

School Counselling Policy & Procedures 2022-2023

Next review date: July 2023



This policy has been read and adopted by AAESS Board of Directors and Executive Principal:

Signed:



For and on behalf of AAESS Board of Directors

Date: July 2022

Signed:



Mr Andrew Thomas, Executive Principal

Date: July 2022

Our Vision

Al Ain English Speaking School (AAESS) is committed to encouraging all students & staff to be self-aware, confident and resilient, so they experience a positive approach to wellbeing and mental health. The counselling department offers a nurturing and personalised approach to pastoral care and staff support ensuring that students and staff feel valued, cared for and know that they can access support should they need.

Mission

We recognise that it is the collective responsibility of the family, school and community, to ensure the wellbeing of both students and staff. The AAESS Counsellor will ensure all students have access to the service including SOD and those with LS needs and that all staff can use the service too. The Counsellor takes a lead in delivering preventative programs within the academic year, to build resilient young people and empower them with the skills to resolve problems in many areas of their life. There are also tailor made advice sessions for staff on areas which may challenge mental health in the workplace. Student advocacy is an important aspect of our support for children and adolescents and Careers advice is provided throughout their school journey and as they prepare to leave School.

Aims

This policy and associated procedures apply at AAESS to Students and Staff. Our aim is to promote the wellbeing of all students and staff and ensure individuals are appropriately supported, by acting in the following ways:

- To provide a safe and nurturing environment to support students including students with Learning Support (LS) and students of Determination (SOD)
- To provide a service for Staff who may require this support
- To identify 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 & SOD taking account of their age and understanding or any special needs they may have so that communication methods are adapted.

- To deliver early intervention and wellbeing programs across the schools to increase the resilience of students.
- To respond to urgent situations for students and staff as needed
- To encourage parental and student involvement in accessing counselling services and adopting a multi-disciplinary approach.
- To advise on guidance for Careers
- To review and to promote best practice within the department.
- To respond to emerging challenges such as the pandemic, Online & Hybrid learning and the pressure on Social Media on Mental Health

The counselling department aims to build on the school's pastoral provision by offering additional personal support to students who may benefit from the opportunity to work with a professional counselor. This confidential service helps promote the psychological well-being of students, enabling them to make the most of the opportunities offered for their social and academic development.

The counselling support provided, conforms to the current best practice and professional standards for school based counseling, specifically in respect of counselor qualifications, continual professional development, supervision policy and safe working practices.

What is Counseling?

Students and Staff are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Bereavement, loss, family, and peer relationship difficulties, anxiety and bullying are major issues which without support may lead to deterioration of behaviour, attitude and mental health. The adult trained Counsellor listens to their views and advises on methods to manage their feelings. Staff may have issues relating to their work or private lives which they need to discuss.

Referrals and Assessments

Students and staff may self-refer or be referred by another person e.g. parent, teacher, nurse, line manager, HR or friend. The School Counselor will make a professional assessment to determine whether counseling is appropriate at this time.

Confidentiality

All students and staff are entitled to confidentiality. This is vital in enabling individuals to express their distress in counseling. Whilst acknowledging that confidentiality is crucial it cannot be absolute in any counseling relationship. Limits to confidentiality will be explained to students and staff at the beginning of the counseling relationship and periodically thereafter as required. The need to protect students is sensitively weighed against their right to privacy and confidentiality. In the case of a potential Child Protection concern, events may develop that could lead to the Counselor considering that a breach of confidentiality is necessary in the interest of the student's safety. This relates to situations when the Counsellor has strong grounds for thinking that a student may be at risk of significant harm from others or themselves. The Counsellor will endeavor to seek the student's views and consent in advance of any disclosure of information and explain the possible consequences of involvement with other parties. Where a student is at risk of significant harm the Counselor is required to initiate the school's child protection procedure (see AAESS Child Protection Policy) and report to the Child Protection link on SLT. A staff member who is judged by the Counsellor to be at risk of harm due to their disclosures will be subject to reporting procedures to the school leadership team so that they can be advised and supported by HR and other services following a risk assessment. The school has a duty of care to protect and advise its employees.

Reporting and evaluation

All counselling staff report to their line manager and SLT link. At the end of each term, the counselling Department will conduct a review and evaluation of the service, this information will be forwarded to line managers. Department meetings are held weekly and caseloads discussed daily as needed.

Sharing Information

The Counseling Department will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with specific school staff, other agencies and specialized services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. Counselors may find it necessary to liaise with, share information or provide referral information to students and/or parents for further help and in the case of staff to HR and the SLT. Information will only be shared on a need to know basis and school senior management will always be consulted about this to ensure decision-making, risk management and strategy remain informed.

- School Counseling Procedures
- Services provided
- One to one individual counseling, in a nurturing and safe environment for all students across key stages and all staff including non-teaching staff
- Play Therapy for students
- Group Work for students
- Staff, Student & Parent training and awareness raising
- Wellbeing programmes & collaborative working with Clinic, Learning Support, HR and teaching departments

Types of problems brought to counselling

- Anxiety
- Family/relationship issues
- Depression
- Isolation
- Grief/loss
- Stress
- Work-based stress
- Transition
- Careers counselling
- Examination & assessment strategy
- Other issues including self-image, eating disorders, self-harm, Social Media issues

Referral & assessment

The process is outlined in the School counseling referral chart (see appendix 1)

Sessions

Counselling sessions last up to 40 minutes, depending on age and circumstance. They will be held in the designated counseling room, unless the Counsellor chooses another location for particular intervention.

The Counsellor will review the process after every four sessions.

Scheduling and waiting times

The counseling department tries to meet the needs of all students and staff. As the school year progresses, there is an increasing demand for our services and, consequently, waiting lists rapidly develop. In order to accommodate many students, we need to ensure that every available space is used. Therefore, students need to keep appointments as scheduled. In the event that they are unable to attend, the counselor should be notified, as soon as possible.

The counselling department reserves the right to make decisions about services on a case by case basis, taking clinical information into account.

Informed Consent

In the case where counselling is initiated, and throughout the counselling process as necessary, counsellors inform students and staff of the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks and benefits of services to be performed. They will clearly indicate limitations that may affect the relationship such as information sharing, limitations of confidentiality as well as any other pertinent information. Adek and the Executive Principal has determined that consent from parents is not required for children to use the School Counselling service although each case must be discussed with the teacher and HOY and SLT informed so they can advise further on communication with parents

Emergency

The counseling department is available to assist out of hours where a student or staff member needs urgent assistance or the school SLT need urgent advice

The School Counsellor has provided a Suicide & Self-Harm Protocol to all relevant personnel and the School Clinic

Student advocacy

Student Advocacy is the process of supporting and enabling young people to express their views and concerns, access information and services, defend and promote their rights and responsibilities. Should there be a multi-disciplinary meeting, where the student

is in attendance, the counsellors will act as the student's advocate. Other members of the school pastoral team will lead any disciplinary matters.

Record keeping

Counsellors will keep a formal record of students and staff seen which may include brief mention of types of problems discussed. An initial referral form will be completed detailing presenting issues and all written parental correspondence will be kept on file. Counsellors' own notes are stored in a locked cabinet, in a locked room in the Counseling department and archived as required. Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student or staff will be identified within the data collected.

Continual Professional Development

Each counsellor has a responsibility to develop professionally and maintain professional body membership. This can be accomplished through internal and external training. The Counselling department will provide internal peer supervision and training.

Working with external specialists

The counseling team is building a wide network of multi-disciplinary agency contacts for referrals and advice exchange.

[Child Protection](#)

Refer to AAESS child protection policy - Click on the link for access.