



**DUBAI
BRITISH
SCHOOL**
JUMEIRAH PARK

Counselling Policy

This procedure is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

	Date	Name(s):
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Counselling Policy

1. Definition of Counselling / Counselling at DBSJP

At DBSJP, it is our goal that every student is given the tools to make a positive difference during their time with us and beyond. Under the shared Dubai British School's vision, of Enjoy, Aspire, Achieve, we provide the facilities, resources and inspiration in which students can enjoy their schooling experience, and ultimately achieve their life goals. To be fully receptive to new learning, good mental and emotional wellbeing must be present. The student counselling service is a key part of the care offered at DBSJP which also includes learning support, strong pastoral structures and a variety of special interest activities (ECAs), all of which help to nurture wellbeing and enrich child development. The DBSJP model corresponds with the vision highlighted in the national Agenda "to create enriching educational environments" and forms part of the UAE goals for education.

The counselling model at DBSJP is based on best practice guidance from the Department of Education in the UK, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the International School Counselor Association (ISCA).

The International School Counselor Association (ISCA) defines school-based counselling as, "Counselling is the professional assistance and support provided to a student or small group of students during times of transition, heightened stress, critical change or other situations impeding student success. It's short term in nature and based on counselling theories and techniques that are effective in a school setting to support a student's development."

School counsellors do not provide long term therapy. As noted by the American School Counsellors Association, "school counselors do not provide long-term counseling in schools. However, school counselors are prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health needs and assist students and families seeking resources."

Counselling is an intervention that young people can access voluntarily to explore issues which cause them distress. The need for counselling in school is widely evidenced as summarized in the BACP paper "School Based Counselling – what is it and why we need it". Without appropriate support, a psychological difficulty in childhood can undermine learning and lead to long term mental health problems. When emotional or social development is inhibited, counselling can be an effective resource in overcoming individual barriers.

The overarching objective of counselling at DBSJP is to provide a safe, supportive environment accessible to the whole school community where individuals or groups can explore personal problems without judgement to aid self-awareness and reflection. Therapeutic methods used may vary according to the age and needs of the students, but the overarching values and philosophy remain.

The service is both preventative and responsive. Early detection and assessment are crucial in preventing more severe long-term mental health problems. However, counsellors can only work

with students who have either been referred or sought the service. When emotional or mental crisis emerge, these are prioritised.

The aims of counselling are specific to the individual, but may include the following:

- Assisting the young person to develop greater understanding of themselves, their relationship with others and their environment to support social and emotional development.
- Developing confidence and resilience by creating a better awareness and utilization of their personal resources.
- Helping students reflect on their own thoughts and feelings whilst fostering positive behaviors to help strengthen mental wellbeing.
- Providing emotional support and assistance with transition such as bereavement, parental separation or relocation.
- Supporting problem solving and the pursuit of meaningful goals.
- Helping young people and their families find specialist support from external organizations to match their needs.

In addition, counsellors work to educate parents, children and staff on mental health topics with the aim of lessening stigma and broadening understanding.

2. The School Counselor's Role

The counsellor offers young people a safe and supportive environment to work through difficult issues. The counsellor will listen to a young person's views, experiences and feelings without judgement in an atmosphere of respect and empathy based on a secure and trusting working relationship.

Counsellors assist individuals to find their own solutions rather than providing advice often using tools such as motivational interviewing. Through counselling students gain a better understanding of how their thoughts, feelings and behaviors affect one another and gain skills in coping with difficult thoughts and feelings more effectively.

Dubai British School Jumeirah Park has a school counselling service available to all students

The role of the school counselor regarding confidentiality is:

- To support the students' right to privacy and protect confidential information received from students, the family, guardians and staff members
- To explain the meaning and limits of confidentiality to students in developmentally appropriate terms
- To provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding the counseling relationship and confidentiality
- To inform students and the family of the limits to confidentiality when:
 - the student poses a danger to self or others
 - there is a court-ordered disclosure

- consulting with other professionals, such as colleagues, supervisors, treatment teams and other support personnel, in support of the student
- the student participates in group counseling
- substance use and treatment are concerns (CFR 42, Part 2; 2017)
- To keep personal notes, separate from educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exceptions exist
- To seek guidance from supervisors and appropriate legal advice when their records are subpoenaed
- To communicate highly sensitive student information via face-to-face contact or phone call and not by e-mail or inserting into the educational record
- To request to a court of law that a student's anonymity be used if records are subpoenaed
- To be aware of federal, state and local security standards related to electronic communication, software programs and stored data
- To advocate for security-level protocols within student information systems allowing only certain staff members access to confidential information
- To assert their belief that information shared by students is confidential and should not be revealed without the student's consent
- To adhere to all school board policy and federal and state laws protecting student records, health information and special services (i.e., HIPAA, FERPA, IDEA)

In addition, the DBSJP counsellors seek to:

1. Collaborate with pastoral care teams, Teachers and the Inclusion Department.
2. Work with Safeguarding leads to support the early identification of at-risk young people and assist the child protection process.
3. Work with groups of students with common needs, where appropriate, to support each other in their development of stronger coping strategies and good mental wellbeing.
4. Continually seek service improvement through training, development and individual progress monitoring of students.
5. Provide both structured and informal support to parents and school staff.
6. Help source external mental health support when necessary.
7. Counselling is a term-time service. It is not available during school holidays.

2.1 Summary

The counselling relationship between students and their school counsellor requires an atmosphere of trust and confidence. Students must trust the school counsellor to be able to enter into a meaningful and honest dialogue with the school counsellor (Iyer & Baxter-MacGregor, 2010). However, students should be informed that exceptions to confidentiality exist in which school counsellors must inform others of information they obtained in the counselling relationship to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to students themselves or others and if it is legally required.

3. Quality Assurance

The counsellors are qualified to a minimum of Bachelor or Master's level and maintain annual membership with an international or national psychology body such as the International Schools Counselling Association (ISCA) British Psychological Society (BPS), American School Counselor Association (ASCA), American Psychological Association (APA).

Counsellors actively seek continuous professional development and receive monthly supervision.

Insurance is provided by the school policy. Counsellors do not have personal indemnity insurance.

4. Leadership and Management

In order to achieve the schools vision, Dubai British School Jumeirah park 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 Vice Principal, who is a member of the School Leadership Team (SLT). In partnership with other senior leaders and the Principal, the Vice Principal 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 who might be subject to abuse or harassment, for whatever reason
- Students whose family are in crisis or under great stress
- Students at risk of significant harm
- Students with poor attendance and/or punctuality
- Students who are young carers
- Students who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion from school
- Students who have a temporary high-level need
- 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

6. Guiding Ethical Principles

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

1. Being Trustworthy: 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-maleficence: 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 recognize 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 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 coordinated approach from Key Stage Leaders, School Clinic, Student 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 Services and Counsellors is required to ascertain how best to proceed.

7.1 Consent

Parental confirmation 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 Jumeirah Park to seek parental consent for children to attend counselling, except in circumstances involving Child Protection concerns.

Parental consent is not required for instances of group programs or support sessions, where the focus is on enhancing wellbeing, rather than addressing individual 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."*ⁱⁱ

As guidance for Gillick competency, the Counselling Service at Dubai British School Jumeirah Park 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 has 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 Jumeirah park 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 6 sessions. Any extension to this will be subject to review with the Head of Primary / Head of Secondary.

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

Sessions will be for a maximum of 50 minutes for secondary students. Primary school counselling sessions are generally for 30 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 minimize 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. The Counsellor may override any registration on ISAMS any absence marks a teacher may have made for not being seen to attend a timetabled class whilst in counselling.

8. 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 unauthorized disclosure. Disclosure may be authorized by the young person's consent, or the law.

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 certain circumstances. Confidentiality may be breached if the client discloses information that leads the counsellor to believe that they are in danger or at risk of significant harm. This also applies if they disclose information that identifies other children that may be or are at risk. If the young person discloses that they are at risk of serious self-harm or have suicidal ideation confidentiality will be breached to ensure safety.

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 Jumeirah Park 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 via CPOMS 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 3 Certification in Child Protection to ensure Safeguarding best practice across the school. A member of the Counselling Service will be a member of the DBSJP 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 Jumeirah Park 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 Jumeirah Park will advise in advance and work with parents to handle this situation as respectfully as possible.

If a School Counsellor at Dubai British School Jumeirah Park 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 specialized 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/Head of Pastoral 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.

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 Jumeirah Park 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 parent contract)
- **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 personalized support)
2. Before making a referral
 - a) Before making a referral to a specialized service the school consults with parents or carers. 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).
 - b) The school then takes instruction from the Child Protection Officer on how to proceed.

10. Supervision

Supervision is undertaken monthly and reflective of role requirements. Counsellors will be required to have weekly line management supervision to help with administrative requirements, accountability, and the development of the service.

Counsellors at Dubai British school Jumeriah park will also attend peer supervision with Taaleem counsellors. It is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure they attend monthly and that each session lasts a minimum of 60 minutes. Regular job a like meetings are also encouraged to foster best practice and provide opportunity for monitoring of caseloads and sharing of resources.

Supervision will take place in school hours where possible, with any costs incurred covered by the school. Counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision.

11. Staff Development and Training

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

12. Record Keeping

Dubai British School Jumeirah Park adopts a Data Protection policy with the UK Data Protection Act 1998 in mind, this is updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management. Student records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the counsellors office. Digital records are also held on the counsellors laptop. The laptop is password protected and each individual record is also protected with another password. Key/password access is by the Counsellors only, with a spare key held for emergency by Head of student support and Inclusion.

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 Head of Primary / Head of Pastoral 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 Head of Inclusion 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.

15. Supporting Policies and Documentation

1. KHDA Parent School Contract
2. Service Level Agreement

3. DBSJP Inclusion Policy
4. DBSJP Child Protection Policy
5. School Counsellor Job Description

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

ⁱⁱ Gillick v WestNorfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)