

Mission Statement:
Creating tomorrow's successful and
caring citizens today.

GFM Counselling Policy



Policy Updated By	Latest Publish Date	Monitoring Cycle
Bianca Louise Nelson Akram Tarik	February 2023	Annually

Schedule for Development / Monitoring / Review

This policy was approved by the Governing Body on:	
The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the:	Principal and Senior Leadership Team
The Policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly in the light of any significant new developments. The next anticipated review date will be:	February 2024
Should serious incidents take place, the following external persons/agencies should be informed:	Akram Tarik (Principal) and in his absence (Vice Principal)

This policy is applied at GFM alongside our school's vision, mission and values. Interwoven with the principles of High Performance Learning; values, attitudes, attributes and A.C.P. Characteristics.

The UAE Government are regularly developing initiatives to support mental health and reduce stigma around it. In line with the UAE National Policy for the Promotion of Mental Health, GEMS Founders, Mizhar aim to care, guide and support both students and staff by offering onsite access to counselling. This handbook was created to assist stakeholders in the referral process of accessing the counselling systems.

Introduction

GEMS Founders, Mizhar has a dedicated counselling referral system that works in hand with the Wellbeing Policy in aims to promote the emotional and social welfare of the students across the whole School.

All students and staff have the opportunity to speak to the School Counsellor.

Vision

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All students and staff have the opportunity to speak to the School Counsellor.

The Counsellor can provide an array of general developmental programs that can be tailored to year groups and are often based on data trends specific to the School and its community.

Additionally, individual plans for students who may need additional emotional support are on offer in upto but not always, an 8-week program, which then offers external advice, and support avenues.

When working with the Counsellor, students will be provided with resources to encourage growth mindset and empower management of their own emotional and social health.

VISION: To empower students to celebrate their uniqueness and bring a positive change to the world in which we live

MISSION: To ensure a strong emotional network for our students and staff exists at School

Counselling is a way for students to internalize their emotional stability, release anxiety and stress, rely on their School as a source of advisory and most importantly, feel a level of safety, trust and respect that is reciprocated back to them.

Counsellors

- Practice and train within boundaries of UAE and International standards
- Have vast experience and knowledge of therapies and interventions
- Practice ethically in accordance to KHDA guidelines
- Maintain professional competence
- Enforces confidentiality agreements with all parties
- Have clear guidelines of support and clarity of confidentiality rules with all staff and parents

Support of the School

Teachers All new teachers are informed of the counselling procedures upon induction. Teachers are vital in the information collecting process, the support and the utilization of resources as they see the child every day.

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Parents are integral to the School maintaining its success. The parents must be forthcoming and collaborative when going through the counselling process and are given the tools to be able to do so.

SLT Senior Leadership and the Principal and Heads of School are able to support counselling in its promotion and in ensuring policies and practices are met and standards are upheld.

Community Outreach for example, centres, support groups and psychology professionals are important in sustaining the development and practice of School Counselling and are an important network system for the School as they ensure a variety of options can be available to the student and/or family.

Confidentiality and Consent

ALL STUDENTS are entitled to confidential support. Information they share will be kept in confidence with the counsellor unless there is a risk of significant harm to the child, they are a significant risk of harm to themselves OR they provide information which can be deemed as safeguarding. A student can also request that the counsellor share information on their behalf for example when wanting to tell something to a parent.

Counsellors will always adhere to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Parents/Carers will always be notified if there is information that is of a concern.

Parents will be requested to meet with the counsellor to give consent.

Counsellors may also offer; **Group Counselling, Year Group workshops, Staff Training**

Framework

The Counselling Policy has been devised to framework the structure of Counselling at GFM, to give support on recognizing changes in behaviour and the guidance on receiving and retaining information confidentially and guidance on the procedures of reporting.

It will ensure that confidentiality is key, the welfare of the child remains paramount and convey the severity of sensitivity that counselling entails.

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Allowing all students access to counselling onsite;

- Ensures that School is a safety net for all students
- Gives equal opportunity to all students
- Students have access to a wide range of resources
- Students in older year groups can access careers advice
- Students undergoing difficult times can ask questions without fear
- Students have access directly to medical experts in clinic
- Other staff members can be observant of students who are of a significant concern
- Families can access holistic support from the School

School-based counselling is one of the most prevalent forms of psychological therapy for children and young people. Due to capacity and individual programs that are offered, provisions may be different across Schools.

*Counselling will be delivered as a **preventative** measure, an **early intervention** measure, a **parallel support** to teachers and a **gateway** to external support if necessary.*

GFM Counselling aims to:

- Improve mental health and well-being
- Incorporate counselling pastorally
- Reduce stigmas of counselling
- Improve attainment and progress through counselling support
- Have a positive impact on bullying
- Increase pupil engagement

Arifah had been a bubbly, high achieving, popular 13 year old. However, when she returned in Term 2 from Winter Break, her Form Tutor had noticed a dip in her mood, withdrawal from social activity and other staff had reported a dip in her attainment – not her usual self.

Arifah had spoken out of turn to her form tutor earlier that week. This was unlike her.

There was then a test due in the middle of the week which Arifah had said that she was 'totally prepared for.' The teacher had no reason not to believe this as she always had great grades. Not only did Arifah not take the test, she did not turn up for the lesson that day. Arifah was eventually found underneath a staircase crying.

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Referral for counselling

Whilst ANY child can be referred for counselling, there is a process before reaching the stages as above. A student can be referred **immediately** via the QR code system or by contacting directly via email at counsellor_gfm@gemsedu.com.

Referrals may be done by;

Teacher/Staff Member

Parent

Self

When referring a child, the Counsellor will decide the priority of the concern once a detailed explanation of reasoning is provided by the person who has referred the child.

This system allows the severity of the concern to be identified. Sessions will be delivered based on the severity.

Email communications regarding Counselling are always labelled as 'CONFIDENTIAL' with Student ID number and not names. In a QR Code referral, you may name the student as only the Counsellor receives the information.

If a parent has asked for their child to be referred to the counsellor a meeting with the parent will be requested for more information gathering and in addition, verbal and formal signed consent.

Sessions

As there is little time we can allocate to counselling sessions during school hours, we allocate a number of weeks in which a student can be assisted (*not to be confused with medically assessed*) via sessions with the counsellor.

An initial observation will take place *in the classroom* following a referral.

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After this, it will be decided if the student may benefit from sessions and how many. This can be a maximum of an 8-week session schedule or not.

The decision is based on the severity of the student's socioemotional need.

Once this is decided, the counsellor will set up another meeting between counsellor, teacher and parents. When the parent agrees to the tailored support, the sessions will begin.

If after a guided counselling program, there are still concerns for the student by either the counsellor, the teacher or the parent, the counsellor will assist in seeking external support for the student which the parents will then have to subsidize themselves.

Alternative Support

- As an alternative, resources may be shared with both the class teacher and the parents to be consistent in any support
- Support systems within the School may be sought if necessary for example, support of intervention services from Inclusion Team
- Parents may be advised to seek external support if all support avenues have been exhausted within the School

The Counsellor has the right to refuse or postpone sessions based on their professional judgement.

This COUNSELLING POLICY is agreed to and supported by;

ARKAM TARIK *Principal and CEO, GEMS Founders School Al Mizhar*

JEREMY HALLUM *Vice Principal and E-Safety Governor, GEMS Founders Al Mizhar*

BIANCA LOUISE NELSON *School Counsellor*

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Signed.....*B. Nelson*.....

Date.....*Feb 2023*.....

School Counsellor

Signed.....*[Signature]*.....

Date.....*Feb 23*.....

Vice Principal

Signed.....*[Signature]*.....

Date.....*FEB 23*.....

Principal/CEO

Policy review date: February 2024

Please read this policy alongside:

GFM Wellbeing Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Zero Tolerance Policy
E-Safety Policy
Parent & Student Cybersecurity Guide
Filtering Policy
Acceptable Use Policy,
Bring Your Own Device Policy
Data Protection Guidance,
Audio Video Conferencing Security Guide for Teachers
Remote Learning & Safeguarding Policy
IT Online Security Guidance for Parents
Safeguarding and Inclusion Guidance during Remote Learning
Mobile Phone Policy
Social Media Policy

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