

EDITOR, NEWS DESK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCC CALLS FOR STRONGER CHILD SAFEGUARDING MEASURES ACROSS
ALL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

KUALA LUMPUR (14 AUGUST 2026) – The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), is deeply concerned by the reported incident involving a nine-year-old child who was allegedly bullied by an older student at a tahfiz school in Kedah. It is particularly distressing that the child reportedly sustained physical injuries and psychological trauma and is now fearful of returning to school.

Every child has the right to learn and develop in a safe, supportive and dignified environment, free from violence, abuse, intimidation and bullying. This is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which requires children to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence and affirms that their best interests must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them. All educational institutions owe a duty of care to the children entrusted to them. This responsibility applies equally to government schools, tahfiz schools, religious schools and all other private educational institutions.

OCC calls on every educational institution to establish and rigorously implement comprehensive child safeguarding and anti-bullying mechanisms. These should include clear procedures to prevent, report, investigate and respond to incidents, adequate supervision particularly in residential settings, confidential and child-friendly reporting channels, prompt notification of parents or guardians, and timely access to medical care, counselling and psychosocial support. Teachers, wardens and other personnel must be properly screened, trained and equipped to identify signs of bullying, abuse or distress and to intervene without delay. Institutions must also maintain proper records of reported incidents and cooperate fully with parents, enforcement agencies, child protection authorities and relevant regulators.

The safety of children cannot depend solely on whether a child has the courage or ability to disclose what has happened. Institutions must have proactive systems to identify risks, detect warning signs and intervene before harm escalates. Any response must prioritise the best interests, safety, recovery and continued education of the affected child. No child should face retaliation, stigma or further disadvantage for reporting bullying.

OCC also reminds parents and guardians that the Anti-Bullying Tribunal Act 2026 came into force on 16 June 2026. Incidents occurring on or after that date may be reported through the mechanisms provided under the Act. For schools under the Ministry of Education (MOE), complaints may be directed to the school for action through its school-level anti-bullying committee. Where a school or educational institution is not registered under MOE, including relevant private or religious institutions, parents or guardians may lodge a claim directly with the Anti-Bullying Tribunal.

The Tribunal provides a resolution and remedial mechanism that is distinct from the criminal justice process. Depending on the circumstances of the case, it may order remedies such as an apology, counselling, compensation or reimbursement of reasonable expenses arising from the incident, including medical costs. Where the alleged conduct may constitute a criminal offence, particularly when it involves physical assault, serious injury, threats or an immediate risk to a child's safety, a police report should also be lodged. Recourse to the Tribunal does not replace or prevent a criminal investigation by the police.



MEDIA STATEMENT
THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)

OCC urges the Government and relevant authorities to ensure that parents, guardians, children and educational institutions receive clear and accessible information on these reporting pathways. No complaint should be delayed or left without action and all relevant authorities should conduct a prompt and thorough investigation into the reported incident and to ensure that the affected child receives appropriate protection and support. The child's identity and privacy must be safeguarded throughout the process.

This incident must serve as a clear warning to every institution entrusted with the care and education of children and child safeguarding is a fundamental obligation, not an administrative option. OCC urges the relevant authorities to ensure that binding and consistently enforced safeguarding and anti-bullying standards apply across all educational settings, including private and religious institutions. No institution should be permitted to operate without effective systems to protect every child's safety, well-being and dignity.

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Children's Commissioners (CC)
Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
14 August 2026