مدرسة جيمس كامبردج العالمية أبوظبي

GEMS Cambridge International School

ABU DHABI

Wellbeing & Mental Health Policy

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Introduction

At GEMS Cambridge International School, Abu Dhabi (CIA), we prioritize the emotional health and wellbeing of our students, staff, and parents. Our inclusive and supportive ethos fosters respect, self-esteem, and open communication. This policy outlines the measures in place to nurture and protect the wellbeing of all stakeholders. We recognize that mental and emotional wellbeing is just as crucial as physical health and that a thriving school environment is one where every individual feels safe, valued, and supported.

This policy aligns with **ADEK's Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safeguarding, and Student Behaviour Policies** and aims to integrate wellbeing into every aspect of school life, ensuring that all members of the community can develop resilience, confidence, and a positive mindset.

Vision and Aims

Our Vision

- To ensure all learners thrive in a fully inclusive learning environment.
- To add significant value to the learning experience and encourage high performance.

Our Aims

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for students, staff, and parents.
- To create a community that fosters mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing.
- To provide structured support systems that help students, staff, and parents overcome personal and academic challenges.
- Develop resilience and coping strategies to enhance personal and academic growth.
- Ensure wellbeing is embedded in all school activities and policies.
- Provide a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment.
- Foster positive relationships between students, staff, and parents.
- Equip staff and students with the tools to manage stress and mental health challenges effectively.
- Establish robust referral systems for mental health concerns and early intervention programs.
- Encourage open communication and student voice in shaping wellbeing initiatives.

Definition of Wellbeing

We adopt the **OECD definition**: “The psychological, cognitive, social, and physical functioning and capabilities that students need to live a happy and fulfilling life.”

Our students define wellbeing as: **"The state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy."**

We recognize that wellbeing is not merely the absence of illness but the active pursuit of a fulfilling and balanced life. By enhancing wellbeing, we nurture emotional intelligence, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and a growth mindset, preparing students and staff to handle challenges effectively.

Identification and Support Through PASS at GEMS CIA

To ensure early identification and support for student wellbeing, CIA utilizes the **Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) assessment**, which is conducted twice a year across Years 2 to 13. PASS data helps the school identify students requiring additional emotional and academic support and implement targeted interventions accordingly.

Students scoring **below the 25th percentile** are flagged for additional support, with those scoring **between the 5th and 25th percentile** receiving structured mentoring, small group sessions, and pastoral check-ins. Students scoring **below the 5th percentile** are identified as high-priority cases, receiving personalized one-on-one counseling, parental engagement, and, where necessary, external referrals. Additionally, students scoring **above the 85th percentile** are monitored for signs of overconfidence or avoidance behaviors that may mask underlying concerns.

PASS results are used to shape wellbeing initiatives, classroom interventions, and staff training on student mental health. Parents of students identified for additional support are engaged through meetings, workshops, and resources to assist their child’s wellbeing. The school conducts an annual review of PASS data trends to assess the effectiveness of wellbeing strategies and refine intervention measures.

- **Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) is conducted twice a year** to assess student wellbeing and engagement.
- **All students from Years 2 to 13 participate in PASS assessments**, with a focus on identifying students requiring additional emotional and academic support.
- **Identification of At-Risk Students:** Students scoring below the 25th percentile are flagged for additional intervention and support.
- **Targeted Intervention:**

    - **Students scoring between the 5th and 25th percentile** receive structured mentoring, additional check-ins, and small group sessions with the pastoral and wellbeing teams.
    - **Students scoring below the 5th percentile** are identified as high-priority cases and receive personalized support, including one-on-one counseling and parental engagement.
    - **Students scoring above the 85th percentile** are monitored for signs of overconfidence or avoidance behaviors that may mask underlying issues.
- **Data Utilization:** PASS results inform strategic planning for student wellbeing initiatives, classroom interventions, and staff training on student mental health.
- **Parental Communication:** Parents of students identified for additional support are engaged through meetings, workshops, and resources to assist their child's wellbeing.
- **Annual Review:** PASS data trends are analyzed to measure the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives and refine intervention strategies.
- **Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) is conducted twice a year** to assess student wellbeing and engagement.

High Performance and Emotional Intelligence

At CIA, we embrace High Performance to cultivate emotional intelligence, independent, reflective, and resilient learners. High performing students develop thinking skills, attitudes, and values, ensuring they are prepared for both academic and personal success.

- We integrate emotional intelligence into our curriculum, fostering a **growth mindset, adaptability, and perseverance**.
- Students are encouraged to embrace challenges, learn from feedback, and continuously improve their emotional intelligence.
- Emotional intelligence is developed through **social-emotional learning** which include **self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills**.
- We provide structured opportunities for students to practice **decision-making, resilience, and stress management techniques** in real-world scenarios.

Support During Vulnerable Phases

We recognize that certain periods of the academic year can be particularly stressful for students and staff. To mitigate stress and provide necessary support, CIA implements:

- **Stress-reduction programs** during high-pressure periods such as exam seasons, transitions between grade cycles, and university applications.
- **Targeted wellbeing workshops** focusing on resilience, emotional regulation, and coping strategies.
- **One-to-one and group counseling support** during vulnerable phases to ensure emotional stability and academic success.
- **End-of-term feedback and reflection sessions** to assess stressors and refine support systems.
- **Peer and mentor support programs** to provide additional guidance and reassurance during transitional phases.

Inclusion and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

CIA is committed to providing an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of ability, can access the support they need to thrive. Our approach to inclusion and SEN support includes:

- **Tailored mental health provisions** to support students with additional learning needs.
- **Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs)** that incorporate mental health considerations.
- **Flexible accommodations**, such as modified timetables, sensory-friendly environments, and assistive learning technologies.
- **Collaboration with the Inclusion Department** to ensure students receive the necessary emotional and academic support.
- **Staff training on inclusion and mental health**, ensuring that teachers can recognize and address wellbeing concerns effectively.

Educational Risk

We recognise that students can become vulnerable to low academic performance as a result of external factors such as family relationship breakdowns, attendance, illness, emotional changes. CIA is fully committed to early identifying of a child who could become Educationally at Risk and support for the student and family is put in place through the Educational Risk Team.

Role of the Principal and Senior Leaders

The **Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** play a critical role in embedding wellbeing into the school's culture, policies, and daily operations:

- **Vision and Strategy:** Ensure that wellbeing remains a core priority in the school's strategic direction.
- **Leadership and Role Modeling:** Act as role models by fostering a culture of trust, respect, and open communication.
- **Staff Wellbeing:** Oversee staff wellbeing programs, including professional development, workload management, and support networks.
- **Student Wellbeing:** Ensure student wellbeing programs are well-implemented, monitored, and adapted to meet evolving needs.
- **Parental Engagement:** Encourage parent and community involvement through regular communication, workshops, and engagement events.
- **Policy Implementation and Compliance:** Ensure the effective implementation of the Wellbeing Policy in alignment with ADEK regulations and best practices.
- **Crisis Management and Support:** Lead responses to critical incidents and ensure adequate mental health support structures are in place.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Conduct regular assessments of wellbeing initiatives through surveys, feedback sessions, and performance reviews to ensure ongoing improvements.

Role of Staff Towards Each Other and Their Own Wellbeing

CIA encourages a collaborative and supportive staff culture where all staff members actively contribute to each other's wellbeing. Staff are responsible for:

- **Supporting Colleagues:** Encouraging, assisting, and providing emotional support to colleagues experiencing difficulties.
- **Promoting a Positive Work Environment:** Engaging in open communication, teamwork, and mutual respect.
- **Maintaining Work-Life Balance:** Setting boundaries, prioritizing self-care, and managing workload effectively.
- **Seeking Support When Needed:** Utilizing available resources such as the school counselor, peer mentoring, and senior leadership guidance.

- **Participating in Wellbeing Initiatives:** Engaging in professional development, wellbeing workshops, and social activities to foster a sense of community and resilience.
- **Modeling Healthy Behaviors:** Demonstrating self-care, emotional regulation, and stress management techniques for both students and colleagues.

Wellbeing Support Systems

Wellbeing Team and Their Roles

CIA has a dedicated staff and student Wellbeing Teams to ensure a structured and effective approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the CIA community. The team includes:

- **Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT):**
    - Ensure wellbeing remains a core priority in the school's strategic planning.
    - Oversee policy implementation, compliance, and wellbeing initiatives.
    - Foster a school culture of openness, support, and mental health awareness.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Team & Educational Risk Team**
    - Ensure all safeguarding and Educational Risk concerns, including mental health issues, are addressed in line with ADEK's Student Protection and Educational Risk Policies.
    - Collaborate with external agencies for student safety and wellbeing interventions.
    - Provide training to staff on recognizing and responding to safeguarding, educational risk concerns.
- **Student and Staff Wellbeing Coordinators:**
    - Lead wellbeing programs and coordinate initiatives to support emotional and physical health.
    - Work closely with staff, students, and parents to ensure a proactive approach to wellbeing.
    - Organize professional development sessions on mental health and wellbeing strategies.
- **Pastoral Team:**

    - Provide day-to-day emotional and behavioral support for students.
    - Work with teachers and parents to address wellbeing concerns and implement support strategies.
    - Facilitate peer mentoring and emotional resilience programs.
- **School Counselors and Social Workers:**
    - Offer confidential, professional counseling services for students and staff.
    - Implement individual and group therapy sessions.
    - Conduct wellbeing assessments and provide recommendations for support strategies.
    - Liaise with external mental health professionals when additional intervention is required.
- **Mental Health First Aiders:**
    - Trained staff members equipped to provide immediate emotional and mental health support.
    - Offer guidance and signpost students and staff to appropriate resources and support services.
    - Support crisis intervention and provide debriefing following critical incidents.
- **Student Wellbeing Ambassadors:**
    - Peer-led initiative where selected students promote wellbeing awareness and support among their peers.
    - Organize student-led wellbeing campaigns and workshops.
    - Encourage a positive school culture where mental health is openly discussed and supported.
- **Parent Ambassadors and Community Links:**
    - Engage parents in wellbeing initiatives and provide peer support for new families.
    - Collaborate with the school to strengthen community involvement in wellbeing programs.
    - Act as a bridge between parents and the Wellbeing Team, ensuring families feel supported.

This team works collaboratively to ensure that every member of the school community has access to the support they need, contributing to a nurturing and resilient learning environment. CIA has a dedicated Wellbeing Team to ensure a structured and effective approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff. The team includes:

Transition

Support for New Families at CIA

CIA recognizes the importance of ensuring that new families feel welcomed, supported, and well-integrated into the school community. To achieve this, we provide:

- **Pre-Admission Support:**
    - Dedicated **family induction webinars** where parents meet school leaders and gain an understanding of CIA's values and policies.
    - **School tours and orientation days** to familiarize families with the campus, facilities, and support services.
- **Transition and Induction Programs:**
    - **Welcome sessions** for students and parents before the start of the academic year.
    - **Buddy system** pairing new students with existing students to ease their transition.
    - **Introduction to key staff members**, including pastoral care leaders, school counselors, and inclusion coordinators.
- **Parental Engagement and Communication:**
    - Regular **coffee mornings and meet-the-teacher sessions** to foster connections and provide information.
    - Access to **parent workshops** on student wellbeing, mental health, and academic success strategies.
    - **Dedicated parent ambassadors** to provide peer support and help new families integrate into the community.
- **Ongoing Support:**
    - **New family surveys and check-ins** during the first term to identify any areas where additional support is needed.

- **Pastoral care follow-ups** to monitor the wellbeing and adjustment of new students.
- **Social events and school community initiatives** to help families engage and build relationships within the school.

6. Safeguarding and Confidentiality

- Confidentiality will be maintained unless disclosure is necessary for student safety.
- Cases of neglect, abuse, or harm will be reported to the **GEMS Guard system** and handled in line with **ADEK's Student Protection Policy**.
- Confidentiality will be maintained unless disclosure is necessary for student safety.

7. Compliance and Monitoring

- The **School Leadership Team (SLT) and Wellbeing Committee** will oversee implementation and effectiveness.

8. Links to Other Policies

The CIA Wellbeing Policy is aligned with various school and regulatory policies to ensure a comprehensive approach to student and staff wellbeing. This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** – Covers procedures for reporting and managing safeguarding concerns, including mental health issues.
- **Student Behaviour Policy** – Outlines expectations for student conduct and wellbeing support.
- **Inclusion Policy** – Details support structures for students with special educational needs and disabilities.
- **Anti-Bullying Policy** – Provides strategies for preventing and responding to bullying incidents.
- **Health and Safety Policy** – Ensures a safe physical environment that contributes to wellbeing.
- **E-Safety and Digital Wellbeing Policy** – Addresses online safety and the impact of digital technology on mental health.
- **Staff Wellbeing Policy** – Focuses on mental health support, workload management, and professional development for staff.

- **Student Attendance Policy** – Links attendance and engagement with wellbeing strategies.
- **Educational Risk Policy** – Links external or internal concerns that affect a students school performance.

9. Conclusion

CIA is committed to fostering a culture of wellbeing, ensuring that every student, staff member, and parent has the resources to lead a balanced and fulfilling life. CIA is committed to fostering a culture of wellbeing, ensuring that every student, staff member, and parent has the resources to lead a balanced and fulfilling life.

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