



## **GEMS Cambridge International Private School Sharjah** **Well-Being Policy**

**Last Amendment:** November 2022 **Policy Review Date:** November 2023

### **Purpose**

We are committed to ensuring that we nurture a positive atmosphere for the entire GCS school community.

With regards to students in our care, we nurture their growth into healthy adults, by ensuring that they:

1. Be healthy
2. Stay safe
3. Enjoy and achieve
4. Make a positive contribution
5. Achieve economic and mental health well-being

Promoting a healthy lifestyle is integral to our curriculum, we recognise our role in ensuring students not only are physically fit and make healthy eating choices but they also take steps that enable them to experience mental well-being as well. As a school, we know that food is fundamental to the quality of a child's life, not just in providing essential nutrition but in communicating and sharing positive values, attitudes and experiences with each other. And along with this, we are also cognizant of the fact that physical activity, sleep and learning to manage our time all contribute to a child's overall mental well-being.

Consequently, GCS does its utmost to teach students the key points about living a healthy life. It is only through a whole-school approach that the key messages about physical and mental health can be achieved.

Adults should be good role models and support the students in understanding how balanced nutrition contributes to a person's health, happiness and general well-being.

### **Objectives**

This policy main aims and objectives are:

1. To help students know and understand the importance of food and drink in a healthy lifestyle.
2. To help students know and understand the importance of living an active lifestyle



3. To help students know and understand how they can take steps to improve their overall mental wellbeing.
4. To give students the skills they need to make the right choices.
5. To give students the opportunity to experience success and the positive benefits of contributing to the school and wider community.
6. To promote the physical and emotional well-being of all our students.
7. To improve the health of students, staff and the whole school community by helping to influence eating habits through increasing knowledge and awareness of food issues, including what constitutes a healthy diet.
8. To ensure a safe, hygienic, learning environment for students.
9. To ensure students are well nourished at school and that every child has access to safe, tasty and nutritious food and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day.
10. To ensure that food provision in the school acknowledges the ethical and medical requirements of staff and students e.g. religious, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
11. To respect the dietary laws and customs of the UAE.
12. To ensure that students refrain from bringing nuts, nut products and chocolate into school as part of their snacks/lunches.
13. To introduce and promote practice within the school to reinforce these aims and to remove or discourage practice that negate them.
14. To outline the roles and responsibilities of key members of staff who work to promote living an all-around healthy lifestyle within our school community

### **Equal Opportunities**

The school recognises the value of, and seeks to achieve, a diverse school community which includes people from differing backgrounds, with different skills and abilities. The school will take positive steps to create school culture through its governing body, managers and other employees, in which people can feel confident of being treated with fairness, dignity and tolerance, irrespective of their individual differences. This commitment extends to the whole school community and others connected with it. The school is committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to the promotion of good relations between all.

### **Guidance on Mental Health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our Moral Education curriculum and Well- Being Activities (Appendix). There is an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, resilience, knowledge,



understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

A healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health, through the curriculum and extended provision:

- Daily form/registration time
- Positive praise in lessons
- Reinforcement of our GCS and Islamic Values
- Competitions and workshops
- Student leadership meetings
- Mindfulness sessions
- Kindness calendar and challenges
- Extra-curricular clubs (ECSs)
- Intervention groups
- Differentiated learning activities
- Personalised plans for students of determination or students with social/emotional needs
- Parent/Carer events, webinars and workshops
- Personalised one- one parent meetings for students
- Child Friendly Social Media Platforms
- Reward systems including Class Dojo in Primary, Values certificates in Secondary, GEM of the Week/Term/Year certificates
- Well- Being Team on MS Teams with Health Awareness Consultations
- Weekly Well-being newsletter with helpful guidelines for parents
- Weekly GCS newsletter
- PE lessons
- Afternoon Catch up sessions during distance learning
- Peer mentoring sessions
- Student Safe anonymous reporting form

## **Strategies**

### **Daily Lessons and the Curriculum**

The Oxford Well Being Framework embedded with the PERMAH Framework has been introduced to further emphasise the commitment of the school towards developing well-being ongoing practices and formally monitoring and supporting student well-being.

GCS also facilitates an enhanced environment for learning through:

Our Values Driven whole school ethos.

Establishing clear rules, routines and expectations about behaviour for learning.

Positive student, teacher, parent relationships.

Moral Education/MSE and PSHE lessons to create a physically, emotionally and socially rich environment where key relationships can thrive and the students feel secure in their learning.

Consistent support for SEN and vulnerable children from the inclusion team, teaching assistants, teachers, and external agencies where appropriate. Celebrating successes and achievements in the classroom through positive achievement (Dojo/Positive Phoenix Classroom points).

Encouraging independence in learning using a range of teaching styles appropriate to students' age and ability.

We regard healthy eating education as a whole-school issue, and we ensure that opportunities to teach the importance of living a healthy lifestyle occur throughout the curriculum. Healthy eating education is an important part of our school's curriculum and the importance of balanced nutrition and healthy food choices are taught throughout the school.

We also promote healthy eating through the informal curriculum. We encourage students to participate in school games clubs and sports, and so learn the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. We organise school visits to outdoor pursuit centers and provide opportunities for students to explore the natural world. Our school site is fully utilised in the interest of the students' physical and emotional development through playground activities.

### **Our School Clinic**

Our team of School Doctor and Nurses work to produce educational campaigns on a range of health-related topics. These include campaigns on personal hygiene, germs, healthy eating, obesity, breast cancer awareness, etc.

Our clinic staff conduct checks of eyes, weight and height and monitor the obesity percentages in each phase. Checks are also conducted for lice. In addition, our clinic staff ensure all students are up to date on the required vaccinations.

Our clinic coordinates also with our School Counsellor to identify students who show signs of concern, ensuring counselling is offered to both students and their parents as needed.

Our clinics also ensure teachers are made aware of students with any medical conditions.

The implementation of all clinic and safety policies will be monitored systematically to ensure protocols for the enhanced well-being of our staff.



## **The School Environment**

We ensure that our school environment promotes healthy eating. Students are encouraged to eat fruit as part of their daily break time. Primary Teachers conduct healthy lunch box checks and send home communication to parents in regards to any unhealthy items found within a student's lunchbox.

All students are encouraged to bring in a water bottle so they can have access to water throughout the day.

Water dispensers are also provided in the school for additional access to drinking water.

Chewing gum and fizzy drinks are not permitted on the school premises or while the students are representing the school.

The school is aware of the possibility of food allergies within the school population, particularly nut allergies. Parents of students who are on special diets for medical or religious reasons, or who have allergies, are asked to provide as much information as possible about which foods are suitable or foods which must be avoided.

## **School Lunches**

The parents of students who bring packed lunches is made aware of our healthy eating policy, and given clear guidance about what should be included in a healthy packed lunch. Students are taught not to share packed lunches and parents are reminded about the need to avoid sending in packed lunches containing nuts.

## **School / Phase Transition Support**

- Meet the Senior Leadership Team meetings
- Meet the Head of Year and Class Teacher meetings
- One to one meet the family meetings at the start of the school year
- Transition documentation passed on from current teacher to future teacher
- SEN Transition meetings between parents and teachers
- Transition / Move Up days where children get to meet their future Head of Year and have taster sessions in various subjects
- Year 6 Transition sessions with school counsellors
- Year 6 / Year 7 Parent Coffee Morning
- GCSE Options counselling sessions in Secondary School
- Career counselling sessions in Secondary School
- University fairs
- Career Days



## **Role of Parents and Guardians**

We work closely with parents to ensure that the messages we give in school about student well-being and healthy lifestyles are reinforced and supported at home.

In addition, we send home communication to parents in regards to any trends in behaviour that needs to be addressed or to alert them to dangerous trends occurring on social media, etc.

We also offer parental workshops throughout the school year that address not only academic subject areas but also our students' mental and emotional wellbeing. Topics are wide-ranging from sleep, to university guidance, to raising awareness of the importance of volunteering etc.

## **Our Welfare Team**

Our team is on hand to provide counselling and intervention. If and when there is a concern about a student, a parent or any member of staff may fill out a Referral Form' form and submit it to the School Counsellor, who will conduct an initial observation. After which, an observation report will be written up with recommendations for the next steps. They are able to work with teachers to address behavioural concerns and write up behaviour reports for teachers and students to follow as well as develop action plans for students.

## **School Counsellor Roles & Responsibilities:**

1. Open and maintain a file for any student referred to her.
2. Conduct observations.
3. Write up observation reports.
4. Maintain a case log detailing reason for referral and details of each counselling session with the next steps noted.
5. Document and report child protection cases to the DSL and maintain records of all child protection cases.
6. Refer cases if needed to the Student Support Department to determine if there are concerns about specific barriers to learning.
7. Providing crisis management services.
8. Provide counselling for SEND students to develop their social and emotional skills.
9. Identify trends in the behaviour that are a concern within the school.
10. Raise awareness of the role of the school counsellor within the school.
11. Advocating for student services and students' best interests.
12. Providing case management services including, but not limited to, referrals to community resources, collaboration with other professionals.
13. Run the anti-bullying campaign within the school.



14. Devise programs, policies, etc., to curb negative behavior and promote positive behavior.
15. Place students on a behavioral report and conduct follow up with teachers to determine if a student has met his/her targets.
16. Raise awareness of mental wellness among students and parents.
17. Create student leadership opportunities in the form of training students to be mentors, playground buddies or helping students to take on a school community project or external volunteering project.

### **Identifying, referring and supporting children with wellbeing and mental health needs**

Our approach:

- Provide a safe environment to enable students to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of students are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for students based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Involve students in the care and support they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

### **Early Identification**

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with wellbeing and mental health needs as early as possible. We do this in different ways including:

- Student surveys.
- PASS (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School) Surveys.
- Analysing behaviour, exclusions, visits to the medical room/school nurse, attendance and sanctions.
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
- Pupil Progress Review meetings.
- Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns.
- Parental meetings.
- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Student Safe Anonymous online reporting form.

### **Warning Signs**

The staff emails the parents and notifies the designated SLT if they notice the following during their daily online sessions:



- Consistent Absence or failure to respond during sessions
- Preoccupation and excessive worry;
- Showing emotional and behavioural interference/paralysis and showing signs of not being able to cope;
- Avoidance of responsibilities or relationships; continuous incomplete tasks or alarming vocabulary or disclosure in a task
- Perseverance - meaning that the student cannot move away from their thoughts or are chronically thinking about risk and threat;
- Ruminates - thinking too deeply about the situation
- Concerning behaviour
- Seeking attention - Posting random messages in multiple platforms

### **Monitoring and Review**

The SLT in liaison with the Inclusion Department, School Doctor, School Counsellors and PE team will monitor this policy to ensure that our students are taught the importance of living and maintain a healthy lifestyle. It will be reviewed on a regular basis, and at least once every year.

### **Leadership Expectations**

The GCS leaders will set the tone and model what is expected from every member of our learning community.

- Albertha Huyser (Principal /CEO)
- Michelle Motley - Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Walaa Al Sayed – Deputy Designated Safeguarding
- School Counsellors
- Shahana Salman (Moral Education and Culture and Community Lead)
- Ceanlia Vermeulen (Head of Inclusion)
- Senior Leadership Team
- Health Team – Doctor and 2 School Nurses

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student can speak to SLT in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures would be followed with an immediate referral to one of the designated child protection officers or the principal.

### **Working with Parents**

- Introduction of Well- Being Team on MS Teams for all parents and GCS Community which gives parents strategies to build resilience and have reassuring conversations with their child(ren).
- Sharing weekly list of resources around feelings, fears and worries.  
Conducting surveys and providing helpdesk to support parents 24 /7





- Parental Committee weekly meetings to support parents with ongoing queries and concerns
- On demand appointments and meeting with teachers for monitoring their child progress

### **COVID Specific**

Staff and students may be returning to school having experienced effects related to confinement, social isolation, and loss and bereavement amongst many other things. Schools may use outside agencies to support the school community (students but also teachers and staff) with post confinement as well as identify age- and context appropriate resources to cope with mental health issues.

### **Links to Other Policies**

Useful links –

The national programme for happiness and wellbeing

<https://www.hw.gov.ae/en/news/hh-sheikh-saif-bin-zayed-al-nahyan-launcheschild-digital-safety-to-enhance-children-safety-and-quality-of-digital-life-1> <https://www.hw.gov.ae/en/news/250-new-schools-join-the-well-schoolsnetwork-to-enhance-positive-education-and-wellbeing-principles>

National strategy for wellbeing 2031 <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/federalgovernments-strategies-and-plans/national-strategy-for-wellbeing-2031> UAE happiness and wellbeing <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-uae-government/government-offuture/happiness/>

Signed.....

Date: 30/08/2022

**CEO/Principal**