



Counselling Policy

***This policy addresses issues in relation to:
Safe and Supportive Environment – Student Welfare 3.6.2***

(See also Policies on Welfare, Behaviour Management and Anti-Bullying)

*"Childhood and adolescence can be very stressful times and, like adults, young people sometimes need to talk to an understanding, independent person who will not judge them."
(The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2004)*

Policy

Counselling is a way of helping people through talking and listening. Students are encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts about their problems so they can understand themselves and their behaviour better and improve ways of coping.

Counselling involves an undertaken agreement between parties involved (parents or students) and a commitment to privacy and confidentiality is emphasised.

Role of the Student Counsellor:

The Student Counsellor works with students, staff and parents to counsel them on student related issues such as:

- Behavioural concerns: both at school and at home
- Emotional problems: anxiety, grief, depression, low self-esteem, stress
- Family issues: separation/divorce of parents, parenting difficulties, parent-child or sibling relationships
- Peer and social issues: bullying, peer relationships, peer pressure, social skills, orientation of new students
- Developmental issues: resolving problems, making choices, coping with changes, gaining insight and understanding, growing as a person
- Academic concerns: goal setting, motivation, time management, organisation, note making, preparing for tests and exams, exam strategies, coping with stress and effective use of the study planner.
- Extra support during difficult times
- Present workshops: eg Bullying, friendships groups, study skills.
- PBIS, Tier 2 level students: check in check outs, observations, behaviour books.

Al-Faisal College values the social and emotional development of its students. Early intervention may prevent deterioration in emotional wellbeing, behaviour and attitude. Counselling can also enhance student's self-esteem and ability to cope more effectively in school.



Procedure

School counselling is a targeted service, following identification or recommendation by teachers, Coordinators (primary), High School Coordinators (secondary) and the Head of College. Teachers can access the “Counselling referral form” (see Appendix 1) to identify whether students are exhibiting concerning behaviour and need to be referred to the Student Counsellor.

Although behavioural issues and conduct management issues can take its toll on teachers and the whole class, behaviour issues should be dealt with according to the school's Behaviour Management Policy. If the issues cannot be dealt with via the use of effective teacher and classroom strategies, a referral to the school counsellor may be appropriate. All referrals should be in writing via the school Counsellor Referral Form (Appendix 1).

Students may access counselling through one of the following avenues:

- Students may visit the counsellor independently to discuss issues relating to school work, peer and social issues, emotional issues, personal problems or extra support during difficult times.
- Teachers and other members of staff may refer students through the school Counselling Referral Form.
- Parents wishing to access counselling for their child must discuss the matter with the Coordinator (primary), or the High School Coordinators (secondary). The Head of College may then refer the student via the school counsellor referral form.

Counselling Sessions

- Following a referral or a student request, the Counsellor will make initial contact with the student.
- The initial session provides an opportunity for the students to learn more about counselling. They will be told that it is voluntary and the counsellor will always do what is in the best interests of the students.
- Following a referral from the Head of College, where a consent form has been signed by the parents for primary students to see the counsellor (See Appendix 2), initial contact is made by the school counsellor.
- Counsellor partakes in observing the child in class or the playground in order to form an initial assessment.
- The Counsellor will also have an informal discussion with the students to make a preliminary assessment, which will be of use for future work.
- The students will continue to meet the Counsellor regularly, according to their needs as determined by the Counsellor.
- Individual counselling sessions will vary in length depending on the age of the students, the development of the students or other needs.



- If appropriate, the Counsellor may take a joint approach and include other staff members to improve the student's support within the school.
- Counselling sessions may be held during class time or in breaks. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that appointments do not clash with assessments.

Referrals to External Specialists

- Depending on the nature of the case, a referral may be made by the Student Counsellor to external professionals such as pediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologist or speech pathologists. This may be the case depending on the nature of the required intervention or the degree of involvement required.
- Referrals to specialists outside the school will be discussed with the student, their parents/carers, and the Head of College and the rationale for this will be explained.
- The Student Counsellor may liaise with other agencies regarding student wellbeing.
- Under certain circumstances, Head of College / Executive Principal may direct a student to external services, which may be subject to students continued enrollment.

Confidentiality of Records & Disclosing information

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by the counsellor, with relevant information only released in the following circumstances:

- It is required by the law (for example, subpoenas, court orders). The personal information collected must be protected from misuse, interference and loss, and unauthorised access, modification or disclosure;
- Under Chapter 16A of the Children And Young Persons (Care And Protection) Act, schools and other prescribed bodies are permitted to request information relating to the safety, welfare or well-being of a child or children in order to assist the school or other prescribed body. If a school receives a request for information by a prescribed body, it must comply make a decision, assessment or plan/initiate or conduct any investigation/provide any service relating to the safety, welfare or well-being of a child or children/manage any risk to a child or class of children.
- The College may refuse to provide requested information if the school reasonably believes that the provision of the information would: prejudice an investigation of any breach (or possible breach) of any law, a or coronial inquest or inquiry/endanger a person's life or physical safety;
- This may include concerns about the current effects of past abuse on a child or young person, such as risk-taking and self-harming behaviour. (Child Protection & Mandatory Reporting)
- There is a concern that the student will cause harm to another person. In this case, the executive staff are made aware of the issue at hand and parents may be involved to ensure the safety of the student.
- There are concerns for the child's safety. In this case, an MRG is performed and information may be shared to certain organisations (i.e NSW police, Department of Communities and Justice, etc).
- The Head of College / Executive Principal or their delegate requests information or files concerning a student at the school.

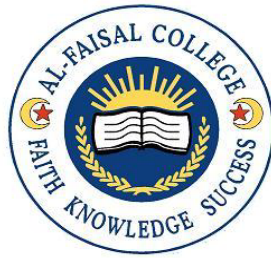


- The student discloses criminal activity such that it may impact on the welfare of the student or others or the reputation of the School.

Irrelevant information about the student's family situation, history or other information which, will not in any way be of assistance to the student's progress, should not be disclosed with the class teacher or other staff members. School counselling files will be kept securely in the Counsellor's office.

Date of Policy:
January 2023

Proposed review date of
policy:
January 2024
*or earlier where amendments in
legislation require immediate policy
reviews*



Appendix 1: Counselling Referral Form (Completed by teacher)

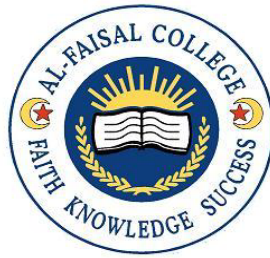
Student's Name: _____

Student's Class: _____

Referring Person: _____

CATEGORY	NEVER	SOMETIMES	ALWAYS
Classroom Behaviour			
Overly energetic, yells out, out of seat			
Very quiet/ uncommunicative			
Acting out (aggressive, hostile, rebellious, destructive)			
Emotional regulation (easily cries, very anxious)			
Inattentive (short attention span, poor on-task behavior)			
Poor peer relationships (few friends, rejected, ignored/abused by peers)			
Academic Problems			
Reading (poor reading skills, comprehension)			
Writing (illegible, reverse letters, doesn't write)			
Spelling (cannot spell phonetically, omits or adds letters)			

Reason for referral (this section is compulsory to complete)



Appendix 2: Primary Referral Letter for School Counsellor

Date:

Dear Mr and Mrs _____

Your child _____ of class _____ have been referred to the school counsellor. Your child’s teacher/s have noticed that your child:

- is experiencing academic difficulties
- appears unhappy
- has difficulty controlling his/her anger
- would benefit from attending a social skills development group
- would benefit from behaviour management lessons
- other: _____

Following the request of your child’s class teacher/s and with my approval, the school counsellor would like to meet with your child. The aim of this meeting is to help your child resolve the difficulties that he/she is currently experiencing. Your child will be required to attend sessions with the school counsellor.

If you have any queries and would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me. Please note that appropriate confidentiality will be maintained. I assure you that the intent of such sessions is to improve the educational opportunities for your child and others in the school.

Please sign the permission slip below and return it to the school office as soon as conveniently possible. Please note that you may withdraw your consent at any stage.

Yours sincerely,

Head of College

I _____ as the parent/ legal guardian of _____

[Print Name]

[Child’s Name]

in class _____ give consent for my child to receive counselling by the school
[Child’s Class]

Counsellor

Parent Signature: _____

Date _____