

SCHOOL POLICY



Name	Counselling Policy
Approved	August 2025
Review	August 2026



POLICY STATEMENT

Dubai Heights Academy is committed to encouraging all students to be self-aware, confident and resilient, experiencing a positive approach to well-being and mental health. Dubai Heights Academy recognises that it is the collective responsibility of the family, school and community to ensure the well-being of the students. As a service, the counsellor takes a lead in delivering preventative programs within the academic year, to build resilient young people and to empower them with the skills to resolve problems in many areas of their life. Student advocacy is an important aspect of our support for children and adolescents.

Our vision is to establish Dubai Heights Academy as a school that enables national and expatriate residents to access a unique, culturally-relevant English National Curriculum designed around every child, every mind and everybody.

- **For every child** – a platform for academic achievement, cognitive development and personal excellence
- **For every mind** – an engaging approach, inclusive environment and progressive learning experiences
- **For everybody** – the inspiration to be the best version of themselves

The school counselling service offers a nurturing and personalised approach to pastoral care ensuring that students feel valued, cared for and know that they can access support should they need to.

AIMS

Our aim is to promote the well-being of all students and to ensure that they are appropriately supported. We aim to achieve this by:

- Providing a safe and nurturing environment to support students.
- Identifying students with, or at risk of, emotional, psychological and/or social issues as early as possible through a variety of means and in consultation with appropriate personnel.
- To provide ethical and professional support for vulnerable students.
- To deliver early intervention and well-being programs across the school to increase the resilience of students.
- To encourage parental and student involvement in accessing counselling services and adopting a multi-disciplinary approach.

The counselling service aims to build on the school's pastoral provision by offering additional personal and group support to students who may benefit. This confidential service helps to promote the social and emotional well-being of students, enabling them to make the most of the opportunities offered to them in order to aid their social and academic progress and development.

1. WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

Counselling is a way of helping through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. The process enables students to focus on their particular concerns, work through feelings of inner conflict and gain a greater understanding of themselves and their situation. It can enhance their well-being, provide strategies for coping and empower them to flourish, both in their academic and social life.

2. ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

The role of the school counsellor, as outlined by KHDA guidelines, is to support the emotional,



psychological, and academic well-being of students. The School Counsellor provides individual and group counselling to help students navigate personal challenges, manage mental health issues, and develop coping strategies. In line with KHDA's emphasis on student well-being, the school counsellor collaborates with teachers, parents, and school leadership team, to create a comprehensive support system, ensuring students receive the care they need. The school counsellor also implements preventative programs, such as mental health awareness initiatives, and intervene during crises to maintain a safe, supportive environment. Their primary goal is to foster students' overall well-being, enabling them to thrive academically and personally. Additionally the counsellor provides guidance and support to staff to enable them to provide mental health first aid and is an active participant in our school community and as such builds warm and supportive relationships with all students, as do all our staff.

3. REFERRALS AND ASSESSMENTS

Students may self-refer or may be referred to the school counsellor by a member of staff or parent/s. Students will require parental consent prior to the commencement of any formal intervention from the school counsellor. Following a referral, the school counsellor will undertake the necessary initial assessments and observations and the referral will be discussed during a counsellor caseload meeting. Counsellor caseload meetings are held on a weekly basis and provide an opportunity for all referrals and cases to be discussed by the multidisciplinary team. Each case is assessed on an individual basis as to whether there is a need for school counselling/well-being support, or whether an alternative intervention would be more appropriate. Following this, the school counsellor will then respond to the referer with feedback and recommendations going forward.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

All students are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Code of Ethics. This does not apply however, if a safeguarding concern is identified; in such instances, any information pertaining to the safety of a child or the safety of another child will need to be shared with the appropriate person(s). Where a student is at risk of significant harm, the counsellor is required to initiate the school's Safeguarding Procedure (see Dubai Heights Academy Safeguarding Policy for further information).

5. INFORMED CONSENT

When counselling is initiated, and throughout the counselling process as necessary, the school counsellor will inform students of the purpose, goals, techniques, procedures, potential risks and benefits of accessing support through the counselling service, and clearly indicate any limitations that may affect the relationship such as information sharing, limitations of confidentiality as well as any other pertinent information.

- **Key Stage 1 & 2 students**

Students, parents and staff can refer to the school counsellor, however, written parental consent must be obtained prior to the commencement of any formal counselling/well-being sessions.

- **The Gillick Principle with reference to Key Stage 3 students**

"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" (Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords, 1985).

Gillick competence will be assessed by the counsellor in the initial meeting with the student and if deemed competent, the student will be able to give consent to receive counselling support. Assessment of competence based on the Gillick principle depends on the maturity of the student, their understanding of the consequences of his or her actions, and the student having sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable them to understand what is being proposed i.e. counselling. As a general understanding, most Key Stage 3 students are deemed sufficiently competent to understand the counselling process. In instances where this is not the



case, parental consent will be obtained.

6. WELL BEING PROGRAMMES

Well-being programmes do not require parental consent, for example social skills groups and preventative group work with students and student workshops. As a member of the school community, the school counsellor participates in a range of school activities, including support for activities, trips and excursions and whole school events. For these activities and in relation to any potential interaction between a student and the school counsellor, parental consent is not a requirement.

7. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Dubai Heights Academy will actively support the school counsellor to seek to identify and meet the very diverse needs of our students. This is achieved through a direct reporting line to the Principal and close working relationships with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Inclusion/Pastoral Department. The school counsellor takes the lead role in coordinating counselling support and service provision, particularly regarding students and families. In partnership with the Senior Leadership Team, the school counsellor 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.

8. COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Counselling sessions will typically last for between 30 and 45 minutes and will take place in either the counselling room or the enrichment zone. Counselling sessions will take place at a convenient time for the student in order to ensure minimal disruption to their learning. There will be a review of counselling support every term in order to measure impact and progress and parents will be fully involved in the review process. A decision will be made at this review as to whether there is a continued need for counselling support and/or whether a referral to an external agency for support may be of benefit to the student.

9. SHARING INFORMATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The school counsellor will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school staff, other agencies and specialised 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, the counsellor will "test" sharing of counselling goals validity by considering two 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 Senior Leadership Team and the School Inclusion and Welfare Teams to be informed of students accessing counselling support, 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.

10. OTHER RELATED POLICIES

10.1 Anti-bullying and Cyber Bullying Policy

10.2 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

10.3 Mental Health and Well-being Policy

10.4 Confidentiality Policy

10.5 Behaviour Policy

10.6 Whistleblowing Policy

11. SCHOOL COUNSELLING REFERRAL PROCESS

The following table summarises the school counselling referral process at Dubai Heights Academy.

1	Concern is raised	<p>If a staff member has a concern about a student, it must be logged on CPOMS-Wellbeing and Safeguarding Portal with the relevant members of staff alerted. This may be the School Counsellor, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Class/Form Teacher, The Head of Department, the Head of Inclusion, or other relevant members.</p> <p>If a parent has a concern about their own child, in the first instance, they should discuss it with their child's class/form teacher and/or SLT.</p>
2	Review of information received.	<p>The counsellor and the well-being team will review this information and gather information from any other appropriate adults to gain further insight into the student and the referral.</p> <p>Observations of the child may be undertaken at this stage.</p>
3	Determine if counselling is appropriate	<p>If it is deemed that the child would not benefit from support from the school counsellor, alternative ways of supporting the child may be recommended at this time.</p>
4	Student added to counsellor case load (as appropriate)	<p>If it is deemed that the child would benefit from support from the school counsellor, the level of need and priority will be assessed and a plan of action will be developed.</p>
5	Consent sought	<p>Before counselling sessions begin, the counsellor will obtain written consent from either the student, parent or both.</p>
6	Counselling sessions identified	<p>The counsellor will then approach the student and or class/form teacher to arrange counselling sessions at a mutually convenient time.</p>
7	Counselling sessions begin	<p>Most counselling phases will last for 6-8 weeks but this will vary depending on the individual needs of the student. The counsellor will use their professional judgement to determine if the time frame needs to change. The Counsellor will offer a termly wellbeing meeting with parents and/or join IEP meetings to discuss strategies to support the student and how these strategies might be implemented in the home environment.</p>
8	Closure session	<p>All counselling relationships will be ended in an appropriate way at a time where the counsellor and student feel they are ready. Where appropriate, parents and teachers will be notified of this.</p>

