

Be Kind. Be Great. Be You.

Counselling Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Rationale

South View School is a school that focuses and seeks to develop the individual and ensure that students are fully and appropriately supported in developing positive wellbeing and mental health. Part of South View School's counselling mission is to create and develop a holistic, robust, nurturing wellbeing framework focusing on positive mental health and wellbeing.

SVS aims for every pupil to achieve their full potential by equipping them with the life skills they will need to succeed. The happiness, wellbeing and success of all our South View family members are our ultimate goal. Each member of staff at South View School plays a part in supporting positive wellbeing and mental health.

Objectives

South View School counselling service is committed to empowering pupils to be confident, self-reliant and resilient. It aims to ensure the pupils have positive mental wellbeing. The counselling service provides a confidential, safe, nurturing and personalised approach, complementing the pastoral support within the school community. The service is available to the whole school community.

Aims

South View School aims:

- To ensure that the pupils have access to appropriate support and are treated with respect and dignity.
- To provide a safe and nurturing environment to support the therapeutic process for all pupils, appropriate to the needs and life stage of the pupil.
- To enable pupils to make informed decisions to improve their emotional, social and physical wellbeing.
- To enable pupils to be empowered and encouraged to grow in an environment of compassion and equality.
- To identify, alongside the Pastoral and Inclusion teams, pupils who may be at risk of emotional, psychological and/or social issues as early as possible.
- To provide ethical and professional support for vulnerable pupils.
- To encourage pupil, parental and staff involvement in accessing the service.

2. THE COUNSELLING SERVICE

2.1 What is Counselling?

Counselling provides an opportunity for individuals to talk, in a private and confidential setting, about things that are worrying them or affecting their day-to-day life. Counsellors are trained to listen, without judging, and to help the person to resolve their thoughts and feelings and gain a greater understanding of themselves and their situation. The counselling sessions are dictated

by the individual and common issues for pupils are bullying, parental separation, stress, anxiety, friendships, change, bereavement, distressing traumatic events and anger. The counsellor will work with the individual to provide strategies and counselling interventions to suit the individual needs of the client. The client can be a parent, teacher, staff member or student.

2.2 The Role of the School Counsellor(s) is to:

- Provide a high level counselling service to the South View School community
- Maintain professional competence through educational, consultation and training experiences to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and effectiveness.
- Inform pupils, teachers and parents of the purposes, processes and goals of counselling at or before the time when the counselling relationship is entered.
- Maintain confidentiality of the pupils, staff and parents at all times. Except in cases of limited confidentiality.
- Ensuring confidential information and record-keeping is kept in a safe place
- Develop and maintain consistent and clear lines of communication with parents/guardians as appropriate.
- Implement effective pupil and staff support and guidance.
- Provide individual and small group counselling.
- 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 Inclusion Department to assist SEND pupils.
- Promote wellbeing to students and the broader community through education and raising awareness

Note:

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

2.5 Reasons for referral

Students may be referred to see the counsellor for intervention and support with issues such as:

- Anxiety/ Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Family issues: separation
- Domestic violence
- Grief and loss
- Mental health/ disabilities of parents
- Traumatic experiences
- Social skills difficulties
- Bullying (victim/perpetrator)

- Friendship issues or social isolation
- Suicidal/self-harm ideation and/or behaviours
- Other mental health symptoms

2.3 Partners and Stakeholders

Administrators and Senior Leadership Team support the counselling program in numerous ways, including implementing and upholding policies and procedures. Together with the School Counsellor(s), they develop partnerships with resources in the community that contribute to the counselling process.

Head of Inclusion collaborates with the School Counsellor on all pupil referrals to ensure that pupils' needs are assessed holistically. In many cases SEND pupils also require counselling services in addition to Inclusion support.

Teachers are a valuable resource as they spend the most time with pupils and are able to provide key information and feedback, which informs the counselling process. Teachers work closely with Counsellors to assess and monitor pupils' progress and well-being.

Various opportunities are provided through which pupils can benefit from the school counselling service such as individual counselling, group counselling and workshops.

Students are encouraged to take an active role in the school-counselling program as they work towards success in school. Various opportunities are provided through which students can benefit from the school counselling service such as group counselling and workshops, in addition to individual sessions.

Parents/guardians work in partnership with School Counsellors to help their son/daughter be successful in school. The school counselling service ensures that parents are given the tools to help their child with his/her developmental, emotional and social needs. Parent/guardian support is vital to the success of all counselling endeavours.

Community members such as psychologists, psychiatrists and other medical professionals partner with the school in a variety of ways, providing workshops, assessments and consultations that contribute to pupils' development.

3. Counselling Referral Process

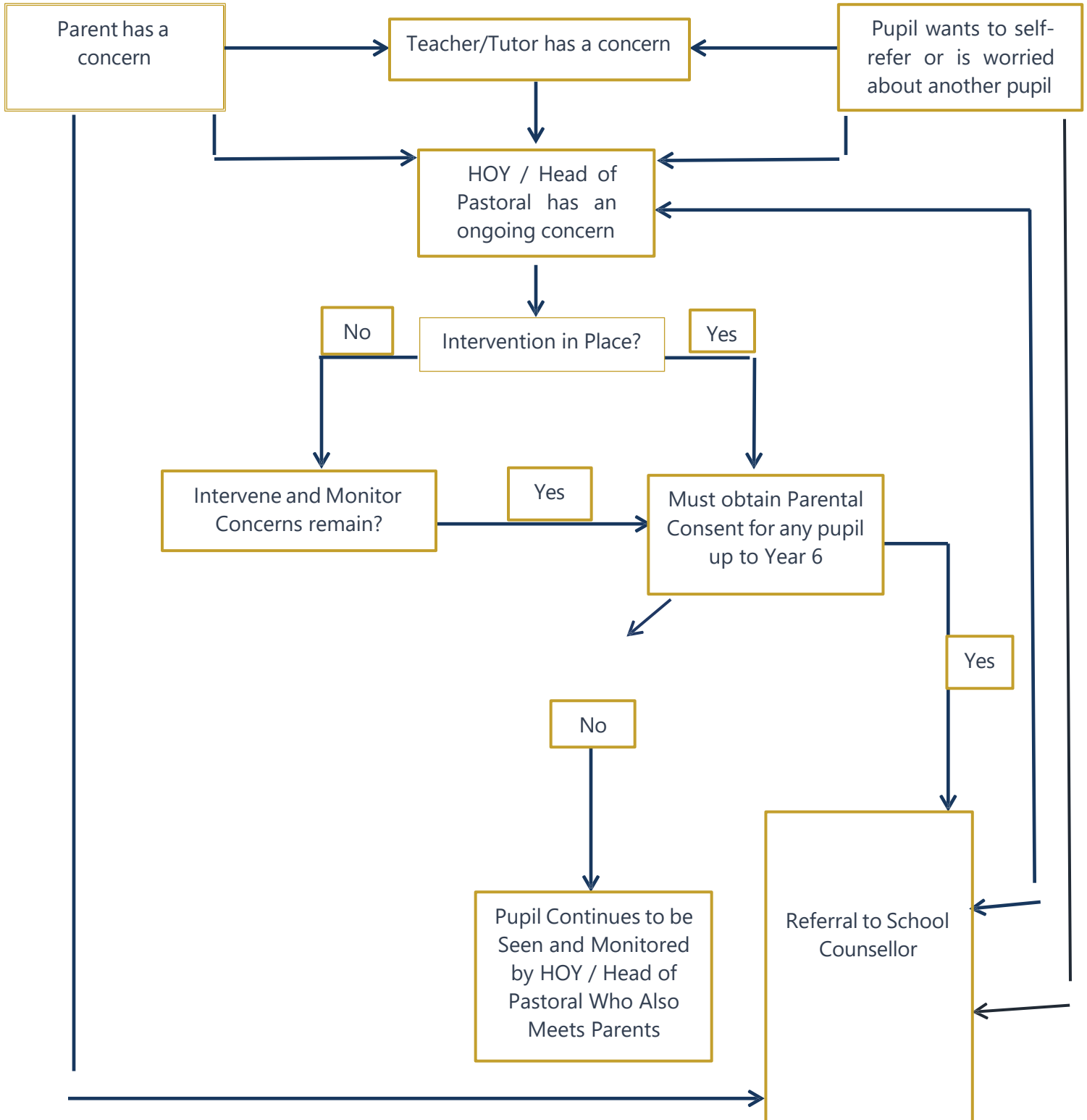
3.1 Referral process

The purpose of the referral process is to provide timely and effective support to initiate an appropriate plan of action for pupils at various levels of need. The Counsellor recognises the contribution of all members of the school community in the identification of early warning signs. Throughout the referral process, the Counsellor consults and collaborates with teachers, parents, administrators, other school staff, and/or outside agencies on behalf of the pupil. A formal referral system facilitates gathering and analysing information systematically and

objectively to plan for the pupils' social, emotional and academic development. In order to maintain a relationship with the individuals involved in the referral process, it is recommended that the Counsellor follows up with the referring individual, stating that the situation has been addressed.

- Teachers can refer pupils through either the Head of Year (HOY) or Head of Pastoral and the referral must be accompanied by a referral form. Parental consent should be sought (Appendix 2 and 3)
- Any pupil in Year 7 or above can self-refer (Appendix 4)
- Any pupil in Years 6 or below must be referred through either the HOY or Head of Pastoral and the referral must be accompanied by a referral form. Parental consent should be sought (Appendix 2)
- Parents can refer their son/daughter directly to the counselling service by contacting the counsellor via email and/or phone call. The Counsellor will meet with the parents and minute this on the pupil's file. Parental Consent will be signed for further counselling of the child (Appendix 2)
- A member of staff can self-refer by contacting the counsellor
- Referrals can be made by approaching the Counsellor directly in person, via telephone or via email
- Staff may also seek assistance from the Counselling Service for classroom or group intervention to provide psychosocial education or support to address issues. This support may take the form of classroom lessons, observations, workshops presentations or programmes. Consultation with the Head of Inclusion and the Counsellor(s) is required to ascertain how best to proceed.
- If the matter requires urgent and immediate intervention (e.g self-harm or suicidal ideation), the counsellor should be notified immediately.

Counselling referral flowchart



3.2 Referrals to external services

The counsellor may also recommend referrals for individuals to an external, appropriately qualified professional if the intervention is outside the counsellors scope of practice or if longer term support or immediate crisis support is required. The counsellor will liaise with parents and the student as appropriate regarding the reason for the recommendation.

An exception to this practice occurs when the school has information that indicates that a pupil may be at risk of harm (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy). In these circumstances the school then takes instruction from the Safeguarding lead on how to best proceed.

3.3 Consent

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.

F1-Year 6: Parental permission must be obtained prior to any sessions commencing.

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 South View School to work in partnership with parents wherever possible and to seek parental consent for pupils to attend counselling, except in circumstances involving Child Protection concerns.

Year 7 & above: The Gillick Principle

'As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing are of sufficient understanding and intelligence' (Gillick V West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords, 1985).

Since this ruling, all young people are entitled to confidential counselling. Gillick competence will be assessed by the counsellor in the initial session and if deemed competent, the pupil will be able to give consent (Appendix 8). Assessment of competence based on the Gillick principle will take account of the age, maturity, understanding of consequences of their action and understanding what is being proposed by the counsellor. 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. As a rule, most pupils in Year 7 or above are deemed sufficiently competent to understand the counselling process.

Parental permission will be sought if this is not the case.

As guidance for Gillick competency, the Counsellor will take the following into consideration:

1. The young person has explicitly requested that their parents / guardians have no knowledge about them receiving counselling.
2. The Counsellor had done everything s/he can to persuade the young person to involve their parents / guardians.
3. Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parent / guardian to be informed.

4. The young person understands the advice / information they have been given and have sufficient maturity to understand what is involved and what the implications are. They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling.
5. The young person can communicate their decisions and reasons for it.
6. This is a rational decision based on their own value system or religious belief.
7. The young person is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person?
8. The Counsellor must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person.
9. Without counselling, would the young person's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?

In cases where the child is NOT Gillick competent and parental consent is NOT forthcoming, South View School will continue efforts to engage the parents via invitation to meet the Counsellor or discuss the issue with a relevant member of staff.

4 CONFIDENTIALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

4.1 Confidentiality

An individual's right to privacy and confidentiality is the basis for an effective counselling relationship. It is therefore imperative that the individual feels safe to disclose information to the counsellor without breaching their confidentiality, except in cases where limited confidentiality must be applied (Section 4.2)

The counsellor will obtain consent from the student or parents to liaise and correspond with third parties where this would assist in the wellbeing of the individual (Appendix 6).

4.2 Limited Confidentiality

At the initial session, the Counsellor will make it clear to the pupil that they may need to breach confidentiality in terms of telling others and seeking help should they deem that the pupil or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm.

In short:

- All things discussed are confidential between the student and the counselor except when the student himself or another person is at risk.
- Any information which highlights that the student or another person is in danger.
- If the student is in danger of doing grievous harm to himself.

The Counsellor will discuss the possibilities of breach again if the need arises during the counselling relationship. Where possible, the Counsellor will keep the young person informed and involved in the process of gaining assistance from others.

The Counsellor is NOT required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offense, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the Counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime.

4.3 Confidential Record Keeping

The counsellor will keep a formal record of pupils who access the service and a brief description of the presenting issue. Where the pupil is referred, a referral form will be kept on file as well as parental consent, where needed. All pupil records will be stored in a locked cabinet in the counsellor's office.

Statistical data may be collated annually but pupils will not be identified.

South View School adopts a Data Protection policy in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998, and it updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management. Each pupil's records are stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked Counselling Office.

These counselling records, including process notes, do not form part of the Student School Record, and remain the property of the Counselling Service.

4.4 Safeguarding and Child Protection

In the event that there is a child protection concern about a pupil's welfare, the Counsellor will initiate the school's child protection and safeguarding procedures (please refer to the Safeguarding Child Protection policy). Counsellors are aware of the Child Protection procedures and adhere to those at all times. The Counsellor will endeavour to seek the pupil's views and consent before sharing the information and will also explain the possible consequences of third party involvement. The need to safeguard children will always take precedence over the child's right to autonomy and to confidentiality and this is upheld in terms of UAE Federal Law No 3 of 2016 Child Rights Law.

4.5 Court and other Legal Proceedings

Confidentiality may be breached by law, if counselling staff at South View School are subpoenaed to attend a hearing or other court proceeding. The Counselling Service cannot guarantee that student information can be kept confidential. If this situation arises, South View School will advise in advance and work with parents to handle this situation as respectfully as possible.

If a School Counsellor at South View School is given a court order to appear in court or produce their counselling records, the school counsellor can obtain legal advice from a legal service provided by the school to limit disclosure of non-relevant sensitive client information.

5 Service Administration

5.1 Supervision

All counsellors need to engage in regular external clinical supervision to ensure that the Counsellor maintains ethical competence and confidence in their work.

Counsellors at South View School will undertake a minimum of one 60 minute counselling supervision session per month with an external Supervisor who is qualified and has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting. Supervision will take place in school hours where possible, with cost covered by the school. Counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision.

Counsellors will also require separate line management supervision to help with administrative requirements, accountability and the development of the service. This is not the same as counselling supervision and the two fulfil different functions.

Peer supervision is also recommended through Dubai School Counsellors' networks. Regular meetings are encouraged to foster best practice and provide opportunity for monitoring of caseloads and sharing of resources.

5.2 Reporting and Evaluation

The Counselling Service seeks to identify and meet the needs of our very diverse school community. This is achieved through a direct reporting line to the Principal, Head of Inclusion, and close working relationships with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Inclusion Department. The Counsellor reports to the Principal and Head of Inclusion, and will meet regularly to review and evaluate the service and address any issues arising. Part of the evaluation process will be a yearly appraisal of the counsellor and identification of CPD.

In partnership with the Principal and SLT, the Counsellor monitors, advises, evaluates and plans for the development of counselling provision across the school.

5.3 Complaints Procedure

In the first instance all complaints are to be raised with the school following the usual school complaints procedure which can be found on the school website. If necessary, complaints alleging a breach of professional standards will be dealt with by reference to the Principal. The Principal will take responsibility for investigating the nature of the complaint.

Appendix 1: RELATED REGULATION, LAWS AND POLICIES

Laws and regulations:

- DFE Statutory Guidance '*Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future Departmental advice for school leaders and counsellors*', March 2015
- Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017)
- Federal Law No. (29) of 2006 Concerning the Rights of People of Determination
- Federal Law No. (2) of 2014 Concerning Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai
- UAE Federal Law No 3 of 2016 Child Rights Law (Wadeema's Law)
- Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017 Regulating Private Schools in the Emirate of Dubai
- Parent School Contract

South View School Policies and documents:

- SVS Inclusion Policy
- SVS Child Protection Policy
- SVS School Counsellor Job Description