



مدرسة الدوحة البريطانية  
DOHA BRITISH SCHOOL

# School Counselling Policy



Last Review: September 2023

Next Review: June 2024

Reviewer: Policy Committee





## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the role of the School Wellbeing Counsellor and the parameters within which the service operates.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all DBS schools.

## 3. Policy Statement

Doha British School understands that young people and children experience developmental changes that are unique to each individual. We recognise counselling as a process which assists a young person to focus on his or her particular concerns and developmental issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices, coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others. Counselling enables children and young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope with change (BCAP school counselling - good practice ).

### 3. The Role of the School Wellbeing Counsellor

3.1 The overall aim is to effectively implement a counselling service that meets Doha British School's goals to provide all students the opportunity to achieve their best, enabling pupils to thrive. The School Wellbeing Counsellor will support the developmental, emotional, social and academic needs of the student body to promote wellbeing and success.

3.2 Doha British School has a school counselling service available to all staff, students and their families. The role of the Wellbeing Counsellor is to:

- Implement effective student and staff support and guidance. This includes understanding self and others, coping strategies, peer relationships and social skills, communication, problem solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills.
- Provide individual and small group counselling to deal with issues such as self- image and self-esteem, personal adjustment, family issues, loss and grief, interpersonal concerns, academic development, and behaviour.
- Assist parents and the school community with information regarding mental health issues and challenges.
- Work proactively with the school community to promote and foster student wellbeing.



## 4. Aims of the School Counselling Policy

The aim of Doha British School's counselling policy is to provide a framework of procedures and well-being of the students. It will ensure that the students have access to appropriate support and are treated with respect and dignity. Learning in a positive environment enables students to:

- Make informed decisions to improve their emotional, social and physical wellbeing
- Experience challenge & enjoyment
- Experience the positive aspects of healthy living and activity for themselves
- Establish a pattern of health and wellbeing which will be sustained into adult life and which will help promote the Health and Wellbeing of the next generation of students.
- Be empowered, and encouraged to grow in an environment of compassion and equality.

## 5. Leadership and Management

5.1 The School Wellbeing Counsellor takes the lead role in coordinating counselling support and service provision, particularly regarding students and families.

5.2 In partnership with the Safeguarding Team, the School Wellbeing 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.

5.3 The Lead Wellbeing Counsellor supports, coordinates and guides all Wellbeing Counsellors across the cluster to ensure consistency in approaches, processes and standards.

## 6. Guiding Ethical Principles

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

- Fidelity: honouring the trust placed in the practitioner.
- Autonomy: respect for the client to be self-governing.
- Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the client's well-being.
- Non-maleficence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the client.
- Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services.
- Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care for self.



## 7. Referral Process

7.1 Referrals to access the counselling service can be made by 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 Wellbeing Counsellor's responsibility to ensure that the student's rights to autonomy are respected. It is important to recognise that pupils can only benefit if they want to be involved.

7.2 Referrals to a School Wellbeing Counsellor can be made by a variety of methods as relevant to each school context. All referrals will be logged through my concern either under the referral tab or logged through a concern. This process may slightly differ across the three schools due to the setup and pupil capacity of the school.

7.3 Students are able to access the service without a referral from a member of staff/parent.

7.4 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 inputs, observations, workshops, presentations or programmes.

## 8. Consent to School Counselling

8.1 Parental consent 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 Doha British School to work in partnership with parents wherever possible and to seek parental consent for children to attend counselling, except in circumstances involving Child Protection concerns.

8.2 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.

8.3 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 guidance for Gillick competency, the Counselling Service at Doha British School 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 Wellbeing Counsellor has done everything they can to persuade the young person to involve their parents/carers.
3. Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parents/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.
5. They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling.
6. The young person can communicate their decisions and reasons for it.
7. This is a rational decision based on their own value system.
8. The young person is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person?
9. The Wellbeing Counsellor must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person.
10. Without counselling, would the young person's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?

8.4 Since assessing Gillick competence is a matter of professional judgement, the School Wellbeing Counsellor will use a tool to help guide the processing of assessing Gillick competence, as well as providing a method for recording how the judgement was made [Gillick tool](#)

8.5 In cases where the child is NOT Gillick competent and parental consent is NOT forthcoming, Doha British School will continue efforts to engage the parents via invitation to meet the Wellbeing Wellbeing Counsellor or discuss the issue with a relevant member of SLT.

## 9. Session Allocation

9.1 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 12 sessions. Any extension to this will be considered on a case by case basis depending on the needs of the individual student.

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

9.3 Sessions will be for a maximum of 50 minutes for secondary students. Primary school counselling sessions are generally for 30 minutes.

9.4 Appointments are to be timetabled in class time, using free periods where possible, in consultation with the student regarding important learning deadlines. Release from lesson times is to be spread across the individual timetable to minimise disruption from subject learning. Communication regarding appointment times will be made via the student's class teachers in Primary School, and Form tutors/subject teachers/students in Secondary School. The Wellbeing Counsellor will not advise the reason for consultation to Form Tutors/teachers without parent and/or student consent.



## 10. Privacy and Confidentiality

### 10.1 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 are 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 Wellbeing 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.

### 10.2 Breaching Confidentiality

At the initial session, the Wellbeing Counsellor will make it clear to the student that they may need to breach confidentiality in terms of telling others and seeking help. This may happen when the young person, or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm. In the case of threats of suicide or serious self-harm, there is a general acceptance of a need for intervention and of breaking confidentiality.

The Wellbeing Counsellor will discuss the possibilities of a breach, again, if the need arises during the counselling relationship. Where possible, the Wellbeing Counsellor will keep the young person informed and involved in the process of gaining assistance from others.

The Wellbeing Counsellor is NOT required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the Wellbeing Counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime.

### 10.3 Safeguarding & Child Protection policy

The Counselling service will be familiar with the Doha British School Safeguarding & 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).





The need to safeguard children will always take precedence over the child's right to autonomy and to confidentiality.

## 11. Other Professionals

11.1 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.

11.2 The school can recommend preferred providers, however the selection of outside agencies and practitioners will remain the sole discretion of the parents seeking assistance.

The specialists most commonly involved in supporting students are:

- Sidra Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Hamad Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Sidra Child Advocacy Programme (SCAP).

Before making a referral

- a) Before making a referral to a specialised service the school consults with parents or carers.
- b) An exception to this practice occurs when the school has information that indicates that a student may be at risk of harm (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy). In these circumstances the school then takes instruction from the Designated Safeguarding Lead on how to proceed.

## 12. Evaluation and Recording

All Wellbeing Counsellors will meet regularly with the Cluster lead for Safeguarding and their campus specific Safeguarding teams to review and monitor the service and identify improvement priorities.

## 13. 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. The Principal/Head of Primary/Head of Secondary will take responsibility for investigating the nature of the complaint.

## 14. Links to other policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy



- Behaviour Policy





Thank you