THE ENGLISH COLLEGE DUBAI

PART OF iSP International Schools Partnership

CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY
2026/2027

AIM: (final result we are aiming to achieve)**:**

This policy was created to ensure that there are clear guidelines for the following:

- When parental consent will be required for students to engage in counselling.
- Private information shared by students that can and can't be kept confidential.
- The process involved in revealing confidential information.
- Information that must be disclosed to the authorities, regardless of the situation.

RATIONALE: (The reason for which this policy has been written)

Confidentiality is considered to be one of the foundations of the therapeutic alliance. Knowing that their personal information will be discussed and recorded in confidence will encourage students attending counselling to be open and honest about their thoughts and feelings. However, there are certain limitations to confidentiality in counselling, and there are circumstances where the School Counsellor may need to break confidentiality. Therefore, it is important that The English College has a policy that clearly outlines the circumstances where confidentiality must be broken and how information will be shared with the relevant parties in these situations.

GUIDELINES: (The principles/instructions/steps of the policy)

Counselling at The English College

The English College offers short-term individual and group counselling to both Primary and Secondary students. The School Counsellor can support students' with their academic, social and emotional development. This service is not intended as a substitute for the diagnosis or treatment for any mental health disorders. If a child is in need of additional/different mental health services, the School Counsellor can offer parents/carers guidance and support with finding an appropriate service provider.

Consent

Consent for Primary Students

It is our protocol at The English College to work in partnership with parents/carers wherever possible. When a primary school student is referred to counselling, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss their child's needs and asked to sign a consent form. Students in primary school can not undergo counselling unless written consent is provided by all of the child's legal custodians.

In primary school, there is an understanding that whilst the majority of counselling is kept confidential, there may be some sharing of information and liaison with parents and staff to ensure that a student receives the care and support they need. However, the school counsellor will notify students if they intend on sharing information with their parents/carers and/or teachers.

The DSL will always know who in the primary school is receiving counselling. However, what is discussed during counselling will only be shared with the DSL on a need-to-know basis.

Consent for Secondary Students

For secondary students, consent to attend school counselling may be given by the student without their parent/carer's involvement. However, this is only possible when a student is deemed Gillick competent. When assessing Gillick competency, the School Counsellor will take the following into consideration:

1. The student has requested that their parents/carers have no knowledge about them receiving school counselling.
2. The student can clearly communicate their decisions and reasons for not involving their parents/carers.
3. The School Counsellor feels confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the student without parental involvement.
4. The student understands the nature of counselling and the possibility that parents/carers will be involved if they are believed to be at risk of harm (physical and/or psychological).

In cases where a student is NOT Gillick competent and parental consent is NOT forthcoming, the School Counsellor will not engage in counselling with the student; The English College will continue to engage with the parents/carers to ensure that the student receives the care and support they need.

If one parent/carer requests that their child undergo counselling, the School Counsellor is not required to seek consent from the child's other parent/carer. However, if the School Counsellor is concerned about the child's safety, they will be required to share their concerns with both parents/carers. If the School Counsellor shares their concerns with one parent/carer on a telephone call, they will request that the information provided is

shared with the child's other parent/carer. The School Counsellor will then send a follow up email to both parents/carers.

The DSL will always know who in the secondary school is receiving counselling. However, what is discussed during counselling will only be shared with the DSL on a need-to-know basis.

Confidentiality

The School Counsellor has an ethical responsibility to protect the privacy of students by not disclosing any information obtained during counselling, except under agreed upon conditions. During the first session with a student, the School Counsellor will share the school's confidentiality policy with them and make it clear that they may need to break confidentiality if there are ever any serious concerns about their safety and/or wellbeing. Confidentiality will be broken when the School Counsellor is told/suspects that a student is:

- At risk of harming themselves or others
- Having suicidal thoughts
- Planning to take their own life, or have attempted to take their own life
- Being abused or neglected
- Involved in dangerous activity (e.g. inappropriate relationships, substance abuse, reckless behaviour, etc.)
- Not using digital technologies responsibly
- Being bullied
- Suspected of having a mental health disorder and is need of professional support outside of school

When the School Counsellor is concerned about a student's safety and/or wellbeing and requires assistance, they will share relevant information with the school's DSL. Together, they will then decide whether a student's parents/carers need to be involved or if there are any legal obligations that require them to contact local authorities. The School Counsellor will keep the student informed and involved in the process of gaining assistance from relevant parties.

Legal Obligations

Under Federal Law number 3, 'Wadeema's Law', if a student discloses that they are being subjected to physical abuse and/or neglect, the school has a legal obligation to share this information with Dubai's Child Protection Services (CPS). Where possible, the school's DSL will contact the student's parents to arrange a meeting before contacting CPS. This is to simply inform them of what their child has disclosed and to explain the school's legal obligations. It is not the school's responsibility to investigate these issues, but to remain impartial throughout. The DSL, in discussion with the Principal, will decide which CPS to refer the case to depending on the nature of the concern. In some situations, the police may also be notified in addition to CPS; this depends on the nature of the concern.

Sharing Private Information With Parents

Parents/carers will always be contacted if the School Counsellor has any major concerns about their child's safety and/or wellbeing. If a parent/carer contacts the School Counsellor and asks them to share private information about their child, the School Counsellor will consult ethical codes, follow a sound ethical decision-making model and seek consultation from the school's DSL regarding a course of action.

The School Counsellor will attempt to educate the parent/carer about the negative consequences that might result from breaking confidentiality, including possible irreparable damage to the counselling alliance and distrust between them and their child. If the parent/carer is adamant that they want access to their child's private information, the School Counsellor will attempt to limit the information shared and attempt to inform the student that their parent/carer has requested information.

External Referrals

In some cases, a need for additional or more specialised support may be identified during the counselling process. The following steps will be followed:

1. **Identification of Need**
   A concern or issue is identified through counselling sessions, observations, or safeguarding processes.
2. **Counsellor Assessment**
   The School Counsellor will assess whether further support from an external provider may be beneficial. The counsellor will not discuss or suggest potential diagnoses with the student, but will instead communicate that they may benefit from additional support.
3. **Student Discussion**
   The School Counsellor will speak with the student in an age-appropriate and supportive manner to explain the recommendation for further support.
4. **Parent/Carer Communication**
   The School Counsellor will contact the student's parents/carers to share relevant information and discuss the recommendation for an external referral.
5. **Provision of Recommendations**
   A list of appropriate external providers will be shared with the family to support them in accessing services.
6. **Consent and Collaboration**
   With parental consent, the School Counsellor will seek to collaborate with the external professional to ensure continuity of care and to best support the student's wellbeing.

The School Counsellor will remain available to support the student within the school setting throughout this process. However, in-school counselling is often discontinued when a child begins receiving regular therapy or support from an external provider. This

helps ensure the student is not overwhelmed and that therapeutic approaches remain consistent. This can be discussed collaboratively with the student and their parents.

APPENDICES (Relevant links to other policies or documents)

Federal Law number 3: 'Wadeema's Law'

POLICY REVIEW HISTORY:

This policy will be monitored, evaluated and reviewed by the Whole School Senior Leadership Team, approved by the Principal

Historical Record				
Revision No.	Date	Brief Description of Change	Approved by	Next Review:
0	9/5/2021	New policy	WSLT	1/9/2022
1	26/4/2022	Updated for next academic year	WSLT	1/6/2023
2	20.06.2024	Updated	WSLT	June 2025
3	01/07/2025	No changes made	WSLT	July 2026
4	01/07/2026	No changes made	WSLT	July 2027