

مدرسة كامبردج انترناشيونال
Cambridge International School, Dubai

School Counselling Policy and Procedures including Unexpected School Closure

NAME OF POLICY	School Counselling Policy and Procedures including Unexpected School Closure
APPROVED BY	Principal
DATE APPROVED	March 2020
DATE OF REVIEW	Next projected review September 2022
RELATED POLICIES	Safeguarding and Inclusion - Guidelines During Remote-Learning

Rationale

At Cambridge International School we recognize the uniqueness of each child through a programme of learning that promotes challenge and personalized learning at all levels and by providing an enabling, inclusive environment which empowers all children to achieve. We encourage creative and critical thinking within the context of meaningful and stimulating experiences.

School counselors working in a virtual setting provide a school counseling program through the use of technology and distance (virtual/online/e-learning) counseling with the same standards and adherence to ethics as school counselors working in traditional school settings. School counselors work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure equity, access and success of all students whether virtual school counseling is offered synchronously or asynchronously.

School counselors provide programming to promote engagement in the virtual school counseling platform to ensure students can gain access to the tools required to reach their potential. Counselors understand the additional concerns related to the use of distance counseling, technology and social media and make every attempt to protect confidentiality and meet any legal and ethical requirements for the use of such resources

School counselors understand the expectations and limitations of providing virtual school counseling. They have the responsibility to provide a school counseling program that supports students in academic, career and social/emotional development; a program that closely emulates the guidance/counseling provision that would take place in a regular, face-to-face school environment. Virtual school counseling provides a means to reach, support and positively impact students throughout their remote learning journey. Within this context, school counselors will be prepared to support students with guidance and access to tools and resources required to reach their potential.

The counseling program at CIS that has a face to face or virtually is designed to assist your child in making the most of his or her educational experience. We know academic performance is important because academic qualifications are the passport to accessing a good university but we believe a values-based education is of equal importance. GEMS values-driven education is expressed through our four core values which are woven into every curriculum offered by GEMS Schools and are at the core of our DNA. They are not symbolic, we live and breathe them. They are: Leading through Innovation, Pursuing Excellence, Growing by Learning, Global Citizenship. Through our values we encourage independent learning, empowering students to take on responsibility. Students learn to celebrate diversity in a spirit of understanding and tolerance and develop a positive regard and awareness of other people

Definition of terms

1. **Counselling** – It is a goal-oriented relationship between a professionally trained, competent counselor and an individual seeking help for the purpose of bringing about a meaningful awareness and understanding of the self and environment, improving planning and decision making, and formulating new ways of behaving, feeling, and thinking for problem resolution and/or development growth. (*Gibson & Mitchell, 1999; Villar, 2009*)
2. **School Counsellor** – School counsellors are an important part of the educational leadership team and provide valuable assistance to students regardless of whether they work in an elementary school or middle school, high school or beyond. They are educated and trained in addressing all students' academic, career and social/emotional development needs by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school counselling program that promotes and enhances student success. (*American School Counselor Association*).
3. **Confidentiality** – Confidentiality is a professional's promise or contract to respect clients' privacy by not disclosing anything revealed during counseling, except under agreed upon conditions. (*Journal of Professional School Counseling, 2002*)
4. **Counselling Programs** – Comprehensive program promoting student achievement designed and delivered by school counsellors. These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature. Comprehensive school counselling programs, driven by student data and based on standards in academic, career and personal/social development, promote and enhance the learning process for all students. (*American School Counselor Association*).

The School Counsellor plays five major roles: Coordinator, Consultant, Conductor of Activities and Change Agent.

1. As Counsellor, he/she aims to help people overcome obstacles to their personal and educational/professional growth and move toward the maximum development of their potential. To accomplish these he/she establishes a warm, trusting, confidential working relationship with the counsees to assist in self-acceptance and understanding, decision-making, and problem-solving. The counselee's concern is the focal point in the ideally one-on-one or small group face-to-face encounter.
2. As a Coordinator, he/she needs to be able to identify tasks that should be done by other persons or an agency and organize everything to facilitate the performance of such tasks by the needed person or agency. He/she must act as liaison between the clientele and the resource person or agency for the purpose of collecting and disseminating information and providing the necessary services. Examples of these would be referral systems and the provision of symposia, seminars, dialogues, etc.
3. As Consultant, he/she may act as an objective party, looking at a situation and suggesting other helpful interventions without necessarily having a direct contact with the identified client whose needs are being addressed. He/she assists others to assess problems, find alternatives for dealing with them, and develop skills for effective work with the parties involved.
4. As Conductor of Activities, he/she may need to carefully plan and directly conduct certain activities that may promote the client's positive movement in life. Such activities may focus on orientation, group test interpretation, training peer facilitators, Stress Management Program, Time Management Program, Values Clarification, etc.
5. As a Change Agent, the counsellor must be involved in the process of organizational change, where necessary. His/her roles may involve acting as a catalyst, process helper, solution giver, resource linker, and stabilizer. The change agent works to overcome the status quo if it no longer works or it has become hostile to the people by pointing out the problems and underscoring the need for change. Counselling skills such as: recognizing needs, analyzing problems, setting goals, obtaining needed resources, and/or generating and evaluating solutions in order to facilitate change are most needed. Among areas that can be worked on are old practices and policies that worsen rather improve the situation, e.g., teaching techniques, discipline procedures that alienate rather than create positive changes.

The School Counselor's Virtual Role

Within this new environment, school counselors provide programming to encourage engagement in the virtual school counseling platform to ensure students can gain access to the tools required to reach their potential. Students enroll in virtual schools or virtual counseling for myriad reasons and come from diverse backgrounds.

School counselors working with students in a virtual setting should:

- Adhere to the same ethical guidelines in a virtual setting as school counselors in a face-to-face setting
- Recognize and acknowledge the challenges and limitations of virtual school counseling
- Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available
- Recognize and mitigate the limitation of virtual school counselor confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients
- Inform both the student and parent/guardian of the benefits and limitations of virtual counselling
- Inform both the student and parent/guardian of the benefits and limitations of virtual counseling. Direct students to appropriate modes of communication for different issues. For example, discussions of a sensitive nature/topic may best be reserved for real-time video conferencing, rather than email.
- Educate students on how to participate in the virtual school counseling relationship, in order to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings that could occur - perhaps, due to absence of visual and/or verbal cues that would otherwise provide additional contextual meaning to the school counseling process during regular face-to-face meetings.
- Incorporate lessons that align with academic, career and social/emotional domains
- Safeguard yourself by being mindful of your surroundings while video conferencing.

School counselors are available through email and virtual meeting platforms (e.g., MTEAMS). School counselors cannot interact with students via social media platforms or accept friend requests. The CIS Counseling Department, during emergency situations, may operate entirely virtual and will take reasonable steps to ensure user privacy.

School counselors will be checking their emails from home; email is the best avenue to reach your counselor. To schedule an appointment, students (Secondary) and parents may email their respective counselors directly to find a mutually agreed upon date/time.

In order to speak to your child through a virtual platform, CIS safeguarding protocol requires that one adult family member be in the home, or another teacher be present during the session. Please be aware that in order to ensure that students feel comfortable and to preserve the integrity of the student-counselor relationship, parents are asked not to intervene during sessions unless asked to do so by the student or the counselor.

In most situations, distance counseling will occur as audio-only sessions. The use of video is at the discretion of the counselor on a case-by-case basis.

School counselors do not provide therapy or long-term counseling. When students require long-term counseling to address mental health issues or to provide long-term support after a crisis, school counselors will collaborate with families to make referrals to appropriate community resources.

Consent is always required

If you do not wish for your child to receive distance counseling services, or if you have questions about the distance counseling policy, please email the counselor directly. If you are happy for your child to receive distance counseling services as described above please respond complete the referral forms provided.

School Counsellor's services include:

1. **Pastoral Care.** Support all the programs of Student Pastoral Care Team.
2. **Inclusion.** Support all the programs of Inclusion Team and advocate inclusive education.
3. **Counseling.** Individual and group counselling (eclectic/integrative in nature) of students regarding issues that might impact on their school adjustment.
4. **Psychoeducation.** Work with staff to teach pro-social skills and promote resilience and personal development of the students.
5. **Professional Development.** Presents timely topics and trends about the issues concerning school and children which will benefit either the students, school staff and parents.
6. **Guidance Lessons.** Conducts Guidance Lessons to help children learn about social and emotional skills which are fundamental in their development and growth.
7. **Admission Assistance.** Assistance with the entry process during Admission Assessments along with the SENCO.
8. **Evaluation.** Holistic assesment of children's learning and academic process.
9. **Staff Support.** Emotional support and guidance to the staff who are in need of such.
10. **SENCO Partnership.** Work hand in hand with the SENCO to promote emotional as well as academic progress of the child.
11. **Parent Consult.** Meeting with the parent/s in order to cater children's counselling needs.
12. **Outside Referral.** Liase with external agencies, service providers and other schools to ensure provision of maximum support to meet children's well-being.

General guide for ethical practices

School Counsellor shall:

1. Have a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals.
2. Aim to provide counseling to students in a brief context and support students and families/guardians in obtaining outside services if the student needs long-term clinical counseling.
3. Do not diagnose but remain acutely aware of how a student's diagnosis can potentially affect the student's academic success.
4. Acknowledge the vital role of parents/guardians and families.
5. Be concerned with students' academic, career and social/emotional needs and encourage each student's maximum development.
6. Respect students' and families' values, beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identification/expression and cultural background and exercise great care to avoid imposing personal beliefs or values rooted in one's religion, culture or ethnicity.
7. Maintain appropriate boundaries and are aware that any sexual or romantic relationship with students is considered a grievous breach of ethics and is prohibited regardless of a student's age. This prohibition applies to both in-person and electronic interactions and relationships.
8. Promote awareness of school counselors' ethical standards and legal mandates regarding confidentiality and the appropriate rationale and procedures for disclosure of student data and information to school staff.
9. Inform students of the purposes, goals, techniques and rules of procedure under which they may receive counseling. Disclosure includes informed consent and clarification of the limits of confidentiality. Informed consent requires competence, voluntariness and knowledge on the part of students to understand the limits of confidentiality and, therefore, can be difficult to obtain

from students of certain developmental levels, English-language learners and special-needs populations. If the student is able to give assent/consent before school counselors share confidential information, school counselors attempt to gain the student's assent/consent.

10. Be aware that even though attempts are made to obtain informed consent, it is not always possible. When needed, school counselors make counseling decisions on students' behalf that promote students' welfare.
11. Explain the limits of confidentiality in developmentally appropriate terms through multiple methods such as student handbooks, school counselor department websites, school counseling brochures, classroom curriculum and/or verbal notification to individual students.
12. Keep information confidential unless legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed or a breach is required to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to the student. Serious and foreseeable harm is different for each minor in schools and is determined by students' developmental and chronological age, the setting, parental rights and the nature of the harm. School counselors consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.
13. Collaborate with administration, teachers, staff and decision makers around school-improvement goals.
14. Provide students with a comprehensive school counseling program that ensures equitable academic, career and social/emotional development opportunities for all students.
15. Cooperate with all relevant stakeholders, including students, educators and parents/guardians when student assistance is needed, including the identification of early warning signs of student distress.
16. Gather and provide a list of resources for outside agencies and resources in their community to student(s) and parents/guardians when students need or request additional support.
17. Do not release a student who is a danger to self or others until the student has proper and necessary support. If parents will not provide proper support, the school counselor takes necessary steps to underscore to parents/guardians the necessity to seek help and at times may include a report to child protective services.
18. Report to parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when students disclose a perpetrated or a perceived threat to their physical or mental well-being. This threat may include, but is not limited to, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, violence, bullying or sexual harassment. The school counselor follows applicable UAE Law and the GEMS Corporate Office policy.
19. Facilitate short-term groups to address students' academic, career and/or social/emotional issues and inform parent/guardian(s) of student participation in a small group.

Confidentiality

The School Counselling is confidential:

1. Within the limits of legal and ethical requirements for the protection of children and young people;
2. With the understanding that relevant information may be provided (for the purpose of supporting a child's well-being) to selected and concerned people:
 - *CIS Student Well Being Team Members*
 - *CIS Child Safeguarding Lead and Deputy*
 - *Principal, Vice Principal and Head of Schools*
 - *Counsellor's professional advisors and consultants*

3. Committed to respecting the right of a student, all information disclosed by student which he/she deemed to be private - related to his/her personal life, mental health, issues and comments against other people, will all be treated confidentially.
4. Recognize that primary ethical obligation for confidentiality is to the students but equilibrium must be maintained that obligation with an understanding of parents'/guardians' legal and inherent rights to be the guiding voice in their children's lives.
5. School Counselor understands the need to balance students' ethical rights to make choices, their capacity to give consent or assent, and parental or familial legal rights and responsibilities to make decisions on their child's behalf.

Procedures

Individual referrals are accepted wherever there are concerns regarding the academic progress or issues related to social and emotional adjustment at school of the students.

The following people inside the school can anytime refer a child for counselling:

1. Learning Manager
2. Head of Year
3. SENCo
4. SLT members

The following procedures apply regarding referrals to the School Counsellor:

A. Referrals by class teachers or staff:

1. Class teacher completes the referral form (Appendix A) to be signed by the Head of School followed up with the copy of incident reports/emails if available, as evidence. Referrals must be supported by fruitful observations about the counsellee's difficulties and current issues be it physical, emotional, social, and academic performance before handing it over to the Counsellor.
2. The Counsellor will set an appointment with the student and discuss the concern further with the student
3. If the referral is in relation to academic progress, cognitive functioning or emotional and social issues, parent/s will be notified and their consent will be needed.

B. Referrals by Parents:

1. Parents should set an appointment with the School Counsellor. It can be made via e-mail and/or phone call.
2. The Counselor will meet the parents and it is minuted onto the student's file.
3. Parent Consent will be signed for further counselling of the child (Appendix B). Children and young people have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time and it is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure that their rights are being respected.
4. If the referral is in relation to emotional distress, anxiety, abuse, loss, bereavement, healthy eating and peer relationship difficulties, liaison with other agencies is essential in order to sustain professional counselling standards so that the quality of their work with the student will be monitored within the school setting.

Counseling Process

First Step: Relationship Building.

After a referral of a child, initial counselling shall be made for rapport building. This is when the counsellor exerts effort to establish a climate conducive to mutual respect, trust, free and open communication, and understanding, from the very start of the session.

Second Step: Problem Identification and Exploration. To bring about proper problem identification and exploration, the counsellor should ensure that the following actions are taken:

- a. **Define the Problem** – describe or identify the problem as specifically and objectively as possible.
- b. **Explore the Problem** – identify the information needed to fully understand the problem, and how, by whom, and when this information can be obtained.

c. Integrate the Information – all of the information collected should be systematically organized into a meaningful profile of the counselee and the problem.

Third Step: Planning for Problem Solving. At this point, it is good to identify a specific, pertinent, and attainable goal.

a. Set the Goals – the counselee and the counsellor must also agree upon the goals to work toward.

b. Identify and List All Possible Solutions – Brainstorming for possibilities, including those that seem useless or impossible, is done by the counselee.

c. Explore the Consequences of the Suggested Solutions – It involves looking for ways to implement each solution and evaluating them along with the possible outcomes.

d. Prioritize the Solutions – From the remaining possibilities, the counselee prioritizes the solutions from the most likely to the least likely to produce the desired results. Once the decision is made on the best solution, the counselee can move on to application and implementation.

Fourth Step: Solution Application and Termination. Task distinction between the counselee and the counsellor should be clearly established: the counselee applies the chosen solution, and the counselor defines the point of termination.

Cases of Self-Harm and/or Suicidal Ideation

Providing virtual services to students presents inherent risk. However the following applies even when students are not in a virtual environment. In times of emergency school closure, where school counselors are providing virtual support and services, it is necessary to address this urgent concern to ensure student safety and wellbeing. If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress in an out-of-school location, the staff member will:

- Inform the school's Safeguard Lead and Principal.

If the student contacts the staff member and expresses suicidal ideation:

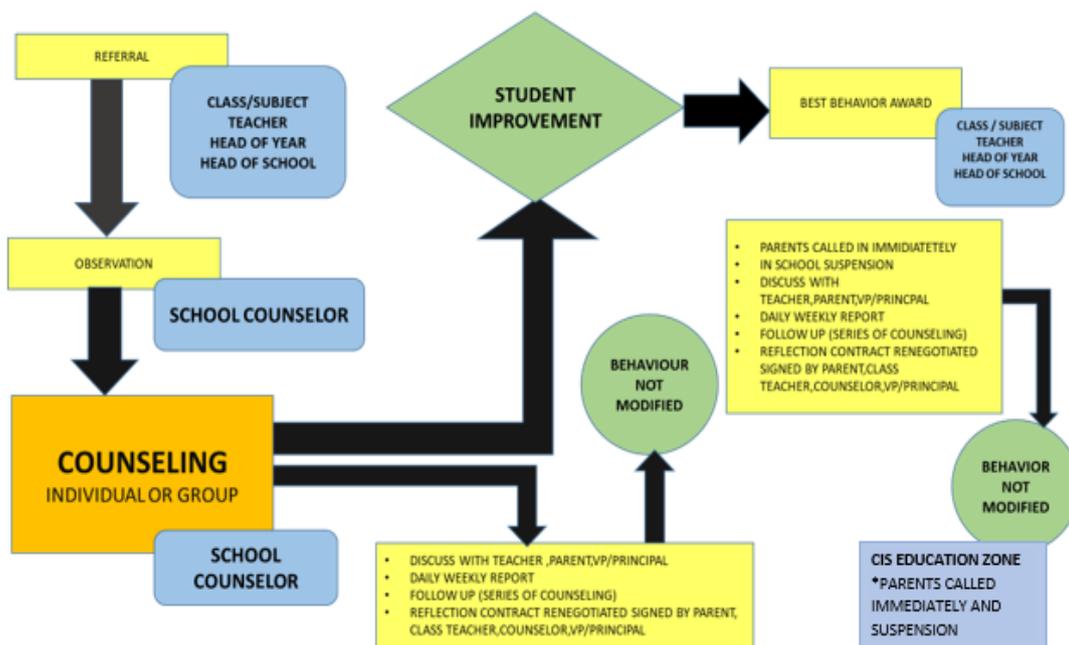
- The staff member should maintain contact with the student (online, or on the phone).
- The staff member should then enlist the assistance of another person to contact the parents of the student while maintaining verbal engagement with the student.
- The parent or guardian will be informed, as soon as possible, by the designated counselor, School Safeguarding Lead or Principal.
- The parent should be encouraged to seek immediate medical/professional attention for the student and inform the school's leadership team once they have done so.
- The counseling team will seek to secure parental permission to communicate with external care providers, regarding the wellbeing of the student.
- If the threat of student self-harm/suicide continues, the family must obtain and provide a 'school medical clearance form' from a certified mental health professional

COUNSELLING FLOW CHART

This Counselling Flow Chart may guide all the school staff to be informed about the process of counselling to the students. Thus, it represents the proceedings to give a student a chance to express his/her difficulties and help them perceive things more clearly through counselling.



First of all, this flow chart shows the proper escalation of behaviour issue and other students' difficulties/problems which need a counselling intervention. Only this has to be properly observed and followed at by all the responsible people.



This Counselling Flow Chart may guide all the school staff to be informed about the process of counselling to the students. Thus, it represents the proceedings to give a student a chance to express his/her difficulties and help them perceive things more clearly through counselling.

Summary of virtual counseling

School counselors understand the expectations and limitations of providing virtual school counseling. School counselors have the responsibility to provide a school counseling program and develop programs to support all students in academic, career and social/emotional development that would emulate school counseling that would take place in a face-to-face environment. Virtual school counseling is a way to reach a diverse student set, to help students meet their potential and have an impact on their learning in a way they may not receive in a traditional face-to-face school environment.



COUNSELLING REFERRAL

Date: - _____

Name of Person Referring: - _____

Students Name: - _____ Class: _____

The problem appears to be in the area of:

- Achieving in school
- Financial/money
- Health
- Peer pressure
- Subject area concern
- Classroom behaviour
- Social/emotional
- Conflict resolution
- Making a career/educational choice
- Friendship
- Physical abuse
- Mental abuse
- Other :-

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Please comment on any specific information related to the student's issue that will assist in our meeting together (In some cases with parents)

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Please check one: -

- Urgent
- As soon as possible

Is the student aware of this referral?

- Yes
- No

Best times to meet with the student (Teacher's only):-

N.B:- Once complete please return this to School Counselor



CIS SCHOOL COUSELLING CONSENT FOR STUDENTS

School Counselling: Information for Parents and Carers

What is Counselling?

Counselling is an opportunity to talk about things that are concerning us. Often having a problem or worry can affect a child's behaviour and schoolwork. The CIS Counsellor promote learning and personal growth by offering a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and accessible student-centered counselling programme for members of the CIS community.

How can a School Counsellor help?

Assist & promote children’s social & emotional wellbeing and enhance the link between the school & home. School Counsellors are good at relating to children and are trained to listen without judging. Few of us are able to work well when we are unhappy or stressed. If children and parents are able to receive emotional support, then they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential. In most cases counselling at Early Childhood level involves the parents. The Counsellor work with teachers, parents and other staff to help support your child.

What issues can the School Counsellor help with?

There may be pressures on children, for example friendships, teasing, bullying, anxiety, negative behaviours at home or school or schoolwork.

How does my son or daughter get to see the School Counsellor?

Referrals can be made by the Class Teacher, parents or older students themselves. If a teacher feels that counselling may help, they will offer for you to meet the Counsellor to discuss the issues and counselling in general. In most cases counselling at Primary level involves the student and parents or the parents alone.

How long will counselling last?

School Counsellors usually provide short-term counselling. Counselling may be for one or a few sessions, usually for half an hour.

Is Counselling Confidential?

What is shared in counselling is not repeated to others without the parent’s or student’s permission, unless there are concerns about the student’s safety or another person’s safety.

If my child wants to see a Counsellor does that 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 that are bothering us. Often this can be because we don’t want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone who understands the school environment. The Counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

Parental Consent

I give permission for (child’s name) in Class to consult with the school counsellor and I acknowledge that I have received information about the counselling service.

Name

Parent’s signature

Date

If you would like further information, please email or contact School Counsellor.