



AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DUBAI

Leadership Succession Policy

Effective Academic Year: 2026–2027

Policy Owner	Board of Governors, in consultation with the Principal and Senior Leadership Team
Applies To	Principal, Vice Principals, Senior Leadership Team members, and other designated key leadership positions
Review Cycle	Biennial, or following a material change in school leadership structure
Regulatory Alignment	KHDA School Inspection Framework; NEASC Standards for Accreditation

1. Purpose

American International School Dubai (AIS) is committed to ensuring continuity, stability, and quality of leadership across all levels of the school. This policy establishes a structured and proactive approach to leadership succession, so that the school is prepared for both planned leadership transitions, such as retirement, resignation, or promotion, and unplanned transitions, such as sudden departure, extended leave, or incapacitation.

Effective succession planning protects the continuity of teaching and learning, safeguards institutional knowledge, supports the wellbeing of students, staff, and families during periods of change, and demonstrates sound governance to regulatory and accrediting bodies, including the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following designated leadership positions at AIS, referred to collectively as Key Leadership Positions:

- Principal
- Vice Principals
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including Heads of Department, Heads of Data and Assessments, Heads of Inclusion, and equivalent strategic roles
- Any other position formally designated as a Key Leadership Position by the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors may extend selected provisions of this policy to additional middle leadership roles where continuity of function is considered critical to school operations.

3. Definitions

1. **Planned Succession:** A leadership transition that is anticipated in advance, including retirement, resignation with appropriate notice, contract non-renewal, or internal promotion.
2. **Emergency Succession:** A leadership transition that occurs without advance notice, including sudden resignation, extended medical leave, incapacitation, or death in service.
3. **Interim Leader:** A staff member temporarily assigned to fulfil the duties of a Key Leadership Position until a permanent appointment is confirmed.
4. **Successor Pool:** The group of staff identified through talent mapping as having the potential, readiness, or developmental trajectory to assume a Key Leadership Position in the future.
5. **Leadership Pipeline:** The ongoing process of identifying, developing, and preparing staff for future leadership responsibility.

4. Guiding Principles

Leadership succession planning at AIS is guided by the following principles:

- **Continuity of Learning:** Decisions relating to leadership transition prioritise minimal disruption to students, teaching staff, and the academic calendar.
- **Proactive Planning:** Succession needs are reviewed on an ongoing basis rather than only at the point of departure.
- **Equity and Transparency:** Opportunities for leadership development and consideration for interim or permanent roles are communicated and applied fairly, in line with the school's recruitment and equal opportunity practices.
- **Capacity Building:** Wherever possible, AIS invests in growing internal leadership capacity, while recognising that external recruitment may be necessary to bring particular expertise or perspective.
- **Confidentiality:** Succession discussions, including the identification of potential successors, are treated as confidential personnel matters.
- **Accountability to Governance:** The Board of Governors retains ultimate responsibility for the appointment and oversight of succession arrangements for all Key Leadership Positions.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Principal

- Maintains oversight of succession readiness for all Key Leadership Positions other than their own.

- Identifies critical positions and associated succession risk on an annual basis.
- Oversees the identification and development of the Successor Pool, in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team and Human Resources.
- Recommends interim leadership arrangements to the Board where a Key Leadership Position becomes vacant without notice.
- Ensures that knowledge transfer and handover documentation are completed for departing leaders.

5.2 Senior Leadership Team

- Contributes to talent identification and leadership development planning within their respective areas of responsibility.
- Supports mentoring, coaching, and shadowing opportunities for staff identified within the Successor Pool.
- Maintains up-to-date documentation of role responsibilities, key contacts, and operational processes to support continuity in the event of an unplanned transition.

5.3 Human Resources

- Maintains confidential records of succession planning discussions and the Successor Pool.
- Coordinates recruitment processes where internal succession is not available or appropriate.
- Advises on contractual, visa, and labour law considerations relevant to leadership transitions, in line with UAE regulations.

6. Types of Succession Planning

6.1 Planned Succession

Planned succession applies to transitions that are known in advance, such as end-of-contract departures, retirement, or internal promotion. For planned transitions, the following minimum timelines apply wherever operationally possible:

- Principal and Vice Principal roles: succession planning initiated at least two months in advance of the anticipated vacancy.
- Other Senior Leadership Team roles: succession planning initiated at least one month in advance.

Planned succession includes a structured handover period of no less than two weeks of overlap between the outgoing and incoming leader, where feasible, to support continuity of operations, stakeholder relationships, and ongoing projects.

6.2 Emergency Succession

Emergency succession applies where a Key Leadership Position becomes vacant without advance notice. In such circumstances, AIS will:

- Activate an interim leadership arrangement within five working days of the vacancy occurring.
- Draw, in the first instance, from the Successor Pool or the most senior available member of staff within the relevant area of responsibility.
- Communicate the interim arrangement to relevant stakeholders in accordance with Section 9 of this policy.
- Initiate a permanent recruitment process, where required, within one academic term of the vacancy occurring.

Each Key Leadership Position must have at least one identified interim cover arrangement documented at all times, to be reviewed annually as part of the succession risk summary referenced in Section 5.1.

7. Succession Planning Process

7.1 Identification of Critical Positions

On an annual basis, ahead of the start of each academic year, the principal, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, will review and document the Key Leadership Positions considered most critical to school operations, taking into account factors such as regulatory responsibility, span of oversight, and the availability of qualified internal cover.

7.2 Talent Identification and the Leadership Pipeline

AIS will identify staff with leadership potential through a combination of performance evaluation, demonstrated initiative, qualifications, and expressed interest in leadership development. Identified staff form the Successor Pool for relevant Key Leadership Positions.

Inclusion in the Successor Pool does not constitute a guarantee of future appointment. All permanent appointments to Key Leadership Positions are subject to a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process, in accordance with AIS recruitment practices.

7.3 Leadership Development and Capacity Building

Staff identified within the Successor Pool will be offered, where resources allow, access to leadership development opportunities, which may include:

- Structured mentoring or coaching by current Senior Leadership Team members
- Shadowing of leadership meetings, governance processes, and strategic planning activities
- Delegated leadership responsibility on a project or interim basis

- External professional development, such as leadership qualifications, certifications, or accredited training programmes
- Participation in relevant accreditation, inspection, or compliance preparation activities

7.4 Knowledge Transfer and Documentation

Each Key Leadership Position holder is responsible for maintaining a current handover document outlining core responsibilities, recurring deadlines, key external contacts, ongoing projects, and access to essential systems and records. Handover documents are reviewed annually and updated immediately prior to any planned transition.

7.5 Interim Leadership Arrangements

Interim leaders are provided with a documented scope of authority, a defined reporting line, and access to relevant handover documentation. Where an interim arrangement is expected to extend beyond one academic term, the Principal will review whether additional support, compensation adjustment, or an accelerated permanent recruitment process is warranted.

8. Recruitment and External Appointment

Where a suitable internal successor is not available, or where the Board or Principal determines that an external appointment best serves the needs of the school, recruitment will proceed in accordance with AIS recruitment practices and applicable UAE labour and education regulations. External recruitment for other Key Leadership Positions is led by the Principal in consultation with Human Resources.

9. Communication Protocol

Communication regarding leadership transitions will be timely, consistent, and appropriate to the audience. As a general guide:

- Staff are informed of confirmed interim or permanent leadership arrangements as early as practicable, and no later than the date the arrangement takes effect.
- Parents and guardians are informed of changes to the Principal, or other publicly facing leadership roles through a formal communication from the school.
- KHDA and other relevant regulatory bodies are notified of changes to the Principal or other positions where notification is required under applicable regulations.
- Internal succession discussions, including the composition of the Successor Pool, remain confidential and are not shared outside of those with a legitimate governance or operational need to know.

10. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All records relating to succession planning, including talent identification, development plans, and interim arrangements, are maintained as confidential personnel records by Human Resources and the Office of the Principal. Access is limited to individuals with a legitimate governance, operational, or oversight responsibility, in accordance with AIS data protection practices.

11. Alignment with Regulatory and Accreditation Requirements

This policy supports AIS in meeting expectations under the KHDA School Inspection Framework relating to governance, leadership stability, and continuity of provision, and contributes to evidence of effective leadership and governance practice under NEASC Standards for Accreditation. The principal will ensure that succession planning documentation is available for review as part of internal self-evaluation processes and external inspection or accreditation visits.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed by the Board of Governors on a biennial basis, or sooner in the event of a material change to the school's leadership structure, governance arrangements, or relevant regulatory requirements. The annual succession risk summary prepared under Section 5.1 will be used to inform each review.

13. Policy Approval and Review History

Version	Date	Description	Approved By
1.0	18 th June, 2026	Initial policy drafted for Board review	25 th June, 2026