



**Al Rabeeh Academy  
Health & Wellbeing and  
Counselling Policy  
2022-2023**

## Health & Wellbeing

### **Policy statement**

At *Al Rabeeh Academy*, we are committed to promoting positive health and wellbeing to all students, their families, and to members of staff. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures, we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

### **Ethos**

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and parent council/volunteers – outlining *Al Rabeeh Academy's* approach to promoting health and wellbeing.

### **Aims**

- ❖ Promote positive health and wellbeing in all staff and students.
- ❖ Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- ❖ Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- ❖ Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- ❖ Provide the right support to students with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- ❖ Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience-building techniques.
- ❖ Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around the school.

### **Key staff members**

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Heads of Schools,
- Deputy Heads
- Head of Boys/Girls
- Head of Protection Care and Wellbeing/DSL
- Social Workers
- SENCO

- ❖ If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student or colleague, in the first instance they should Report on MyConcern, then speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- ❖ If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed.
- ❖ If the child presents a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

## Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students, and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, emails), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

## Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing a mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should alert a member of the safeguarding team.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- ❖ Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- ❖ Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- ❖ Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- ❖ Changes in activity and mood
- ❖ Lowering of academic achievement
- ❖ Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Skipping PE or getting
- changed secretly
- Lateness to, or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or loss of hope

## **Managing disclosures**

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgmental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on MyConcern and/or Engage (as per the nature of the disclosure).

This information will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, then with the Principal if action is needed.

## **Whole school approach**

### a. Working with parents/carers

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What language is more suitable to be used in the meeting? Do we need a translator?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the student's Daybook on Engage and/or MyConcern and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

## b. Supporting parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents, carers, and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

## **Supporting Peers**

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support them but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one-to-one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

## **Professional Development**

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe. Multiple staff members will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent. Details of those trained will be displayed in areas such as staff rooms and staff pantries

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group, or whole school CPD should be discussed with Mr. Mohammed Awwad, Head of Protection, Care and Wellbeing ([wellbeing@alrabeehacademy.ae](mailto:wellbeing@alrabeehacademy.ae)) who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

## **Counselling**

### **Definition of Counselling**

“Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing, or perhaps dissatisfaction with life or a loss of a sense of direction or purpose. It is always at the request of the client.” The client can be a student, parent, teacher, or staff member, with the primary goal to enhance wellbeing.

### **Statement**

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

### **Purpose**

Al Rabeeh Academy counsellors/ Social workers, with the well-being team, are committed to providing an equal opportunity for all students.

Our purpose is to improve the educational experience and success of students by providing humanistic counselling services addressing personal, academic needs.

Our counsellors are responsible for coordinating on-campus counseling services to all students. Our mission is to provide programs and services that enhance personal and academic exploration. The ultimate goal of the Al Rabeeh Academy counsellors; is to improve the conditions for learning and well-being which includes both prevention and intervention services at all levels.

### **Role of the counselor**

1. Provide a safe, supportive environment accessible to the whole school community.
2. Assist students to find their own solutions rather than providing advice.
3. Help students have a better understanding of how their thoughts, feeling, and behaviour affect one another and gain skills in coping with difficult thoughts and feelings more effectively.
4. Conduct effective individual, and group counseling where students can explore personal problems without judgment to aid self-awareness and reflection.
5. Conduct quality workshops, presentations, and assemblies that meet the needs of ARA community.
6. Conduct quality activities.
7. Provide appropriate referrals as necessary.
8. Provide effective crisis response.
9. Various awareness activities are coordinated and promoted on an annual basis by the Counselling staff. Examples include but are not limited to: Mental Health Week/ Bullying Week, Anxiety Screening, Anger Management, etc.

### **Confidentiality**

A student's right to privacy and confidentiality is the basis for an effective counselling relationship. They are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the young person's autonomy and is legally established in the Human Rights Act 1998 article 8. This states that everyone has the right to respect for private and family life, home, and correspondence and that there will be "no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right".

Good practice dictates the use of a clear contract to explain to children and young people the boundaries of confidentiality a school counselling service can offer. The aims of this explanation are:

- To enable the students to develop a trusting relationship with the Counsellor.
- To allow the students to open up and share feelings without blame or reprisal.
- To allow the students to speak freely about issues concerning them.
- To encourage others to come forward for counselling.

### **Potentially vulnerable groups**

There are a number of identified groups of students and families for whom this policy is particularly pertinent:

- Students who are Gifted and Talented (G&T)
- Students with physical or sensory impairments
- Students whose families are in crisis or under great stress
- Students at risk of significant harm, or neglect or might be subject to abuse or harassment.
- Students with poor attendance and/or punctuality
- Students who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion from school
- Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

### **Referrals**

The school counsellors accept referrals from teachers, the school inclusion team, the Senior Leadership Team, parents, and pupils.

- Pupils in Year 6 and below must be referred by a teacher, parent, or member of the pastoral team.
- Parents may refer their child by contacting the child’s teacher or the counsellor directly
- Pupils in Year 7 or above may self-refer.
- In the case of behavioral difficulties, the wellbeing team may refer a student to the counsellor. The counsellor and student will meet one time and then the decision of whether or not to access the counselling services will be left to the pupil.
- Members of staff can self-refer by contacting the counsellor directly

## Consent

A referral of a pupil up to year 6 must be accompanied by parental consent for the child to attend the service.

- Year 7 and above: The Gillick principle:  
*‘As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent, providing they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence (Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords, 1985).*  
 In line with this ruling, young people are entitled to access counselling and generally, students from year 7 and above can do so without parental permission. Should this occur, the counsellor will see the child for one session in order to assess their Gillick competence. Assessment will take into account the age, maturity, understanding of the consequences of their actions, and understanding of what is being proposed by the counsellor. Should the child be found to be Gillick competent the counsellor will proceed with counselling without parental consent. Should the counsellor assess that this is not the case, parental permission will be sought.

## Evaluation and Recording

The Counsellors, the head of protection, and the Principal will meet regularly to review the service and address any issues arising. Statistical data will be collated on an annual basis and no student will be identified within the data collected. Data is obtained to highlight areas of concern, influence policies within the school, and to gain support in developing the counselling service. Service evaluation and measurement of effectiveness is also desirable. The Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will monitor the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis and, if necessary, make recommendations for further improvements.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

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Principal Approval:	
Review Date:	August 2023