



**ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL**

**ABU DHABI**

## **COUNSELLING POLICY 2015-2016**

The counselling program at St. Joseph's School is designed to assist your child in making the most of his or her educational experience. This includes his/her emotional well-being, academic progress, and personal and social development.

Our school-counselling program aims to be comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature. A comprehensive program seeks to develop all students (K-12) in 4 key areas: Academic, Career, Personal and Social and Global perspectives. Our students are motivated, supported, and given the tools to not only succeed at school but to go on to contribute to local and international communities.

At St. Joseph's school, we believe it is better to build strong children that repair adults. A preventative model believes in being proactive, ensuring that our students are learning key skills and techniques to thrive as individuals. Preventative education is delivered through various means such as individual and group sessions and classroom instruction. Topics addressed include Exam anxiety, stress management, health and safety and bullying. Lastly, our school counselling program is designed to meet the needs of our students at each stage of their growth and development.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the St. Joseph's School Counselling program is to ensure that all students are encouraged and motivated to reach their full potential by providing a comprehensive school counselling program that values the individuality of each student and nurtures his/her educational, academic, career, personal and social needs.

### **Goals**

- St Joseph's school aims to integrate a comprehensive school-counselling program into all aspects of school policy; with a strong emphasis on collaboration with students, staff and parents
- The school-counselling program will ensure that students' welfare and safety is always prioritized
- St. Josephs School counselling program will maintain an positive environment of trust and reassurance where students are encouraged to reach out for support

### Codes of practice

- Each student is seen as a valuable member of his/her community and is treated with dignity and respect
- Every opportunity is granted for students to be empowered, and encouraged to grow in an environment of compassion and equality
- All students' ethnic and cultural diversity are considered in the design and delivery of school counselling services
- Counselling policies and procedures will be followed in order to serve the students best interests
- Confidentiality is key to the process of counselling and as such will be respected and maintained by all students and staff

### Guidelines for the Department

The school counsellor:

- Practices within the boundaries of individual professional competence
- Adheres to ethical standards of the profession and relevant statutes established by the UAE government and regulatory organizations (ADEC)
- Maintains professional competence through educational, consultation and training experiences to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and effectiveness
- Informs students, teachers and parents of the purposes, processes and goals of counselling at or before the time when the counselling relationship is entered
- Maintains confidentiality of the students, staff and parents at all times- including the protection of personal information and record keeping
- Will develop and maintain consistent and clear lines of communication with parents/guardians

### Partners

**Administrators** (include the principal, vice principal and non-teaching staff) support the counselling program in numerous ways, including implementing and upholding policies and procedures. Together with the school counsellor, they develop partnerships with resources in the community that contribute to the counselling process

**Teachers** are a valuable resource as they spend the most time with students and are able to provide key information and feedback, which informs the counselling process. As such, teachers work closely with counsellors to assess and monitor students' progress and well-being. Partnerships with teachers enhance the learning process as counselling interventions are integrated with classroom delivery

**SEN (Special Education Needs) Coordinator** collaborates with the school counsellor on all student referrals to ensure that students' needs are assessed holistically. In many cases SEN students also require counselling services in addition SEN support.

**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 program such as group counselling and workshops, in addition to self-referrals

**Parents/guardians** work in partnership with school counsellors to help their student be successful in school. The school counselling program ensures that parents are given the tool to help their student with his/her developmental, emotional and social needs. Parent/guardian support is vital to the success of all counselling endeavours.

**Community** members such as the religious of our parish, psychologists, psychiatrists and other medical/educational professionals partner with the school in a variety of ways, providing workshops, assessments and consultations that contribute to students' development.

### **Confidentiality**

#### **Counselling folder/paperwork**

All counselling related records are kept in a secure and private location. Access is granted to the Principal and Counsellor. Each case referred to the counsellor is recorded and treated with confidentiality. Counselling records are kept separately from school records unless noted otherwise by school policy.

#### **Parental consent/ access to counselling records**

Parents and guardians of students of grades 1-7 will be notified if the counsellor is to provide individual/group counselling for their child. Counselling is voluntary and parents/guardians reserve the right to consent to or decline counselling services for their child. Parents will not be granted access to counselling records, which are considered property of the counsellor/school. Parents/guardians of all students (K-12) will be notified immediately if there is any concern regarding the safety of their child.

### **Referrals**

If students require additional support outside the resources available at the school, they are referred to external resources such as psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors etc. following the consent of parents. The school counsellor assists in the process of transitioning to ensure the student undergoes minimal interruption of services.

### **Services provided**

#### **Individual counselling**

School counselors use many different mediums to work with students in individual sessions. In individual sessions, students may draw, write, sing, play, or just talk. Sometimes we work on learning a specific skill such as deep breathing for anxiety. Other times we work on role-playing situations, such as a problem with a friend or having a difficult conversation.

### **Group counselling**

When there are multiple students experiencing similar problem or issue, it can be helpful for them to be in a counseling group together. Group counseling helps students build relationships and feel that they are not alone in their experiences.

### **Workshops**

The school counselling program addresses key issues faced by students of various age groups by designing and implementing workshops that provide students with key skills and techniques to navigate the world around them.

### **Training**

The counselling program offers teachers and administrators various opportunities to expand their scope of practice to include counselling. Staff will be aware of counselling policies and practices, how to identify indicators for student concern and how best to serve the counselling needs of our students.

**Focus Areas for Student Academic, Career and Personal/ Social Development**

<p><b>Grade 1- 4 Focus</b></p>	<p>Classroom behavior</p> <p>Good Manners</p> <p>Awareness about bullying</p> <p>Moral Values</p> <p>Understanding emotions</p>
<p><b>Grade 5-8 Focus</b></p>	<p>Establishing Effective relationships</p> <p>Stress Management</p> <p>How to overcome Exam Stress</p> <p>How to deal with past unhappy memories</p> <p>How to face strange situations ( safety)</p> <p>Cleanliness</p> <p>Awareness about bullying</p>
<p><b>Grade 9- 12 Focus</b></p>	<p>Career Exploration and Guidance</p> <p>Establishing Effective relationships</p> <p>Stress Management</p> <p>How to overcome Exam Stress</p> <p>How to deal with past miserable memories</p> <p>Developing life skills</p>

\* Developed from Rossford Schools: School Counselling Framework June 2011

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The school counselling policy will be reviewed annually to ensure the implementation of best practices and to take into account the changing needs of our students. The policy will be amended to include current research and practice. Each school year will begin and end with a "School Needs Assessment" to make sure the needs and requirements of both staff and students are being met. Parents and guardians are invited to provide their feedback/suggestions on improving the services provided by the school counselling program.

**Sr. Carmen  
Principal**