



American International School
المدرسة الأمريكية الدولية

WELL-BEING POLICY

2023-24

Principal: Dr. Layne B. Hunt

WELLBEING POLICY 2023-2024

Policy Statement

At American International School AIS, Dubai, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and using effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected – both directly and indirectly – by mental health issues.

Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining AIS approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies and our Wellbeing Action Plan 2022-23.

Policy aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional 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 refer them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst staff and 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 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:

- School Doctor/Nurse
- Wellbeing Coordinators/guidance counsellor
- Section Heads
- Head of Inclusion
- Vice Principal/Principal

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to the Head of Section or Designated Wellbeing Coordinator or School Doctor.

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.

Wellbeing Initiatives: Individual Care Plans (students)/Personal Wellbeing Plans (Staffs)

Students:

When a student has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through the AIS Doctor or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the student, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the student's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

Staffs:

At AIS we have taken a proactive approach for staffs. All staffs have been introduced to a Personal Wellbeing approach by the guidance counsellor. This is a strategy to address the day-to-day stressors and is based on a pre-emptive *Personal Wellbeing Plan* with strategies to deal with early onset of stress through long-term wellbeing strategies.

If a staff member has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through the AIS Doctor or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up.

Universal Taught Wellbeing Curriculum

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves – and others – physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of the CCSS.

Moreover, we are guided by the UAE's National Strategy for Wellbeing 2031 along with wellbeing matters framework on teaching about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively. [WellbeingMatters-Eng.pdf](#) Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages provides an opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Agencies and Key stakeholders

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. We do this through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure students, staff and parents 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

Targeted prevention programs and support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school Doctor/guidance counsellor in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family, and individual levels.

Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working closely with Dubai's Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (see appendix) and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral.
- Identifying and assessing in line with ICAS to confirm that further support is needed using the following assessment tools: <https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/link/5765> (Age 6-12) and/or <https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/link/5764> (Age 11-17) who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems.
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach.
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, According to the child's needs.
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur.

Confidentiality

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 the student's personal file, including

- Date
- Nature of the disclosure and the main points of the conversation
- Name of the member of staff and the disclosure with night
- Agreed next steps

Information will be shared with School Doctor and designated Wellbeing Coordinator

If a Peer Mentoring Program is in place, any disclosures will align with this process.

If a member of staff deems it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within the school or the parents/carers, then this move will first be discussed with the student.

We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- Why we need to tell them

- What we are going to tell them
- When we are going to tell them

Ideally, consent gained from the student first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as a student up to the age of 16 who is in danger of harm. It is important to also safeguard staff's emotional well-being. By sharing disclosure with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed, but students may choose to tell the parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours is recommended to share this information before the school contacts the parents/carers.

If a student gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Whole of School Approach

Working with parents/carers

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 comfortable in the school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the ends of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child 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.

Guiding 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 questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

A record of the meeting points discussed/agreed are added to the pupils record and an individual care plan created if appropriate.

Supporting Parents

- 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 programs run by school Doctor 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 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 by 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

Training

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. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

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 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.

Policy Review

This is reviewed every two years as a minimum the next review is due August 2023. In between updates, policy is updated when necessary to reflect changes. This is the responsibility of the well-being coordinators.

Appendix:

Online Assessment Tools:

- <https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/link/5765> (Age 6-12)
- <https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/link/5764> (Age 11-17)

Mental Health Counsellor- Meghna Khan:

- <https://www.mkcscares.com/>

Mental Health Support Line:

- <https://hope.hw.gov.ae/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing agencies

- <https://icasmna.com/health-wellbeing-services/>
- <https://www.priorygroup.ae/>
- <https://www.lighthousearabia.com/>
- <https://www.thrive.ae/>
- <https://mindfulme.me/>
- <https://americanwellnesscenter.ae/>
- <https://camaliclinic.com/>