



St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai – Muhaisnah

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING POLICY

Written by:	Guidance Counsellor	Reviewed:	January 2019
Endorsed by:	SLT	Next Review:	June 2020
Approved by:	Board of Governors		



Counselling Policy

Philosophy

The guidance and counseling philosophy SMM are based on the premise that every individual is created in the image and likeness of God, to that he/she has innate goodness and unique capabilities. As a God-created individual s/he was bestowed with an ultimate Gift to choose to continuously become as they are formed hand in hand with the school values.

Alongside the process of learning and developing themselves into mature, positive and unique individuals, students encounter psychosocial challenges in forms of; individuality being compromised to suit societal norms; socioemotional and academic pressure to loss of personal direction/purpose and; distortion of formation by extrinsic psychosocial factors. Hence, it is in this light the guidance and counseling policy is geared to assisting the students to acquire the necessary skills and disposition needed for them to undergo a healthy transition into being matured and responsible individuals with upholding the values of SMM with respect to UAE culture.

Mission

Guided by the counseling philosophy and the overall school mission "We believe in the uniqueness of each student and in supporting them in achieving their dreams" Taken from the Saint Mary's School Core Values statement, the centre is geared to the following objectives:

- Assist students healthy go through personal and social, educational and vocational aspects of school and learning.
- Support in the school's behaviour policy and in maintaining school ethos of trust and safe school environment where children are valued and uniqueness is respected enabling them to achieve maximum potentials as learners.
- Give support to teachers in dealing with issues arising in the classroom.
- To assist parents and carers in providing a nurturing and caring atmosphere at home.
- To ensure that the stakeholders are aware of the services available through the counseling centre.
- Support students in dealing with unhealthy competitiveness, bullying, social exclusion, family crisis, scholastic under-achievement, abuse, peer pressure and racism as they go through the different stages of educational development.
- To ensure that as far as possible the school experience is happy and developmental.

Code of Practice

The Guidance and Counselling centre operates on two aspects of assistance and support to the



developmental needs of the students mainly Curative and Preventive programs. Working closely under the leadership of the Office of the Pastoral Care and Development, in coordination with the Heads of Key stages and SEN department the centre's core service, counseling will be within the following referral:

Counselee Classification

- Personal walk-in students or groups of students who seek assistance to resolve psychosocial and emotional distress.
- Socially identified students by all stakeholders with proper referral in coordination with current status with the Office of the Pastoral Care and Development.
- Referrals of the Head of Key Stages coupled with a class behavioural log with response to behaviour management, level of administrative correction, anecdotes of previous parents' communication and the official referral document provided by the centre.
- Academically underachieving students based on internal assessment, CAT4 data, and referral of the department heads.
- Parents' referral that concerns child's academic achievement, emotional stability, social environment and personal safety. Outside of mental health coordinating agencies and previous school's recommendations will also be filed for the progress of counseling sessions.
- Student/s at risk in the context of child protection and safeguarding with referring person's notes on child protection.

With the consideration of the supervising adults may affect a students' happiness and wellness, the centre will include:

- Self-referred family counselling,
- Parent consultations, and
- Teacher's counselling and consultations.

The number of counselling sessions may be determined depending on the intensity of the intake interview and the severity of psychosocial stressors.

Guidelines for the Department

Keeping the areas of need in mind, we intend to:

- To follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education for Special Needs in UAE/Federal Law 29.
- Adopt an open and accepting attitude towards children as part of its responsibility for pastoral care. Staff ensures that children and parents will feel free to talk about any concerns and will see the school as a safe place when there are difficulties. Children's worries and fears will be taken seriously and children are encouraged to see help from or confide in members of staff.
- Establish and maintain an ethos where students feel secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure that students know there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or are in difficu



- Provide opportunities to equip students with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse and develop inner strength through form time and as needed guidance class interventions.
- Ensure every effort is made to establish effective working relationships with parents and teachers.
- Ensure that the staff is aware of how and when to act on concerns of the students.
- Ensure that there is a clearly defined response when the need for counseling is identified.

This should be in keeping with the nature of the problem, the age of the child and their emotional state. Some difficulties may be dealt with successfully within the classroom with the teachers.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All students have a right to confidentiality in their dealings with the counselor. The right is not Universal, however, and there are some cases in which - for the student's best interest - confidentiality cannot be guaranteed e.g. in the case of abuse, bullying, and risk to another student's life. In counseling the student, he/she is made aware that confidentiality could not be guaranteed in any of the above cases and that information of this nature would have to be referred to. In short:

1. All things discussed are confidential between the student and the counselor except when the student himself or another person is at risk.
2. Any information which highlights that the student or another person is in danger.
3. If the student is in danger of doing grievous harm to himself.

Recording of counseling sessions is kept to a minimum. The counselor makes notes for own future reference without recording the details of the problems.

The counseling folder will include an information sheet with the following details:

1. Name
2. Class
3. Class Teacher
4. Age
5. Contact numbers
6. School Counsellor's notes
7. Records of parent interview (depending on the nature of need)
9. Report of Educational Psychologist (if applicable)
10. Office Test and Final term records
11. Meeting notes between teachers/parents

Once a child is identified to have any Special Educational Need on these scales; they are referred to the Educational Psychologist who is recognised by the Ministry of Education, UAE for further recommendations.

Medical Information

The school Medical Record is updated as and when information comes into the school clinic. Any major changes or necessary information is passed on to the school counsellor straight away. The



Counselling department closely coordinates with students with a medical condition and keeps open referral process especially with those of psychosomatic reasons. Some medical conditions may have a significant impact on a child's experiences and the way they function in school. If these are not properly managed they could hinder their access to education. Therefore consultation and open discussion between the child's parents, the school, the school doctor and any specialist services providing treatment for the child will be essential to ensure that the child makes maximum progress.

Moreover, cases in which some child protection issues on physical abuse are carefully referred to and fro the guidance counselor and clinic, vice versa. These cases are directly and confidentially discussed with the doctor in charge.

Referrals

The counsellor may also refer a student to an external, appropriately qualified professional. A referral may occur after the counselor has made an informed decision that the student's situation requires assistance beyond the counselor's professional training.

Parents are provided with referral details and they make the decision to proceed with an appointment with the specialist.

Preventive Measures

Every class has a daily class (form) time and assemblies per key cluster are arranged by the heads of key stages. This provides an opportunity for the discussion of important issues such as equality, friendship, freedom, justice, rights, and responsibilities. Class time brings together the children and adults in a positive, encouraging and non-judgmental way.

The school rules are mentioned in detail in the school diary. They are discussed regularly with the students to ensure that all students have a clear understanding as to their meaning. They are also referred to in class, in assembly and consistently throughout the school year. Behaviours such as name-calling, bullying, physical aggression or disruptive behaviour are dealt with seriously.

Parents are asked to contact the school if they have a concern. They are given the opportunity to meet with the counselor during the parent-teacher meetings. These are held three times a year. In addition, the counsellor is available for appointments with parents as and when required.

Child Protection

The department also regulates the school's Child-Protection Policy which is in place to ensure that the child feels safe and secure in the school environment.

There are four main elements to our Child Protection Policy:

- Prevention (e.g., positive school atmosphere, class time periods where problems with classmates can be resolved and pastoral support)
- Protection (by following procedures, ensuring staff are aware and supported to respond)



immediately and sensitively to child protection concerns.

- Support (to students and school staff and to children who may have been abused)
- Collaboration (with staff, students & parents to promote Safeguarding and wellbeing of all our students.

This policy applies to all staff of the school. We recognize that child protection is the responsibility of all staff within our school. (Refer to Child Protection Policy)

Services Provided:

The services provided under the counselling department can be categorized into counselling, career guidance, training and psychological assessment.

1. Counselling:

The service is designed to assist students to utilize their own resources for growth in self-understanding, planning, decision-making and coping with their personal issues and handling academic challenges.

Identification of student need can come from the teacher, parent, concerned adult in the student's life or the student himself. The counselling sessions are held in strict confidentiality.

Counselling that takes place in the school can be divided into – individual and group.

Individual Counselling - is an interactive process, which facilitates meaningful understanding of the self and environment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour. The student is assisted to cope with personal challenges they are facing.

Group Counselling - counselling for more than two people. This would take place when there are classroom situations that require outside intervention. The students are encouraged to listen to, support and challenge each other and thus, learn to be open, constructive, and assertive and to experience how others see them. This normally takes place in the class time period.

2. Career Guidance/Information Service:

The service functions as a guide to students in planning academic for years 8-12, exploring career interest and opportunities and guiding through the university admissions and selection process.

Students are informed about career fairs taking place in the UAE and are encouraged to visit the same.

Careful interpretation of the standardized test results such as CAT4, Internal assessments and marks, qualification of area of interest, personality, and family systems are analysed to assist the students prepare for their career path. Having in great consideration that career starts from school and that we want our graduates to land on their most suited career path.

The main function of the above is to provide as much information as possible on the widest range of options open to the student.

The counsellor will be familiar with



- 1) The requirements of students, parents, pastoral structures and school administration
- 2) The sources of useful information locally and internationally
- 3) Systems for acquiring, storing and disseminating information e.g. an adequate careers library, appropriate student and parental access to pertinent useful information etc.
- 4) Methods of processing and using information for the student in an integrated way e.g. making it clear, understandable and student friendly.

The goal of the information service is to help the student in decision making processes and problem solving.

3. Training:

This aim of this service is to provide information for the improvement of the students' academic, emotional, personal and social life through workshops, lectures or presentations.

Teachers are also provided with training sessions on helping the students to have access to a healthy and wholesome life. They are also provided with tips on identifying students who may be struggling with self-esteem and acceptance issues.

Behaviour Management in the Classroom

Several behavioural issues arise in the classroom as a result of various conditions that students have been assessed to have. The teachers are made aware of strategies that will assist in good classroom management for these students and promote an excellent learning environment.

- Reduce seating distractions. Lessen distractions. Keep child near the teacher instead of near the window/door.
- Break down assignments. Keep instructions clear and brief, breaking down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- Give positive reinforcement. Always be on the lookout for positive behaviours. Praise him when he stays seated, doesn't call out, or waits his or her turn instead of criticizing when he or she doesn't.
- Teach good study skills. Underlining, note taking, and reading out loud can help him stay focused and retain information.
- Supervise. Check that he goes and comes from school with the correct books and materials.
- Buddy system
- Be sensitive to self-esteem issues. Avoid asking him to perform a task in public that might be too difficult. Reward appropriate behaviour (Catch the child being good).
- Provide opportunities for responsibility. Give the student a job (attendance, door person, distribution of books) which requires him to take some responsibility and praise even the smallest success.

4. Psychological Assessment:

This service provides standardized assessment materials to help the students in understanding themselves and to maximize their best potentials (in the process of making these available at the Counselling Department).



In situations, where the student's needs fall outside the scope of school counselling, the parents are provided with referrals to ministry approved outside agencies and an assessment is made. A report is then made available to the parents and the school. The counsellor ensures that the teachers are aware of the recommendations provided and follow up is done on the same.

Tests may include: Personality tests, Aptitude tests, Interest Inventories, Problem checklist, General ability tests, Performance tests, School exam results and Public exam results.

Roles and responsibilities

All adult/staff have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes a responsibility to be alert to possible abuse and to record and report concerns to the counselling department.

The counsellor is designated to take the lead responsibility for students who need professional assistance from a pastoral role.

Liaising with the family of the concerned student,

Providing advice and support and information to staff as appropriate,

Maintaining records for individual children

Arranging proper training/awareness for all staff.

Information Distribution

Keeping the services in mind, it is important that all the students, parents as well as the teaching and non-teaching staff are informed of the facilities available in the school. This information is disseminated as follows:

Information for Students

With regard to the counselling service, each class is informed or reminded at the beginning of the school year, during their orientation (School planner), of the school counselling service.. They are provided with a Call Slip to be provided to the teacher for the class they are missing.

Information for Parents

The parents are also made to feel free and welcome to come and visit the guidance counsellor. The school diary provides the parents with information regarding contact information for the counsellor and an appointment is made via a phone call. Phone calls from parents over a concern are also accommodated. Also, as part of overall school information dissemination e.g. school notices and parent-teacher meetings, parent orientation days, information regarding guidance and counselling is made available as required.

Information for Staff Member



All staff members are oriented regarding the services provided by the counselling department during teacher meeting and orientation programs. They are particularly informed with regard to students who are under their care and have educational, physical, social, behavioural problems. The counsellor makes available all relevant information about students to the teaching staff. This includes tips for classroom management and access to useful website links.

Process for Scheduling Appointments

For students in the Primary section:

The teachers through the Heads of Key Stage must speak with the Counsellor if s/he needs to refer students to her or if s/he needs to discuss the case of a particular student.

The teacher must note in the diary asking their permission to refer their child to the counsellor. Parents' acknowledgement must be provided to the counsellor through the diary at the time of the appointment.

The teacher is given a slip to confirm that the student was in the counsellor during his/her class.

For students in the Secondary section:

Students from key stage 3 can make an appointment with the senior counsellor as needed; preferably in their class time period or other periods in the case of an emergency. The concerned teacher is provided with a slip to confirm that the student was with the counsellor during his/her period with use of the class exit pass as well.

Team Work

The counselling department is part of an overall educational team which includes subject teachers, class tutors, department heads, deputy-principal, principal, specialist teachers, P.E., Religion., Furthermore, the counsellor, in conjunction with staff and management, will be central to and supportive of pastoral teams and policies which attempt comprehensively to deal with in-school issues e.g. anti-bullying, substance abuse, crisis response, bereavement, child protection etc.

Ethical Requirements

Ethical awareness is a prerequisite for the counsellor. S/he is obliged to operate, in policy, process and practice in an ethical manner. The counsellor's primary focus is the welfare of the student and s/he is ethically bound to act in the best interest of the student. The counsellor must act within the law and within the ethical guidelines as outlined by her profession.

The counsellor discusses with and informs both staff and students of information that is relevant and pertinent to their situation.



Success Criteria

The policy will be considered to be successful, if:

- There is an increased awareness and understanding of the importance of listening to student concerns.
- Students feel that there are people who have time to listen to them and also to steer them toward those who can help them further.
- Students with concerns are dealt with sensitively and in confidence if appropriate.

Policy Review

The counselling policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis.