

GEMS Cambridge International Private School Sharjah

Counselling Policy 2023-2024

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1. Purpose:

This policy reflects our active commitment to promote and safeguard the welfare of the student at GEMS Cambridge International Private School-Sharjah. We believe that children/students have a fundamental right to feel safe and protected and to value their own self.

Counselling should be considered as a useful intervention in helping students who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties.

2. Policy Aims:

At GEMS Cambridge International Private School-Sharjah we are committed to:

- Promoting the benefits of counselling to all members of school community
- Providing counselling to students within the parameters of the relevant school policies.
- Inform all members of the school community of the procedures involved in the counselling process.
- Make counselling accessible to the pupils for whom it is appropriate.
- Review the counselling policy annually.

Please also refer to our Schools vision and aims.

3. Counselling – definition:

Counselling is an interactive learning process between counsellor and the student, whether individually or in a group, which approaches, in a holistic way, personal, educational and /or vocational issues. The availability of a counselling service can support individual students inside/outside the classroom context, the pastoral and the disciplinary structures in the school.

Young people clearly face many challenges whilst growing up, and may find at times that they need someone to talk to, external to either home or school. Counselling is a process which offers support and guidance when things feel particularly difficult.

Competitiveness, bullying, social exclusion, family crisis, scholastic underachievement, abuse, peer pressure, substance misuse, sexuality and racism are some of the problems which can assisted with the support of counselling in a safe and confidential environment.

4. Procedures:

4.1 Procedures for Referral

A Self-Referral

A pupil can refer themselves for counselling in any of the following ways:

- Ask a teacher to organise an appointment with the counsellor.
- Fill out the referral form and put it in the post-box outside the counsellor's room.
The referral forms are found on the top of the post-box.
- Ask the parent to make the referral through the PR officer

B. Teacher

A teacher can refer students for counselling in any of the following ways:

Ask the Head of Inclusion/Head of year for a counselling appointment

- Fill out the referral form available in the shared drive
Z:\Inclusion\School Counselling
And emailing it directly to the counsellor

Note: Referral forms must be completed and submitted before confirmation of appointment.

C. Parent

A parent can contact the school and ask for counselling appointment to be made for their child. It is essential that the student referred for counselling has decided that they want to see the counsellor themselves. An appointment with the counsellor will be made on this understanding.

Note: Due to the nature of the counselling process, students are encouraged to come alone for their counselling, though will be seen alongside friends, or teachers as appropriate. Counselling involves an active drive to build family relationships so it may be that the counsellor will ask permission from the student to meet with the parent either with the student present or by themselves.

4.2 Counselling Procedures

A. Appointments

- After a referral has been received, the teacher, student or parent will receive a confirmation email from the counsellor.
- Student should inform the teacher of the subject that they will be missing.
- If an appointment clashes with a class test or assessment, the pupil should seek to change the appointment time to avoid missing these essential classes.
- If the student is unable to attend a counselling session he/she should inform the form tutor or counsellor.

B. Counselling Sessions

- If it is felt that more than 1 period is required for a particular student, the counsellor must inform the teacher as the student must be accounted for while out of class.

If a pupil does not turn up for a session it will be reported to the form tutor and head of year for a follow up.

Roles and Responsibilities

The counsellor is there to enable the young person to focus on their concerns, giving them a vehicle to explore specific problems, make choices, cope with crises, work through feelings of conflict and improve relationships with others.

The counsellor can offer a young person a safe and supportive environment to talk over difficult issues in confidence and will listen to a young person's views, experiences and feelings without judgment in an atmosphere of respect and empathy based on a secure trusting working relationship.

The Role of the Counsellor is to:

- Provide a counselling service to young people who are registered with the school as current pupils.
- Organise and administer the counselling service in conjunction with school staff.
- Communicate and liaise with school staff, in the best interest of the young person, whilst within the limits of client confidentiality.
- Encourage the engagement of the young person's family when appropriate and beneficial.
- Liaise with staff in taking and making referrals to and from other agencies.
- Act as a resource to schools staff by offering an insight into counselling promoting the service where possible.
- Maintain accurate counselling session records and to write reports as and when required.
- Maintain and develop professional practice through regular and on-going management and clinical supervision and training and through involvement in service evaluation and auditing.

5. Confidentiality:

The contents of each counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and the pupil unless the pupil's welfare or safety, or that of another, is considered to be at risk of significant harm. At this point information may need to be shared with the senior leadership or child protection officer within the school. Confidentiality is essential to the counselling process as it:

- Enables the student to develop a trusting relationship with the counsellor
- Enables the student to speak freely about their feelings without fear of blame
- Enables the student to express any distress they are feeling
- Encourages students to approach the counsellor

Counsellors are aware of the child protection procedures and adhere to those as appropriate.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The Principal will report matters as they arise to the Corporate Team. Evaluation will result in changes to policy and inform School Improvement Priorities, where appropriate.

Date for review: **This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team.** Any points arising from evaluations will be either communicated through change in Policy or actions in the SOP.

Appendix A

Counselling Referral Form

Basic Information

Child's name:
DOB:
Class or Year Group:
Class Teacher:
Phase Leader:
First Language:
Strengths and Interests:

Personal History:

Attitude to others, in social, family relationships:
Moral and religious attitudes and standards:
Mood:
Leisure activities:

Area/s of concern (Please tick if a concern area)

Social Skills	
Self Esteem	
Self-care skills	
Physical (including motor skills)	
Medical	
Behaviour	

Name of Parent/Guardian aware of referral:

Not required for middle school however in Lower school parental permission is advised.

Contact Details of Parent/Guardian:

Expand on your concerns – please give as much detail as possible Details of Special Needs(Risk factor to self or others, Bullying, Social difficulties, Substance Misuse, Learning difficulties , Disability, Mental Health , Ethnicity, Access difficulties etc.):

Has student been informed of referral?

Appendix B

COUNSELLING

Information for parents and guardians

What is counselling?

Counselling is the opportunity to talk about things that are of concern to a young person, in confidence, with a qualified counsellor. What is spoken about will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, change and loss.



What does the counsellor do?

Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

Why have a counsellor in school?

A school based service brings counselling to children and young people in a place that is familiar and safe.

How long will counselling last?

Counselling may only be for a few sessions, or for a longer term, it is reviewed regularly between counsellor and young person.

Where and when does it take place?

Counselling at GCS is in a private counselling room no.84 on the first floor, in the Year 5 corridor. The sessions can last up to 50 minutes (depending on the circumstances), and appointment times can be varied so that is time is not lost from any one subject.

Is it confidential?

A key feature of counselling is that the session is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time when it is OK to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the work with parents, unless the student requests or gives consent for this. This can be hard for parents, unless the student requests or gives consent for this. This can be hard for parents to accept at times, but ensuring the confidentiality of the work is crucial for establishing trust so that the student feels confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them. However, if the welfare and safety of the student is considered to be at a risk or harm, then relevant information would be discussed with the nominated senior member of the staff, the counsellor would aim to discuss this with the pupil first.

What if I don't want my child to receive counselling?

If a young person requests counselling and they are able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling.

We would, however, prefer your support for the work and we are happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.



What if he/she refuses to have counselling?

The decision about whether or not to take up the offer of counselling is entirely voluntary for a student just as it would be for an adult.

Can I support counselling work?

Yes. Parents can help by showing acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show interest if their son/daughter wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they don't. This isn't an easy task and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

If my child wants to receive counselling does this mean I am failing as a parent?

Absolutely not!! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to speak to those closest to us about things which are bothering us. Often this can be because we don't want to worry those we love most or because we want to talk things through with someone else outside of the family. The counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

How are referrals made to the counselling service?

Referrals can be made through your child's head of the year, you can refer your child or your child can self-refer.



Information for staff

The counselling service in the school supports the emotional health and wellbeing of students. The counselling service provided is one to one counselling, and if appropriate small group work

Some behaviors that you may see that suggests that the student may benefit from counselling are:

- The standards of work are observed to be dropping dramatically
- The pupil is observed to be becoming subdued or over excitable
- There are marked mood swings I behavior that is out of character
- There are reports of difficulties or refusal to come to school
- They are suspected or known to be bullying others
- They are victims of bullying
- They are experiencing family breakdowns-divorce/separation
- There are peer group difficulties
- Relationship issues-e.g. not making friends /promiscuity
- Low self esteem
- Grieving- loss or bereavement
- The pupil is suspected or known to be self-harming e.g. cutting, eating disorders
- They are known to be suspected of being abused or neglected
- Substance or alcohol abuse

Some key questions to ask are:

- How are they coping academically, socially and emotionally?
- What are your reasons for requesting counselling for the student?
- What has been tried already? What has been the response from the student?
- How extreme is the behaviour or attitude?
- How long has the issue been going on?
- How sudden is the change?
- How is the behaviour affecting the students, members of the school community?

How could you approach the idea of counselling with a student?

Talk with the head of year as much details as possible about your concerns

Then:

1. Consult and discuss the idea of counselling sensitively with the student-use the counselling brochure to explain to them the idea of counselling, if this is useful.
2. Stress to them how normal and ordinary the counselling approach is for ANYONE who is having difficulties.
3. Explain that counselling is voluntary and confidential is a means of support not a disciplinary measure.
4. Make it clear that it is an opportunity to talk about problems and worries with someone to enable them to look at ways of making changes or managing their problems, so that they feel better.
5. Complete a counselling referral form –on the shared drive inclusions folder.
6. If you are still unsure whether or not to make the referral, please come and discuss the issues with me so we can establish the most appropriate way forward for the student.

If the student decides that counselling will benefit them, an initial appointment will be made for the student.

I will inform the head of year (with student's agreement) that they are accessing counselling so that they can support them with leaving lesson to come to their sessions.

Supporting the student during the counselling process

- ❖ The first session is an opportunity for them to make a decision as to whether they agree to counselling or not
- ❖ It is important that the student is not questioned about the sessions that they have attend
- ❖ They may not want their peer group to know that they see a school counsellor, so consideration needs to be given to how they are given information, spoken to about counselling and excused from lesson in order to attend and discreetly access counselling session.

Appendix D

Information for Students

What is a counsellor?

At sometime we all have problems that worry us. Sometimes it can be difficult to talk to parents, friends or teachers about the things that make us anxious.

Sometimes when we have a worry or problem in our heads it can make it difficult to think about or concentrate on other things happening in our lives.

A counsellor is someone who will listen to you very carefully, they won't judge you or tell you what to do.

In a 1-1 counselling session the counsellor will provide you with a space to think about the issues in your life that are causing you worries or difficulties. Then they will help you to find ways of managing or help you explore choices and look at things in away that enable you to move forward.

Counselling is about CHANGE, DIFFERENCES and finding ways to MANAGE- no matter how small the changes may seem—the aim is to make the problems and worries in your life not feel as big or overwhelming so that you can move forward even if it is just a little bit

WHAT KIND OF THINGS DO PEOPLE talk about in counselling?

Whatever matters or is important to them!!!

Examples of what a student might want to talk about are:

- Bullying
- Exam worries and stresses
- Making friends
- Keeping friends
- Death of someone
- Moving countries and schools
- Feelings of anger, sadness, confusion, depression etc
- Confusion on why they feel the way they feel
- Struggling at school
- Struggling with a teacher
- Home worries
- Family problems
- Loneliness
- Something is happening to them that they are not happy with or worries them
- Arguments and fighting with parents
- Relationships
- How they feel about themselves
- Want to change something in their lives but don't know how
- Thoughts that worry them

IF IT WORRIES YOU THEN IT IS IMPORTANT

TO KNOW?

Counselling is voluntary. It is your choice to come or not.

Whatever you decide is OK!

The counselling sessions are

confidential

However, it is important that you know that if you tell the counselor that there is a risk of harm to you or someone else then it is important that help is found to make sure you are safe. This would be discussed with you.

How many times would I come?

- That depends on you and your problems—some students come once and that helps or they decide its not what they want at that moment
 - others come once a week for a 6 weeks and then review,
 - others just come when they feel they need support or someone to listen to them,
 - some students want support throughout the school year.
- To enable differences to be appreciated, most counsellors would recommend that some consistency is needed, so ideally, 1 session a week for 6 weeks would be a good starting point

Appendix E

Parental Consent Request for Counselling

Parental consent will be requested for lower school students wishing to receive counselling.

- In case of parents who live at separate addresses, the request for parental consent will be sent to the first contact on the most recent data collection form submitted at the start of each academic year.
- If parental responsibility is held by persons other than the student's biological parents, it's their responsibility to inform the school of these circumstances and any parental consent requests will be sought from them.
- Parental consent will be sought if deemed necessary.

Appendix F

Student Assessment form

Over the Last week

No.	Over the Last Week	No t at all	So me tim es	Oft en	All the tim e
1.	I have felt edgy or nervous				
2.	I haven't felt like talking to anyone				
3.	I have felt able to cope when things go wrong				
4.	I have thought of hurting myself				
5.	There has been someone I felt able to ask for help				
6.	My thoughts and feelings distressed me				
7.	I have felt unhappy				
8.	My problems have felt too much for me				
9.	It's been hard to go to sleep or stay asleep				
10.	I have done all the things I wanted to				

Appendix G

Confidential

Counselling Evaluation Forms-Strengths and difficulties Questionnaire

For each item please mark the box for Not True (NT), Somewhat True (ST) or Certainly True (CT). Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year. To be completed at the beginning and end of counselling process.

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Male/Female _____

Do you have any comments or concerns?

	NT	ST	CT
Considerate of other people's feelings			
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
Often complains of headaches ,stomach aches, sickness			
Shares readily with other children (pencils, treats etc.)			
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers			
Rather solitary , tends to plan alone			
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request			
Many worries, often seems worried			
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
Has at least one good friend			
Often fights with other children or bullies them			
Often unhappy, down hearted or tearful			
Generally liked by other children			
Easily distracted , concentration wanders			
Nervous or clingy in new situations easily loses confidence			
Kind to younger children			
Often lies or cheats			
Picked on or bullied by other children			
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, etc.)			
Thinks things out before acting			
Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
Gets on better with adults than with other children			
Many fears, easily scared			
Seeks tasks through to the end, good attention span			
