

School Counselling Policy

2022-2023



مدرسة جيمس متروبول
GEMS Metropole School
MOTOR CITY

Approved by: Mr. Naveed Iqbal **Date:** August 18, 2023

Last reviewed on: July 5, 2022

Next review due by: July 8, 2023

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1. Introduction

GEMS Metropole School's counselling program is designed to assist students in making the most of their educational experience. This comprehensive program refers to a sequential, development program designed to benefit all the students in the preparation of their futures. Such a program includes a curriculum organised around three areas essential for a students' growth and development from the Foundation Stage up to Sixth Form in three key areas: Academic Development, Emotional-Social Development and Career Development.

In the school counselling program, students are motivated, supported, and given the tools to not only succeed at school but to go on to contribute to the local and international communities. This policy works towards building stronger students than repairing adults. A protective model that believes in being proactive, ensuring that students are learning key skills and techniques to thrive as individuals. Preventative education is delivered through various means such as individual and group sessions and classroom instruction. This program is designed to meet the needs of our students at each stage of their growth and development.

VISION: GEMS Metropole School is an inspiring and inclusive community hub leading global citizens

MISSION: Happy, safe and exceeding our potential.

2. Counselling Mission Statement

Metropole's Counselling Program perfectly blends with the UAE Federal Law issued by H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 2006, concerning the rights and protection of people of determination. Therefore, we at Metropole ensure that all the students are encouraged and motivated to reach their full potential by providing a comprehensive school counselling program that values the individuality and respects differences of each student and nurtures them to enhance their educational, academic, career, emotional and social needs.

3. Aims of the School Counselling Policy

The aim of Metropole's school counselling policy is to provide a framework of procedures and well-being of the students. It will ensure that the students have access to appropriate support and are treated with respect and dignity. Learning in a positive environment enables students to:

- Make informed decisions to improve their emotional, social and physical wellbeing
- Experience challenge & enjoyment
- Experience the positive aspects of healthy living and activity for themselves
- Establish a pattern of health and wellbeing which will be sustained into adult life and which will help promote the Health and Wellbeing of the next generation of students.
- Be empowered, and encouraged to grow in an environment of compassion and equality

4. Guidelines for the department

The School Counsellor(s):

- Practices within the boundaries of individual professional competence
- Adheres to ethical standards of the profession and relevant statutes established by the UAE government and regulatory organizations (KHDA)
- Maintains professional competence through educational, consultation and training experiences to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and effectiveness
- Informs students, teachers and parents of the purposes, processes and goals of counselling at or before the time when the counselling relationship is entered
- Maintains confidentiality of the students, staff and parents at all times- including the protection of emotional information and record-keeping
- Develop and maintain consistent and clear lines of communication with parents/guardians

Partners:

Administrators (include the Principal, Vice-Principal and non-teaching staff) support the counselling program in numerous ways, including implementing and upholding policies and procedures. Together with the school counsellor(s), they develop partnerships with resources in the community that contribute to the counselling process.

Teachers are a valuable resource as they spend the most time with students and are able to provide key information and feedback, which informs the counselling process. As such, teachers work closely with counsellors to assess and monitor students' progress and well-being. Various opportunities are provided through which students can benefit from the school counselling program such as group counselling and workshops, in addition to self-referrals.

Parents/guardians work in partnership with school counsellors to help their student be successful in school. The school counselling program ensures that parents are given the tool to help their student with his/her developmental, emotional and social needs. Parent/guardian support is vital to the success of all counselling endeavours.

Community members such as psychologists, psychiatrists, other medical and university/educational professionals' partner with the school in a variety of ways, providing workshops, assessments and consultations that contribute to students' development.

5. Confidentiality

All the students are entitled to confidentiality. This means that the information they bring to the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the counsellor. Information will not be shared unless the young person has agreed to it. The counsellor will, however, state that they may need to break confidentiality should they deem the young person at significant risk of harm to themselves or others. At this point, information may need to be shared with another party, either within the school e.g. Safeguarding Officer or with an appropriate referral to an outside agency. Counsellors are aware of the Child Protection procedures and adhere to those at all times.

Parental consent/ access to counselling records

Parents and guardians of students will be notified if the counsellor is to provide individual/group counselling for their child. Counselling is voluntary and parents/guardians reserve the right to consent to or decline counselling services for their child. Parents will not be granted access to counselling records, which are considered the property of the counsellor/school.

Parents/guardians of all students will be notified immediately if there is any concern regarding the safety of their child and will receive an end of term feedback report.

6. Services provided

The counselling program targets three main areas of development: Academic, Emotional & Social, and Career Development.

Academic Development:

- Apply skills needed for educational achievement
- Apply skills of transitioning between educational levels
- Understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community

Emotional/Social Development:

- Understand self as an individual and as a member of diverse local & global communities
- Interact with others in ways that respect individual & group differences
- Apply personal safety skills & coping strategies

Career Development:

- Apply career exploration & planning skills in the achievement of life career goals
- Know where & how to obtain information about the world of work & post-secondary training/education
- Acquire skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self as it relates to culture and family values, and make informed career decisions
- Employ strategies to achieve future career goals and satisfaction

- Foster an understanding of the relationship between emotional qualities, education, training and the world of work.

The above areas of development are enhanced and developed using the following approach:

Individual Sessions

The school counsellor(s) use many different mediums to work with students during sessions. In individual sessions, students may draw, write, sing, play, or just talk. Sometimes we work on learning a specific skill such as deep breathing for anxiety. Other times we work on role-playing situations, such as a problem with a friend or having a difficult conversation.

Group counselling

Such sessions are held with multiple students experiencing similar problems or issues, it can be helpful for them to be in a counselling group together. Group counselling helps students build relationships and feel that they are not alone in their experiences.

Workshops

The school counselling program addresses key issues faced by students of various age groups by designing and implementing workshops that provide students with key skills and techniques to navigate the world around them.

Training

The counselling program offers teachers and administrators various opportunities to expand their scope of practice to include counselling. Staff are aware of counselling policies and practices, how to identify indicators for student concern and how best to serve the counselling needs of our students.

7. Referral process and feedback

The purpose of the referral process is to provide timely and effective support to initiate an appropriate plan of action for students at various levels of need. The student counsellor recognizes the contribution of all members of the school community in the identification of early warning signs. Throughout the referral process, the student counsellor consults and collaborates with teachers, parents, administrators, other school staff, and/or outside agencies on behalf of the student. A formal referral system facilitates gathering and analysing information systematically and objectively to plan for the students' social, academic, and career development. In order to maintain a relationship with the individuals involved in the referral process, it is recommended that the student counsellor follows up with the referring individual, stating that the situation has been addressed.

A referral is made to the school counsellor(s) when a concern for a student arises. Possible sources of referrals may include self-referral by student experiencing a problem, concerned peers, parent(s)/ guardian(s), teachers, administrators, and/or other school personnel – through the online referral process. Emergency interventions are required in those situations that need immediate attention (i.e. peer concern about the emotional safety of another

student, death of a pet or family member and abuse). The student counsellor may determine that other resources would be appropriate, including referral to other individuals within the school, such as the school nurse. An outside referral may be necessary when a concern presented is beyond the scope, training, and/or expertise of the student counsellor. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect, the referrer is required to fill out the 'Child Causing Concern' form and inform the School Safeguarding Officer.

8. Counselling Referral Procedure Flowchart

The Flowchart is available separately at the end of the policy as **Appendix F**.

9. Criteria for students to access the school counselling services:

The counselling services help to increase the students' learning potential inside the classroom. Teachers and parents are the key people in the recognition of counselling services for each child. Only through this combined team effort can the school's teaching goals be pursued.

The following should be considered emergency referrals and referred immediately:

- Suspected evidence of child abuse, physical or mental.
- A child who cries or gets sick daily.
- A child who becomes unable to function in a normal way.
- Any behaviour change in a child that is sudden or unusual.
- A child undergoing a traumatic family experience.
- Indications of mounting hostility between a child and a teacher or his or her peer group.

A Staff member or Parent may refer:

- Any child who requests to see a counsellor.
- Students who need individual help beyond the time permitted in the classroom.
- Students with learning difficulties.
- Students having difficulty with special relationships.
- Students demonstrating observable changes in behaviour that cannot be accounted for by the teacher.
- Students whose parents request counselling.
- Students who are antisocial.
- Students who are constantly late for school or with their work.
- Students with frequent complaints of hurts or aches.
- Students who are fearful or nervous.
- Students who seem to seek only negative attention.
- Students unable to follow rules.
- The "class clown."
- Students who are often absent from school.

A Staff member, Parent should refer:

- Students who have experienced a death in the family or of a close friend.
- Students experiencing a divorce or separation in the family.
- Students moving to a new community.
- Students entering a new class.
- Students who exhibit excessive aggressive behaviour.
- A group of students who are unable to resolve a conflict.
- Students living in a broken home.
- Students of migratory families.
- Students who seem to be involved in bullying situations

10. Counseling Support Design

Tier 1- Universal Support

- **COMPREHENSIVE** (open access to well-being support and resources for all staff and students)
- **DEVELOPMENTAL** (Mental Health Awareness for all staff, students and parents through Webinars and Coffee mornings)
- **PREVENTIVE** (share well-being resources with staff for students to work on regular basis)
- **PROACTIVE** (On request 2-3 group support sessions for students with similar concerns; after teachers have secured consent from parents for the same with specific reasons stated as per their observations)

Tier 2- Targeted Support

- Progress monitoring
- Regular and on-request consultations with teachers and parents
- Collaboration with teachers for class recommendations
- Referrals to in-school support systems (HOYs, Pastoral Team and Peer Mentors)

Tier 3- Intensive Support

- 1:1 dedicated counseling sessions with the School Counselors
- Regular meetings and progress related consultations with the Teachers and Parents

Tier 4- External Support

- Referral to external agencies for extensive support after exploring the intervention made available within school.

11. Links to other policies

- Safeguarding/child protection policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Inclusion policy
- Health and Wellbeing Policy

12. Monitoring arrangements

The school's arrangements for managing the access to education and training providers to students is monitored by Mr. Nisar Mourad – School Operations Manager.

This policy will be reviewed by Ms. Rubina Zahoor – School Psychologist and Ms. Rajone Karmarkar – Student and Career Counsellor. At every review, the policy will be approved by Mr. Naveed Iqbal – Principal and CEO

Appendix A

FACULTY/STAFF REFERRAL FORM

Student Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Year/Section:** _____

Referred by: _____ **Title:** _____

Area(s) of Concern:

Personal / Social Development:

Peer Relationships Family Relationships Emotional Issues Other _____

Academic Development:

Grades Attendance Educational Planning Other _____

Career Development:

Decision-making Exploration / Planning Post-Secondary Options Post-Secondary applications Other _____

Pre-Referral Intervention

Strategies and Response to Intervention: _____

Reason for Referral: _____

Student's Strengths/Interests: _____

Specific Observable Behaviours: _____

Parent / Guardian Contacted: No Yes

Date: _____

Outcome of Contact: _____

Notes:

For School Counsellor Use Only:

Informed Consent (attached): Yes

Date _____

No Action Plan Date:

 Parent/Guardian Contact

 Group Counselling
 School Nurse

Individual Counselling

Referral Outside Resource(s)
 Other _____

Special Services

Administrator Referral

Follow-up with referring person Date: _____

Appendix – B

STUDENT SELF-REFERRAL FORM (PRIMARY)

Dear School Counsellor,

My name is _____ . I am in Year/Section _____ .

My teacher is _____ . My classroom number is _____ .

I need to talk with you about (Please tick the box):

- URGENT!!! Something private right away!!!
- The death of a person or a pet I love
- A friend I am worried about
- My angry feelings
- How to get along better with friends/peers
- How to get along better with adults (parents/teachers)
- How to get along better with brothers and sisters
- How others are treating me
- Feeling better about myself
- Saying “NO!” and “STOP IT” when people want me to do things I don’t want to do
- My grades and schoolwork
- Planning now for the future
- Something else

Other comments _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Return this form to the School Counselling Office. I will contact you as soon as possible. If you have indicated this is URGENT!! Return the form to a person in the counselling office or your Lead teacher or your Head of Year.

Appendix C

STUDENT SELF REFERRAL FORM (SECONDARY AND SIXTH FORM)

Name _____ Grade _____

Lead teacher: _____ Best Hour(s) to contact me: _____

I need to talk with you about (Please tick a box):

- URGENT!!! Something private right away!!!
- The death of a person or a pet I love
- A friend I am worried about
- My angry feelings
- How to get along better with friends/peers
- How to get along better with adults (parents/teachers)
- How to get along better with brothers and sisters
- How others are treating me
- Feeling better about myself
- Saying "NO!" and "STOP IT" when people want me to do things I don't want to do
- My grades and schoolwork
- Planning now for the future (e.g. Career choices, post-secondary subject options)
- Something else – *I will tell you when I see you*

Other comments _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Return this form to the Counselling Office. I will contact you as soon as possible. If you have indicated this is URGENT!! Return the form to a person in the guidance and counselling office or to your LEAD Teacher, Head of Year.

Appendix D

PARENT/GUARDIAN REFERRAL FORM

A School Counsellor is available for students, parents, faculty and staff by appointment.

*Please call 04 550 7200, stop by either of the counselling offices **F 058 and F059** to schedule an appointment.*

I am requesting that the School Counsellor talk with my child:

Urgent—today! As soon as possible After the school counsellor and I talk

Student's Name _____ Grade _____

Lead Teacher _____ Your Name _____

Relationship to Student _____ Phone _____

Best times to reach me _____

Your Signature _____ Date _____

My child's strengths include _____

My primary concern(s) (Check all that apply):

- Something's wrong but I don't know what
- A loss (e.g. death of a person or pet, loss of a friendship, parents' divorce)
- Anger
- Perfectionism
- Relationships with friends/peers
- Relationships with adults (parents/teachers)
- Relationships with brothers/sisters
- How my child is treated by others
- Feelings of negativity, discouragement, self-doubt
- Unhealthy or unsafe choices
- Study skills, grades and schoolwork
- Post-secondary options/Planning now for future

Other

Concern(s) _____

Additional information regarding concern(s) _____

Return this form to Counselling Office. I will contact you as soon as possible.

Appendix E

INFORMATION ABOUT COUNSELLING: Letter to Parent for Informed Consent (page 1)

Dear Parent,

If your child is referred to the school counsellor, the very word “counselling” may make it sound like a mysterious process, but it is not. Counselling is a relationship built on confidentiality and trust—student trust, parent trust, teacher trust. Adequate information is the foundation of trust—all involved must have information about the limits and processes of counselling. The following information describes the overall process of counselling.

How does a student receive counselling at school?: Students may be referred to the School Counsellor (SC) for individual and/or small group counselling by their parents or guardians, school faculty, school staff, a concerned friend, or they may refer themselves. Once a referral is made the SC sets up a meeting with the referred student.

Who provides the counselling at school? Counselling is provided by a certified School Counsellor (SC). The SC has a degree with an emphasis in School Counselling. School Counselling focuses on the academic development, Social/Emotional development, and career development of students.

Is counselling required? It is your choice to give consent for your child to receive counselling. What will counselling for your child involve? Counselling may include small group or individual sessions. During the sessions, your child and an SC will work together to understand the problem, the present and future consequences, develop goals for change and a plan of action for change.

How is the information shared? Trust is the basis for effective counselling. GEMS Metropole emphasizes the importance of confidentiality between school counsellors and students at the same time recognizing the rights of parents. As a parent or guardian, you must trust that the SC will “take good care of” one of your most prized possessions. Your child must know and trust that what is shared with the counsellor will stay with the counsellor unless he or she gives permission to share information or if the counsellor suspects the child is in danger of being hurt by others, hurting himself, or hurting others.

Confidentiality: Trust and confidentiality work together. Counselling records do not become a part of the permanent record of the student except as required by schools’ designated Safeguarding Lead. All records prior to the safeguarding incident will be kept confidential. However, once a Cause of Concern form has been filled, all counselling records henceforth will be recorded and will be shared with the designated Safeguarding Lead. A record may indicate that a student was seen by the School Counsellor; nevertheless, the topics discussed are not included unless required by the Safeguarding Committee. The Counsellor may talk with the classroom teacher about how he or she can help your child in the classroom; however, specific information will not be shared.

Possible outcomes: Through counselling, your child may be taught strategies to help him or her make more effective and healthier decisions, increase the ability to set and reach goals, build better relationships with others, and be more successful in school. We all must realize that changes take time; his or her problem did not develop overnight, nor will it disappear overnight. Counselling will be successful when students, school counsellors, teachers, and family members work together.

Informed Consent Form (page 2)

Cost: There is no cost involved in any of the counselling services your child will receive as a part of Metropole's Comprehensive School Counselling Program.

I have read and understand the information provided by the School Counsellor and have had an opportunity to ask questions about counselling.

I consent for my child to participate in counselling. I understand that participation is completely voluntary and that classroom requirement takes precedence over participation in counselling.

I do not consent for my child to participate in counselling.

I understand that this consent is effective for the current school year _____ to _____.

Student First/Last Names (please print) and Year/Section

Parent/Guardian Name and Signature and Date

Parent/Guardian: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Appendix F

Counselling Referral Procedure Flowchart

