

HABITAT SCHOOL, AL TALLAH, AJMAN

Revised Counselling Policy 2020-2021



Volume-2

School Mission and Vision

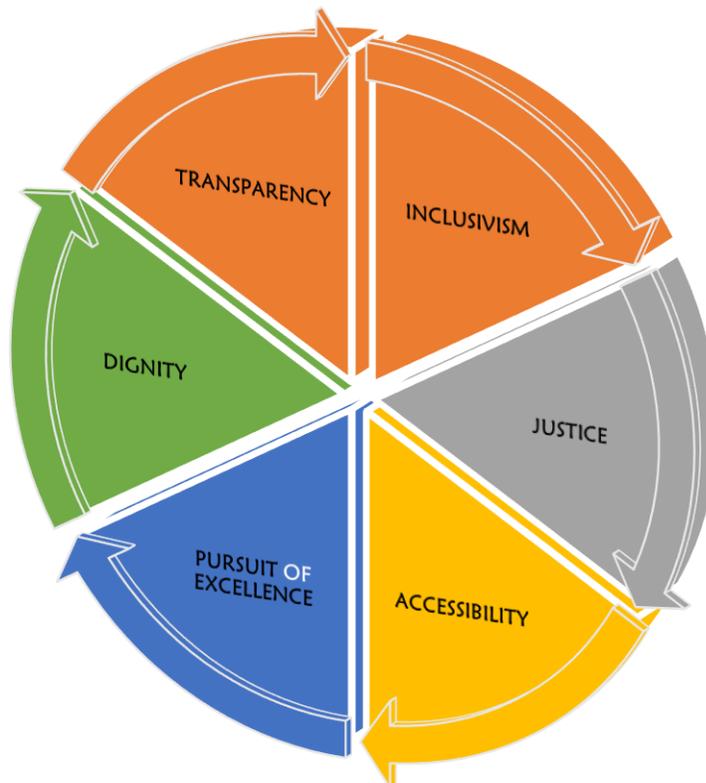
Our Vision

The school envisages learning as a communitarian process of imbibing education from the natural, academic, social and technological eco systems created around the institution of school.

Our Mission

We strive to provide a new model of education for the expatriate children in the UAE in a culturally inclusive, technologically effective and ecologically sensitive way in a cosmopolitan environment.

Our Core Values



INTRODUCTION

Habitat School believes that every individual has the right to fulfil their potential. Like children, adults, young people can find that their ability to concentrate or their behaviour is affected when they are trying to deal with difficult issues. Counselling in school provides pupils and staff with a safe, confidential space to explore these issues and can enable individuals to achieve their potential both academically and personally.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To provide support to emotional and mental health and well-being of pupils and staff in the School.
- To provide a safe, confidential space that allows individuals to explore issues that they may be having.
- To work through those issues by developing positive coping strategies, empower them to find a voice and enable them to build stronger relationships both inside and outside of the school environment.
- To keep the individual at the center of the service and work that we deliver.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy applies to all students (KG-Grade 8), and staff (teachers, admin staff, drivers, attenders, etc.) of the Habitat School, Al Tallah, Ajman.

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will be understood as;

Counsellor:

A person trained to give guidance on personal, social or psychological problem.

Counselee:

A person who is being counselled by a counsellor

Counselling:

The provision of assistance and guidance in career selection, resolving personal, social or psychological problems and difficulties by a professional to support wellbeing and success of students.

Confidentiality:

Having confidence where there will be no disclosure of information by the counsellor, teacher or head of school.

Ethical standards:

The duty to follow a morally correct path.

Intervention:

The most suitable practical option undertaken to improve a child's behaviour

1. Underlying philosophy

Counselling at Habitat School is offered to assist students to develop appropriate skills and attitudes and resolve problems in relation to personal, career and/or academic issues. Counselling is provided within the framework of the School community, involving staff and parents as required.

2 Counselling services

Student counselling is provided in respect of different areas:

2.1 Personal counselling

Personal counselling services vary according to need, but may be concerned with:

Developmental and mental health issues;

- Social and behavioural issues
- Emotional problems
- School refusal
- Academic difficulties
- Addressing and resolving specific problems;
- Making decisions;
- Bullying
- Stress management;
- Coping with crisis;
- Developing personal insights and knowledge; and
- Improving relationships with others etc

2.2 Group Counselling

Group sessions are conducted to inculcate values and ethics for life and to address common problems of growing up life skill issues.

2.3 Career counselling

Careers services and education is a vital component of students exploring their options and managing their future planning. The School aims to ensure that every student has access to individual careers counselling to discuss tertiary aspirations and future goals.

2.4 Academic counselling

Academic counselling is provided to students who may be experiencing difficulties with their studies. Discussion with a School counsellor can help students identify their areas of difficulty and develop strategies to facilitate improvement in their academic performance.

Discussion with a School counsellor may lead to a referral to Academic Services to offer structured learning opportunities for students who may require additional assistance. The name “Academic Services” reflects the cooperation between the Studies Directorate and Student Wellbeing areas of the School in the management of student learning. Academic Services incorporates areas such as students at risk, academic disadvantage, provisions for elite performers, and policies for dealing with disability issues, unsatisfactory progress and special provisions. Students who access Academic Services are required to supply documentation supporting their access as requested by Academic Services.

2.4 Esafety Counselling

Esafety counselling is provided to students who may be experiencing difficulties or safety issues with their internet or device usage. Such as:-

- Grooming, sexual abuse
- Cyberbullying, trolling and cyber stalking
- Digital footprint, reputation and identity theft
- Illegal and inappropriate behaviour
- Pornography and inappropriate content
- Too much time spent on the internet
- Copyright infringement and illegal downloads

Discussion with a School counsellor can help students to identify their safety issues and develop strategies to solve their problems.

3 Referrals

A student will generally attend counselling on a voluntary basis. However, situations may arise where the School will request or require a student to attend counselling

3.1 Referrals to School counsellor

Referrals may be made in one of many ways:

- By the Principal,
- Vice Principal,
- Supervisors,
- HODs,
- Special Educator,
- Teachers,
- Administrator
- Self-referral by the student;
- or By a parent

3.2 Referrals to external health providers

Where the School in its absolute discretion determines it is necessary or appropriate, a student (through his parents) may be requested to attend for counselling or other treatment by external health providers. This may occur for a number of reasons, for example where the nature, frequency and/or duration of the required intervention means it is not appropriate for the School counsellors to provide the service. Where the School makes a request for a student to attend treatment by an external health provider, the following guidelines will be followed:

The request will be discussed with the student and/or his parent/s and the rationale for the request explained;

The student and his parent/s will be provided with the name(s) of one or more suitable health providers, but may choose to consult with whichever health provider they wish to; The student's parents will be responsible for payment of the external health provider's fees;

The School counsellor will facilitate the referral if requested to do so, and with consent of the student (through his parents), will be entitled to provide such reports kept by the School to the external health provider as are, in the School's opinion, reasonably necessary; and

The School counsellor may be entitled to receive reports from the external health provider, as are reasonably necessary, to satisfy the School counsellor that the issues requiring the student's attendance on the external health provider have been satisfactorily resolved, or are being managed to the School's satisfaction.

The parents and the student will be expected to agree to a request by the School for counselling or other treatment by an external health provider unless, in the School's reasonable opinion, there are reasons why such counselling or other treatment is unnecessary or inappropriate.

4 Therapies and intervention.

4.1 Types of therapies and interventions

When counselling a student, a School counsellor will provide only recognized therapies and interventions. These may include cognitive, behavioural, family, narrative, and solution-focused approaches. In many cases, the given intervention will be a blend of approaches which focus on supportive, short-term, problem-

centered outcomes. In some cases, a need may be identified for a student to undergo psychometric assessments (e.g. I.Q., memory cognitive/aptitude (personality/behavioural tests). Given the significant amount of resources and time required for the administration, interpretation, and reporting of such assessments, parents will generally be advised that they should be carried out by external private psychologists. A School counsellor may provide the names of suitable practitioners if requested. In such cases, the assessments will be at the parents' expense.

4.2 Duration/frequency of consultation

Consultation with a School counsellor will generally take place during class time, unless otherwise agreed with the counsellor. The duration of each consultation will generally be for no longer than one lesson (maximum). It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that consultations do not clash with scheduled assessment tasks. The school operates a non-therapy model. As such, interventions requiring ongoing consultation will be notified to Teachers, Supervisor or Vice Principal

4.3 Joint interventions

Where it is considered appropriate, at the School's absolute discretion, joint interventions may be provided. This may involve one or more School counsellors jointly consulting with a student and members of his family. A joint intervention may also include the involvement of other appropriate staff. On occasions, groups of students may be required to consult with one or more School counsellors and other appropriate staff.

5 Confidentiality

5.1 Students

Discussions (including records of discussions) with a School counsellor are confidential, except where in the reasonable opinion of the School counsellor:

There is a concern that the student will cause himself harm;

There is a concern that the student will cause harm to another person;

The student discloses that another person is at risk of significant harm;

The student discloses criminal activity that may impact on the welfare of the student, or others, or the reputation of the School;

The student discloses that he has suffered harm, or the counsellor reasonably suspects that the student has suffered harm;

It is necessary or appropriate to consult and/or seek advice from other School counsellors, the Principal, Vice Principal, Supervisor , or to seek external legal advice, about issues involving the student (for example the need for reporting under the School's Child Protection Policy, or for referral to another School counsellor or an external health provider);

5.2 Parents

Where necessary, students will be informed that to facilitate good communication between the School and home, and to enhance the effectiveness of the School counsellor's role, it may be in the best interests of the student that his parent/s be informed that he is seeing a School counsellor. It is the responsibility of either the referrer or the School counsellor to inform the student's parent/s

Student counsellors, in the course of their work, may liaise with the student's parent/s in managing the student. Additionally, it may also be considered necessary or appropriate by Principal, Vice Principal, Supervisor , Teachers , for a School counsellor to meet with a student's parent/s to discuss issues affecting the student.

If a student specifically requests that his parent/s not be informed that he is seeing the counsellor, the student may consult with the School counsellor without his parent/s' knowledge only if the School counsellor and Principal or Vice Principal are satisfied that it is in the best interests of the student that he receive counselling and that his parents not be informed. The School counsellor and the Principal or Vice Principal may reassess and change their decision about this at any time. Where appropriate, the student may be encouraged to reconsider his position by a School counsellor explaining the rationale for parental involvement. Despite a student requesting his parents not be informed, where the School in its absolute discretion determines it is necessary or appropriate, a student's parent/s may be informed of the student's request for counselling and/or any counselling provided to the student.

6 Accountabilities

The School counsellors have both professional and administrative accountabilities.

6.1 Professional accountabilities

It is imperative that appropriate records of counselling provided to students be maintained. As a minimum, the School counsellors' records must record the student's name, the date of each consultation, the persons present at the consultation, and a brief account of the main issues discussed. Similar records should also be kept in regard to meetings and/or telephone conversations with parents, staff, and external health providers regarding the student. The School counsellors will meet regularly with each other to discuss the number of students who have consulted with them and, where necessary or appropriate, to discuss any issues about particular students, such as the need to refer students either to another School counsellor, or externally.

6.2 Administrative accountabilities

To ensure appropriate communication and accountability within the School, the School counsellor will held a meeting once a term with Principal, Vice Principal, Supervisors and Administrator to provide feedback generally on the provision of counselling within the School and specifically (as necessary or appropriate) on individual matters.

7 Records/Access

All counselling records must be stored electronically within the School's network but accessible only by the relevant School counsellor and the Principal. Other than in exceptional circumstances, a School counsellor's records will only be accessed by the Principal in consultation with the relevant School counsellor. The records of the School counsellor are at all times the property of the School. If a School counsellor leaves the School, his or her records will remain with the School and will be securely and confidentially archived under the guidance of the Vice Principal. His or her counselling records may only be accessed by the Principal and the other remaining School counsellor/s. Access to a student's counselling records by the particular student, his parent/s, or third parties will only be granted where legal and privacy obligations are met.

8 Child protection

As is required of all staff members of the School, the School counsellors are required to be familiar and comply with the School's policies for child protection, including the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.

School counsellors play a key role in implementing the School's child risk management strategies, including the identification and reporting of harm and inappropriate behaviour, and providing support to students and parents.

ETHICAL STANDARDS OF SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

A.1. Responsibilities to Students

The school counselor:

- a. Has a primary obligation to the counselee who is to be treated with respect as a unique individual.
- b. Is concerned with the educational, career, emotional, and behavioral needs and encourages the maximum development of each counselee.
- c. Refrains from consciously encouraging the counselee's acceptance of values, lifestyles, plans, decisions, and beliefs that represent the counselor's personal orientation.
- d. Is responsible for keeping informed of laws, regulations, and policies relating to counselees and strives to ensure that the rights of counselees are adequately provided for and protected.

A.2. Confidentiality

The school counselor:

- a. Informs the counselee of the purposes, goals, techniques, and rules of procedure under which she/he may receive counseling at or before the time when the counseling relationship is entered. Disclosure notice includes confidentiality issues such as the possible necessity for consulting with other professionals, privileged communication, and legal or authoritative restraints. The meaning and limits of confidentiality are clearly defined to counselees through a written and shared disclosure statement.
- b. Keeps information confidential unless disclosure is required to prevent clear and imminent danger to the counselee or others or when legal requirements

demand that confidential information be revealed. Counselors will consult with other professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.

- c. Discloses information to an identified third party who, by her or his relationship with the counselee, is at a high risk of contracting a disease that is commonly known to be communicable and fatal. Prior to disclosure, the counselor will ascertain that the counselee has not already informed the third party about his or her disease and he/she is not intending to inform the third party in the immediate future.
- d. Requests of the court that disclosure not be required when the release of confidential information without a counselee's permission may lead to potential harm to the counselee.
- e. Protects the confidentiality of counselee's records and releases personal data only according to prescribed laws and school policies. Student information maintained in computers is treated with the same. In a group setting, the counselor sets a high norm of confidentiality and stresses its importance, yet clearly states that confidentiality in group counseling cannot be guaranteed care as traditional student records.

B.1. Parent Rights and Responsibilities

The school counselor:

- a. Respects the inherent rights and responsibilities of parents for their children and endeavors to establish, as appropriate, a collaborative relationship with parents to facilitate the counselee's maximum development.
- b. Adheres to laws and local guidelines when assisting parents experiencing family difficulties that interfere with the counselee's effectiveness and welfare.
- c. Is sensitive to cultural and social diversity among families and recognizes that all parents, custodial and noncustodial, are vested with certain rights and

responsibilities for the welfare of their children by virtue of their role and according to law,

B.2. Parents and Confidentiality

The school counselor: a. Informs parents of the counselor's role with emphasis on the confidential nature of the counseling relationship between the counselor and counselee.

b. Provides parents with accurate, comprehensive, and relevant information in an objective and caring manner, as is appropriate and consistent with ethical responsibilities to the counselee.

c. Makes reasonable efforts to honor the wishes of parents and guardians concerning information that he/she may share regarding the counselee, C.

Responsibilities to Colleagues and Professional Associates

C.1. Professional Relationships

The school counselor:

a. Establishes and maintains professional relationships with faculty, staff, and administration to facilitate the provision of optimal counseling services. The relationship is based on the counselor's definition and description of the parameter and levels of his or her professional roles.

b. Treats colleagues with professional respect, courtesy, and fairness. The qualifications, views, and findings of colleagues are represented to accurately reflect the image of competent professionals. C.2. Sharing Information with Other Professionals

The school counselor:

- a. Promotes awareness and adherence to appropriate guidelines regarding confidentiality; the distinction between public and private information; and staff consultation,
- b. Provides professional personnel with accurate, objective, concise, and meaningful data necessary to adequately evaluate, counsel, and assist the counselee.
- c. If a counselee is receiving services from another counselor or other mental health professional, the counselor, with client consent, will inform the other professional and develop clear agreements to avoid confusion and conflict for the counselee.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as it is deemed appropriate, but no less frequently than every 2 years. The policy review will be undertaken by the Principal, or nominated representative.

Last review date: 13/09/2020

Contact

If you have any queries or concerns regarding this policy then please contact counsellor@tallah.habitatschool.org