (KG1): the child automatically moves up to FS2, continuing their existing pathway. No readiness assessment is required.
- **Transitional placement:** Year 1 (KG2): if a parent wishes the child to be considered for Year 1 instead, the school or ECC must first complete and document a readiness assessment. If the child is deemed ready, the transitional placement may be agreed with the parent, and the regular approval request can be uploaded on the KHDA student registration system.

Never previously enrolled in any educational institution:

- **Placement by age:** Year 1 (KG2): the child is placed in Year 1 based on their age. No readiness assessment is required.
- **Transitional placement:** FS2 (KG1): if the school or ECC assesses that the child is not yet ready for Year 1, the child may instead be placed in FS2. This must be based on a documented readiness assessment, and the regular approval request can be uploaded on the KHDA student registration system.

(b) Children born between September 1 and December 31, 2022

Already enrolled in a school or ECC:

- **Automatic progression:** FS1 (pre-KG): the child automatically moves up to FS1, continuing their existing pathway. No readiness assessment is required.
- **Transitional placement:** FS2 (KG1): if a parent wishes the child to be considered for FS2 instead, the school or ECC must first complete and document a readiness assessment. If the child is deemed ready, the transitional placement may be agreed with the parent, and the regular approval request can be uploaded on the KHDA student registration system.

Never previously enrolled in any educational institution:

- **Placement by age:** FS2 (KG1): the child is placed in FS2 based on their age. No readiness assessment is required.
- **Transitional placement:** FS1 (pre-KG): if the school or ECC assesses that the child is not yet ready for FS2, the child may instead be placed in FS1. This must be based on a documented readiness assessment, and the regular approval request can be uploaded on the KHDA student registration system.

Requirements for the transitional placement route

Where the transitional placement option is used, the school or ECC must:

- Base the decision on a documented readiness assessment;
- Ensure the decision reflects the child's readiness and best educational interests, not the availability of places in a particular class or year group;
- Obtain documented parental agreement; and
- Apply to KHDA using the regular KHDA student registration system before confirming enrolment. A place must also be available at the school or ECC in the relevant class; the transitional placement route does not, in itself, create additional capacity.

The transitional placement option is available only for the 2026–27 academic year. If it is not used during this academic year, the child cannot access this transitional arrangement in a later year and will instead be placed according to the **Primary Placement Rule** applicable at that time.

UK Curriculum: FS1 Readiness Provision

This provision is separate from the one-time transitional cohort arrangements for the 2026–27 academic year. It is an **ongoing provision from the 2026–27 academic year onwards** and applies only to **UK curriculum provision.**

Children born between **September 1 and December 31** who have **not yet turned three when the academic year begins, but will turn three by 31 December**, may be considered for admission to FS1 through a readiness assessment.

This provision recognises that, while these children meet the minimum age requirement under the December 31 cut-off, they may still be under three when they enter the school or ECC.

Requirements

Before placement in FS1 can be confirmed:

- The school or ECC must conduct and document a formal readiness assessment;
- The school or ECC and parents must discuss the assessment outcome and proposed placement;
- Written parental agreement and **KHDA approval must be obtained before enrolment is confirmed.**
- If the school or ECC determines that the child is **not yet ready for FS1**, the child may enter FS1 in the following academic year. Where the school or ECC and the parents do not agree on the child's readiness, the school's or ECC's documented professional assessment will apply, subject to KHDA review where required.

This provision applies only when determining the child's **initial entry into FS1**. It cannot subsequently be used to move the child beyond their established progression pathway or to change a placement retrospectively.

Mandatory Requirements for Schools and ECCs

The following requirements are mandatory for all private schools and ECCs in Dubai:

- All schools and ECCs must follow the standard age–grade progression chart **(Appendix 1)** for all student placement decisions.
- Schools and ECCs are prohibited from implementing student retention, advancement, or grade adjustment without obtaining prior written approval from KHDA.
- All student placement decisions must comply with the educational standards and guidelines outlined in this document.
- Schools and ECCs are responsible for leading student placement cases, including conducting readiness assessments, gathering supporting evidence, and providing tailored support before submitting to KHDA for consideration.
- Enrolment decisions are subject to the school's or ECC's assessment of the child's readiness and the availability of places. No placement may be confirmed based on seat availability alone.

Exceptional Placement Cases

Exceptional placement requests will be considered only in specific circumstances. These include situations where maintaining the standard placement poses a clear and documented risk to the student's learning, development, or ability to access education, despite the implementation of extensive, evidence-based support over a sustained period.

Exceptional placement should only be considered when there is a clear developmental mismatch, a significant and documented disparity between the student's developmental readiness and the academic and social expectations of their current grade level and when this mismatch, despite substantial intervention, results in sustained disengagement from learning, social isolation, or long-term risk to wellbeing, motivation, and academic progress. Any one of these outcomes, evidenced and arising from a genuine developmental mismatch despite sustained intervention, may be sufficient; all three are not required simultaneously.

For example, where a student consistently fails to engage with the curriculum despite sustained, high-quality, evidence-based interventions, or where the student experiences significant isolation from peers due to developmental stage differences, these factors may — in combination — indicate a need for an exceptional placement review.

Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Prior interventions must have been appropriate, targeted, and implemented over a sufficient period to evaluate effectiveness. A formal risk assessment must be completed by the school or ECC and submitted via the KHDA portal as part of the application.

Schools and ECCs should read the risk assessment guidance (Appendix 2), complete the form (Appendix 4) as part of that assessment, and use the checklist (Appendix 3) to confirm their submission is complete before applying.

Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

Schools' and Early Childhood Centres' Roles and Responsibilities

Schools and ECCs are responsible for identifying placement concerns, conducting assessments, engaging with parents, and submitting exceptional placement requests to KHDA. All placement recommendations must prioritise student wellbeing, academic progression, and regulatory compliance.

Key considerations include:

Student Placement Assessment and Documentation

- Identify students who may require exceptional placement in line with the criteria defined in this document.
- Conduct formal academic and risk assessments, including:
    - Curriculum-based and school or ECC-specific diagnostic assessments that measure academic progress against age and stage expectations.
    - Standardised assessments (e.g., CAT4, MAP, PT Series) that provide longitudinal and comparative data confirming underperformance or delayed readiness.
    - Social-emotional and developmental evaluations, recognising that child development is holistic, encompassing social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical growth. Recommended instruments include ASQ:SE-2, SDQ, DECA, DAP, or similar KHDA-recognised tools.
    - A formal risk assessment outlining the concerns of maintaining the standard placement (see Appendix 2 for structure and rating guidance).
- Gather and document all supporting evidence, including:
    - Academic performance records (e.g., grades, formative and summative assessments).
    - Student work samples and teacher feedback highlighting persistent gaps or mismatches.
    - Internal learning support documentation (e.g., IEPs, ILPs, or intervention records).
    - External assessment reports provided by parents, if available, including those identifying academic delay, developmental differences, or learning challenges not formally categorised under 'student of determination'.

Parental Communication and Collaboration

- Engage parents early in discussions about student placement concerns through scheduled meetings, written communications, and documented follow-ups.
- Clearly explain the nature of placement concerns, the outcomes of school or ECC-led assessments, and the rationale behind any proposed exceptional placement, using accessible, non-technical language.
- Request all relevant documentation from parents, including external assessment reports, medical or therapeutic evaluations, and previous school or ECC records relating to learning needs or abilities.
- Obtain signed parental consent before submitting an exceptional placement request. If consent is not provided, the student will follow the standard progression pathway as set out in the school or ECC policy and KHDA regulations. However, if substantial internal evidence indicates that this is negatively impacting the student in any way, a school or ECC can escalate a child protection and welfare concern under Federal

Law No. 3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law) and as part of the Escalation and Non-Cooperation Protocols in this guide. This must be communicated to parents in writing and documented in the student's file.

Submission and Approval Process

KHDA will review exceptional placement requests within 10 working days of receiving a complete submission. Each case will be assessed using a standardised risk rubric (Appendix 2) to ensure consistency and fairness. A designated KHDA case officer will act as the point of contact throughout the process. If additional information is required, the review timeline may be extended, and the school or ECC will be notified in writing.

- Prepare a detailed case file justifying the exceptional placement request, ensuring alignment with the risk criteria and documentation requirements in the Submission Checklist (Appendix 3) and the Risk Assessment and Rationale Form (Appendix 4).
- Submit the request to KHDA with all required documentation, including:
    - A completed Risk Assessment and Rationale Form (Appendix 4).
    - Evidence of previous high-quality interventions and their documented outcomes.
    - A structured and personalised transition plan outlining how the student will be supported in their new placement.
    - Relevant assessment reports from licensed, recognised professionals or certified assessment centres (see Appendix 3 for acceptable sources).
    - Signed parental consent.
- Respond to KHDA queries and provide additional clarification within the timeline specified in the request.

Implementation and Ongoing Monitoring

- Where placement is approved, ensure that a structured transition plan is in place before the student moves to the new grade level. This may include differentiated instruction, emotional support, modified expectations, or temporary additional assistance.
- Monitor and evaluate student progress following placement, conducting regular follow-ups with classroom teachers, inclusion staff, and parents. Formal reviews must occur at least every eight weeks and at the end of each term.
- Modify intervention plans as necessary to better support the student. All adjustments must be documented and reflected in the student's learning support file.
- Schools and ECCs may not charge additional fees for support that forms part of a placement or transition plan (e.g., academic interventions, differentiation, inclusion support).
- Where a student requires an individual learning support assistant (ILSA) beyond the school's or ECC's standard inclusive provision, the cost may be borne by parents through a KHDA-approved Individualised

Service Agreement (ISA). This applies only in accordance with the KHDA Inclusive Education Policy Framework for Students of Determination.

- Any ISA must be fully aligned with the KHDA ILSA Recruitment and Agreement Guide. Schools and ECCs must present the distinction between standard provision and ILSA arrangements, and the actual cost basis, clearly in writing to families before any agreement is signed.

Escalation and Non-Cooperation Protocols

While the placement process is designed to be collaborative, schools and ECCs may encounter circumstances where parental cooperation is limited or withheld. The following protocols apply:

- **Parental refusal to submit assessments:** Where parents refuse to share relevant external reports (e.g., psychological, developmental, medical), the school or ECC must:
    - Document all attempts to obtain the information, including meeting notes, follow-up emails, and the outcomes of conversations.
    - Proceed with internal school or ECC-led assessments and documented evidence where possible.
    - Formally notify the parent in writing that the absence of external documentation may delay or constrain the placement decision-making process.

- **Safeguarding escalation:** Where substantial internal evidence indicates that a developmental mismatch is significantly impacting the student's academic access, emotional wellbeing, or inclusion, and the parent remains uncooperative, the case must be escalated to KHDA as a child protection and welfare concern under Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 (Wadeema's Law). KHDA will determine whether intervention, override of standard progression, or additional measures are necessary.

- **KHDA role upon escalation:** KHDA will review the submitted documentation and risk assessment, evaluate the case using regulatory and safeguarding frameworks, and provide direct guidance which may include:
    - Hosting an individual case conference;
    - Liaising with external authorities;
    - Temporarily approving an interim placement;
    - Recommending specialist referral or follow-up monitoring.

A designated KHDA focal person will be assigned to each escalated case to ensure clarity, consistency, and effective communication throughout.

School and ECC Internal Policy and Point of Contact

All schools and ECCs must develop an internal Student Placement Policy that:

- Clearly outlines staff roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols;
- Details step-by-step procedures for early identification, internal assessment, parental engagement, and documentation;
- Includes a clear escalation process and safeguarding liaison structure.

Schools and ECCs must appoint a designated placement coordinator (e.g., Head of Inclusion, Vice Principal, or ECC Centre Director) who will act as:

- The internal lead for all placement-related decisions;
- The liaison between the school or ECC, KHDA, and parents;
- The person responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with these guidelines.

Parents' Roles and Responsibilities

Parents play a critical role in ensuring that student placement decisions are well-informed and supported by relevant documentation. When schools or ECCs apply for an exceptional placement, parents must actively participate in the process.

Providing Relevant Information and Documentation

Parents must submit all required reports and assessments, including:

- External assessment reports from psychologists, therapists, or medical professionals, with all diagnoses aligned to the UAE National Unified Classification of Disabilities.
- Medical or psychological reports that impact academic progression (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia, developmental delays).
- Previous school or ECC reports and evidence of prior interventions, if applicable.
- Therapy reports, early intervention history, or specialised support documentation to demonstrate learning challenges or developmental delays.

Engaging in the Placement Process

- Attend meetings to discuss concerns and recommendations with school or ECC leaders.
- Participate in assessment and observation processes to provide additional insights into their child's learning needs.
- Ask questions and seek clarification on assessment outcomes and proposed placement changes.

Consent and Agreement

- Review the proposed placement decision and discuss implications with school or ECC staff.

- Sign formal parental consent documents acknowledging the placement decision and expected outcomes.
- Support their child's transition by reinforcing agreed strategies at home.

Post-Placement Monitoring and Feedback

- Communicate with the school or ECC if concerns arise about their child's adjustment to the new placement.
- Collaborate with the school or ECC on implementing and refining support strategies outlined in the transition plan. Parents are encouraged to actively monitor delivery of this plan and hold the school or ECC accountable for providing the agreed support.

Schools and ECCs are expected to provide placement-related support as part of their inclusive education provision and must not charge additional fees for intervention, differentiation, or academic support unless a formally agreed ILSA arrangement is in place under the KHDA IE Policy Framework.

- Attend scheduled progress review meetings to evaluate the student's development and ongoing needs.

KHDA's Roles and Responsibilities

KHDA ensures that every placement decision places the best interests of the student at the centre, while remaining fair, justified, and fully aligned with UAE educational regulations. KHDA reviews, approves, or rejects exceptional placement requests, and monitors ongoing compliance with established policies and safeguarding standards.

Review and Approval Process

- Evaluate the evidence provided by schools and ECCs to ensure that placement requests align with KHDA policies and student wellbeing considerations.
- Require clear justifications for any placement adjustments, supported by:
    - Formal risk assessments;
    - Academic performance data;
    - Specialist and school or ECC reports.
- Seek additional clarification from the school or ECC if required.
- Approve or reject exceptional placement requests based on:
    - The academic, social, and developmental needs of the student;
    - The validity and sufficiency of the supporting documentation;
    - Alignment with best practices and applicable policy frameworks.
- Issue a written decision letter to both the school or ECC and the parents within 10 working days of receiving a complete submission, detailing the rationale, the evidence considered, and the right to appeal under Article 32 of Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017.

Appeals Process for Exceptional Placement Decisions

KHDA recognises the importance of ensuring all exceptional placement decisions are made fairly, transparently, and in the student's best interest. If new or significant evidence emerges after KHDA's decision, schools or ECCs may formally submit appeals through the KHDA portal.

Grounds for Appeal

- Appeals will only be considered where new material evidence is available that was not included in the original submission and that could significantly affect the placement decision. Appeals based solely on disagreement with the outcome, without new documentation, will not be reviewed.

Eligibility and Responsibility

- Only schools and ECCs may formally submit appeals through the KHDA portal.
- Schools and ECCs are expected to communicate the appeal process clearly to parents and support them in compiling the necessary information, where appropriate.

Submission Process

Appeals must be submitted within 30 calendar days of receiving notification of the original decision. The appeal must include:

- A cover letter outlining the grounds for the appeal;
- A copy of the original placement request and KHDA's decision letter;
- Any new evidence not previously submitted (e.g., updated assessment reports, medical documentation);
- The signature of the school principal or ECC centre director.

Review and Outcome

In accordance with Article 32 of Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017, appeals will be reviewed by an independent KHDA panel, which may request additional information to support its review. The KHDA will communicate a formal written outcome within 60 calendar days of submission. The panel's decision is final.

Appendix 1

The following table sets out the minimum age requirements for grade placement in Dubai private schools and ECCs. All institutions must adhere to this table for all placement decisions.

Age-Grade Comparison Chart					
Age**	**England & Wales (UK) 13-year system**	**UAE MOE**	**IB — 12-year (Programme stages: PYP/MYP/DP)**	**IB — 13-year (Continuous Year numbering)**	**SABIS/US 12-year system (K-12)**
3	FS1		PYP Early Years (Pre-K)	FS1/KG1/EY1	Pre-K
4	FS2	KG1	PYP Early Years	FS2/KG2/EY2	KG1
5	Year 1	KG 2	PYP Early Years	Year 1	KG2
6	Year 2	Grade 1	PYP Year 1	Year 2	Grade 1
7	Year 3	Grade 2	PYP Year 2	Year 3	Grade 2
8	Year 4	Grade 3	PYP Year 3	Year 4	Grade 3
9	Year 5	Grade 4	PYP Year 4	Year 5	Grade 4
10	Year 6	Grade 5	PYP Year 5	Year 6	Grade 5
11	Year 7	Grade 6	MYP Year 1	Year 7	Grade 6
12	Year 8	Grade 7	MYP Year 2	Year 8	Grade 7
13	Year 9	Grade 8	MYP Year 3	Year 9	Grade 8
14	Year 10	Grade 9	MYP Year 4	Year 10	Grade 9
15	Year 11	Grade 10	MYP Year 5	Year 11	Grade 10
16	Year 12	Grade 11	DP Year 1 (Grade 11)	Year 12	Grade 11
17	Year 13	Grade 12	DP Year 2 (Grade 12)	Year 13	Grade 12

Note: This simplified table covers only the UK, MOE, IB, and US systems, as these are the most common for students transferring into Dubai from abroad. Other curricula regulated by KHDA follow a broadly comparable 12- to 13-year structure and are set out in full in the Age-Grade Comparison Chart

**Age is calculated as of December 31 for institutions with an August/September academic year start, and as of March 31 for institutions with an April academic year start.

Transitional provisions for the 2026–27 academic year are set out in this document.

Appendix 2

Guidance for Conducting a Risk Assessment for Exceptional Grade Placement

A completed Risk Assessment and Rationale Form is required to justify an exceptional placement request. The risk assessment must demonstrate that, without the exceptional placement, the student faces a significant and foreseeable risk of harm to their education, development, or wellbeing.

Usage of the Risk Assessment and Rationale Form

- This form must be completed for all exceptional placement requests.
- Schools and ECCs must submit the completed form along with supporting evidence (IEPs, specialist reports, assessments).
- KHDA will review the case and determine whether the risk level justifies an exceptional placement.

Key Steps in the Risk Assessment Process

Identify the risks

- Consider the full range of risks to the student's education and wellbeing that arise from maintaining the current placement. Risks must be specific, evidenced, and directly linked to the student's individual circumstances.

Assess the severity and likelihood

- Use the risk matrix below to determine the overall risk level by combining the assessed severity and likelihood of harm.
    - Severity: Minor (1) | Moderate (2) | Severe (3) | Critical (4)
    - Likelihood: Unlikely (1) | Possible (2) | Likely (3) | Certain (4)
    - Risk Score = Likelihood × Severity (R = L × S)

Risk Level	Descriptor
Critical (16)	Certain + Critical: Placement must be adjusted immediately. Application will be prioritised by KHDA.
High (9–12)	Likely/Certain + Severe: Strong case for exceptional placement. Full submission required.
Moderate (4–8)	Possible + Moderate: Continue intervention; monitor closely. Re-assess after further support cycle.
Low (1–3)	Unlikely + Minor: Standard support pathway applies. Exceptional placement will not be approved.

Note: Applications for exceptional placement must demonstrate a High or Critical risk score (9–16) to qualify for KHDA consideration. Moderate or Low scores indicate that standard support pathways have not yet been exhausted.

Document interventions, supports and modifications

- What targeted support has already been provided? (e.g., differentiated instruction, additional learning support, therapy, IEP provisions)
- Have these measures been implemented consistently over a sufficient period?
- What evidence demonstrates the outcomes of these interventions?

Propose additional controls and justify placement decision

- Identify any further interventions or accommodations that could minimise risk within the standard placement.
- If no viable alternatives exist, clearly justify why an exceptional placement is necessary, detailing the foreseeable harm to the student's education and wellbeing if standard placement continues.

Considering Risk Level

To qualify for an exceptional grade adjustment, the school or ECC must demonstrate that, without it, the student faces a High or Critical risk of harm to their education and wellbeing, defined as follows:

- Despite significant, documented support and modifications over time, the student remains disengaged from learning;
- The student experiences social isolation attributable to a developmental mismatch;
- The student faces foreseeable long-term harm to their wellbeing, motivation, and academic progress if the current placement continues.

Any one of these outcomes may be sufficient; all three are not required at the same time.

Calculating the Risk Score

Using the above 'Likelihood' and 'Severity' descriptors, the overall risk score is calculated by multiplying likelihood by severity of risk (R = L × S).

Applications for exceptional placement adjustment must identify a High or Critical risk score. In such cases, complete the Risk Assessment and Rationale Form (Appendix 4), providing supporting information and documentation.

Appendix 3

Evidence Requirements for Exceptional Placement Submissions

Submission Checklist for Schools and Early Childhood Centres

To ensure that all evidence used in student placement decisions meets consistent professional and regulatory standards, KHDA recognises only assessment reports issued by licensed, recognised professionals or certified assessment centres. Reports must be based on valid, reliable diagnostic tools and conducted by individuals or organisations authorised under UAE law or an equivalent recognised authority to provide such services.

Assessment reports from DHA-, CDA-, or DOH-licensed professionals, or other Emirate-recognised professionals, are accepted. Reports from internationally qualified professionals practising outside the UAE are accepted if the professional's credentials are verified, and the assessment methods are internationally recognised. Schools and ECCs are responsible for verifying the credentials of all external assessors before submission.

This clarification aims to standardise the quality of evidence submitted by schools and ECCs, prevent the use of informal or non-diagnostic reports, and protect the integrity of the exceptional placement process. Schools and ECCs must verify that all submitted reports originate from approved sources and reflect current (within 12 months) professional evaluations, unless otherwise stated by KHDA.

The following table provides guidance on acceptable assessment sources and types. It is not exhaustive and may be periodically updated by KHDA:

Assessment Type	Accepted Professional / Body
Cognitive / Developmental	Licensed clinical or educational psychologists (DHA, CDA, DOH, or equivalent recognised authority)
Speech and Language	Licensed speech-language therapists (DHA, CDA, or DOH)
Occupational Therapy / Sensory Integration	Licensed occupational therapists (DHA, CDA, or DOH)
Behavioural / Social-Emotional	Licensed psychologists or certified behaviour analysts (e.g., BCBA)
Academic Achievement	Standardised diagnostic assessments conducted by KHDA-approved educational assessors or qualified school/ECC SENCOs

An effective Individual Education Plan (IEP) or equivalent document (e.g., ILP, ALP) may serve as supporting evidence demonstrating that targeted interventions have been implemented and monitored over time. However, an IEP does not replace formal diagnostic or clinical assessment reports required from licensed professionals.

All exceptional placement requests submitted to KHDA must include the following documents. Incomplete submissions will be returned without review, and the 10-working-day SLA will not begin until we receive a complete submission.

- Completed Risk Assessment and Rationale Form (Appendix 4)
- Evidence of previous high-quality interventions and documented outcomes
- A structured and personalised transition plan
- Relevant assessment reports from licensed or recognised professionals (see table above)
- Signed parental consent form
- Submission Checklist signed by the school principal or ECC centre director

Appendix 4

Exceptional Placement Request Form (Risk Assessment and Rationale)

Student name	Student's date of birth	School's name

Likelihood level 1 2 3 4 Please select	Explain why you have selected this likelihood level:
Severity level 1 2 3 4 Please select	Explain why you have selected this severity level:

Overall Risk Score (L x S)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Low risk				Moderate risk				High risk				Critical risk			

Explain what strategies have been used to lower the overall risk score (provide supporting documentation)

Explain why exceptional placement adjustment is required (provide supporting documentation)

As part of the exceptional placement adjustment, what other strategies will be implemented to lower the risk of harm to education and wellbeing?

Name of staff member submitting this form for exceptional grade adjustment	
Recommendation	☐ Maintain standard placement ☐ Exceptional placement justified
Assessor's name:	
Assessor's signature:	Date:
School principal's name:	Date:
School principal's signature:	
Parent's name:	☐ I have been consulted on this placement decision
Parent's signature:	

Document Control

Document Title	Student Placement Guidelines for Dubai Private Schools and Early Learning Centres
Effective Date	September 2026 for Academic Year 2026–2027
Applies To	All private schools and early childhood centres (ECCs) operating in Dubai
Issuing Authority	KHDA Private Schools Sector
Legal Basis	EC Resolution No. (2) of 2017; Ministerial Resolution No. 24 of 2021 and updates; The Education, Human Development and Community Development Council Admission Age Guide for KG and Grade 1 Students 2025; Federal Law No. 3 of 2016
Review Cycle	Annual or as required for regulatory updates