



**DUBAI
BRITISH
SCHOOL**
EMIRATES HILLS

Counselling Policy

This procedure is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
School Counsellor	
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1. Definition of Counselling

"Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps a dissatisfaction with life, or a loss of a sense of direction or purpose. It is always at the request of the client." The client can be a parent, teacher, staff member or student, with the primary goal to enhance wellbeing.

2. The Role of the School Counsellor

The overall aim is to effectively implement a counselling service that meets Taaleem's goals to provide all students the opportunity to achieve their best. The School Counsellor will support the developmental, emotional, social and academic needs of the student body to promote wellbeing and success.

Dubai British School has a school counselling service available to all staff, students and their families. The role of the counsellor is to:

- Implement effective student and staff support and guidance. This includes understanding self and others, coping strategies, peer relationships and social skills, communication, problem solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills.
- Provide individual and small group counselling to deal with issues such as self-image and self-esteem, personal adjustment, family issues, loss and grief, interpersonal concerns, academic development, and behaviour.
- Assist parents and the school community with information regarding mental health issues and challenges.
- Work proactively with the school community to promote and foster student wellbeing.
- Work collaboratively with the Student Support Services department to assist students with needs for Special Educational, Language Support, Gifted and Talented, and for students with physical or sensory impairments.

3. Taaleem Core Values

All school leaders and teachers work towards these aims by promoting the Taaleem Core Values:

- Pioneering – Challenge the norm. Visionary, Authentic, Aspirational, Focused
- Professional – Attract and retain the best people. Insightful, Diverse, Distinctive, Excellence, Creative
- Nurturing – Put students first. Inclusive, Holistic, Respectful, Compassionate, Communicative
- Spirited – Have a passion for life. Courageous, Determined, Engaging, Adaptable

4. Leadership and Management

In order to achieve these aims, Dubai British School must actively support the Counselling Service to seek to identify and meet the very diverse needs of our students. This is achieved through a direct reporting line to the Principal and close working relationships with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Inclusion Department. The School Counsellor takes the lead role in coordinating counselling support and service provision, particularly regarding students and families. In partnership with Senior Leaders and the Principal, the School Counsellor monitors, advises, evaluates and plans for the development of counselling provision across the school. Successful inclusion should result in every student feeling safe, confident and happy at school, whilst making the best progress towards achieving their potential - be that in lessons, during their play or lunchtimes or when involved in any of our school excursions and extra-curricular activities.

5. Potentially vulnerable groups

There are a number of identified groups of students and families for whom this policy is particularly pertinent:

- Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Students whose home language is not English (EAL)
- Students who are Gifted and Talented (G&T)
- Students with physical or sensory impairments
- Students who might be subject to abuse or harassment, for whatever reason
- Students who are young carers
- Students whose family are in crisis or under great stress
- Students at risk of significant harm or neglect
- Students with poor attendance and/or punctuality
- Students who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion from school
- Students who have a temporary high-level need

6. Guiding Ethical Principles

In accordance with the guiding body, The British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP)ⁱⁱ, the ethical principles of Counselling for our school are:

1. Fidelity : honouring the trust placed in the practitioner
2. Autonomy: respect for the client to be self-governing
3. Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the client's well-being
4. Non-malificence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the client
5. Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services
6. Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care for self.

7. Referral Process

Referrals to access the counselling service can be made at any time by teachers, parents, outside agencies, peers, or students who self-refer. Children and young people have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time, and it is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure that the student's rights to autonomy are respected. It is important to recognise that pupils can only benefit if they want to be involved in the counselling process.

Referrals to consult a School Counsellor be made by approaching the Counsellors directly in person, via telephone, or via email. It is the Counsellors' responsibility to ensure a Referral Form (see Appendix 1) is completed for every referral.

Referral may also be made from staff following identification of early warning signs indicated at Departmental meetings. Meetings are held monthly, representing a co-ordinated approach from Key Stage Leaders, School Clinic, Student Support Services, Physical Education Department, and Counselling Service, whose key aim is to identify and monitor students who may require additional support from a medical/physical/SEN/emotional and social wellbeing perspective.

Staff may also seek assistance from Counselling service for classroom or group intervention to provide psychosocial education or support to address generic or specific needs. This may take the form of classroom lessons, observations, workshops, presentations or programmes. Consultation with Student Support Services and Counsellors is required to ascertain how best to proceed.

7.1 Consent

Parental consent for counselling of students is sought upon receipt of referral, where appropriate. In primary school, there is an understanding that while the majority of counselling is kept confidential, there may be some sharing of information and liaison with parents and staff, with the child's knowledge and consent. It is our protocol at Dubai British School to work in partnership with parents wherever possible and to seek parental consent for children to attend counselling, except in circumstances involving Child Protection concerns.

For a young person to be eligible to receive counselling, s/he must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid verbal counselling contract, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality and the need for this to be overridden where there is a risk of harm.

For secondary students, consent to attend counselling may be given by the student **without** the parent/carer's involvement, if that student is deemed Gillick competent. *"As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence."*ⁱⁱⁱ

As guidance for Gillick competency, the Counselling Service at Dubai British School will take the following into consideration:

1. *The young person has explicitly requested that their parents/carers have no knowledge about them receiving counselling.*
2. *The Counsellor has done everything it can to persuade the young person to involve their parent/carers.*
3. *Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parent/carers to be informed.*
4. *The young person understands the advice/information they have been given and have sufficient maturity to understand what is involved and what the implications are. They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling.*
5. *The young person can communicate their decisions and reasons for it.*
6. *This is a rational decision based on their own value system or religious belief.*
7. *The young person is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person?*
8. *The Counsellor must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person.*
9. *Without counselling, would the young person's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?*

In cases where the child is NOT Gillick competent and parental consent is NOT forthcoming, Dubai British School will continue efforts to engage the parents via

invitation to meet the Counsellor or discuss the issue with a relevant member of Student Support Services.

7.2 Session Allocation

Appointments are made subject to availability and to urgency. Sessions will generally be weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, depending on the need, for a maximum of 12 sessions. Any extension to this will be considered on a case by case basis depending on the needs of the individual student.

After the 6th consecutive counselling session, a review session with the student will be conducted by the Counsellor to track progress and revise counselling goals.

Sessions will be for a maximum of 60 minutes for secondary students. Primary school counselling sessions are generally for 40 minutes.

Appointments are to be timetabled in class time, using free periods or Supervised study periods (SPS) where possible, in consultation with the student regarding important learning deadlines. Release from lesson times is to be spread across the individual timetable to minimise disruption from subject learning. Communication regarding appointment times will be made via the student's parents/class teachers in Primary School, and Form tutors/subject teachers/students in Secondary School. The Counsellor will not advise the reason for consultation to Form Tutors/teachers without parent and/or student consent.

7.3 Where Counselling will take place

Counselling will take place in the Counselling office (**Room F02**) in Student Support Services, or the Therapy Room, (**Room 117**). The Counsellor may override any registration on ISAMS any absence marks a teacher may have made for not being seen to attend a time-tabled class whilst in counselling.

7.4 Privacy and Confidentiality

A student's right to privacy and confidentiality is the basis for an effective counselling relationship. They are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the young person's autonomy and is legally established in the Human Rights Act 1998 article 8. This states that everyone has the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence, and that there will be "*no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right*".

Good practice dictates the use of a clear contract to explain to children and young people the boundaries of confidentiality a school counselling service can offer. The aims of this explanation are:

- To enable the young person to develop a trusting relationship with the Counsellor.
- To allow the young person to open up and share feelings without blame or reprisal.
- To allow the young person to speak freely about issues concerning them.
- To encourage others to come forward for counselling.

Client consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving dilemmas over confidentiality. Exceptional circumstances may prevent the Counsellor from seeking consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation. In such circumstances the Counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balances the student's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others.

Generally speaking, the position in Dubai is that the privacy of an individual is protected under general provisions of laws not specifically focused on the issue of privacy. By way of example, the UAE Penal Code makes it an offence to publish, through any means, news, pictures or comments pertaining to the secrets of people's private or familial lives. It also makes it an offence for anyone who is, by **reason of profession, craft, circumstance or art, entrusted with a secret, to disclose the secret**, or use it for his or her own benefit, or that of another, unless such disclosure or use is permitted by law or by the consent of the person to whom the secret pertains.

The professional management of confidentiality concerns the protection of personally identifiable and sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure. Disclosure may be authorised by the young person's consent, or the law.

8. Privacy and Confidentiality

8.1 Breaching Confidentiality

At the initial session, the Counsellor will make it clear to the student that they may need to breach confidentiality in terms of telling others and seeking help. This may happen when the young person, or any other person (adult or child) is at **risk of significant harm**. In the case of threats of suicide or serious self-harm, there is a general acceptance of a need for intervention and of breaking confidentiality.

The Counsellor will discuss the possibilities of breach again if the need arises during the counselling relationship. Where possible, the Counsellor will keep the young person informed and involved in the process of gaining assistance from others.

The Counsellor is NOT required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offense, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the Counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime.

8.2 Child Protection policy

The Counselling service will be familiar with the Dubai British School Child Protection policy and procedures in this regard. There may be a need to breach confidentiality in the interests of child safety if a student confides about abuse (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or other abuse) or neglect, to self or another juvenile or minor (less than 18 years).

A Record of Incident needs to be completed as a first step, and Child Protection Officers advised.

Assessment needs to be conducted as to whether the child is "in need" or "at risk of significant harm". This enables the necessary early intervention of family support to be implemented as a preventative strategy before the situation deteriorates.

The need to safeguard children will always take precedence over the child's right to autonomy and to confidentiality and this is upheld in terms of UAE Federal law No 3 of 2016 Child Rights Law.

The Counsellor holds a Level 2 Certification in Child Protection to ensure Safeguarding best practice across the school. A member of the Counselling Service will be a member of the DBS Child Protection committee to assist the Child Protection Officers.

8.3 Court or other Legal proceedings

Confidentiality may be breached by law, if counselling staff at Dubai British School are subpoenaed to attend a hearing or other court proceeding. The counselling service cannot guarantee that student information can be kept confidential, however every attempt will be made to reveal as little as possible in a legal setting. If this situation arises, the Dubai British School will advise in advance and work with parents to handle this situation as respectfully as possible.

If a School Counsellor at Dubai British School is given a court order to appear in court or produce their counselling records, they will refer to Taaleem Legal Department to obtain legal advice to limit disclosure of non-relevant sensitive client information.

Due to the sensitive nature of counselling young children and adolescents, counsellors should be fully aware of the risks of litigation arising from, for example, claims of negligence or breaches of confidentiality. Employed counsellors will be covered by the concept of vicarious liability for alleged acts of negligence carried out as part of their duties. However, counsellors may also pursue additional professional indemnity insurance cover if desired, at their own expense.

8.4 Sharing Information with Other Stakeholders

The Counselling Service will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school staff, other agencies and specialised services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. This should only happen with the young person's or parents' permission.

In regard to school staff and academic goals, Counsellors are asked to "test" sharing of counselling goals validity by considering 2 questions:

- a) Do team members need to know this?
- b) How will knowing this help the team make decisions that will facilitate the student's educational progress?

It will be common for the Key Stage/Year Group Leaders and Head of Inclusion to be informed of students accessing counselling services, however not necessarily the reasons or contents of sessions. This can only be shared subject to parental/student consent. A general update regarding progression is considered sufficient, unless conducive to student wellbeing and academic success.

When the need arises, liaison with outside agencies to support a student's mental health issues is necessary and a written consent to provide/seek additional information to a Third party from parents and/or students will be obtained in every case.

(Refer Appendix 3)

9. Other Professionals

At times, it may be necessary to refer students or staff to outside agencies for specialist therapeutic intervention. Serious, ongoing mental health issues and family based problems are referred to appropriate outside professionals/agencies for full assessment

and support. Dubai British School will not accept responsibility for individual referrals to practitioners. The school can recommend preferred providers, however the selection of outside agencies and practitioners will remain the sole discretion of the parents seeking assistance.

In terms of our Inclusion policy:

1. Specialist Support outside the school's provision – students will benefit:
 - a) Specific targeted intervention for individuals. These students may have specific and/or exceptional needs that require the support from outside professionals. The school will provide appropriate advice and recommendations into any educational plans for the student. Additional costs for specialist support will be met by the parents (see Service Level Agreement Policy).
- **The specialists** most commonly involved in supporting students are:
 - Health Care Agencies (including GP, Psychiatrists and Mental Health Specialists)
 - Therapy Services (Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, etc.)
 - Educational Psychologists
 - Services for the Hearing or Visually Impaired
 - Parent employed LSA (1:1 personalised support)
2. Before making a referral
 - a) Before making a referral to a specialised service the school consults with parents or carers.
 - b) An exception to this practice occurs when the school has information that indicates that a student may be at risk of harm (see Safe-guarding and Child Protection Policy). In these circumstances the school then takes instruction from the Child Protection Officer on how to proceed.

10. Supervision

All counsellors need to engage in regular clinical supervision, (also known as external consultative support) to ensure that the counsellor maintains ethical competence and confidence in their work. Requirements for supervision are clearly described in BACP's (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) *Ethical Framework*.^{iv}

Counsellors at Dubai British School will undertake a minimum of one 60 minute counselling supervision session per month with an external Supervisor who is qualified and has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting. Supervision will take place in school hours where possible, with cost covered by the school. Counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision.

Counsellors will also require separate line management supervision to help with administrative requirements, accountability, and the development of the service. This is not the same as counselling supervision and the two fulfil different functions.

Peer supervision is also recommended through both Dubai and Taleem school counsellors' networks. Regular meetings are encouraged to foster best practice and provide opportunity for monitoring of caseloads and sharing of resources.

11. Staff Development and Training

School Counsellors are encouraged to pursue ongoing professional development, utilising local conferences and workshops where possible.

12. Record Keeping

Dubai British School adopts a Data Protection policy in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998, and is updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management. Each student's records are kept under an anonymous ID number and stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked Counselling office in Student Support Services (Room F02). Key access is by the Counsellors only, with a spare key held for emergency by Head of Student Support.

12.1 Access to Records

These counselling records, including process notes, do not form part of the Student School Record, and remain the property of the Counselling Service. The young person has a general right of access to confidential counselling material. A parent/carer does **not** have this right of access, and in accordance with Section 4(3)6(1) of the Data Protection Act 1998, any disclosure or processing of such material is "*unwarranted in any particular case by reason of prejudice to the rights and freedoms or legitimate interests of the (child concerned)*".

Counselling records may be requested by the Courts during welfare hearings of children. (Refer 4.3 above).

13. Evaluation and Recording

The Counselling Service and the Principal will meet regularly to review the service and address any issues arising.

Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student will be identified within the data collected. Data is obtained to highlight areas of concern, to influence policies within the school and to gain support in developing the counselling service. Service evaluation and measurement of effectiveness is also desirable.

The Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will monitor the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis and, if necessary, make recommendations for further improvements.

14. Complaints Procedure

In the first instance all complaints are to be raised with the school following the usual school complaints procedure which can be found on the school website. If necessary, complaints alleging a breach of professional standards, including confidentiality, will be dealt with by reference to the Principal. The Principal will take responsibility for investigating the nature of the complaint.

15. Supporting Policies and Documentation

1. KHDA Parent School Contract
2. Service Level Agreement
3. DBS Inclusion Policy
4. DBS Child Protection Policy
5. School Counsellor Job Description

16. Effective Date: July 2020

17. Review Date: June 2021

ⁱ Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools 4th edition. Edited by Susan McGinnis with Peter Jenkins

ⁱⁱ BACP. Ethical principles for Best Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy. (2010)

ⁱⁱⁱ Gillick v WestNorfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)

^{iv} BACP. *Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Rugby: BACP (2002)

Appendix 1

Referral Form:

[Staff Referral Form Counselling.docx](#)

Appendix 2

Third Party Consent Authority - Information Sharing

[RELEASE OF INFORMATION AUTHORITY.docx](#)