



Effective From	2 January 2026
Compliance From	AY 2026/27 (Fall term)

EARLY EDUCATION INSTITUTION **POLICY**

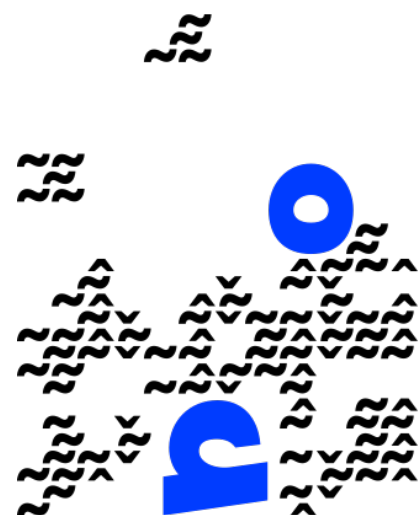
on

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent framework for promoting physical activity and movement-based learning in EEs. It aims to support the holistic development of children by integrating physical education into daily experiences while ensuring safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate practices across all EEs.

This policy seeks to ensure that every child benefits from a safe, engaging, and developmentally appropriate physical activity program that promotes their physical literacy and supports the achievement of their physical development milestones.



Definitions

Child	A person under the age of 4 years, as per Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Regulating Nurseries.
Developmentally Appropriate Practice	Teaching strategies and learning environments that are grounded in the developmental stages of children. Developmentally appropriate practice recognizes the child's age, individual strengths and needs, and sociocultural context to ensure that learning experiences are both challenging and achievable.
Early Education Institutions (EEIs)	All ADEK-licensed institutions that offer early years service (e.g., nurseries).
Inclusive Physical Activity Practice	Inclusive physical activity practice involves designing and delivering physical activities that are accessible, adaptable, and supportive of the diverse needs of every child, and in particular, children with additional learning needs.
Key Group	Known as a "class" in more formal educational settings, comprises a group of children, an EE Educator, and any other members of the key team.
Movement-Based Learning	The practice of embedding physical activity into various parts of the learning schedule, such as using movement during storytelling, transitions, or music. Movement-based learning supports cognitive development and attention in young children.
Physical Activity	Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure (WHO, 2020). This includes structured play, free movement, active exploration, and any movement integrated into the learning environment.
Physical Literacy Principles	A set of foundational concepts that focus on nurturing a child's confidence, competence, motivation, and understanding to engage in a wide range of physical activities. These principles guide how physical activity is introduced and integrated into daily routines in a meaningful, inclusive and developmentally appropriate way.
Planned Physical Activity	A planned, progressive program of physical activity that supports the development of motor skills, physical fitness, teamwork, and positive attitudes toward physical activity.
Structured Activity	Adult-guided physical activity sessions with clear objectives, often focused on skill development such as coordination, balance, or rhythm. These sessions complement unstructured play and are delivered in a playful, engaging manner.
Restrictive Equipment	Any apparatus that physically confines a child and restricts natural movement, such as sitting, crawling, standing, or walking. It is typically used for safety, feeding, or convenience, but can limit physical activity if overused. Examples are highchairs, strollers, infant seats (e.g., bouncers or car seats used outside of transport), walkers, or jumpers that limit free movement.

Third-Party Service Provider	An external person or company providing a service as part of a contract.
Unstructured Activity	Spontaneous physical activity that occurs during free play or exploration, without direct adult instruction. Supports creativity, self-expression, and self-regulation, and is essential for brain and motor development.
WHO Recommendations	Recommendations for physical activity based on the <i>Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep for Children Under 5 Years of Age</i> (WHO, 2022).

Policy

EEIs shall provide opportunities for structured and unstructured daily physical activity that actively support the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development of all children. This policy outlines minimum standards and expectations related to physical activity and physical literacy in accordance with the *Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep for Children Under 5 Years of Age* (WHO, 2022) and the *ADG 40 Abu Dhabi Guideline for Nutrition in Early Childhood* (QCC, 2024).

EEIs shall develop and implement a Physical Activity Policy which includes the following:

1. Daily targets for physical activity
2. Suitable environment and resources
3. Promotion and development of physical literacy
4. Embedding physical activity in the curriculum
5. Inclusivity
6. Monitoring and engagement

1. Daily Targets for Physical Activity

1.1 Planned Physical Activity

EEIs shall ensure that they allocate daily targets for physical activity within the planned schedule for each age group as per [Table 1. Minimum Daily Physical Activity for Children](#). This allocation shall be in addition to regular movement during the day.

EEIs shall adhere to the following when planning the physical activity schedules:

- a) **Play:** EEIs shall allocate daily play-based physical activity sessions (unstructured or structured and preferably outdoor when weather permits) for all children for a minimum of 30 minutes (for an average 6-hour day, including Fridays if these are half-days). During these sessions, children can either engage in free play (e.g., climb, slide, ride), with or without equipment, or participate in structured play-based physical activity sessions led by an adult, appropriate for their age.

- b) **Structured Play:** EEIs shall allocate at least 2 of the above play sessions to structured physical activity, so that children have opportunities for structured physical activity twice a week. This includes opportunities to engage in structured games, dance, yoga, races, ball skills, etc.
- c) **Additional Integrated Movement for 2-4 years:** In addition, for children aged 2-4 years, indoor group activities such as circle time, storytelling, or music sessions shall integrate movement and be planned for a minimum of 30 minutes daily.
- d) **Additional Play for 0-2 years:** For children aged 0-2 years, an additional daily session of 30 minutes shall be allocated for planned structured or unstructured physical activity in a developmentally appropriate, well-resourced space, so that each child has planned physical activity sessions at least twice a day (for a total of 60 minutes daily within an average 6-hour day) while at the EEI. This shall be in addition to the spontaneous physical activity they engage in while learning within their key groups. If a child is asleep during the scheduled session, the EEI shall provide an alternative opportunity for physical activity, if possible, later on during the day.
- e) **Extended Hours:** For children attending sessions at the EEI for more than 6 hours, an additional physical activity session of a minimum of 30 minutes shall be scheduled for every 2 hours of additional time spent at the EEI.

Table 1. Minimum Daily Physical Activity for Children

Age Group	Minimum Daily Activity*	Example of Activities
Less than 1 year/not mobile	30-minute sessions, twice a day. These targets may be accumulated across multiple shorter sessions according to the infant's awake periods.	Tummy time, reaching for an object, crawling, and floor play.
1-2 years	30-minute sessions, twice a day (any intensity).	Walking, climbing, push/pull toys, rolling a ball, and throwing.
2-4 years	30-minute play sessions (of which 2 sessions per week are structured) and 30-minute additional movement (through indoor group activities).	Running, jumping, skipping, hopping, climbing, ball games, simple racing, obstacle courses, dancing and riding tricycles, running relays, parachute games, and sliding.

*For an average 6-hour day. Based on WHO recommendations and adapted for children while under EEI supervision.

1.2 Daily Schedules

- a) Daily schedules shall visibly indicate the timetabling of all physical activity sessions, both indoors and outdoors (weather permitting).
- b) Daily schedules shall be planned to avoid prolonged periods of inactivity (except for naps and meals).
- c) Physical activity shall be planned in accordance with children's natural energy patterns, such as calmer, restorative movement activities following lunch and more vigorous play during mid-morning and mid-afternoon periods. For infants, these minutes may be achieved through multiple brief activity sessions that follow their natural sleep-wake cycles.

1.3 Inactivity and Restraint

EEIs shall ensure that children are not restrained by:

- a) Restrictive equipment (such as prams/strollers, highchairs) for more than 15-20 minutes at a time.
- b) Screen time as a replacement for physical activity or during mealtimes.

1.4 Parent Partnership to Meet Daily Targets

EEIs shall communicate WHO recommendations for daily physical activity targets to parents, emphasizing the collective role EEIs and parents play in ensuring children meet the minimum targets, both while at the EEI and at home.

2. Environment and Resources

EEIs shall ensure that they provide safe, well-resourced, enabling environments for play and physical activity, as per the guidelines outlined in the [ADEK EEI Physical Environment Policy](#), [ADEK EEI Learning and Development Policy](#), and [ADEK EEI Risk Management Policy](#).

2.1 Environment

EEIs shall provide physical activity environments that prioritize child safety and are feasible for regular use across varying weather conditions. Environments shall be designed to support safe movement, reduce risk of injury, and enable consistent access to age-appropriate physical activity. The following elements are required:

- a) Soft flooring in play areas used by children 0-2 years old, to provide protection from injuries and support safe exploration.
- b) Shaded outdoor play areas to allow for safe outdoor activity throughout the year (see [ADEK EEI Physical Environment Policy](#) for more details).
- c) Indoor soft play zones or multipurpose spaces to ensure safe, active play during periods of extreme weather or poor outdoor conditions.

- d) Secure and age-appropriate climbing and/or sliding equipment or obstacle courses for children aged 3-4 years, promoting physical development while maintaining safety standards.

2.2 Resources

EEIs shall ensure that resources for physical activity are provided as per the developmental level of the children. This includes equipment for sports, play, gross and fine motor skills development. As a minimum, EEIs shall provide:

- a) Portable Play Equipment
 - Soft balls of different sizes and textures for throwing, catching, and rolling.
 - Bean bags, hoops, and cones for target games, balancing, and obstacle courses.
 - Lightweight bats and rackets for striking activities (for children 3-4 years old).
- b) Climbing and Balancing Apparatus
 - Low climbing frames, soft play blocks, tunnels, and balance beams.
 - Stepping stones or mats for jumping and hopping activities.
- c) Ride-on Toys and Push/Pull Equipment
 - Age-appropriate tricycles, scooters, and other ride-on toys.
 - Push carts, wagons, and pull toys to encourage walking and coordination.
- d) Music and Movement Props
 - Musical instruments, such as rhythm sticks, mini drums, shakers, bells, for dancing, rhythm, and movement games.
 - Access to music for action songs, nursery rhymes, and movement-based storytelling.
- e) Sensory and Manipulative Materials
 - Textured mats, sensory balls, and objects of different shapes and sizes to grasp, squeeze, and manipulate.
 - Waterplay and sand play equipment to encourage pouring, scooping, and digging.
- f) Marked Activity Zones and Circuits
 - Clearly marked areas or circuits for structured activities like hoop hopping, relay races, or simple sports games.
- g) Non-Restrictive Clothing and Supportive Footwear
 - EEIs shall ensure that parents provide comfortable clothing and shoes or socks, as applicable to the child's comfort, to facilitate the free movement and safe participation of their children in all activities.

2.3 Risk Assessments

Risk assessments shall be in place to ensure the safe and functional use of physical activity resources, particularly for climbing and balancing equipment (see [ADEK EEI Risk Management](#) and [ADEK EEI Physical Environment Policy](#)).

3. Physical Literacy

EElS shall ensure that they integrate physical literacy principles into daily routines and activity planning to support children's confidence, competence, motivation, and understanding to engage in physical activity throughout life.

3.1 Promoting Physical Literacy

EElS shall:

- a) Design developmentally appropriate activities that enhance fundamental movement skills such as balance, object control, coordination, agility, and spatial awareness.
- b) Encourage self-confidence, problem-solving, and persistence through physical tasks that help develop gross and fine motor skills.
- c) Provide consistent opportunities for children to experience enjoyment, challenge, and success in physical activities.
- d) Provide staff with ongoing professional development and training in physical literacy and active, play-based learning methodologies.
- e) Distribute supportive communication to parents on the role they play in developing their child's physical literacy, with suggestions and ideas for promoting an active lifestyle as a family.

4. Embedding Physical Activity in Curriculum

EElS shall ensure that physical activity and movement opportunities are intentionally embedded throughout the daily curriculum, providing children with frequent and varied chances to move, explore, and develop their motor skills in both structured and unstructured environments.

4.1 Role of EE Educators

EE Educators are expected to incorporate movement-based learning across all domains and whenever they see an appropriate opportunity to do so during the day. This includes during storytelling, music, dramatic play, and other exploratory activities to support holistic development and active engagement (see [ADEK EEI Learning and Development Policy](#) for more details).

4.2 Staff Training

EEIs shall ensure that staff are trained to:

- a) Incorporate physical activity within their planning to cover all domains of learning, where applicable.
- b) Deliver high-quality physical activity in line with physical development milestones.
- c) Model and support positive physical literacy behaviors.
- d) Assess and report on children's physical development as part of continuous learning (see [ADEK EEI Learning and Development Policy](#) and [ADEK EEI Observation and Assessment Policy](#)).

4.3 Leading and Facilitating Physical Activity

Physical activity sessions (indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather and the facilities available) involving structured play shall be led by an EE Educator or third-party service provider (supported by the EEI staff), and in line with the adult-to-child supervision ratios mandated in the [ADEK EEI Child Supervision Policy](#).

5. Inclusive Physical Activity

5.1 Access to Physical Activity

EEIs shall ensure that every child, including those with additional learning needs, has equitable access to and participation in all physical activities. This includes making necessary adaptations to activities, equipment, and environments as well as providing relevant staff support, modifications, or assistive devices to accommodate physical disabilities, chronic health conditions, or temporary injuries to ensure the meaningful involvement of every child (see [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#) and [ADEK EEI Learning and Development Policy](#) for more details).

5.2 Staff Training in Inclusive Practices

EEIs shall provide regular professional development for educators and staff on inclusive physical activity practices.

5.3 Assessment of Programs for Inclusion

EEIs shall routinely assess and adapt their physical activity programs to ensure that all children are fully supported and that the milestones for physical development are included within the child's developmental learning plan (see [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#) for more details).

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

EEIs shall demonstrate evidence of policy implementation through:

- Daily schedules and curriculum plans.
- Observations, assessments, and records of physical development (see [ADEK EEI Physical Activity Policy Guide](#) for more details).
- Staff training logs and environmental safety assessment checks.

7. Parent Communication and Engagement

- 7.1** EEIs shall establish regular communication with parents regarding children's daily physical activity routines and opportunities within the EEI.
- 7.2** EEIs shall ensure that children's assessment reports include a section on physical activity, reflecting progress against age-appropriate physical ability goals.
- 7.3** EEIs shall encourage parent participation in physical activity initiatives by organizing at least one sports day or active day event per year that provides an opportunity for parent participation.
- 7.4** EEIs shall communicate and emphasize the partnership of EEIs and parents in ensuring each child meets targets for daily physical activity, quality sleep, and limited sedentary time as per WHO recommendations. This includes promoting active play, reduction of screen time, ensuring sufficient sleep in a sleep-conducive environment, and how parents can encourage safe movement in general at home. This information can be shared through workshops, information sessions, or via newsletters.

8. Compliance

- 8.1** This policy shall be effective as of 2 January 2026. EEIs are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2026/27 (Fall term).
- 8.2** 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 EEI is found to be in violation of its obligations.

References

- Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (QCC). (2024). *Abu Dhabi Guideline (ADG 40): Abu Dhabi Guideline for Nutrition in Early Childhood* (ADG 401st ed.).
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2020). Physical Activity Fact Sheet.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2019). *Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep for Children Under 5 Years of Age*.
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550536>

Publication

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Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

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

