



## **COUNSELLING POLICY**

### **Our Mission Statement**

At GEMS Winchester School, the counselling service extends to all the individuals who are a part of the school environment; students, teachers and parents. Like physical health, everyone has mental health and we need to take care of it. The counselling service provides a safe and nurturing approach to all students to explore their barriers and challenges and develop skills needed to overcome them.

WSD aims to ensure positive mental health to all students and encourage the students to reach their full potential by providing a counselling program that is comprehensive, preventive in design and developmental in nature. Counselling program values the individuality of each student and nurture his/her educational, social, emotional and personal needs.

### **Rationale**

Students of any age can be at a risk of experiencing poor mental health and poor wellbeing. Students face anxiety and stress caused by increasing demands of examination, adjusting to the new modern school environment and experiencing new country and culture. All of these can have a big impact on their mental health. Unmet Mental health needs can pose serious barriers to social and educational development. School counselling service is a necessary part of the education system and can provide required education, interventions and referral services to students, parents and teachers.

#### **1. Our Aims for Counselling:**

- Provide safe and nurturing environment.
- Enhancing the awareness of mental health in school, aiming to remove stigma.
- Identify students at risk of social, emotional and psychological concerns.
- Provide short-term counselling or crisis intervention.
- Support students through individual intervention program in dealing with bullying, family crisis, change, peer pressure, friendships, anger, academic expectations and issues surrounding their mental health.
- Provide resources, support and encouragement to students, parents and teachers to access counselling service.



## 2. Counselling – Practice

Counselling service provides an opportunity for students to talk in confidence about things that are affecting their emotions, feelings and behaviours. The school counselor is a qualified and trained member of the staff. The school counselor will hold necessary license from relevant authority to work within a school setting. Counselor supports the students to gain a better understanding of themselves and their situation to help them resolve their problems.

## 3. Role of School Counselor

- Student Wellbeing is priority.
- Encourage academic achievement strategies.
- Manage emotions and develop interpersonal skills.
- Short term counselling to students.
- Referrals for long term support.
- Advocacy for students at Individual Education plan meetings and other student focused meetings.
- Adheres to ethical standards of the profession and framework established by the UAE government and DSIB.
- Maintain profession competence through education, training program and supervision.

## 4. Confidentiality

- It is the school counselor's responsibility to respect the right to privacy of those with whom they enter a counselling relationship and to provide an environment of trust and confidence.
- Explains the meaning and limits of confidentiality to students in developmentally appropriate terms.
- Provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding the counselling relationship and confidentiality.
- School Counselor's primary obligation regarding confidentiality is towards the student but balance that obligation with an understanding of the guardian's legal rights to the guiding voice in their children's lives.
- Confidentiality is an ethical and legal term ascribed to the information communicated within the counselling relationship, and it is to be maintained unless keeping that information confidential leads to foreseeable harm.
- Inform students and the family of the limits to confidentiality when:
  - The student poses a danger to self or others,



- Exception to confidentiality exist, and the students should be informed when situations arise in which school counselors have a responsibility to disclose information obtained in counselling relationships to others to protect students, themselves or other individuals.
- Where a student is at risk of significant harm, the counsellor will initiate the School safeguarding procedures and consult with the DSL and SLT (refer to WSD Safeguarding & Child Protection policy).
- HOY and tutor's are aware of students accessing the service but will not have information to the session details.
- To keep personal notes separate from educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exception exists.

## 5. Referral and Evaluation

- Any student in Year 10 or above can self-refer.
- The Head of Year, Assistant Principal or DSL must refer any pupil in Year 9 or below. A referral form will always accompany with parent consent.
- The SLT team may refer a pupil to the counselling service against their wishes due to their behavior. The students referred will be offered 1-2 counselling session with the counsellor. The student can then agree or disagree for another session with the counselor.
- Parents can refer their ward for counselling by meeting with the school counsellor.
- A member of the staff can self-refer by contacting the school counselor.

**Check Appendix 1 Referral process.**

## 6. Counselling Sessions

- Counselling sessions will last 40 minutes in the counselling room. Students referred will be eligible for 6 sessions for 40 minutes/12 sessions for 20 minutes.
- Scheduled Appointments at a convenient time for the students to ensure their learning is not impacted.
- Counselling service tries to meet the needs of all students but there may be times when there is a huge demand on the service and it may result in waiting lists.
- Review of the sessions after 6 weeks.

## 7. Informed Consent

- Parental Permission/Consent obtained prior to any sessions commencing for students in FS2 – Year 9.

**Check Appendix 2 – Parent Consent**



## **8. Record Keeping**

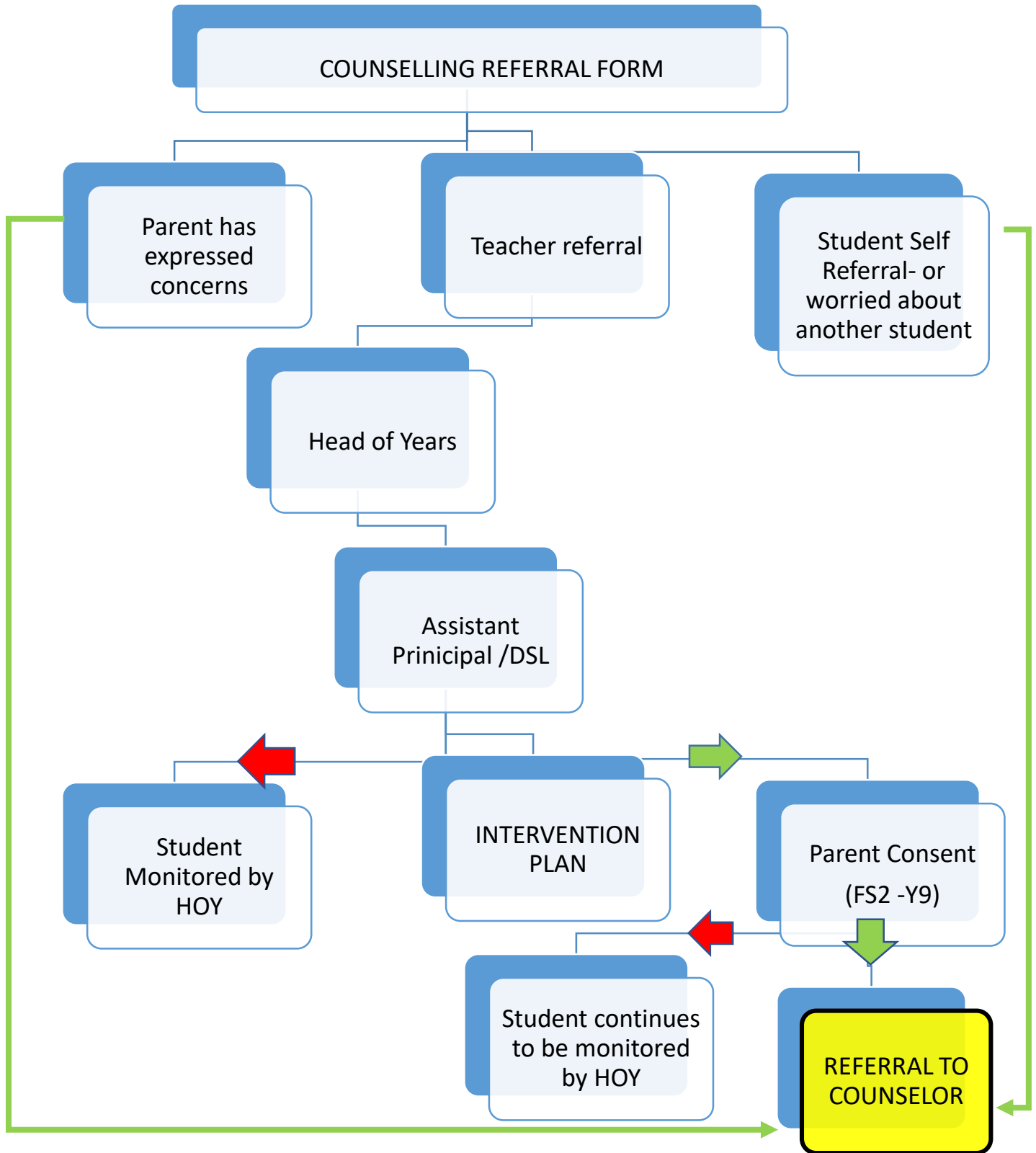
- The school counsellor will keep a formal record of pupils who access the service with a brief description of the presenting issue.
- Where a student is referred a referral form and parent consent where needed will be kept in the individual file.
- All student records will be stored in a locked cabinet in the counselor's office.
- Statistical data will be annually reported keeping students identity confidential.

## **9. PROVIDING VIRTUAL/DISTANCE SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

- Students and families can reach the school counselor through school phone, email or online school platforms.
- Following school policies and guidelines for online services/activities accessing student information's and records through online platforms.
- Educate students – ways to participate in the relationship through virtual/distance school counselling.
- Mitigate confidentiality limits during online counselling sessions.
- Be assessable to students through emails, phone or online platforms for advising following the communication plan developed with school administration.
- Provide information through Orientation Slides, Newsletters and through School communications.
- Encourage students and families to use appropriate online resources.
- Educate the school community to on how best access the school counselor.



### APPENDIX 1: COUNSELLING REFERRAL FORM





**APPENDIX 2: PARENT CONSENT FORM**

**PARENTAL INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

We request to obtain permission for your child to receive brief counselling sessions with the school counselor at WSD. Through information received from your child's teachers, it is felt that individual counselling would be helpful.

It is important that parents meet with the counsellor initially to provide a background history of the child's medical issues, significant life events and any other relevant information that will assist the counselor when meeting with the child.

The Counselor will meet with students on a short-term basis. The counselling sessions will occur during the school days at an agreed upon time with the Head of Years. The counselling will not occur during important academic instruction or assessment.

Counselor's support to student is available for social, emotional, academic and/or behavioral concerns at school. If you ward has concerns in the home environment, a list of outside therapists for you to contact will be provided. The counselor is available during regular school hours to meet with parents and caregivers to support and help problem solve any concerns you might have.

All information is confidential and disclosed with written permission except when the student is at risk of harming themselves, others or otherwise required by School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies.

Kind Regards,  
Shalini Nair  
**School Counselor**  
**shalini.n\_wsd@gemsedu.com**  
**+ 971 (4) 337 4112**

---

**CONSENT FORM**

YES, I give permission for my ward \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in Individual Counselling Sessions.

Parent Email Id: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_