



مدرسة جيمس متروبول الواحة
GEMS Metropole School
AL WAHA

Counselling Policy

Approved by:	Mr. Jeremy Hallum
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MISSION

Lead, nurture and succeed.

VISION

A sustainable and inclusive community hub, nurturing future leaders.

Nurturing
LEADERSHIP



This policy is applied at MTW alongside our school's vision, mission and values.

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Vision and Mission
3. Aims and Objectives
4. Definitions
5. Fundamental Principles of Counselling Provision
6. Scope of Counselling Services
7. Counselling Framework and Guidelines
 - a. Confidentiality and Consent
 - b. Safeguarding
 - c. Ethical Practice
 - d. Counselling Process
 - e. Programme Delivery: Referral and Collaboration
8. Identification of Counselling Needs
9. Counselling Support Structure
10. Referral Process and Collaboration
11. Student Transfers to Other Schools
12. Record Keeping
13. Roles and Responsibilities
14. Training and Professional Development
15. Strategies for Promoting Mental Health and Well-being
16. Potential Vulnerable Groups
17. Monitoring and Review
18. Links to Other Policies





1. Introduction

At GEMS Metropole School Al Waha, we are committed to fostering an environment where students excel academically while developing into compassionate, responsible individuals. Our core values of respect, empathy, and integrity are embedded in our educational approach, ensuring that students are equipped with guiding principles for life.

We believe that values-based education is essential in shaping well-rounded individuals who not only achieve success in their careers but also contribute positively to their communities and society at large.

The Counselling Policy serves as a guiding framework for delivering consistent, high-quality counselling services that support students' emotional, social, and academic well-being. This policy aligns with GEMS' mission to nurture lifelong learners and globally minded citizens in a supportive and inclusive environment.

At GEMS Metropole Al Waha (MTW), our counselling model is phase-specific, with a dedicated Primary Counsellor (Ms. Rekha Ramakrishna) and Secondary Counsellor (Ms. Priscilla Matthews) delivering age-appropriate, developmentally aligned support from FS1 to Year 10. The counselling team is line-managed by the Head of Inclusion and Wellbeing Lead, ensuring close collaboration with the Inclusion, Safeguarding, and Pastoral teams. This structure promotes a cohesive, student-centred approach to wellbeing where support is responsive, integrated, and consistent. Both counsellors are visible and accessible to students, fostering a culture in which emotional literacy, trust, and help-seeking behaviours are actively encouraged.

2. Vision and Mission

Vision

To ensure that every student in the GEMS network has access to comprehensive counselling support that promotes their well-being, resilience, and personal growth.

As our Chairman, Sunny Varkey, aptly states: *"What's an education if it doesn't teach fundamental human values? Values that, in the words of GEMS Founder Sunny Varkey, 'will guide students through life', allowing them to live happy, fulfilling, and meaningful lives and have a positive impact on society and the world."*

Mission

To provide a safe, inclusive, and confidential counselling service that addresses the emotional, social, and academic needs of all students, enabling them to thrive within the school environment and beyond.

At GEMS Metropole Al Waha (MTW), our counselling provision reflects the school's vision to empower every learner to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in an inclusive and nurturing environment. Rooted in the school's values of respect, kindness, curiosity, confidence, and creativity, the counselling team plays a central role in supporting student development and well-being. Through proactive, compassionate support, the team helps foster confident, empathetic individuals who are equipped to navigate life's challenges with resilience, openness, and a strong sense of self and community.

3. Aims and Objectives

1. **Promote Student Well-being:** Ensure that students have access to resources that support their mental health, emotional well-being, and personal development.
2. **Early Intervention:** Identify and address concerns at the earliest stages to prevent escalation and promote timely support.



3. **Inclusive Support:** Provide counselling services that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and accessible to all students.
4. **Skill Development:** Equip students with resilience, coping strategies, and life skills to manage challenges effectively.
5. **Collaboration:** Foster strong collaboration between counsellors, teachers, parents, and external agencies to support student well-being.
6. **Compliance:** Ensure counselling practices meet the standards set by UAE regulatory bodies (KHDA) and align with international best practices.

4. Definitions

- **Counselling:** A structured professional service that provides students with emotional, social, and mental health support to help them navigate personal and academic challenges effectively.
- **Well-being:** A holistic state of physical, mental, and emotional health where students feel safe, valued, and supported, enabling them to reach their full potential.
- **Mental Health Literacy:** The ability of students and staff to recognise, understand, and manage mental health concerns, as well as provide appropriate support and intervention when needed.
- **Confidentiality:** The ethical practice of safeguarding students' private information shared in counselling sessions. However, confidentiality may be breached in situations where safeguarding concerns arise, such as risks of harm to the student or others, in compliance with child protection and safeguarding policies.

5. Fundamental Principles of Counselling Provision

GEMS counselling provision, and in turn, GEMS Metropole School Al Waha's counselling provision, is guided by the following principles:

1. **Accessibility:** Counselling services are available to all students from FS1 to Year 10 (and beyond as the school grows).
2. **Inclusivity:** Support is tailored to diverse needs, backgrounds, and abilities.
3. **Collaboration:** Counsellors work with teachers, parents, and external specialists.
4. **Evidence-Based Practices:** Counselling strategies are rooted in research and best practices.

6. Scope of Counselling Services

Counselling services in GEMS Metropole School Al Waha include, but are not limited to:

1. **Individual Counselling:** One-on-one sessions for students to discuss personal, social, academic, or emotional concerns.
2. **Group Counselling:** Small group sessions focusing on shared challenges (e.g., social skills, stress management, peer relationships).



3. **Crisis Intervention:** Immediate support for students experiencing crises (e.g., trauma, grief, or sudden emotional distress).
4. **Preventive Programmes:** Proactive initiatives to promote mental health literacy, resilience, and emotional well-being (e.g., workshops, seminars).
5. **Referral Services:** Coordination with external mental health professionals and services when specialised support is required.

7. Counselling Framework and Guidelines

a. Confidentiality and Consent

- **Confidentiality:** Student privacy is respected within the limits of safeguarding policies. Information shared in counselling sessions remains confidential unless disclosure is required to ensure the safety and well-being of the student or others, in accordance with child protection and safeguarding regulations.
- **Consent:** Counsellors inform students about the limits of confidentiality at the start of counselling. For primary students (FS1-Year 6), parental consent is required after the first session to continue counselling support. For secondary students (Year 7 – 10), informed consent from the student is required, with parental involvement as necessary, particularly in cases where significant concerns regarding the student's well-being arise. Counselling services adhere to the child protection and safeguarding regulations applicable in the UAE, ensuring a balance between student autonomy and parental engagement.

b. Safeguarding

- **Mandatory Safeguarding Engagement:** Counsellors must actively collaborate with the School Safeguarding Team and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). Safeguarding concerns must always be escalated to the appropriate team members, as confidentiality does not override safeguarding responsibilities in a school context. Safeguarding concerns must be reported on GUARD to the DSL (Lynsey Seeley) in line with GEMS Safeguarding Policy.
- **Clear Reporting Expectations:** Any disclosures related to student safety, including self-harm, abuse, neglect, or risk to others, must be reported immediately to the DSL, in line with GEMS safeguarding procedures and UAE child protection laws.
- **Training and Accountability:** Counsellors will receive regular safeguarding training to ensure they understand their obligations and can accurately assess risk. Any failure to escalate safeguarding concerns will be taken seriously and may result in professional review.

c. Ethical Practice

GEMS Education counsellors uphold the highest ethical standards, respecting the diverse school community and adhering to the UAE context. They are guided by:



- **BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy):** Provides a comprehensive ethical framework for counsellor conduct, including confidentiality, boundaries, and dual relationships.
- **ISCA (International School Counsellors Association):** Offers ethical guidelines tailored to school counselling, addressing student development, parental involvement, and school collaboration.
- **UAE Federal Law No. (3) of 2022 (Concerning Mental Health):** The legal framework for mental health care in the UAE, covering patient rights, confidentiality, and informed consent.
- **UAE Data Protection Law (Law No. 2 of 2019):** Governs the processing of personal data, ensuring student information privacy and security.
- **MOE (Ministry of Education) Regulations:** Relevant MOE guidelines concerning student welfare, counselling services, and ethical conduct within schools.

d. Counselling Process & Programme Delivery

- **Referral:** Students may self-refer (where available) or be referred by teachers, parents, or peers. A triage system identifies the appropriate support level.
- **Assessment:** Initial assessment determines support needs.
- **Intervention Plan:** Personalised plan outlining goals and strategies.
- **Review:** Ongoing progress evaluation and adjustments.
- **Closure:** Formal conclusion with follow-up recommendations.
- **Collaboration:** Counsellors collaborate with pastoral, inclusion, and safeguarding teams, ensuring robust information sharing protocols.
- **Adherence to recommended caseloads** is essential for effective counselling. BACP and ISCA (and other relevant professional bodies) offer guidance on appropriate caseloads (e.g., BACP suggests 5 cases/day or 20-25/week for full-time counsellors).
- **External Referrals:** Counsellors maintain a vetted list of community mental health resources.

8. Identification of Counselling Needs

Key Methods for Identification

Students in need of support may be identified through various methods, including:

- **Teacher/Pastoral Team Observations:** Teachers, pastoral leads, and other school staff monitor student behaviour, academic performance, and engagement, flagging concerns to the appropriate support staff, which may include counsellors, Heads of Year, Form Tutors, or Pastoral Leads.
- **Self-Referral:** Students can confidently request counselling support through Upstrive Wellbeing App, speaking to a trusted adult or going independently to the Hive to speak with the Counsellor directly.
- **Parent Referral:** Parents can request support for their child by contacting the school's counselling team or other relevant staff members.



9. Counselling Support Structure

Tiered Support System

Tier	Description	Actions
Tier 1: Universal Support	Preventative and proactive well-being support for all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole school well-being programmes. - Classroom lessons on mental health literacy and SEL. - Regular mindfulness and resilience-building activities. - Collaboration with parents.
Tier 2: Targeted Intervention	Focused counselling support for students identified with specific needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short-term individual or small-group counselling. - Peer support programmes. - Collaboration with teachers and parents for intervention plans.
Tier 3: Intensive Support	Specialised support for students with significant mental health challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Referral to external mental health services. - Crisis intervention plans. - Continuous collaboration with external professionals. - Short-term intensive support strategies (e.g., increased check-ins, safety planning, close monitoring).

10. Referral Process and Collaboration

Referral Process Overview

- **Guidelines:**
The referral process provides short-term support for students facing mental health challenges. A triage system maps out available emotional well-being support to ensure students receive appropriate intervention. Clear communication about the counselling process should be provided to students, staff, and parents. For self-referrals, the system should be accessible and discreet.
- **Contextual Consideration:**
Schools may adapt the referral process to suit the cultural and demographic nuances of their student populations.

How to Refer for School Counselling Support

At MTW, the Hive is a designated wellbeing space where students can approach the counsellor during drop-in hours. In Primary, trusted adults help younger children request support as well as Upstrive, while Secondary students are encouraged to self-refer via Upstrive, email, or directly visiting the counselling office.

- **Student Referrals:**
Students can self-refer through:
 - Upstrive Wellbeing App
 - Email the counsellor directly.
 - Visiting the counsellor's office during drop-in times.
- **Staff/Parent/Guardian Referrals:**
Referrals can be made via:
 - Email communication.



- Online or face-to-face meetings with the counsellor.
- M360 Referral Form is available for all staff to access to refer students of concern.

Caseload Management

- **Guidelines:**
 - Individual counselling sessions typically last up to 50 minutes. Younger students may require shorter sessions.
- **Contextual Consideration:**
 - Recognise the limits of short-term support and encourage long-term assistance when needed.

Maintaining Lists of Mental Health Support Centres

- **Guidelines:**

Counsellors must maintain updated lists of local mental health resources, including:

 - Local mental health clinics.
 - Private practitioners.
 - Culturally competent services.
- **Contextual Consideration:**

Lists should be tailored to the cultural and demographic needs of the school community.

Vetting Process for Mental Health Support Centres

- **Contextual Consideration:**

Schools may collaborate with local authorities or professional bodies to ensure external services meet appropriate standards and regulations.

11. Student Transfers to Other Schools

Without Child Protection or Safeguarding Concerns:

- If a student receiving counselling support transfers to another school domestically or internationally, the counsellor should consult with their line manager about sharing relevant information with the new school's counsellor.
- Information should only be shared with the clear consent or request of the parent or guardian.

With Child Protection or Safeguarding Concerns:

If the student has safeguarding or child protection concerns, the counsellor or DSL must ensure necessary information is shared with the receiving school's counsellor or DSL via a secure phone call.

- If the new school is outside the country, communication should still occur via phone, with details documented securely.
- Parental consent is not required if sharing information could compromise the child's safety, but parents should be informed when possible and appropriate.
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12. Record Keeping



- **Confidential Records:**
Records are kept securely in line with GDPR and UAE data protection laws.
- **Session Notes:**
Counsellors document session notes and review them periodically.
- **Progress Reports:**
Reports are shared with parents and relevant staff as appropriate.

13. Roles and Responsibilities

School Counsellors Supporting Social, Emotional, Mental Health, and Well-being

School counsellors play a pivotal role in supporting students' social, emotional, and mental well-being. Their responsibilities differ based on the developmental needs of the students they serve. The expectations for **Primary, Lower Secondary, and Upper Secondary School Counsellors** (FS1-Y13) are outlined below to reflect these differences.

At MTW, the division of counselling responsibilities ensures that both the developmental and contextual needs of Primary and Secondary students are effectively met. Ms. Rekha's expertise supports play-based and SEL integration across early years, while Ms. Priscilla's work with adolescents focuses on self-awareness, peer dynamics, and emotional regulation.

Primary School Counsellors

Focus Areas:

- **Social and Emotional Development:**
Support young children in understanding and expressing their emotions, building friendships, and resolving conflicts.
- **Emotional Regulation:**
Teach strategies for managing big emotions, such as anger, frustration, and anxiety.
- **Early Mental Health Support:**
Identify and address early signs of anxiety, sadness, or behavioural challenges through early intervention.
- **Transition Support:**
Assist students in adjusting to school routines and new environments (e.g., starting school, moving to a new grade).
- **Parental Involvement:**
Work closely with parents to support consistent approaches to social and emotional development.

Responsibilities:

- Provide **play-based and creative counselling** to help young children express themselves in a developmentally appropriate way.
- Conduct **one-on-one and group sessions** on topics such as friendship skills, empathy, and emotional regulation.
- Implement **preventive programmes** to build resilience and promote positive mental health (e.g., mindfulness, social-emotional learning).
- **Collaborate with teachers** to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into classroom activities.
- Maintain **open communication with parents**, offering strategies and resources to support social and emotional development at home.



- Monitor students for **early signs of mental health issues** and refer to external services when necessary.

Lower Secondary School Counsellors (Y7-9)

Focus Areas:

- **Identity and Self-Esteem:**
Help students navigate the challenges of early adolescence, including self-image, peer pressure, and identity development.
- **Peer Relationships:**
Support students in managing friendships, peer conflicts, and bullying.
- **Emotional and Mental Health Support:**
Provide early intervention for signs of anxiety, low mood, and behavioural changes.
- **Stress Management:**
Teach coping strategies to manage school-related stress and personal challenges.

Responsibilities:

- Conduct **individual and group counselling sessions** to address emotional, social, and mental health challenges.
- Facilitate workshops on **building self-esteem, managing peer pressure, and developing social skills.**
- Implement **anti-bullying initiatives and peer mediation programmes** to support positive peer relationships.
- Collaborate with teachers to identify students who may benefit from counselling and develop intervention plans.
- Provide **mental health literacy programmes** to educate students on recognising and managing emotions.
- Engage parents in supporting students' social and emotional well-being through workshops and resources.

Upper Secondary School Counsellors (Year 10-13)

Focus Areas:

- **Mental Health and Emotional Resilience:**
Support students in managing anxiety, depression, relationship challenges, and personal stressors.
- **Stress and Exam Anxiety:**
Help students develop coping strategies for academic pressures, exams, and future planning.
- **Emotional Well-being:**
Facilitate discussions around emotional awareness, self-regulation, and personal growth.
- **Crisis Intervention:**
Provide immediate support for students experiencing emotional crises or significant mental health challenges.

Responsibilities:

- Offer **one-on-one counselling** focused on mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress management.
- Facilitate group sessions and workshops on **emotional resilience, coping strategies, and self-awareness.**
- Support students through **crisis intervention**, collaborating with external mental health services when necessary.



- Provide education on **mental health literacy**, reducing stigma around mental health concerns and promoting help-seeking behaviours.
- Work closely with teachers to identify and support students displaying signs of emotional distress.
- Engage with parents and guardians to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting students' mental health and well-being.

14. Monitoring and Review

Annual Review

- The counselling policy and services will be reviewed annually by *the counselling team and relevant line manager*, and the Corporate Head of Well-being to ensure they remain effective, relevant, and compliant with regulatory standards.

Feedback Mechanisms

- **Student Feedback:**
Collect feedback through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one discussions to understand students' experiences with counselling services.
- **Parent Feedback:**
Gather input from parents through workshops, surveys, and feedback forms to assess satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- **Staff Feedback:**
Teachers and school staff provide feedback on the effectiveness of counselling interventions and collaboration processes.

Compliance Checks

- Ensure alignment with UAE regulatory bodies, including KHDA.
- Verify adherence to ethical standards set by BACP and ISCA.
- Conduct regular audits to review case management, safeguarding practices, and confidentiality protocols.

Data Collection and Reporting

- Track data on:
 - Number of counselling sessions provided.
 - Types of issues addressed (e.g., anxiety, peer conflict, academic pressure).
 - Outcomes of interventions and referrals.
- Submit termly reports to school leadership and the Corporate Head of Wellbeing for analysis and strategic planning.

15. Training and Professional Development

Commitment to Professional Growth



GEMS Education is dedicated to maintaining high standards of counselling through continuous professional development (CPD) for counsellors, teachers, and school leaders. This commitment ensures counselling services are effective, ethical, and culturally sensitive.

Professional Development Objectives

1. **Up-to-Date Knowledge:** Stay informed about the latest research, theories, and best practices in school counselling and mental health.
2. **Counselling Skills Enhancement:** Develop and refine counselling techniques, intervention strategies, and therapeutic approaches.
3. **Ethical and Legal Compliance:** Ensure familiarity with ethical guidelines and UAE regulations concerning safeguarding and confidentiality.
4. **Cultural Competency:** Build cultural awareness and sensitivity to support the diverse GEMS community.
5. **Collaboration and Networking:** Engage in peer learning, supervision, and knowledge-sharing within the counselling community.

Modes of Professional Development

1. **Workshops and Conferences:** Attend events hosted by recognised professional bodies and mental health organisations.
2. **Webinars and Online Training:** Participate in verified e-learning courses covering current trends and challenges in student counselling.
3. **Peer Learning and Supervision:** Regular peer supervision, case discussions, and collaborative learning within the GEMS Counselling Network.
4. **Self-Directed Learning:** Engage with research articles, journals, and counselling literature to expand knowledge and expertise.
5. **Mentoring and Coaching:** Work with experienced counsellors or mental health professionals for guidance and feedback.

16. Strategies for Promoting Mental Health and Well-being

Holistic Mental Health and Well-being

- **Strategy:**
Address students' academic, personal, and social well-being through a balanced and supportive approach.
- **UAE Context:**
Respect cultural traditions, family dynamics, and community involvement to support students holistically.

Cultural Competence and Awareness

- **Strategy:**
Foster an inclusive environment through culturally appropriate counselling practices and assessment tools.
- **UAE and Qatar Context:**
Acknowledge the diversity of Emirati and expatriate cultures within counselling services.

Early Identification and Intervention

- **Strategy:**
Implement programmes to identify mental health concerns early and provide timely interventions.
- **UAE Context:**
Adapt identification methods to align with local values and help-seeking behaviours.

17. Potential Vulnerable Groups

Identifying and supporting vulnerable groups is essential to ensure that counselling services are inclusive, equitable, and tailored to students' diverse needs. The following categories represent students who may require additional support due to their unique circumstances. Counsellors should adopt a sensitive, culturally aware, and proactive approach to meet these students' social, emotional, and mental health needs.

a. Students of Determination

Description:

Students who have learning difficulties, developmental delays, physical disabilities, neurodivergence (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, ADHD), or sensory impairments.

Specific Needs:

- Individualised counselling approaches that accommodate the student's specific challenges.
- Collaboration with the school's inclusion team and teachers to provide consistent support.
- Utilisation of **visual aids, sensory tools, and alternative communication methods** to ensure accessibility.
- Providing emotional support to manage frustration, anxiety, or social difficulties related to their SEND.
- Advocacy for inclusive practices and promoting awareness among peers to reduce stigma and encourage empathy.

b. Students Experiencing Mental Health Challenges

Description:

Students who struggle with conditions such as anxiety, depression, trauma, self-harm, eating disorders, or mood disorders.

Specific Needs:

- Early identification and intervention to address mental health concerns before they escalate.
- Regular individual or group counselling sessions focusing on **coping strategies, emotional regulation, and resilience**.
- Collaboration with external mental health professionals for ongoing or intensive support.
- Crisis intervention and safety planning for students at risk of self-harm or suicidal ideation.



- Psychoeducation for students, staff, and parents to reduce stigma and promote a supportive environment.

c. Students from Multicultural Backgrounds

Description:

Students who come from diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, including expatriates and third-culture kids.

Specific Needs:

- Culturally competent counselling services that respect and incorporate students' cultural identities and practices.
- Support for **cultural adjustment, identity development, and navigating cultural expectations**.
- Provision of counselling sessions in students' **preferred languages** where possible.
- Sensitivity to issues related to discrimination, cultural isolation, or marginalisation.
- Facilitating peer groups to encourage inclusivity, cultural exchange, and a sense of belonging.

d. Students Facing Family or Home Issues

Description:

Students experiencing challenges such as parental divorce, separation, bereavement, domestic violence, or family relocation.

Specific Needs:

- Counselling support to process **grief, loss, and changes in family dynamics**.
- Family counselling sessions, where appropriate, to address home-related issues collaboratively.
- Development of **safe spaces** within the school for students to express emotions and concerns.
- Liaising with parents or guardians to provide consistent emotional support and resources.
- Crisis intervention for students experiencing immediate distress due to family issues.

e. Students Who Are Victims of Bullying

Description:

Students who experience physical, verbal, emotional, or cyberbullying, leading to feelings of fear, anxiety, and isolation.

Specific Needs:

- Safe and confidential reporting mechanisms encourage students to seek help.
- Individual and group counselling to address the emotional impact of bullying and rebuild self-esteem.
- Implementing **anti-bullying programmes** and peer mediation strategies.
- Collaboration with teachers, parents, and the school safeguarding team to ensure a safe learning environment.
- Follow-up support to monitor the student's well-being and ensure lasting solutions.

f. Students Facing Academic Pressure

Description:

Students dealing with exam stress, perfectionism, or academic challenges that impact their mental health.

Specific Needs:



- Stress management and resilience-building programmes to help students cope with academic demands.
- Counselling sessions focused on developing **healthy study habits, time management, and goal-setting**.
- Addressing perfectionism and fear of failure to reduce anxiety and boost confidence.
- Collaboration with teachers to implement appropriate academic accommodations.
- Encouraging a balanced approach to academics and well-being.

g. New Students or Expatriates

Description:

Students who are new to the school, region, or country, including expatriates adjusting to a different culture and educational system.

Specific Needs:

- Transition support programmes to help students integrate into the school community.
- **Buddy systems and peer mentoring** to foster connections and reduce isolation.
- Counselling to address feelings of loneliness, homesickness, and cultural adjustment.
- Cultural orientation sessions to familiarise students with school expectations and local customs.
- Support for parents to help their children navigate the transition effectively.

h. Economically Disadvantaged Students

Description:

Students facing financial challenges that may impact their educational experience and mental well-being.

Specific Needs:

- Access to resources and support services, such as school supplies, uniforms, and extracurricular opportunities.
- Counselling to address feelings of **shame, exclusion, or low self-esteem** related to economic challenges.
- Advocacy for equitable access to school programmes and activities.
- Collaboration with school leadership to provide financial assistance where possible.
- Building resilience and empowering students to overcome socio-economic barriers.

i. Students at Risk of Safeguarding Concerns

Description:

Students who may be experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation, or are at risk of harm.

Specific Needs:

- Immediate safeguarding intervention and protection in collaboration with **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)**.
- Confidential counselling support to help students to process trauma and develop coping strategies.
- Close monitoring and regular check-ins to ensure the student's safety and well-being.
- Liaising with external child protection services and law enforcement when necessary.
- Providing a **safe, trusting, and supportive environment** where students feel secure enough to disclose concerns.

j. Students with Chronic Illnesses



Description:

Students managing long-term physical or mental health conditions that impact their school experience.

Specific Needs:

- Counselling to support emotional well-being, coping with illness, and managing treatment-related stress.
- Flexible support plans to accommodate medical needs and absences.
- Collaboration with **healthcare professionals, school nurses, and teachers** to ensure a comprehensive approach.
- Providing peer education to foster understanding and empathy among classmates.
- Promoting self-advocacy skills so students can effectively communicate their needs

k. High-Achieving and Gifted Students

Description:

Students with exceptional academic abilities who may experience pressure, burnout, or social challenges.

Specific Needs:

- Counselling to help students manage high expectations, perfectionism, and academic stress.
- Support for social and emotional development, including building relationships with peers.
- Encouraging a balanced approach to academics, well-being, and extracurricular activities.
- Providing opportunities for enrichment and challenge without fostering undue pressure.
- Addressing potential issues of **isolation, anxiety, and impostor syndrome**.

Cultural Considerations for UAE Context

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Ensure all counselling services respect local customs, beliefs, and family dynamics.
- **Language Access:** Offer multilingual support to cater to the diverse student population.
- **Parental Involvement:** Engage families appropriately while maintaining confidentiality boundaries.
- **Legal Compliance:** Align counselling practices with UAE laws and regulations regarding safeguarding and confidentiality.

18. Links to Other Policies

- GEMS Safeguarding Policy
- GEMS Inclusion Policy
- GEMS Mental Health Policy
- GEMS Well-being Policy
- GEMS Health and Safety Policy

19. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and aligned with current best practices.