BLOOM WORLD ACADEMY

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BWA-09

Counselling Policy	
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Owner	Nicola Upham, Principal – Primo & Junior School and Well-being & Development
Reviewer	John Bell, Executive Principal 

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1. Aim

Bloom World Academy (BWA) considers this policy to be:

- an essential part of the school;
- supportive to staff and students in managing certain situations;
- an important framework that will ensure consistency in applying values and principles throughout the establishment;
- a roadmap for day-to-day operations;
- compliant with laws and regulations, gives guidance for decision-making, and streamlining internal processes;
- designed to influence and determine all major decisions, actions and all activities taking place within the boundaries set by them;
- aligned to the school's guiding statements and identified goals which are formed in strategic leadership meetings.

2. Statement of intent

BWA believes this policy to be a working document that is fit for purpose, represents the school ethos, mission and vision, enables consistency and quality across the school and is related to the relevant UAE legislation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all *stakeholders*

4. Unique definitions

A shared understanding of the following definitions are integral to the implementation of this policy, and as such staff should endeavour to use the correct terminology at all times.

Workshops and Circle Time	Whole-class or whole-year sessions that teach students the skills and techniques to handle the issues they face at their age.
Whole-school approach	A framework that builds mental health promotion, prevention and targeted support into daily school culture, routines and policies.
Early intervention and prevention	Identifying and supporting students early so that concerns don't get worse. It uses monitoring, student voice, staff awareness and working with parents/carers.
Graduated approach	Matching support to need, from classroom strategies and pastoral support through counselling, targeted plans and safeguarding support to external referral. The aim is the right support at the right time.
Self-referral	A student asking for counselling themselves. Parental consent is not needed if the student has capacity to make this choice.
Consent	Parent or guardian agreement needed before ongoing counselling begins when a staff member makes the referral. It is not needed for emergency check-ins, crisis interventions or self-referrals (where the student has capacity).
Confidentiality	Information shared in sessions is private between the student and relevant personnel. It has limits: where there is a safeguarding concern, information is shared on a need-to-know basis.

Psychoeducation	Teaching students, teachers and parents about mental health and other issues that affect wellbeing, and how to identify and address them.
CPOMS	The system where counselling sessions and risk documentation are recorded, stored separately from academic records and accessible to the Safeguarding and Counselling team.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	The member of staff who decides the level of support, intervention or escalation when there are safeguarding concerns. Counsellors work alongside the DSL to support vulnerable students.
YouHQ	The wellbeing screening tool used to help identify students who need additional support.
Team Around the Child	A meeting of the professionals involved with a student to coordinate support.
Mild to moderate vs severe	The line the policy draws for what school counselling can and cannot work directly with. Mild to moderate needs can be supported in school. Severe or clinical needs are referred externally, although the counsellor may still support them in school.
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority, the education regulator in Dubai. Serious safeguarding concerns may be escalated to it
CDA	Community Development Authority, Dubai. Serious safeguarding concerns may be escalated to it.

5. Processing and practice

The follow narrative is explicit in its guidance, consistency, accountability, efficiency, and clarity on how the school operates with regard to Clinic procedures and medical information

Policy Statement

At Bloom World Academy, we are committed to providing a comprehensive, inclusive, and student-centred counselling service that supports the academic, personal, social, emotional, and wellbeing development of all students. Our counselling provision forms an integral part of the school's commitment to safeguarding, student wellbeing, and positive educational outcomes.

Through early intervention, preventative support, and targeted counselling services, we aim to empower students to develop resilience, build positive relationships, overcome challenges, and achieve their full potential. We are dedicated to ensuring that our counselling services are accessible, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of our school community, fostering an environment where every student feels safe, understood, valued, and supported to thrive both within school and beyond.

Early Intervention and Prevention

At Bloom World Academy, we recognise that early identification and intervention are key to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing and preventing concerns from escalating.

The school adopts a proactive and preventative approach to wellbeing through regular monitoring, student voice opportunities, wellbeing observations, staff awareness, safeguarding procedures, and collaboration with

parents/carers. Students may be identified as requiring additional support through pastoral check-ins, wellbeing screenings (YouHQ), behaviour and attendance monitoring, teacher referrals, parent referrals, self-referrals, safeguarding concerns, counselling assessments, Team Around the Child meetings, and information shared by external professionals.

Where a need is identified, timely and appropriate support will be implemented to promote positive outcomes for the student. This may include classroom-based strategies, pastoral support, wellbeing interventions, counselling, safeguarding support, targeted plans, or referrals to external services where appropriate. Through this graduated approach, Bloom World Academy aims to ensure that all students receive the right support at the right time, enabling them to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Services provided by the counsellor

- Individual Sessions: The school counsellor uses a variety of methods and techniques during individual sessions with students. These sessions allow students to express themselves through various mediums such as drawing, writing, singing, playing, reading stories, using worksheets, or talking. The counsellor may also focus on teaching specific skills, such as deep breathing for anxiety, or role-playing exercises to help students practice dealing with difficult situations such as problems with friends or having a hard conversation. Sessions will be tailored around the students' individual needs including creating healthy relationships with devices if any concerns have been raised regarding addiction e.g. social media. All of these techniques are rooted in evidence-based psychological interventions that our school counsellors are fully trained to deliver.

- Group Counselling: Counselling groups are held with multiple students who may be experiencing similar problems or issues. Being in a group setting can be beneficial as it allows students to build relationships and feel that they are not alone in their experiences. Group counselling can also provide a sense of support and encouragement for students as they work through their challenges.

- Workshops and Circle Time: The school counselling program addresses various issues faced by students of different ages by designing and implementing workshops and Circle Time that provide students with the skills and techniques they need to navigate their lives and the world around them. These workshops aim to empower students with the knowledge and tools they need to address and overcome the challenges they may be facing.

- Training: The counselling program also offers teachers and administrators opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills related to counselling. Staff are trained in counselling policies and practices, how to identify indicators of student concerns, and how best to support the counselling needs of our students. This training helps ensure that all staff members are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively support and serve the counselling needs of our students.

- Whole-school approach: The school counselling service operates within a comprehensive, whole-school framework that integrates mental health promotion, prevention, and targeted intervention across all levels of the school community. By embedding emotional wellbeing into daily school culture, routines,

and policies, the counselling department ensures that every student develops key resilience factors while receiving the appropriate intensity of support.

- Risk assessment and management: Counsellors will follow systematic risk assessment and management protocols whenever a student presents indicators of acute distress, risk to self, risk to others, risk from others, or other vulnerabilities. Each intervention requires a written safety plan, objective documentation completed within 24 hours and stored separately from academic records on CPOMS, and appropriate actions to best meet the student's needs.

Consent

Consent will be obtained from the parents or guardians of the student before on-going counselling services begin where a referral is made from another member of staff. Emergency check-ins and crisis interventions do not require parent consent. Students who self-refer do not require parental consent, if they have capacity to make this choice. Parents/guardians will be updated as necessary following confidentiality/safeguarding protocol.

Confidentiality

Counsellors are trained in child protection procedures and always follow them. It is best practice to have a clear contract with students that explains the limits of confidentiality in the school counselling service. This helps students trust the counsellor, feel comfortable sharing their feelings, and encourages others to seek counselling.

All students have a right to confidentiality. This means that the information shared during sessions will be kept private between the student and relevant personnel mentioned below. All counselling sessions will be documented and accessible by members of the Safeguarding and Counselling team on CPOMS.

Where a student is considered to be at risk of harm to themselves, at risk of harming others, at risk from others, or presents with additional vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns, the school's safeguarding procedures will be followed. Relevant information will be shared on a need-to-know basis with appropriate staff and professionals to ensure the student's safety and wellbeing.

Where concerns indicate that additional intervention is required, further action may be necessary. Decisions regarding the level of support, intervention, or escalation will be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, external agencies such as the KHDA, CDA, healthcare professionals, or other relevant safeguarding services.

Parents/carers will be informed and involved in the process wherever appropriate, unless doing so would place the student or another individual at increased risk of harm. The school will work collaboratively with families and external agencies to ensure that students receive the most appropriate support, assessment, and intervention to meet their needs and safeguard their wellbeing.

Where the school identifies concerns that suggest a student's mental health needs, level of risk, or presentation exceed the support that can reasonably be provided within the school setting, parents/carers will be required to seek an external psychological assessment, psychiatric assessment, risk assessment, or other specialist support as recommended by the school.

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The school expects parents/carers to engage with and act upon recommendations made to safeguard and support their child. Where there are significant concerns regarding a student's safety or wellbeing and parents/carers are unwilling, unable, or fail to access recommended external support, the school may be required, under its safeguarding duties, to make a referral to relevant external agencies, including the KHDA and/or CDA, to ensure that the student's needs are appropriately assessed and supported.

The Role and Boundaries of the School Counselling Service

The school counselling service provides short-term, school-based support for a range of emotional, social, and wellbeing concerns. The table below outlines the areas that can be supported within school counselling, as well as those that may require referral to external professionals or specialist services to ensure students receive the most appropriate support.

School counsellors can help and support with: (1-1 or in a group intervention)	School counsellors cannot work directly with:
Mild to Moderate Low Mood – Short-term goal setting, behavioral activation, and light CBT-based mood tools	Severe Low Mood / Clinical Depression – Requires clinical psychiatric or psychological intervention; counsellor maintains safety plans and school check-ins
Mild to Moderate Anxiety – Separation anxiety, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and simple phobias (focused on school-based exposure, coping strategies, and grounding exercises).	Severe Anxiety & Panic Disorders – Requires specialized therapeutic input (e.g., intensive CBT); school counsellor supports classroom accommodations
Mild to Moderate Stress – Academic pressure, exam stress, time management, and life transitions.	PTSD & Complex Trauma – Requires specialized trauma therapy (e.g., EMDR, Trauma-Focused CBT); counsellor focuses on maintaining a safe, trauma-informed school environment
Low Self-Esteem / Confidence – Self-compassion work, identifying strengths, and resilience programs	Eating Disorders – Requires a multidisciplinary clinical team (medical, psychological, nutritional); counsellor assists with medical plan monitoring and supportive check-ins
Sleep Difficulties – Sleep hygiene education, routine mapping, and relaxation/mindfulness techniques	Tics or Tourette's Syndrome – Neurological/clinical conditions requiring medical/psychological management; counsellor assists with peer understanding and classroom adaptations
Friendships – Conflict resolution, social skills training, communication, and navigating peer dynamics	Selective Mutism – Requires specialized speech/language and behavioral therapy; counsellor helps coordinate step-by-step school communication plans
Emotional Regulation – Identifying triggers, emotion naming, sensory/de-escalation toolkits, and impulse management	Active and Current Risk Making a Student Vulnerable – Requires immediate safeguarding procedures, crisis intervention, and immediate external agency or emergency service referral
Grief and Bereavement (Normal/Uncomplicated) – Psychoeducation on grief phases, peer support, and memory/coping activities	OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) – Requires specialized ERP (Exposure and Response Prevention) therapy; counsellor

School counsellors can help and support with: (1-1 or in a group intervention)	School counsellors cannot work directly with:
	avoids reinforcing compulsions in school and supports the clinical treatment plan
Family Separation or Divorce (Adjustment) – Helping students process transitions and build personal coping tools	Substance Abuse / Addiction – Requires dedicated medical and addiction recovery services
Attachment Needs – Building school-based relational security, trusted adult relationships, and predictable routines	Complex Personality / Behavioral Disorders – Conduct disorder, ODD, or severe personality pathology requiring external clinical management

6. Roles and responsibilities

With regard to implementation of this policy roles and responsibilities are clearly stated below:

Role of Principal – Responsible for Well-being and Development

- Meet regularly with the school counsellor to discuss key students and necessary interventions
- Plan and co-ordinate workshops and sessions with external providers where required
- Work closely with the school counsellor to establish connections with outside organisations and resources that can aid in the counselling process.

Role of the Counsellor

- Facilitate individual and group counselling, as well as crisis intervention to provide emotional support and guidance. These sessions may focus on a wide range of issues (please see table above) to help students understand their feelings, develop coping strategies, and navigate difficult situations. During these sessions, counsellors use a variety of techniques, such as active listening, reflection, and guidance to help students understand their feelings and develop coping strategies.
- Work alongside the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure all vulnerable students are supported and have access to counselling support. Support will be based on a case-by-case basis.
- In addition to regular counselling sessions, school counsellors may also provide crisis intervention to students in urgent situations. This may include situations such as a sudden loss of a loved one, a traumatic event, or a mental health emergency. In these situations, counsellors provide immediate emotional support and guidance to help students cope with the crisis and make appropriate referrals for further support if necessary.
- Help build students' social-emotional development through whole school approaches (workshops, circle time, forums, pathways)
- Provide psychoeducation to students, teachers, and parents. This may include providing information on mental health disorders, addiction, difficulties, and other issues that may affect students' well-being. School counsellors can also provide guidance on how to identify and address these issues, and make appropriate referrals to outside resources if necessary.

- Work with parents to support their children's well-being. They may involve holding workshops and presentations for parents to teach them strategies on how to best deal with their children's needs and wellbeing.
- Work closely with members of the school leadership team (SLT) to develop individual and grade-based plans to address the specific needs of students.
- Support staff wellbeing and help staff to support students with wellbeing concerns.
- Support the delivery of the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) pathway.

Role of the teachers:

- Collaborate with the counsellor to assess and track student progress and well-being. This enables the school to offer a comprehensive approach to student support and development as they can provide valuable insights into their academic and personal development.

Role of the parents:

- By working closely with counsellors, parents are provided with the resources and knowledge necessary to support their child's emotional, social, and developmental growth. The program encourages parent participation through various means, such as workshops and opportunities for consultation, to ensure the successful outcome of counselling efforts.
- Maintain clear communication with the school, particularly by raising concerns and keeping the school informed about their child's mental health and wellbeing at home.
- Share relevant reports, assessments, and recommendations from external professionals with the school to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach to supporting the student's wellbeing and development.

Role of the community:

- The school may refer students to external specialists for specialised therapy as necessary. If a student is facing ongoing mental health issues or family problems, they may be referred to outside professionals or clinics for comprehensive assessment and assistance. While the school can suggest preferred providers, the final decision of which agency or practitioner to use is left to the discretion of the individuals or their parents seeking assistance. Any additional costs for specialised support will be the responsibility of the parents.
- Common specialists that may be involved in supporting students include healthcare agencies (such as GP's, psychiatrists, and mental health specialists), therapy services (such as child psychology, occupational therapy, and speech therapy), and educational psychologists (for assessments and diagnosis).

7. Associated documentation

When implementing a policy consideration must be given to how it aligns and supports other policies. To ensure consistency this policy is fully aligned with the following key policies:

- Safeguarding
- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy

8. Training implications

This policy will be shared with all BWA academic and administrative staff in the staff handbook.
Staff will be trained and /or refreshed at the start of each academic year – during the annual BWA induction week. For new joiners they will be walked through the policy by the Principal during their induction period.

9. Safeguarding

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children as the safety and protection of children is of paramount importance to everyone in this school. We work hard to create a culture of vigilance and at all times we will ensure what is best in the interests of all children.

We believe that all children have the right to be safe in our society. We recognise that we have a duty to ensure arrangements are in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children by creating a positive school atmosphere through our teaching and learning, pastoral support and care for both students and school personnel, training for school personnel and with working with parents. We teach all our children about safeguarding.

We work hard to ensure that everyone keeps careful watch throughout the school and in everything we do for possible dangers or difficulties. We want all children to feel safe at all times. We want to hear their views of how we can improve all aspects of safeguarding and from the evidence gained we put into place all necessary improvements.

Online Safety and Digital Well-being: As part of our safeguarding responsibilities, the school counselling program incorporates guidance on digital well-being, helping students navigate online environments safely and responsibly. Counsellors provide education on topics such as cyberbullying, digital footprint, and privacy settings to empower students in their digital interactions.

10. Equity Impact Assessment

We have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any member of staff or student and it helps to promote equality at this school.