



New Academy School (NAS)

Dubai, UAE

WELL BEING COUNSELING POLICY

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APPENDIX

Role of Counselor

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Vision:

NAS community inspires passion for learning, where students achieve at their fullest potential to become responsible, productive global and innovative citizens and ambassadors of their own culture.

In order to accomplish this vision, a counseling programme is in place which deals with the positive and emotional wellbeing of the students.

1.2. Mission:

The Counselling Programme supports teachers, the administrative team, parents and the community in preparing all NAS students for successful grade level transitions by providing them a safe and caring environment that nurtures necessary character for lifelong learning, global workforce and responsible citizenship.

1.3. Philosophy

Each child is unique and special in their own way. As a result we believe that the goal of education is to maximize each child's full potential. Our counselling programme offers support to ALL students and their families.

2. Background to the policy

New Academy School recognises that students may face a variety of difficulties and challenges whilst at school, which has impact on the chances of success and progression.

At NAS, students have the right to expect informed, impartial, supportive and timely guidance and counselling organised by the School, around any personal difficulties that are affecting a student's emotional health and studies.

We are committed to providing a good counselling service, ensuring the wellbeing, and developing it further to ensure it is accessible and meets the needs of all.

When we look at the research into adult happiness, we find that it isn't academic results at school or university which contribute most to our sense of wellbeing, but mental and physical health, as well as the relationships we form with others. If we look at it this way, it makes sense that schools should be preparing our children to live happy and healthy lives. A strong sense of wellbeing is important for everyone in the education community. This is partly because happiness leads to more effective teaching and learning, and ultimately, an improved education sector. But happiness is also important because our intrinsic value as humans lies not just in the function we perform in society, but in how much we contribute and give to each other. (Richard Layard, 2017)

3. Definition:

3.1. Wellbeing: Well-being is a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social, and psychological dimensions as well as mental health-related behaviors. It is not just the absence of illness. It is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. (American Psychological Association, 2012)

3.2. Counseling: It addresses the emotional, social, and school concerns which students have at different stages of their lives. Counselor focuses on emotional and mental health issues and to improve their sense of well-being, alleviate feelings of distress and resolve crises. They

also provide assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of psychological symptoms. (American Psychological Association, 2017)

At NAS, Counseling is an interactive learning process between counsellor and student, whether individual or group, which approaches in a holistic way, personal, social and/or academic issues.

(See the Role of Counselor in Appendix)

3.3. Individual Counseling - is an interactive process, which facilitates meaningful understanding of the self and environment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behavior.

3.4. Group Counseling -Group session is a form of psychosocial support where a small group of students meet regularly to talk, interact and discuss problem with each other and the group leader.

3.5. Workshops - A seminar, discussion group or something similar that emphasizes exchange of ideas and the demonstration and application of techniques or skills. Workshops will be open to all teachers and students.

3.6. Rationale behind school-based counselling programme

NAS recognizes each child is unique and special in their own way. The school counselling programme is considered as a useful intervention in helping ALL children and young people including those who are experiencing social, emotional and behavioral difficulties (SEBD) as well as those with special education needs and disability (SEND).

4. The Targets of Counseling Program

- i. Academic (learning to learn)
- ii. Personal/social (learning to live)
- iii. Emotional (learning to feel)

3.1. The Counseling Program Will:

- Address the unique needs of all students
- Work hand in hand with the SEND department and class teachers, supervisors and Head of department to include structured activities based upon the needs of individual students including developmental, preventative and remedial services
- Be an integral part of the instructional program and total educational experience
- Depend upon the support and collaboration of teachers, administrators, students, parents, other school personnel and the community at large to ensure a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the students
- Include and implement appropriate professional development programs for all staff
- Provide accountability and continuous improvement through annual reviews of student progress and program and staff evaluation
- Deliver workshops for teachers related to substance abuse, child abuse and bullying.

5. ONE-TO-ONE Counseling

- The counseling service currently offers an ‘open-ended’ provision.
- The counseling service will be delivered in a private, comfortable and welcoming environment.

- Each counseling session are usually between 20-55 minutes depending on age of the student
- When the student comes to a counseling session through referral by a teacher, the counsellor will take the lead in the conversation
- The counseling service is student-led and the counsellors will not be directive with regard to topics for discussion in the event that it is a self-referral. Students will have the opportunity to express themselves through their preferred media i.e. art, poetry, music, drama.

5.1. Data Protection and Confidentiality

All sessions with a counsellor are confidential. Information will only be shared with explicit and informed consent from the student. The only time the counselling service will share information without consent is if it is felt that a student is at risk of self-harm or causing harm to others. In these circumstances, the procedures within the Child Protection Policy will be followed. The service will usually (but not always) discuss with a student what will be shared and will seek to obtain the student's consent where possible.

All information about students, both paper-based and electronic, is held securely. Electronic information is held on a secure database.

Soft and hard copies kept of the following information:

- Referral forms, including student name and contact details. (See Appendix A)
- Counselling consent form of Student and Parents. (See Appendix B and C)
- Session notes.

This information allows the service to maintain contact with the student and work within ethical and professional guidelines. Session notes ensure that counsellors are able to develop their sessions to meet the needs of the individual student.

Counselling is confidential, unless safeguarding concerns are raised. The Inclusion Head, heads of primary, secondary, middle and high sections will be aware of the names of students accessing the service but will not have access to any detail of presenting difficulties or session content. The Inclusion Head will only get detailed information during weekly debrief sessions to discuss issues of concern.

Parents/guardians, tutors, teachers or support staff do not have access to information about students receiving counselling and may not be informed that students are accessing the service if the session is student initiated.

All information is stored until the student leaves or graduates. If a student wishes for their information to be destroyed before this deadline, they should speak to their counsellor.

6. Procedure

6.1. Entitlement to counselling

This service is available to all currently enrolled students of NAS who may be experiencing emotional, academic or psychological challenges that could inhibit their personal development and/or chances of success and progression. The service aims to promote and contribute to the holistic well-being and achievement of all students.

Students can access the service through the following mechanisms:

- Direct contact with Social Counsellor by email.
- Referral by Coordinator or other member of staff.
- Requesting for an appointment/ Self-referral

7. REFERRALS:

7.1. Referral Procedures

7.1.1. Self-referral:

- A pupil can refer themselves for counselling in any of the following ways:
- Ask a teacher to organise an appointment with the counselor. This request goes to the Head of section who then makes the referral to the counselor.
- The student may ask a parent to make the referral to the counselor.
- Alternatively, the student can go directly to the Counselor or Inclusion Head but during break time.

7.1.2. Teacher referral

- All referrals should be passed on to the counselor.
- A teacher can ask a student if they would like counseling.
- The student must agree to the referral before their name is passed to the counselor.

7.1.3. Parent referral

- A parent can contact the school and ask for a counseling appointment to be made for their child.
- It is essential that the student referred for counseling has decided that they want to see the counsellor themselves. An appointment with the counselor will be made on this understanding.
- School counselors use external referral sources to address concerns such as abuse, depression, anxiety, and family difficulties.
- Parents can refer their children for counselling by contacting the school counselor, class teacher or form tutor.
- The student must be in agreement with this referral before the counseling process can begin.

7.2.External Referral

- An important aspect of the counselor's work is to recognise the onset of serious physical and emotional disturbances and refer appropriately. This may be to a General

Practitioner, psychologist or psychiatrist or other medical consultant for expert opinion. The referral will usually take place in consultation and consent from the parents and student. Sessions can continue with the counsellor if agreed by the referral agency.

8. Assessment of Student Needs

The counselling service aims to provide a non-directive counselling experience.

All members of the team will complete formal and informal assessment i.e., interview, behavioral observation, subjective rating and psychometric tests with each student at the first appointment. It will help to focus the pastoral system on the areas that matter both in school and outside the school ground. This will enable to ensure the wellbeing of the students. All the information is then held confidentially in a secure location.

8.1. Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)

Research proves students who do not have high self-belief tend to underachieve significantly compared their ability. *This school uses the the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)* to gain insight into attitudes that could be hindering achievement. The *PASS* test helps you detect possible barriers to learning, including issues around confidence, resilience, motivation, concentration, disaffection and alienation.

8.2. KHDA Dubai Schools Wellbeing Census (DSWC)

The school utilizes the analyses from the DSWC data to gain in-depth understanding of how students feel about their school life, home life, themselves and their relationships with others. The DSWC data provides insight into student attitudes towards their experiences in and out of school. The information obtained will enable the school team to meet the need. Depending on the analysis students will then receive group counseling.

9. Reviewing and monitoring

- A review discussion will take place at least every six weeks between the student and the counselor to ascertain how beneficial the sessions are. This is to ensure that the student's needs are being met.
- At the end of each term, and at the last session, students will be asked to complete a feedback (See Appendix D) form as well as parents (See Appendix E). These forms are collated and are used to improve the counseling service.
- If students have concerns about the service they are receiving, they are strongly encouraged to speak to their counselor.
- Information on who is accessing the service is analysed confidentially in order to measure the impact of the service and identify areas for improvement.
- This policy and the effectiveness of the service is monitored through student feedback.
- If a student accesses the service for longer than twelve weeks, a review will take place between the counselor and the team supervisor to ensure that the needs of the student are being met. No confidential information will be shared at this meeting.

10. Promotion of the Counseling Services:

10.1. Raising awareness with pupils through:

- Assemblies where the counseling service is explained and pupils are introduced to the counselor.
- Pupil information leaflets distributed in form time and during guidance classes.
- Counselling services information posters displayed on the reception notice board and in the libraries.
- Information posted on the school website.
- Staff discussing the counselling service to individual pupils whenever it is deemed necessary.

10.2. Raising awareness with staff through:

- The introduction of the counsellors to staff
- Discussion of the counselling service at staff briefings, including appointment allocations, referral procedures and any updates relating to the service
- Distribution of a staff information leaflet.

11. Counseling Policy for Teachers

- The counselor will address the unique needs of teachers i.e., when teachers notice behavioural issues for their students, the counselor will help teachers gain a more complete understanding of the issue behind the actions.
- The teachers could consult the counselor for professional advice. When teachers find themselves stuck with strategies that are not working with a particular student.
- The teachers can approach the counsellor via email and can come directly to the Inclusion room.