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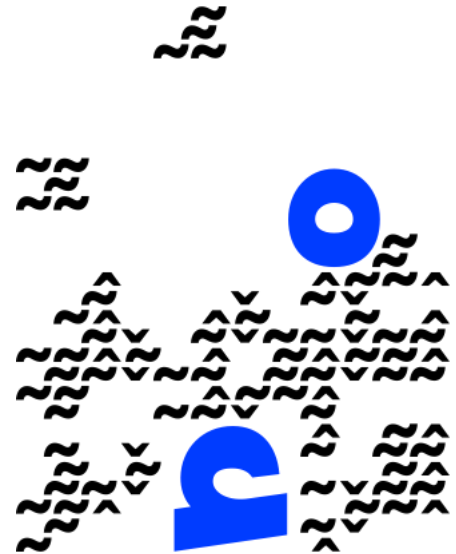
EARLY EDUCATION INSTITUTION **POLICY**

on

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Purpose

This policy sets out a clear framework for creating an optimal and safe learning environment for children and young people across Early Education Institutions (EEl)s to thrive. It standardizes physical environment requirements, procedures, and processes to set up and maintain a physical environment that stimulates and facilitates children's learning while safeguarding their health, safety, and wellbeing.



Definitions

<p>Additional Learning Needs</p>	<p>Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within an early years setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by children 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 child 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 child with hearing impairment may require additional support in class to access lesson content but may not require any physical accommodations to access learning.</p>
<p>Auxiliary Spaces</p>	<p>Areas that have primary functions not related to children's playing and learning (e.g., pantries, toilet blocks, and sleeping rooms).</p>
<p>Built Structures</p>	<p>Constructed material or combination of materials (e.g., concrete, glass, bricks, cement, or steel), which requires being on the ground or attached to something on the ground. These include structures of the EEI's building (e.g., doors, windows, walls, ceiling, flooring, and roofs), and any outdoor structures within the EEI premises (e.g., perimeter fencing and outdoor walls).</p>
<p>Child</p>	<p>A person under the age of 4 years, as per Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Regulating Nurseries.</p>
<p>Early Education Institutions (EEIs)</p>	<p>All ADEK-licensed institutions that offer early years' service (e.g., nurseries).</p>
<p>Facility</p>	<p>A room or space with a specific purpose or function (e.g., pantry, toilet block, or parking/garage).</p>
<p>Fixture</p>	<p>Objects placed in the physical environment by fixing them to permanent structures. Examples include light fixtures, pantry cabinets, brackets, and frames.</p>
<p>Furnishings</p>	<p>Objects within the physical environment that are not part of the EEI's permanent structure and include two categories: furniture and fixtures.</p>
<p>Furniture</p>	<p>Moveable objects placed in the EEI's physical environment that are not fixed to any permanent built structures and that support activities fundamental to the EEI's daily operation. Examples of furniture include chairs, tables, cribs, sand/water/sensory tables, and large household appliances.</p>
<p>Indoor Space</p>	<p>Playing and learning spaces for children unobstructed by large furniture or other permanent indoor fixtures.</p>

Paddling Pool	A plastic inflatable pool for children's water play.
Physical Environment	All visible and tangible aspects of the early education environment, regardless of location on the premises.
Play and Learning Material	All objects used by children for learning and play throughout the EEI premises (e.g., building blocks, clothing for dramatic play, swing sets, slides, and crayons).
Play/Learning Spaces	All spaces used by children for learning and play throughout the EEI premises.
Premises	The indoor and outdoor space that constitutes the licensed physical space of the EEI.
Room	A space with walls, a ceiling, flooring, and a door that closes for privacy.
Surveillance System	A system of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras that record activity onsite (e.g., a video surveillance system). This definition also includes systems that provide 'live streaming'.
Well-Maintained	Kept in good condition for use.



Policy

All EEIs shall develop and implement a Physical Environment Policy, which clearly outlines the specific procedures and actions they will take to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children can learn and play.

The Physical Environment Policy shall outline all processes, procedures, and guidelines to be followed with regards to:

1. Minimum space requirements
2. Suitability, maintenance, and upkeep procedures for play and learning materials
3. Suitability, maintenance, and upkeep procedures for furniture and fittings
4. Safety, maintenance, and upkeep of built structures
5. Design and layout of the premises
6. Health, safety, and environmental (HSE) procedures (including water quality, waste disposal, pest control, temperature control, humidity control, ventilation, lighting, water quality, and cleaning and sanitation schedules)
7. General safety procedures (including fire safety, electrical safety, surveillance, and outdoor shading)
8. Provision of maintenance and external services
9. The roles and responsibilities of administrators, staff, and external service providers

1. Minimum Space Requirements

1.1 Indoor Space Requirements

EEIs shall adhere to the minimum indoor space requirement needed for children to play and learn comfortably in line with [Table 1: Minimum Indoor Space Requirement](#).

Table 1: Minimum Indoor Space Requirement

Age Group	Minimum Indoor Space Requirement
Up to 24 months (1 day to 2 years)	3.5 m ² per child
24 months - 48 months (2 years to 4 years)	3 m ² per child

As per the *Regulatory Compliance Manual for Early Childhood Institutions* (MoE, 2020).

Additionally, the area of the inner play space shall be at least 12 m².

1.2 Outdoor Space Requirements

All EEIs shall have an outdoor play space on their premises.

- a) EEIs shall adhere to the minimum outdoor space limits for children to play and learn comfortably in line with [Table 2: Minimum Outdoor Space Requirement](#).

Table 2: Minimum Outdoor Space Requirement

Age Group	Outdoor Space Requirement
Up to 24 months (1 day – 2 years)	3.5 m ² per child
24 months - 48 months (2 years - 4 years)	5 m ² per child

As per the *Regulatory Compliance Manual for Early Childhood Institutions* (MoE, 2020).

- b) EEIs located in residential or government buildings without a dedicated outdoor space are authorized to use an easily accessible, nearby park or public playground that is at most 300 meters away. In such cases, EEIs shall conduct a risk assessment in line with the requirements of the [ADEK EEI Risk Management Policy](#) to ensure it meets all required safety standards before visiting the park.

2. Play and Learning Materials

2.1 Access Quality

EEIs shall ensure that a wide variety of high-quality, tactile, durable, and sustainable play and learning materials are available in both indoor and outdoor settings.

All play and learning materials shall:

- a) Be tactile to stimulate and facilitate all types of children’s learning, development, and exploration of their surroundings.
- b) Align with curricular standards adopted by the EEI.
- c) Be available in sufficient quantities to allow play opportunities for all children.
- d) Provide a rich and varied environment regarding race, culture, ethnicity, and gender.
- e) Promote appreciation and respect for the local culture, tradition, and heritage of the UAE.
- f) Not glorify violence or harm to others (e.g., canons, tanks, guns, swords, knives, or whips).
- g) Encompass items available from outdoor surroundings (e.g., leaves, twigs, and stones).
- h) Be eco-friendly and sustainable where possible (e.g., the material should feature little to no nonbiodegradable plastics).

EEIs shall ensure that appropriate play and learning materials are accessible for children with additional learning needs. This material shall:

- Be available enough to allow play opportunities for them.
- Support their specific developmental goals and requirements.
- Reflect on their specific needs (e.g., children should see themselves in these materials to promote inclusion; see also [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#)).

2.2 Health and Safety

EEIs shall ensure that all play and learning materials, in both indoor and outdoor settings, meet health and safety standards required for such materials by the Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (QCC), the Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC), the Abu Dhabi Civil Defense Authority (CDA), and all other relevant government authorities.

EEIs shall also conduct regular inspections and maintenance of play and learning materials.

3. Built Structures

3.1 Safety, Maintenance, and Sustainability

To ensure structural integrity and sustainability, all built structures shall:

- Abide by the regulations set in the Abu Dhabi International Building Code (DMT, 2013), *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* (latest version), as well as any other standards specified by relevant government entities (e.g., DMT, Abu Dhabi Department of Health (DoH), CDA).
- Be appropriately sealed to prevent damage from adverse weather conditions (including dust from sandstorms, heavy rain, and thunderstorms) or other potential sources of damage from the surrounding environment.
- Show no signs of physical damage or deterioration (e.g., mold, flaking or peeling paint, peeling or deteriorating caulk, rust, splinters, cracked glass, missing building material, etc.).
- Be adequately and regularly maintained (see [Section 9. Maintenance and Upkeep](#) for further details on necessary procedures) to guarantee their structural integrity.

All built structures on EEI premises shall also meet the following specific requirements:

- All walls shall be smooth to the touch and shall not contain any protruding objects that may cause harm or injury to children (e.g., nails).
- All indoor flooring shall be smooth, easy to clean, and non-slip.
- Wall-to-wall carpeting in any room inside the EEI is prohibited as it poses a health and safety risk to children (see [Section 6.2 Appropriate Furniture for Children](#) for permissible uses of mats and rugs).

- d) Outdoor play spaces shall not feature any architectural or built structures or any tripping hazards that may cause harm or injury to children if used without supervision (e.g., high ledges, or slanted floors).
- e) The flooring of both outdoor and indoor play spaces shall be fitted with shock-absorbent material to minimize physical harm or injury in the case of accidents. Walls, columns, and other built structures located in areas where children are expected to move freely shall be padded with fire-rated shock-absorbing material to reduce risk of injury.
- f) Doors and windows shall contain safety features to make them inaccessible to children without supervision (e.g., child safety locks, doors/windows without movable handles, finger protection fittings, door closers). Doors shall be fitted with finger guards where there is a risk of finger entrapment, particularly in areas accessed by children.
- g) All windows shall adhere to a maximum opening width of 13 cm to prevent children from falling/passing through.
- h) Doors and windows shall also have the appropriate safety glass and contain safety markers at the children's eye level to prevent accidents.
- i) All stairs shall be equipped with banisters/handrails with an appropriate height of no less than 120 cm and designed to prevent children from climbing them.
- j) Stairs used by children shall also be fitted with anti-slip treads and shall be and shall be protected by gates that are easily opened by an adult in case of an emergency evacuation.
- k) Any mechanisms or structures meant to improve accessibility (e.g., ramps) shall meet the specifications set by the Abu Dhabi International Building Code (DMT, 2013) and any other requirements set by the Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT).
- l) All corridors, stairs, and passageways shall be sufficiently wide and clear of any obstacles to accommodate the flow of users and provide easy access to the outside in cases of emergency.

3.2 Fire Safety

- a) EEIs shall have in place fully functioning fire prevention and protection systems and fixtures that abide by the regulations laid out in the *UAE Fire and Life Safety Code of Practice* (Mol, 2018) and that are mandated by the Abu Dhabi International Building Code (DMT, 2013).
- b) EEIs shall ensure they have sufficient equipment to use in case of an evacuation (e.g., evacuation ropes, evacuation trolleys (for older children), and evacuation cribs (for infants – at least 1 for every 5 infants as per the EEI capacity) in line with requirements set in the *Regulatory Compliance Manual for Early Childhood Institutions* (MoE, 2022) as well as the *UAE Fire and Life Safety Code* (Mol, 2018).
- c) EEIs shall establish procedures to be followed in cases of fire emergencies (see [ADEK EEI Emergency Policy](#)).

- d) EEIs shall ensure that navigation through the premises in case of a fire is facilitated through the necessary emergency equipment and signs.
- e) EEIs shall ensure that emergency lighting is in place and functional in the event of a power outage.
- f) EEIs shall ensure that emergency doors are clearly identifiable (e.g., by placing suitable signage), are fitted with a push bar, and open to the outside.
- g) As per Abu Dhabi Civil Defense Authority (CDA) requirements, at a minimum, EEIs shall fit the following auxiliary (non-learning) spaces with fire-rated doors:
 - Electrical rooms
 - Server rooms
 - Pantries

All EEIs located in buildings not classified as residential villas shall also comply with the fitting of fire-rated doors in additional spaces throughout the EEI premises as per the requirements set by the CDA. No wood materials or unused furniture shall be stored anywhere on the EEI premises.

3.3 Electrical Safety

- a) EEIs shall follow all electrical safety-related standards/regulations mandated by the ADPHC, TAQA, DMT, and Abu Dhabi Distribution Company (ADDC).
- b) EEIs shall take all necessary measures to ensure that electrical connections, sockets, wiring, as well as any sources of electricity or power within the premises are secure, away from the reach of the children, and that they pose no harm or risk to children or staff.
- c) EEIs shall child-proof and secure their electrical sockets when not in use.
- d) EEIs shall install electrical sockets at a minimum height of 100 cm from the ground.
- e) EEIs shall store/put away all electrical adapters and cables (electrical, internet, or otherwise) when not in use and ensure they are out of children's reach.
- f) EEIs shall ensure proper wire management at all times (e.g., covering cables with the necessary safety casing).

3.4 Surveillance and Security Systems

- a) EEIs shall have a functional surveillance system in place.
- b) The EEI surveillance system and any service provider contracted by EEIs shall abide by the latest standards set by the Abu Dhabi Monitoring and Control Center (MCC).
- c) EEIs shall ensure that its video surveillance system covers all indoor and outdoor spaces in line with the requirements set by the latest version of the *Manual of Standards For Surveillance Devices* (MCC, latest version) and any other guidance by the MCC, except for the following areas where privacy is expected:

- Inside toilet blocks or nappy-changing spaces
 - Spaces where the changing of clothes takes place
 - Spaces dedicated to breastfeeding and any breastfeeding-support spaces (e.g., lactation rooms)
- d) EEIs shall have in place a visible sticker/signboard in Arabic, English, and Urdu stating that a surveillance system is installed on-premises and onboard vehicles (if applicable).
- e) EEIs shall restrict the use and access of the surveillance system and resulting data (generated/collected on-premises and in vehicles) to legitimate purposes as outlined in Article (3) of Federal Decree Law No. (45) of 2021 Concerning the Protection of Personal Data.
- f) EEIs shall have in place a functional electronic door entry system to control access to, and within, the premises.

See [ADEK EEI Surveillance Policy](#) for further information regarding surveillance requirements.

4. Design and Layout

4.1 UAE National Symbols

EEIs shall prominently display all official photographs of UAE leaders in line with the photograph and placement requirements of Updated Placement Guidelines of Their Highnesses Official Photos.

4.2 Design Principles

EEIs shall ensure the design of their premises:

- a) Is welcoming and visually pleasing for children to engage in a wide range of active learning experiences.
- b) Supports uninterrupted and self-directed play and exploration.
- c) Considers children’s motor skills when designing playscapes and learning environments.
- d) Uses a diverse range of surfaces for children to explore.
- e) Contains age-appropriate decorations providing a range of learning experiences for sensory stimulation.
- f) Uses natural materials and landscapes for children to connect with the outdoors.
- g) Strikes a balance between safety and opportunities for challenging and adventurous play.

- h) Provides individual learning opportunities (e.g., a table with 1 or 2 chairs, or 1 easel for drawing/painting located in the corner of the learning space/room).
- i) Allows children's supervision without interrupting play.
- j) Allows for both natural and artificial lighting.
- k) Provides a suitable physical environment for educators and other staff members to perform their duties effectively.
- l) Is accessible to children of different educational and developmental needs, as well as other adults onsite:
 - All design elements shall be accessible to children with additional learning needs while maintaining the necessary health and safety standards.
 - Design elements that facilitate access such as ramps and guardrails/handrails shall be placed where appropriate.
 - Necessary accessibility design arrangements shall be made to facilitate independent access for adults.

4.3 Layout of Spaces

- a) In line with the fire prevention requirements for children's nurseries, outlined by the CDA, EEIs can situate indoor learning spaces/rooms on the first floor of the building only if:
 - The EEI building is classified as a residential villa,
 - There are emergency exit routes that comply with requirements set by the CDA, and
 - The spaces are not occupied by children below 2 years of age.
- b) Except for the provisions listed in point (a) above, EEIs shall only situate indoor learning spaces/rooms on the ground floor.
- c) Indoor learning spaces/rooms shall be distant from the pantry.
- d) Toilet blocks and changing stations shall be designed and arranged to ensure physical and visual privacy for all users.
- e) Entryways to indoor learning spaces/rooms shall not open directly onto pantry toilet blocks or changing facilities and shall be separated by a buffer space (e.g., corridor or similar).
- f) Indoor learning spaces/rooms shall be divided into clearly defined, easily accessible activity spaces to allow small groups of children to engage in different activities at the same time without interference.
- g) EEI's shall display the floor plan of the premises showing the dimensions of each learning space/room (indoor and outdoor), stating the age group the space is being used for and the maximum capacity per day.
- h) Indoor play spaces for young children from 0-2 years shall be located on the ground floor.

- i) EEIs shall provide spaces for children to engage in structured and unstructured physical activity. All play spaces shall be enclosed (indoors or outdoors), facilitating safe movement of children, and enabling manipulation of sports equipment and physical activity resources (see also [ADEK EEI Physical Activity Policy](#)).

4.4 Layout of Auxiliary Spaces

- a) EEIs shall ensure that a suitable space for rest and sleep is accounted for in the layout of the EEI in line with [Table 3: Requirements for Rest and Sleep Spaces](#) (see also [ADEK EEI Safe Sleep Policy](#)). A separate sleeping room is preferable but not mandatory. The sleeping space shall:
 - Allow for visibility through glass windows or viewing panels.
 - Feature a surveillance system.
 - Be well-ventilated, aired, and maintain a temperature of 21-23 degrees Celsius.

[Table 3: Requirements for Rest and Sleep Spaces](#)

Infants under 12 months	Children from 12 months to 2 years of age	Children 2 years and above
Infants sleep in the same area/room where they spend their day.	It shall be any space within the indoor learning space environment and shall allow children to sleep without disturbance.	It shall be any space within the indoor learning space environment and shall allow children to sleep without disturbance.

As per the *Regulatory Compliance Manual for Early Childhood Institutions* (MoE, 2020).

- b) EEIs shall establish either a clinic (licensed by the Department of Health (DOH)) or a dedicated first aid room within its premises, to be used for the administration of medication and first aid, conducting check-ups, and as an isolation space for children who are suspected of having a serious illness, physical injury, disease, or other communicable condition.
- c) The first aid room shall be furnished and equipped as per the requirements detailed in the [ADEK EEI Infection Prevention and Control Policy](#).
- d) Regardless of the age of the children provided care for in the facility, the clinic or first aid room shall only be located on the ground floor of the EEI premises.
- e) EEIs offering food (supplied by a certified food supplier) shall have a pantry space equipped for the preparation/storage of food meeting the specifications laid out by ADAFSA and any other relevant authorities.
- f) At a minimum, the pantry shall be equipped with a refrigerator, sink, lockable cupboards/drawers, appropriate ventilation, and an adequate supply of cleaning equipment and products (e.g., sponges, antibacterial spray, etc.).
- g) EEIs catering for children below the age of 2 shall also furnish the pantry with an electric bottle sterilizer and warmer.

- h) Only staff pantries are permitted to have electrical appliances, limited to toasters, kettles, or microwaves, provided that these spaces are inaccessible to children and clearly marked with a "STAFF ONLY" sign. Any other types of pantries to which children have access shall not contain these electrical appliances.
- i) EEIs shall have a space dedicated solely for the storage of cleaning products, cleaning equipment, and other chemicals or potentially harmful substances to children.
- j) EEIs shall provide a temporary or permanent secluded and private nursing space for nursing mothers to help them continue breastfeeding and lactation if the EEI offers services to children under 2 years of age.
- k) EEIs shall have at least one space/room dedicated exclusively for administrative duties, which include record storage (including safe storage of children's health and academic records), staff meetings, and parent meetings.

4.5 Splash and Paddling Pools

EEIs with splash or paddling pools on their premises shall abide by the following requirements:

- a) Pools shall be located outdoors (e.g., outside the building) in a completely shaded area on the premises.
- b) Pools shall be enclosed by a permanent fence, wall, or similar barrier that has a minimum height of 120 cm, cannot be climbed by children, and is only accessible through locked entrances/exits.
- c) Drains, streams, and jets shall be designed and installed to avoid generating powerful suction effects.
- d) Non-slip flooring with a minimum width of 120 cm shall be installed around the border of the pool and shall be well maintained.
- e) Pools cannot exceed 60 cm in depth.
- f) All play/learning materials shall be stored outside pools when not in use.
- g) All equipment used for the maintenance and cleaning of pools shall be stored away from children's reach when not in use.

4.6 Lighting

- a) EEIs shall ensure that all indoor learning spaces/rooms are sufficiently lit when children are attending. Windows shall be fitted with curtains or blinds to minimize exposure to sunlight (or light in general) when needed to control lighting in every room.
- b) EEIs shall provide an environment with low lighting (using dimmers, curtains, blinds, or shutters) in sleeping and resting spaces while maintaining a reasonable level of visibility to allow for the supervision of sleeping children.

5. Heating, Cooling, Ventilation, and Humidity

5.1 General Requirements

- a) EEIs shall provide an adequate level of cooling and heating within their indoor facilities.
- b) EEIs shall have in place a central air conditioning system or air conditioning units in every room to ensure that the indoor temperature always falls between 22 and 25 degrees Celsius. This system shall be automatically controlled without the need for manual adjustment.
- c) Alternatives to air conditioning systems and units such as fans, space heaters, or other similar devices are not allowed.
- d) EEIs shall ensure that all rooms are ventilated and have an adequate level of humidity to enable clean air to regularly circulate in the rooms occupied by children.
- e) Toilet blocks and pantries shall have functional exhaust fans.
- f) EEIs shall ensure that all systems used for heating, cooling, ventilation, and humidity are always functional, routinely cleaned, and properly maintained.

5.2 Outdoor Shading

EEIs shall provide the necessary shade in any outdoor facility accessed by children onsite for extended periods. At least 90% of the outdoor playground area shall be covered to provide shade.

6. Furnishings

6.1 Safety and Maintenance

- a) EEI furnishings shall be safe and compliant with requirements set by the CDA, the ADPHC, and the ADQCC, and any other relevant authority in the UAE regarding the buildings, facilities, and equipment used by educational institutions.
- b) EEI furnishings shall be:
 - Child-proof
 - Sturdy
 - Fit-for-purpose
 - Hygienic
 - Well-maintained (e.g., in a usable condition by ensuring regular checks and preventive maintenance)
 - Non-toxic
 - Installed and used as per manufacturer's instructions and expiry dates (if applicable)
- c) Heavy furniture shall be fixed to walls, floors, or built structures within rooms.

- d) Televisions and any other large audiovisual electronic equipment shall be securely and correctly mounted on brackets, frames, tables, or other furniture dedicated to carrying the weight of this equipment.

6.2 Appropriate Furniture for Children

- a) The EEI shall ensure that furniture (e.g., chairs, tables, rugs, and utensils) in indoor learning spaces/rooms is age- and developmentally appropriate, and available in sufficient quantities.
- b) Furniture for children aged 1 or above shall meet the following requirements:
- Chairs with backs and a seat base at an appropriate height that allows children to have both feet on the ground/floor, sitting comfortably.
 - Tables of height between the children's waist and mid-chest allow these children to sit comfortably without overextending.
 - Enough chairs and tables to accommodate children during learning activities or mealtimes so that no child is excluded or left with alternative arrangements.
- c) While carpets are not allowed, mats and rugs can be carefully used for the comfort or convenience of children during play (for example, in a reading corner or specific play corner), if they are washable/easy to clean, do not constitute a trip hazard and are not used as permanent substitutes for chairs.
- d) EEIs shall provide the appropriate furniture and equipment for children's food consumption.
- e) EEIs shall provide the appropriate furniture and furnishings for children in rest and sleeping spaces in line with the requirements shown in [Table 4: Criteria for Appropriate Sleep and Rest Furniture](#).

[Table 4: Criteria for Appropriate Sleep and Rest Furniture](#)

Age of Children	Requirements
Up to 12 months	1 crib per child
12 months – 17 months	Cribs available for two-thirds of the enrolled children in this age range
18 months – 2 years	Cribs available for half of the enrolled children in this age range
Above 2 years to under 4 years	Enough stackable beds or mats that meet recognized safety standards and are easy to clean after each use
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cribs shall be placed at least 50 cm apart from each other • Cribs shall be of a recognized standard • Cribs shall have a firm mattress • Children between 12 months and 2 years can sleep in cribs, stackable beds, or mats • The height from the top of the mattress to the top of the horizontal safety bar shall be at least 50 cm

- Bars on cribs are no more than 6 cm apart for round bars and 7.5 cm apart for flat bars

- f) No child is allowed to sleep on the floor without rest equipment or on alternative sleeping arrangements, such as sofas, chairs, beanbags, pillows, or cushions (as a base), bunk cribs (e.g., stacked cribs), travel seats, or car seats (see [ADEK EEI Safe Sleep Policy](#)).

7. Toilet Blocks and Changing Facilities

7.1 Toilet Blocks

- a) EEIs shall establish separate toilet blocks for adults and children that are sufficiently equipped as per the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* (latest version).
- b) Children's toilet blocks shall:
- Consist of 1 WC and 1 washbasin for every 10 children aged between 2 and 4 years old (based on the EEI's licensed enrollment capacity).
 - Be fitted with low height partition separating the WCs if there is more than 1 WC in the toilet block.
 - Be suitable for children's use (child-sized), including all the necessary safety features, be well-maintained, and clean at all times.
 - Be fitted with unlockable doors, including toilet doors.
 - Be fitted with standard flush toilets; all other types of toilets are prohibited.
- c) The EEI shall perform regular maintenance of the toilet blocks as outlined in [Section 9. Maintenance and Upkeep](#) in this policy.

7.2 Changing Facilities

- a) A changing facility adequately equipped in line with the *ADEK Private Schools' Design Guidelines* (latest version) shall be provided onsite if the EEI offers services to children aged below 2 years old.
- b) Changing facilities shall consist of at least 1 nappy changing unit for every 10 children below the age of 3 years old and be equipped with:
- A changing table
 - A waterproof changing mat
 - A washbasin
 - Necessary nappy changing equipment (see [ADEK EEI Personal Care Policy](#)).

8. Environmental Health

8.1 Cleaning

- a) The EEI premises shall be kept clean and disinfected to meet the standards set by the [ADEK EEI Infection Prevention and Control Policy](#).
- b) EEIs shall develop and implement a detailed cleaning schedule, which addresses:
 - Items and spaces to be cleaned
 - Frequency of cleaning
 - Person responsible for cleaning
 - The cleaning material and detergents are to be used
 - The cleaning equipment to be used
 - Protective covers to be placed (e.g., for sand pits, swimming pools, etc.)
- c) The EEI cleaning schedule shall include the below items for routine cleaning:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walls• Work and play surfaces• Windows and windowsills• Ceilings• Light fixtures• Doors and handles• Sleeping furniture• Toilets• Washbasins• Cupboards• Cribs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shelving• Sinks• Refrigerators• Tables (tops, legs, and underside)• Chairs• Floors• Furniture (indoor and outdoor)• Play and learning material• Splash and paddling pools (if available)• Changing tables
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- d) EEIs shall ensure the use of appropriate cleaning material and equipment when cleaning the physical environment:
 - Disposable cleaning material should be used when possible.
 - All cleaning detergents and agents shall be approved for use in the UAE and used as per the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Color-coded cleaning cloths and equipment to separate their utilization for different facilities (e.g., pantry spaces, children's spaces, toilet blocks, etc.) shall be used.
 - Greywater (untreated wastewater from non-toilet plumbing systems) shall be disposed of appropriately and through suitable channels.
 - Mopheads and buckets shall not be left in any water and shall be stored clean and dry in designated storage spaces along with any cleaning agents.

8.2 Waste Disposal Facilities

- a) EEIs shall ensure that all onsite facilities related to waste disposal and recycling are located in appropriate areas, are fit-for-purpose, and are well-maintained, in line with the requirements of waste management by the DMT, the ADPHC, and all other relevant authorities.
- b) EEIs shall ensure sufficient bins across their premises in line with the below requirements:

- All indoor bins shall be foot-pedaled and away from the reach of younger children (below 2 years old) but can be used by older children for educational purposes (e.g., clearing up waste).
- Soiled nappies shall be stored separately in a sealed and leak-proof container inaccessible to children (see [Section 7. Toilet Blocks and Changing Facilities](#)).
- Outdoor bins shall be sturdy, weather-proof, and covered by a lid. They should be kept at a distance from the outdoor playground and be inaccessible to children.
- All waste disposal and recycling bins shall be maintained in line with [Section 9. Maintenance and Upkeep](#).

8.3 Water Sources

- EEIs shall ensure that regular tests are run on the quality of running water (tap water) across its premises as per the requirements of the relevant authorities in Abu Dhabi.
- If using water tanks, the EEI shall run regular preventive maintenance and disinfect them every 6 months.
- If using splash or paddling pools, the EEI shall ensure that pool water is tested daily before use to meet water quality standards shown below:
 - Temperature ranges between 25 and 28 degrees Celsius
 - PH levels range between 7.2 and 7.6
 - Chlorine concentration ranges between 1.0 and 3.0 parts per million
 - Water for paddling pools shall be replaced daily

8.4 Pest and Insect Control

The EEI shall take all necessary measures to ensure that premises are pest-free while maintaining general health and safety standards related to the application of pesticides in line with the occupational health and safety laws, policies, and regulations in Abu Dhabi (see the [ADEK EEI Physical Environment Policy Guide](#)).

9. Maintenance and Upkeep

9.1 Preventive and Corrective Maintenance

- EEIs shall follow a rigorous and regular preventive maintenance schedule to ensure that its physical environment – including all facilities and furnishings encompassed within – is structurally sound and safe for children’s use.
- EEIs shall plan regular and preventive maintenance for all features of its built structures, safety mechanisms, security systems, plumbing and toilet blocks, furniture, as well as its heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems to ensure their structural integrity, soundness, and functionality.
- The preventive maintenance schedule and report shall include:
 - Identification of the facility, item, or structural element requiring maintenance
 - Maintenance frequency

- The company responsible for maintenance
 - Record of any damages/defects observed
 - Record of the maintenance to be performed
 - Status of the maintenance once performed
 - Date of next maintenance check
- d) EEIs shall contract a licensed and specialized agency or company to perform the maintenance and upkeep of all health and safety equipment and services including fire safety equipment, surveillance (CCTV) systems, pest control, disinfection, water tank cleaning, water testing, and swimming pool cleaning.
 - e) EEIs shall not delay any corrective maintenance once a defect or problem has been identified.
 - f) EEIs shall immediately remove or cordon off any damaged element requiring maintenance that could jeopardize the safety or health of children or staff in any way and ensure its immediate repair/maintenance.

9.2 Timing and Safety

- a) EEIs shall ensure that all planned maintenance activities (including inspections, checks, or performing maintenance) take place during times when children are not present (e.g., after hours, during the weekend, or during public holidays).
- b) EEIs shall move children away from the space where urgent, unplanned maintenance is needed, following all other provisions listed in this section to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.
- c) EEIs shall check the space for debris, or any objects left behind and appropriately clean and/or disinfect it before use after a repair or maintenance is performed.
- d) EEIs shall ensure that at least 24 hours have passed since the application of paint, lacquer, or similar chemicals, before allowing children to use the space.
- e) In all other cases, EEIs shall ensure that any materials or chemicals used during repair or maintenance are not harmful to children once dried or applied and that the necessary time for safe use has passed, in line with the manufacturer's instructions as well as the maintenance company or agency's recommendation.

9.3 Documentation and Records

- a) EEIs shall keep an up-to-date and accurate record of all maintenance checks and services provided.
- b) EEIs shall maintain an accurate record of all formal documentation exchanged with maintenance service providers for at least 5 years.

10. Compliance

- 10.1** This policy shall be effective as of the start of the Academic Year 2024/25 (Fall term). EEIs are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2025/26 (Fall term). EEIs shall be compliant with the updated requirements in version 1.1 of this policy by Academic Year 2026/27 (Fall term).
- 10.2** 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 Law and its amendments or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the EEI is found to be in violation of its obligations.



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- Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). (latest version). Private Schools' Design Guidelines.
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- Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council. (2010). The Pearl Rating System for Estidama: Building Rating System: Design & Construction Version 1.0.
- Department of Municipality and Transport. (2013). Abu Dhabi International Building Code.
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law and its amendments
- Federal Decree Law No. (45) of 2021 Concerning the Protection of Personal Data
- Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Regulating Nurseries
- Updated Placement Guidelines of Their Highnesses Official Photos.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2020). *Regulatory Compliance Manual for Early Childhood Institutions*.
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2026 (March) ADEK_EEI_Physical Environment Policy_v.1.1

Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Early Educational Institutions (EEI) in Abu Dhabi.

Current version:

- *Amended to clarify the mandatory indoor and outdoor play space requirements, including additional standards for play areas for children under two to ensure sufficient space for physical activity; Replaces Estidama building requirements with alignment to the Abu Dhabi International Building Code and updated electrical safety standards; The amendment strengthens safety measures by requiring shock-absorbing surfaces under built structures, enhanced door security, staircase gates that adults can open easily in emergencies; expands the list of areas requiring routine cleaning; and clarifies that pantries are optional unless food is provided through a third-party food service provider. A section on UAE National Symbols has been added to mandate compliance with the Updated Placement Guidelines of Their Highnesses Official Photos.*

Past versions:

- 2024 (September) ADEK_EEI_Physical Environment Policy_v.1.0
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