GEMS Metropole School
AL WAHA

مدرسة جيمس متروبول الواحة

Wellbeing Policy

Approved by:	Mr. Jeremy Hallum
Last reviewed on:	July 2, 2025
Next review due by:	July 2, 2026

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

GEMS Education is dedicated to fostering the holistic development and well-being of all students and staff across its network of schools. This policy outlines a comprehensive approach to promoting mental, emotional, social, and physical well-being, ensuring that all members of the school community thrive in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment.

At GEMS Metropole School Al Waha (MTW), we believe that a student's ability to flourish academically is inseparable from their emotional and social well-being. Our inclusive, values-led approach — grounded in respect, kindness, curiosity, confidence and creativity — ensures that wellbeing is embedded into the daily experiences of our school community. This policy reflects not only GEMS-wide commitments but also the distinctive wellbeing culture we are building at MTW.

This policy provides a framework to promote wellbeing in alignment with the standards and regulations set forth by the KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority) and MOE (Ministry of Education).

Our approach emphasises proactive, prevention-based strategies that support psychological, social, mental, physical, intellectual, and environmental wellbeing.

2. Vision and Mission

"*We place the greatest of importance on the simple, yet powerful human values of kindness, respect, empathy and compassion. We consider these crucial attributes that will equip our young people for the exciting yet challenging future that awaits them, enabling them to truly transform the world for the better as the change-makers they are.*"
— Mr. Sunny Varkey

Vision: To create a culture of well-being where every student and staff member feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Mission: To implement a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to well-being that nurtures resilience, promotes mental and physical health, and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose within the school community.

At MTW, wellbeing is not a standalone initiative but a shared responsibility across every team and phase. Our approach includes visible leadership involvement, proactive communication, consistent wellbeing check-ins via Upstrive, and a wellbeing curriculum tailored from Year 1 to Year 10. The student voice, parent feedback, and staff input directly inform our wellbeing priorities and actions.

3. Definition of Wellbeing

At GEMS, we understand that well-being is a holistic concept that encompasses various dimensions of an individual's life. It is not merely the absence of illness or distress but a positive state of overall health and happiness. Wellbeing involves the harmonious balance of physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects, enabling individuals to thrive and reach their full potential.

Key aspects of wellbeing include:

- **Physical Health:** Maintaining a healthy body through regular exercise, proper nutrition, and access to healthcare services.
- **Mental Health:** Cultivating a positive mindset, managing stress effectively, and seeking support when needed to maintain emotional stability.
- **Social Connections:** Building and nurturing meaningful relationships with family, friends, and the broader community to foster a sense of belonging and support.
- **Personal Relationships:** Developing and sustaining positive interactions with loved ones, which contribute to an individual's overall sense of happiness and security.
- **Sense of Purpose:** Engaging in activities and pursuits that provide a sense of meaning and fulfilment, whether through work, hobbies, or community involvement.

4. Policy Statement

The GEMS Metropole School Al Waha Wellbeing Policy aims to establish a framework that supports the mental, emotional, social, and physical well-being of all students and staff. This framework is designed to ensure that every member of the school community can thrive, both academically and personally.

5. Aims and Objectives

The objectives of this policy include:

- To promote a culture of well-being that supports the holistic development of students and staff.
- To ensure consistency in well-being support across all GEMS schools, including MTW.
- To develop resources and strategies that foster a positive and inclusive school culture.
- To empower students and staff to take an active role in their own well-being.

6. Importance of a Wellbeing Policy

A strong focus on well-being positively impacts students' academic and personal development, as well as their overall health and happiness. Well-being is not just about addressing problems as they arise but proactively promoting positive mental, emotional, and physical health.

This policy:

- Provides a clear framework for how GEMS schools will prioritise and support well-being.
- Ensures a consistent approach to well-being across all GEMS schools.
- Recognises that students learn more effectively when they feel supported, valued, and safe.
- Promotes a positive and inclusive school culture where every member of the community can thrive.

7. Whole School Approach to Wellbeing

At GEMS, we believe that a whole-school approach to well-being is fundamental to our mission of fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Well-being is not the responsibility of a single individual or department; it is a collective effort that involves every member of our school community. This includes students, teachers, staff, parents, and school leadership working together to promote and support well-being.

We aim to integrate well-being into every aspect of school life. This involves incorporating well-being into our curriculum, providing resources and support for those who may be struggling, and creating a positive and inclusive school culture. By prioritizing the well-being of all members of our school community, we can create an environment that promotes both academic and personal development. Through this whole-school approach, we strive to empower our students and staff with the skills and confidence they need to succeed in their future endeavors.

At MTW, our whole-school approach includes dedicated staff such as a Head of Inclusion and Wellbeing Lead, a Primary Counsellor and a Secondary Counsellor, who collaborate closely with SLT, the Safeguarding Team and the Inclusion Department. Our wellbeing initiatives include student-led leadership programmes, termly parent coffee mornings on emotional health, and a strong emphasis on preventative interventions aligned with our Upstrive wellbeing tool.

7.1 School Culture and Environment

- Foster a positive, inclusive, and respectful school culture.
- Create safe and supportive learning environments.
- Encourage participation and collaboration among students, staff, and parents.
- Develop clear boundaries, rules, and expectations that promote respect and kindness.

7.2 Curriculum and Teaching

- Integrate well-being into the curriculum through PSHE, Physical Education, Moral, Social, and Cultural Education (MSC), and other subjects.
- Provide dedicated well-being lessons, assemblies, and activities.

7.3 Policies and Procedures

- Align well-being practices with school policies such as Safeguarding, Anti-Bullying, and Health and Safety.
- Ensure that well-being is a core component of school improvement plans.

8. Principles of Wellbeing Practice

The following principles guide the implementation of the GEMS Wellbeing Policy:

1. **Inclusivity**
   Wellbeing resources and support should be accessible to all students and staff, regardless of their background, needs, or circumstances. This ensures that every member of the school community feels valued and included.

2. **Collaboration**
   Wellbeing initiatives should be developed in partnership with all stakeholders, including students, staff, parents, and external agencies. This shared responsibility promotes a unified approach to fostering a culture of well-being.

3. **Evidence-Based Practices**
   Strategies for promoting well-being must be grounded in the latest research and best practices. This ensures interventions are effective, relevant, and aligned with contemporary standards of care and education.

4. **Proactivity**
   A focus on prevention and early intervention is key to supporting well-being. By identifying potential challenges early and addressing them promptly, schools can prevent escalation and ensure timely support for students and staff.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The successful implementation of the Wellbeing Policy relies on the active participation of all members of the school community. Below are the key roles and their responsibilities:

9.1 School Leadership – Executive Leadership Team, Primary & Secondary Senior Leadership Teams
School leadership plays a pivotal role in creating and sustaining a culture of well-being within the school community. Their responsibilities include:

- **Promoting a Culture of Well-being**
  School leaders must lead by example, demonstrating a strong commitment to the mental, emotional, and physical health of students and staff. This includes setting the tone for a positive school culture where well-being is prioritised.

- **Ensuring Resources and Training**
  Leaders must ensure that adequate resources, such as funding, materials, and human support, are available for well-being initiatives. They should also provide opportunities for staff training and professional development to enhance the delivery of well-being programmes.

- **Monitoring Staff Workload**
  School leadership must regularly assess staff workloads to prevent burnout and stress. Policies that

promote work-life balance, coupled with resources for stress management and mental health support, should be implemented.

9.2 Wellbeing Leads and Champions – Siobhan Scanlan – Head of Inclusion & Wellbeing Lead

Wellbeing leads and champions are responsible for coordinating and promoting well-being initiatives throughout the school. Their duties include:

- **Developing and Implementing Programmes**
  Wellbeing leads are tasked with designing and rolling out school-wide well-being programmes that address the diverse needs of the community.

- **Collaboration with Staff**
  Working closely with teachers, support staff, and external stakeholders, wellbeing leads ensure that practices are integrated into the school's daily routines and curriculum.

- **Monitoring Effectiveness**
  Regular evaluations of the programmes' impact are necessary to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness. Adjustments should be made based on feedback, data and emerging needs.

9.3 Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and support staff are at the forefront of promoting well-being in the school. Their responsibilities include:

- **Integrating Well-being into Daily Practices**
  Teachers should weave well-being strategies into their lessons and classroom interactions, using activities that foster mindfulness, emotional regulation, and positive social behaviours.

- **Identifying and Referring Students**
  As the first point of contact for many students, teachers and staff must be vigilant in recognising signs of distress or changes in behaviour. They should be trained to refer students to appropriate support services when necessary.

- **Modelling Positive Practices**
  Teachers and staff should exemplify healthy coping mechanisms, a positive attitude, and a commitment to self-care. This sets a standard for students and contributes to a supportive environment.

9.4 Parents and Guardians
Parents and guardians play an essential role in reinforcing well-being initiatives outside the school setting. Their responsibilities include:

- **Supporting Well-being at Home**
  Parents and guardians should encourage healthy habits, provide emotional support, and foster open communication with their children to complement the school's efforts.

- **Maintaining Communication with the School**
  Parents and guardians must actively engage with the school by sharing concerns or observations about their child's well-being. A collaborative approach ensures the child receives consistent and holistic support.

9.5 Students
Students are active participants in their own well-being and play a role in promoting a positive school environment. Their responsibilities include:

- **Engaging in Well-being Activities**
  Students should take part in the well-being programmes and activities offered by the school, such as workshops, mindfulness sessions, and community projects.

- **Supporting Peers**
  By showing empathy, kindness, and respect, students can contribute to a culture of mutual support and inclusivity. Actively participating in peer mentoring or support groups is encouraged.

10. Scope of the Wellbeing Policy

This policy applies to all students, staff, and stakeholders within the GEMS network of schools. It encompasses physical, mental, social, and emotional health, promoting a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all.

11. Differentiation Between Wellbeing and Mental Health Policies
Schools must maintain both a Wellbeing Policy and a Mental Health Policy to address the distinct yet interconnected aspects of health and well-being for students and staff. These policies work collaboratively to create a comprehensive framework for promoting overall health, happiness, and resilience within the school community.

11.1 Wellbeing Policy
The Wellbeing Policy focuses on the holistic promotion of health and happiness for all members of the school community. It encompasses diverse aspects, including:

- **Physical Health**: Encouraging regular physical activity, healthy eating, and access to healthcare.

- **Social Connections**: Building meaningful relationships within the school and broader community.

- **Emotional Well-being**: Fostering positive mindsets and resilience through proactive strategies.

- **Cultural Inclusivity**: Recognising and celebrating the diverse backgrounds within the school, ensuring that all students feel valued.

The primary goal of the Wellbeing Policy is to create a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment where students and staff can thrive both academically and personally.

11.2 Mental Health Policy

The Mental Health Policy, on the other hand, provides a focused approach to addressing the emotional and psychological needs of the school community. Key areas include:

- **Prevention and Early Intervention**: Identifying and supporting students and staff experiencing mental health challenges.

- **Access to Support Services**: Ensuring availability of counselling, therapy, and other mental health resources.

- **Awareness and De-stigmatisation**: Promoting open conversations about mental health to break down barriers and foster understanding.

While the Wellbeing Policy promotes overall health and happiness, the Mental Health Policy ensures a structured and specific response to emotional and psychological challenges.

11.3 Why Both Policies Are Essential

Having distinct policies allows schools to:
- Address the broader aspects of overall health while maintaining a dedicated focus on mental health.

- Tailor initiatives to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups within the school.

- Ensure a comprehensive and inclusive framework that supports all dimensions of health.

12. Implementation of Wellbeing Practices

The successful implementation of wellbeing practices involves a systematic and collaborative approach. This ensures that strategies are embedded into daily routines, creating a sustainable culture of well-being.

12.1 Development of Programmes and Initiatives

- Create specific programmes addressing physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being.

- Tailor initiatives to meet the needs of the school community, reflecting the cultural and contextual diversity of the student and staff population.

12.2 Staff Training and Development

- Provide regular training to equip staff with the skills needed to deliver programmes effectively.

- Ensure staff are confident in recognising and addressing signs of distress in students and colleagues.

12.3 Regular Review and Feedback

- Gather feedback from stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of well-being practices.

- Use data-driven insights to refine and enhance existing initiatives.

13. Key Areas of Wellbeing Support

Wellbeing support spans several key areas to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach:

13.1 Physical Health

- Promote daily physical activity through structured programmes, sports, and recreational activities.

- Provide nutritious meals and educate students about healthy eating habits.

- Facilitate regular health check-ups and access to healthcare professionals.

13.2 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- Offer counselling services and therapeutic support for students and staff.

- Incorporate mindfulness, meditation, and stress management workshops into the curriculum.

- Foster a culture of openness where mental health concerns are addressed without stigma.

13.3 Social Wellbeing

- Encourage positive social interactions through peer mentoring and collaborative projects.

- Build a sense of community through events, celebrations, and group activities.

- Address social challenges such as bullying with robust anti-bullying measures and restorative practices.

13.4 Staff Wellbeing

- Provide resources and support networks for staff to manage workload and stress effectively.

- Offer professional development opportunities focused on self-care and well-being.

- Promote work-life balance through flexible policies and practices.

- At MTW, staff wellbeing is prioritised through structured actions such as focused appreciation events, and direct communication with SLT via staff lunches. Wellbeing initiatives are coordinated by the Wellbeing Lead and reviewed with the Principal each term. A dedicated wellbeing budget supports tangible recognition such as vouchers, token systems, and protected calendar events, ensuring staff feel valued and supported.

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation ensure that well-being practices remain effective, relevant, and responsive to the needs of the school community.

14.1 Wellbeing Surveys

- Conduct regular surveys for students and staff to gather feedback on mental health, physical health, social connections, and overall satisfaction.

- Analyse survey results to identify trends and areas for improvement.

14.2 Data Analysis

- Use data-driven insights to inform decision-making and prioritise well-being initiatives.

- Track participation rates, outcomes, and feedback to assess the impact of programmes.

14.3 Continuous Improvement

- Implement a cycle of continuous improvement by refining practices based on evaluation data and stakeholder feedback.

- Incorporate innovative and evidence-based approaches to enhance existing strategies.

15. Potential Vulnerable Groups

Identifying and supporting vulnerable groups within the school community ensures that all members receive equitable access to well-being resources.

15.1 Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Provide individualised support plans and access to specialised resources.

15.2 Students Experiencing Mental Health Challenges
- Ensure access to professional counselling services and implement awareness programmes.

15.3 New Students and Expatriates
- Offer tailored orientation programmes and buddy systems to ease their transition.

15.4 Economically Disadvantaged Students
- Provide financial assistance programmes and additional academic support.

16. Alignment with KHDA Policies

This policy aligns with the regulatory frameworks established by KHDA, ensuring compliance with their standards for well-being in education.

- **KHDA**: Focus on creating happiness and well-being in schools through proactive measures and community engagement.

17. Training and Professional Development
Training and professional development are critical to equipping staff with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support well-being effectively. A comprehensive approach ensures that staff can address the diverse needs of the school community while maintaining their own well-being.

17.1 Staff Training

- **Regular Training Sessions**: Conduct workshops and seminars focusing on mental health awareness, safeguarding, and practical strategies for promoting well-being.

- **Specialised Programmes**: Provide targeted training on topics such as trauma-informed practices, emotional regulation, and cultural competency.

- **First Aid for Mental Health**: Train staff in basic mental health first aid to identify and support individuals in crisis.

17.2 Counsellor Development

- **Professional Memberships**: Encourage counsellors to join recognised professional bodies such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or the International School Counsellors Association (ISCA).

- **Continuous Learning**: Provide opportunities for counsellors to attend conferences, advanced training, and research-based workshops.

- **Supervision and Peer Support**: Facilitate regular clinical supervision and peer support groups to ensure counsellors maintain ethical and effective practices.

17.3 Leadership Training

- **Well-being Leadership Workshops**: Train school leaders to prioritise well-being in decision-making and foster a culture of care within their teams.

- **Change Management**: Equip leaders with skills to manage transitions and implement well-being initiatives effectively.

17.4 Collaboration and Networking

- Encourage staff to participate in regional and international networks to share best practices and learn from others in the field.

- Foster partnerships with local mental health organisations to enhance resources and training opportunities.

18. Links to Other Policies

A strong well-being policy should be integrated with other school policies to ensure consistency and a cohesive approach. Relevant policies include:

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**: Ensuring that all well-being practices are aligned with safeguarding protocols to protect students and staff from harm.

- **Counselling Policy**: Defining the role of school counsellors and the provision of emotional and psychological support.

- **Anti-Bullying Policy**: Promoting a safe and respectful environment that is free from harassment and discrimination.

- **Inclusion Policy**: Ensuring equitable access to well-being resources for all members of the school community, regardless of background or ability.

- **Health and Safety Policy**: Addressing the physical environment and practices that support the well-being of students and staff.

19. **Review and Updates**

The well-being policy must remain a dynamic document, evolving to meet the changing needs of the school community and the latest developments in well-being research.

19.1 Annual Review
- Conduct an annual review of the policy in consultation with students, staff, and parents to assess its effectiveness and relevance.

- Incorporate feedback and data from well-being surveys, staff appraisals, and external audits.

19.2 Updates
- Align the policy with any new guidelines or requirements from KHDA, SPEA, ADEK, or MOE.

- Ensure that updates reflect best practices in mental health and well-being, incorporating evidence-based strategies.

19.3 Stakeholder Involvement
- Actively engage students, staff, and parents in the review process to ensure the policy addresses the needs and perspectives of the entire school community.

20. Conclusion

The GEMS-Wide Wellbeing Policy underscores the commitment to creating an environment where all members of the school community can thrive. By fostering a culture of care, inclusion, and resilience, this policy serves as a foundational framework for promoting holistic well-being, empowering individuals to achieve their fullest potential academically, personally, and professionally.

Appendix:

Policy/Framework	Description	Relevance to Wellbeing and Mental Health	Link
National Strategy for Wellbeing 2031	Aims to make the UAE a world leader in quality of life by promoting mental health and overall wellbeing.	Focuses on enhancing individual and community wellbeing through mental health awareness and supportive services.	Wellbeing 2031
UAE Mental Health Policy (2021)	A framework to integrate mental health into primary healthcare and improve mental health services and accessibility.	Emphasizes early intervention, access to mental health services, and reducing stigma around mental health issues.	Mental Health Policy
KHDA Wellbeing Framework	A comprehensive framework for schools in Dubai to prioritize student and staff wellbeing as part of quality education and school improvement.	Emphasizes whole-school wellbeing practices, including mental health support, physical activity, and social-emotional learning.	KHDA Framework
UAE Happiness Agenda	A government initiative to embed happiness and wellbeing into national policy and everyday life.	Focuses on creating a culture of happiness through mental health support and fostering positive environments.	Happiness Agenda
Dubai Fitness Challenge	Encourages community participation in physical activities to promote physical and mental wellbeing.	Highlights the link between physical activity and improved mental health outcomes, such as reduced stress and anxiety.	Fitness Challenge
Mental Health Services in Schools Initiative	A Ministry of Education program to integrate mental health education and support services into schools.	Provides counselling, mental health education, and early intervention for students and staff within schools.	MOE Services
National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing	Aims to enhance community and workplace wellbeing through various initiatives, training, and resources.	Promotes mental health in workplaces and schools, focusing on stress management and fostering positive relationships.	National Program
Workplace Wellbeing Standards (MOHRE)	Guidelines for employers to support employee mental health and wellbeing through policies, programs, and accommodations.	Encourages mental health awareness, stress management, and access to counselling in professional environments.	MOHRE Standards
Youth Wellbeing Strategy	Focuses on empowering youth through programs and initiatives aimed at fostering resilience, mental health, and life skills.	Promotes mental health literacy, emotional intelligence, and peer support systems among young people.	Youth Strategy
UAE National Bullying Prevention Program	Developed by the Ministry of Education to address bullying in schools and promote positive mental health among students.	Reduces mental health risks related to bullying, such as anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal.	Anti-Bullying Program
National Campaign for Mental Health Awareness	A campaign to destigmatize mental health and encourage individuals to seek help and talk openly about mental health concerns.	Raises awareness about mental health issues and connects people with available resources for support and treatment.	Mental Health Campaign