



مدرسة سمارت فيجن
SMART VISION SCHOOL

Counselling Policy

2022-2023

This procedure is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Date of Original Policy: 2023

Date of Full Revision: February 2023

Date of Next Review: August 2023

1. Definition of Counselling

“Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps a dissatisfaction with life, or a loss of a sense of direction or purpose. It is always at the request of the client.” The client can be a parent, teacher, staff member or student, with the primary goal to enhance wellbeing.

2. Counselling Mission Statement

Smart Vision Counselling Policy blends with the UAE Federal Law issued by H. H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 2006, concerning the rights and protection of people of determination. At Smart Vision we ensure that students are encouraged and motivated to reach their full potential by providing school counselling that values individuality and respects differences of each student and nurtures them to enhance their educational, academic, career, emotional and social needs.

3. Aims of the School Counselling Policy

The aim of Smart Vision’s school 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

4. The Role of the School Counsellor

The overall aim is to effectively implement a counselling service that meets Smart Vision’s goals to provide all students the opportunity to achieve their best. The School Counsellor will support the developmental, emotional, social and academic needs of the student body to promote wellbeing and success.

Smart Vision School has a school counselling service available to all staff, students and their families. The role of the 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.

- Work collaboratively with the Student Support Services department to assist students with needs for Special Educational, Language Support, Gifted and Talented, and for students with physical or sensory impairments.

5. Leadership and Management

In order to achieve these aims, Smart Vision School must actively support the Counselling Service 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 Department. The School Counsellor takes the lead role in coordinating counselling support and service provision, particularly regarding students and families. In partnership with Senior Leaders and the Principal, 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.

6. Potentially vulnerable groups

There are a number of identified groups of students and families for whom this policy is particularly pertinent:

- Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Students whose home language is not English (EAL)
- Students who are Gifted and Talented (G&T)
- Students with physical or sensory impairments
- Students who might be subject to abuse or harassment, for whatever reason
- Students who are young carers
- Students whose family are in crisis or under great stress
- Students at risk of significant harm or neglect
- Students with poor attendance and/or punctuality
- Students who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion from school
- Students who have a temporary high-level need

7. Referral Process

Referrals to access the counselling service can be made at any time by teachers, 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 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 in the counselling process.

Referrals to consult a School Counsellor be made by approaching the Counsellors directly in person, via telephone, or via email. It is the Counsellors' responsibility to ensure a Referral Form (see Appendix 1) is completed for every referral.

Referral may also be made from staff following identification of early warning signs indicated at Departmental meetings.

7.1 Consent

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 Smart Vision 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.

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.

7.2 Session Allocation

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.

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

Primary school counselling sessions are generally for 40 minutes.

Appointments are to be timetabled in class time, using free periods or Supervised study periods (SPS) 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.

7.3 Where Counselling will take place

Counselling will take place in the Sensory or Inclusion Room.

8. Privacy and Confidentiality

All the students are entitled to confidentiality. This means that the information they bring to the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the counsellor. Information will not be shared unless the young person has agreed to it. The counsellor will, however, state that they may need to break confidentiality should they deem the young person at significant risk of harm to themselves or others. At this point, information may need to be shared with another party, either within the school e.g. Safeguarding Officer or with an appropriate referral to an outside agency. Counsellors are aware of the Child Protection procedures and adhere to those at all times.

9. Other Professionals

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. Smart

Vision School will not accept responsibility for individual referrals to practitioners. 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:

- Health Care Agencies (including GP, Psychiatrists and Mental Health Specialists)
- Therapy Services (Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, etc.)
- Educational Psychologists
- Services for the Hearing or Visually Impaired
- Parent employed LSA (1:1 personalised support)

Appendix 1

FACULTY/STAFF REFERRAL FORM

Student Name: _____ Date: _____ Year/Section: _____

Referred by: _____ Title: _____

Area(s) of Concern:

Personal / Social Development:

- Peer Relationships
- Family Relationships
- Emotional Issues
- Other _____

Academic Development:

- Grades
- Attendance
- Educational Planning
- Other _____

Career Development:

- Decision-making
- Exploration / Planning
- Post-Secondary Options
- Post-Secondary applications
- Other _____

Pre-Referral Intervention

Strategies and Response to Intervention:

_____ Reason for Referral:
_____ Student's

Strengths/Interests: _____ Specific

Observable Behaviours: _____ Parent

/ Guardian Contacted: No Yes

Date: _____

Outcome of Contact: _____

Notes:

For School Counsellor Use Only: Informed Consent (attached): **Yes** Date _____ **No** Action Plan

Date: _____

- o Parent/Guardian Contact – Group Counselling - Individual Counselling - School Nurse -Referral
Outside Resource(s) - Special Services - Administrator Referral - Other

_____ Follow-up with referring person Date:

INFORMATION ABOUT COUNSELLING:

Letter to Parent for Informed Consent (Page 1)

Dear Parent,

Children often receive emotional support by talking to someone they trust, such as friends, teachers, a relative or a neighbour but sometimes that is not possible for a variety of reasons. Having a problem can affect a child's behaviour and progress/attainment in school, a school counsellor can help.

If your child is referred to the school counsellor, the very word "counselling" may make it sound like a mysterious process, but it is not. Counselling is a relationship built on confidentiality and trust—student trust, parent trust, teacher trust. Adequate information is the foundation of trust—all involved must have information about the limits and processes of counselling. The following information describes the overall process of counselling.

How does a student receive counselling at school? Students may be referred to the School Counsellor (SC) for individual and/or small group counselling by their parents or guardians, school faculty, school staff, a concerned friend, or they may refer themselves. Once a referral is made the SC sets up a meeting with the referred student.

Who provides the counselling at school? Counselling is provided by a certified School Counsellor (SC). School Counselling focuses on the academic development, Social/Emotional development, and career development of students.

Is counselling required? It is your choice to give consent for your child to receive counselling. **What will counselling for your child involve?** Counselling may include small group or individual sessions. During the sessions, your child and a SC will work together to understand the problem, the present and future consequences, develop goals for change and a plan of action for change.

How is the information shared? Trust is the basis for effective counselling. Smart Vision School emphasizes the importance of confidentiality between school counsellors and students at the same time recognizing the rights of parents. As a parent or guardian, you must trust that the SC will "take good care of" one of your most prized possessions. Your child must know and trust that what is shared with the counsellor will stay with the counsellor unless he or she gives permission to share information or if the counsellor suspects the child is in danger of being hurt by others, hurting himself, or hurting others.

Confidentiality: Trust and confidentiality work together. Counselling records do not become a part of the permanent record of the student except as required by schools' designated Safeguarding Lead. All records prior to the safeguarding incident will be kept confidential. However, once a Cause of Concern is raised, all counselling records henceforth will be recorded and will be shared with the designated Safeguarding Lead. A record may indicate that a student was seen by the School Counsellor; nevertheless, the topics discussed are not included unless required by the Safeguarding Committee. The Counsellor may talk with the classroom teacher about how he or she can help your child in the classroom; however, specific information will not be shared.

Possible outcomes: Through counselling, your child may be taught strategies to help him or her make more effective and healthier decisions, increase the ability to set and reach goals, build better relationships with others, and be more successful in school. We all must realize that changes take time; his or her problem did not develop overnight, nor will it disappear overnight. Counselling will be successful when students, school counsellors, teachers, and family members work together.

Informed Consent Form (page 2)

Cost: There is no cost to you for any of the counselling your child receives as a part of Smart Vision's Counselling program.

I have read and understand the information provided by the School Counsellor and have had an opportunity to ask questions about counselling.

- I consent for my child to participate in counselling. I understand that participation is completely voluntary and that classroom requirement takes precedence over participation in counselling.
- I do not consent for my child to participate in counselling.

I understand that this consent is effective for the current school year _____ to _____.

Student First/Last Names (please print) and Year/Section

Parent/Guardian Name and Signature and Date Parent/Guardian:

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____