



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

SCHOOL POLICY

on

SUSTAINABILITY



Introduction

Sustainability is an element of collective wellbeing that “meet[s] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). Implementing sustainable practices is crucial in creating a culture that prioritizes collective care for the wellbeing of the school’s physical environment. Such a culture also extends to building student competencies as global citizens who understand their impact on larger environmental concerns and their role in contributing to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This policy sets out the requirements for schools to promote and foster an awareness and understanding of sustainability across their school communities.

Purpose

- Ensure that schools have a focused strategy dedicated to promoting sustainability.
- Obligate schools to promote awareness of their sustainability strategy and policies to the school community.
- Ensure schools are committed to preparing students and staff with the knowledge and skills to manage their resources wisely and to recognize their role in tending to the planet’s future.
- Require schools to monitor their own progress in implementing their sustainability strategy actively.
- Encourage schools to actively work to continuously improve their sustainability and environmental wellbeing.

Definitions

ADEK Wellbeing Policies	<p>The group of ADEK policies that relate to student and/or staff wellbeing includes the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEK School Digital Policy • ADEK School Extracurricular Activities and Events Policy • ADEK School Health and Safety Policy • ADEK School Food and Nutrition Policy • ADEK School Inclusion Policy • ADEK School In-School Specialist Services Policy • ADEK School Physical Education and School Sports Policy • ADEK School Safeguarding Policy • ADEK School Staff Wellbeing Policy • ADEK School Student Behavior Policy • ADEK School Student Mental Health Policy • ADEK School Student Protection Policy • ADEK School Wellbeing Policy
Additional Learning Needs	<p>Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within a school setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by students of determination and those who have special educational needs and/or additional barriers to learning, access, or interaction in that specific context (e.g., dyslexic, hearing or visually impaired, twice exceptional, or gifted and/or talented).</p> <p>For example, a student with restricted mobility may require lesson accommodations to participate in Physical Education and building accommodations to access facilities but may not require any accommodations in assessments. Equally, a student with hearing impairment may require adaptive and assistive technology to access content in class and may also require physical accommodations (e.g., sit in the front of the class to be able to lip read) to access learning.</p>
Biophilic Design	<p>The use of building design to increase occupants' connectivity to nature, for example through direct exposure to natural features (such as light, water, and plants), indirect exposure to nature (e.g., via images of nature, and the use of natural materials and shapes) and spatial planning. Biophilic design is intended to deliver wellbeing benefits for occupants and environmental benefits for the local area.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The maintenance and enhancement of environmental, social, and economic resources, in order to meet the needs of current and future generations (UNESCO, n.d.)</p>
Wellbeing	<p>A “positive state experienced by individuals and societies... and encompasses quality of life, as well as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. It is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions” (WHO, 2021)</p>

	On an individual level, refers to a state of feeling good and functioning well, so that an individual can realize their own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and make a positive contribution to their community (Ruggeri et al., 2020; WHO, 2022).
Wellness Space	An area in the school that is accessible to all students and is designated for the purpose of recuperation and the promotion of calmness and mental and emotional health.



Policy

1. Sustainability Strategy

- 1.1 Sustainability Strategy: As part of their overall wellbeing strategy, schools shall develop a focused and results-driven sustainability strategy that includes the following at a minimum:
1. Statement of the school's overall sustainability goals and vision that:
 - a. Addresses how they will contribute to meeting the SDG 4 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).
 - b. Is aligned with the goals and policies of the Environmental Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) and other relevant entities (e.g., ADAFSA, DOE) including but not limited to:
 - 1) The Abu Dhabi Quality Conformity Council (QCC) Standards for School Audits (QCC, n.d.).
 - 2) *ADG 07 2017 Abu Dhabi Guideline for Green School – Sustainable Schools Initiative* (QCC, 2017).
 - c. Sets out how the school defines Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its commitment to its own CSR vision.
 2. The sustainability policies that the school will develop and promote to successfully implement its sustainability strategy, in line with the ADEK wellbeing policies.
 3. Key sustainability initiatives, interventions, and action plans, including how these accommodate the needs of students with additional learning needs, in line with the [ADEK School Inclusion Policy](#).
 4. Outlines how they will empower students as the agents of change, with a focus on community service dedicated to sustainability and environmental wellbeing.
 5. The school leadership's commitment to ISO 14000 standards.
 6. Mechanisms for measuring and monitoring the delivery of the sustainability strategy (see [Section 3. Monitoring and Evaluation](#)).
 7. Resources required and engagement of local community members and partners to deliver the sustainability strategy.
- 1.2 Sustainability Governance: Schools shall appoint a Sustainability Committee or Lead to oversee the sustainability strategy. The Sustainability Committee or Lead shall have the following responsibilities:
1. Oversee the development and implementation of the school's sustainability strategy and associated policies and initiatives.
 2. Conduct an annual review of the school sustainability strategy and its implementation:

- a. Monitor the progress against the goals set out in the sustainability strategy and relevant stipulated targets and expected milestones.
 - b. Oversee the design, delivery, and analysis of sustainability monitoring and evaluation measures (see [Section 3. Monitoring and Evaluation](#)).
 - c. Develop action plans in response to the insights received from the monitoring and evaluation measures.
 - d. Update the sustainability strategy and/or relevant policies and initiatives, as required, in line with the insights received from the monitoring and evaluation measures.
3. Ensure that the sustainability strategy and associated wellbeing policies and initiatives consider the abilities, needs, and engagement of students with additional learning needs, in line with the [ADEK School Inclusion Policy](#).
 4. Ensure compliance with relevant ADEK wellbeing policies.

2. Integration of Sustainability and Environmental Wellbeing

- 2.1 Curriculum Integration: Schools shall integrate sustainability principles into the curriculum across all grades through various subjects.
 1. Schools shall promote environmental awareness, conservation, and sustainable practices through educational programs, projects, and extracurricular activities to minimize the procurement and use of non-renewable and environmentally unfriendly resources.
 2. Schools shall engage students in practical learning experiences, such as switching off lights, gardening, rainwater harvesting, waste management, recycling, and energy conservation initiatives by using the school grounds as sources of teaching and learning opportunities for students.
- 2.2 Psychological Environment: Schools shall identify and establish wellness spaces within the school premises that promote wellness, calmness, and a connection to the natural environment through design strategies that promote good air quality, access to outdoor spaces, access to natural light, and biophilic design, in line with the [ADEK School Student Mental Health Policy](#).
- 2.3 Physical Space: Schools shall promote sustainability principles in building design and construction phases.
- 2.4 Energy Efficiency: Schools shall abide by building design requirements that mandate effective energy-saving measures (*Etidama*), in line with the [ADEK School Buildings and Facilities Policy](#).
- 2.5 Reuse of Uniforms: Schools that require uniforms shall ensure that old uniforms (if still valid for the upcoming academic year) can be donated to the school for second-hand use through discounted resale or temporary loans. Schools shall wash and sanitize school uniforms prior to resale or loan, and parents shall be given information on how to acquire them.

- 2.6 Reuse of Physical Resources:** Schools that require the purchasing of physical resources (books, learning materials, devices) shall ensure that used resources (if still valid for the upcoming academic year) can be donated to the school for second-hand use through discounted resale or temporary loan.
- 1.** For the purchase of MoE-issued books and resources, schools are subject to adhere to MoE requirements.
 - 2.** Schools that mass pre-order books and resources for students due to procurement restrictions (e.g., existing agreements with vendors) are exempt from this requirement, however, they shall have in place a plan to allow some form of reuse of second-hand resources within 5 years of the effective date of the [ADEK School Sustainability Policy](#) as part of their sustainability strategy.
- 2.7 Lost and Found Items:** Schools shall develop a plan for sustainable disposal of lost and found items at the end of every academic year. This can include donating items to charities, second-hand resale (following sanitization), and reuse of items within the school (e.g., maker space projects, costumes, temporary loans for forgotten PE kits).
- 2.8 Responsible Food Consumption:** Schools shall encourage sustainable eating and sourcing practices, in line with the [ADEK School Food and Nutrition Policy](#).
- 2.9 Sustainable Procurement:** Schools shall promote sustainable practices in their procurement and contract processes.
- 2.10 Safe Sustainable Transportation:** Schools shall raise awareness of the impact transport has on the environment and encourage sustainable transportation options for the school community, such as adopting low-emissions vehicles, carpooling, walking, and cycling, as deemed safe and appropriate to the school's location and access.
- 2.11 Advocacy for “zero waste” at school events:** Schools shall encourage the whole school community (students, parents, staff) to create a positive footprint when attending school events. This includes monitoring amounts of food needed at PTA meetings, open days, etc., reducing food waste, encouraging recyclable packaging, and considering bulk purchases with compostable or recyclable wrapping which can later be reused (e.g., in crafting activities).
- 2.12 Sustainable Technologies:** Schools shall encourage a green digital footprint by prioritizing digital over printed resources, when appropriate, and purchasing refurbished electronic equipment (e.g., computers, printers, laptops, etc. manufactured using older parts to refurbish these devices), where applicable, thereby reducing the energy consumption needed to manufacture new ones and thus lowering the carbon footprint of these devices.
- 2.13 Environmental Wellbeing Policy:** Schools shall develop, with feedback from the school community, a policy in alignment with their sustainability strategy (e.g., ways in which all types of waste can be reduced through policy options such as banning of single-use plastics, zero-waste lunches, and snacks, collecting recycled goods at school for projects, etc.).

3. Awareness of Sustainability Strategy and Policies

- 3.1 Awareness Promotion: Schools shall promote awareness of their sustainability strategy, policies, and initiatives to students, staff, parents, and other relevant stakeholders as part of their promotion of awareness of their larger wellbeing strategy, in line with the [ADEK School Wellbeing Policy](#).
- 3.2 Reward and Recognition: Schools shall create a reward and recognition policy to encourage and value students, staff, parents, and the larger community's contribution towards achieving sustainability which can prove to be a powerful motivational tool to create a culture of sustainability.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 4.1 Schools shall regularly monitor their sustainability strategy and evaluate the effectiveness of any implemented policies and initiatives for continuous improvement (as per ISO 14000 standard for environmental performance).
- 4.2 Schools shall include a section dedicated to sustainability and environmental wellbeing in their annual wellbeing survey that aims to capture the community's knowledge of sustainable practices, and overall satisfaction with the school's sustainability strategy (and associated policies and initiatives), and obtain feedback improvement opportunities, at a minimum.
- 4.3 Schools shall regularly update their whole-school sustainability strategy based on community feedback as well as, alignment with best practices and evolving sustainability standards.
- 4.4 Additional Evaluation: Schools shall administer any ADEK-mandated evaluation measures to assess their sustainability practices as required.

5. Compliance

- 5.1 This policy shall be effective as of the start of the Academic Year 2024/25 (Fall term). Schools are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2025/26 (Fall term).
- 5.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with the ADEK's regulations, policies, and requirements, notwithstanding any other penalties imposed by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations.

References

- Abu Dhabi Quality & Conformity Council (QCC). (2017). *ADG 07 2017 Abu Dhabi Guideline for Green School – Sustainable Schools Initiative*.
- Abu Dhabi Quality & Conformity Council (QCC). (n.d.). QCC Standards for School Audits. <https://jawdah.qcc.abudhabi.ae/en/Registration/QCCServices/Services/STD/ADG-List.pdf>
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- Ruggeri, K., Garcia-Garzon, E., Maguire, Á., Matz, S., & Huppert, F. (2020). Well-being is more than happiness and life satisfaction: a multidimensional analysis of 21 countries. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 18: Article 192.
- United Nations (UN). (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future.
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- World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). Health Promotion Glossary of Terms 2021.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2022, June 17). Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response Factsheet. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response%E3%80%80>

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Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Private and Charter Schools in Abu Dhabi. However, any circular issued prior to this policy or issued specifically for Charter Schools thereafter supersedes the requirements of this policy.

Current version:

Updated due to name change of formerly *ADEK School Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy* to *ADEK School Food and Nutrition Policy*.

Past version:

- 2024 (September) ADEK_School_Sustainability Policy_v1.1
First published
- 2024 (January) ADEK_School_Sustainability Policy_v1.0
First circulated to schools

