

# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

At Al Adhwa Private School, we recognize that the wellbeing of our staff is integral to the success of our school and the holistic development of our students. We are committed to upholding our duty of care towards every staff member, ensuring that we foster a safe, supportive, and enriching working environment. Our Staff Wellbeing Policy reflects our dedication to promoting the social, physical, mental, intellectual, and emotional wellbeing of all staff members, from leaders to teachers and support staff.

## Vision

To create a nurturing environment where the wellbeing of all members of our school community, including staff and students, is prioritized, enabling everyone to flourish both academically and personally. We strive to cultivate a culture of support, respect, and balance that enhances the overall health, happiness, and success of our entire school.

## Aim

We aim to create a positive and supportive environment where all staff and students feel valued, motivated, and empowered to grow and succeed in their roles and academic pursuits.

## Objectives

- Promote a healthy balance between work, study, and personal life by offering support and resources to staff and students to effectively manage their time and wellbeing.
- Build a positive school culture where everyone feels safe, respected, and included, encouraging open communication and teamwork.
- Support the development of staff and students through training, mentorship, and opportunities for personal and academic growth.
- Improve physical and mental wellbeing by providing access to wellness programs and stress-relief activities for all members of the school community.
- Involve both staff and students in decisions that impact their wellbeing, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement within the school.

## School Wellbeing Circle

- School Principal
- School Vice Principals
- Inclusion Team
- Social Worker
- Health and Safety Team
- School Counsellor
- School Wellbeing Coordinator and Committee
- Wellness Champions (Senior Student Volunteers)

## I. Mental Health Awareness and Education

The school is committed to fostering a supportive environment that promotes mental health and wellbeing for all students. As part of our mental health education efforts, we will:

1. **Educating Students** – Integrate mental health topics into the curriculum, focusing on developing healthy coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, and resilience. Students will learn about stress management, mindfulness, time management, and the importance of creating an environment where others feel comfortable seeking mental health support. These lessons will also emphasize the impact of stigma and how to avoid harmful behaviors.
  - For students in Cycles 2 and 3, we will expand the curriculum to include topics such as common mental health difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety), substance use prevention, eating disorders, digital gaming addiction, and recognizing signs of maltreatment. We will provide resources on accessing help and support for these issues.
2. **Parental Awareness** – We will actively engage parents by informing them about the school’s mental health policies, initiatives, and available resources. Opportunities for parent involvement in mental health education will be provided, such as workshops and information sessions, to ensure they are well-equipped to support their children’s mental wellbeing.

## II. Counseling and Support Services

1. **Mandatory Provision of Counseling**  
All students have access to counseling services as needed, and each session is documented in line with the ADEK Reporting Policy to ensure clear records of student wellbeing.
2. **Appointment of School Counselors**  
Qualified counselors are employed to address the mental health needs of students, either internally or through licensed Department of Health (DoH) centers, in line with the ADEK In-School Specialist Service Policy.
  - **Qualifications:** Counselors, whether internal staff or external specialists, meet the qualifications set out in the ADEK Staff Eligibility and In-School Specialist Services Policies.
  - **Counselor Responsibilities:** Counselors work with teachers, parents, and external professionals (e.g., psychiatric centers) to provide comprehensive support for students, maintaining confidentiality.
3. **Appointment of Social Worker**  
A social worker is appointed to support students and their families, acting as a link between the school, home, and the community.
  - **Qualifications:** Social workers are hired based on the requirements of the ADEK Staff Eligibility Policy.

- **Social Worker Responsibilities:** Social workers assist in meeting students' personal, social, and emotional health needs, collaborating with families and school staff to enhance students' success. They do not provide therapy or counseling services.

#### 4. **Mental Health Committee or Lead**

A Mental Health Committee or Lead is designated to promote awareness of mental health and social-emotional learning within the school community. The school counselors are employed internally assume this role.

#### 5. **Confidentiality**

Counselors adhere to confidentiality standards as outlined in Federal Decree Law No. (45) of 2021 and the DCD Social Care Professionals Code of Conduct & Ethics.

- Counselors may share information with relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents or school leadership) when necessary to protect the best interests of the student or when legally required.
- In cases of suspected maltreatment, self-harm, or severe issues such as suicidal ideation, counselors will immediately inform the Child Protection Coordinator or school leadership for further action.
- Counselors explain the limitations of confidentiality to students in a manner that is age-appropriate.

#### 6. **Parental Consent**

Parental consent is required for regular or structured counseling services. If a parent refuses consent, they must provide written acknowledgment of their responsibility for the student's wellbeing.

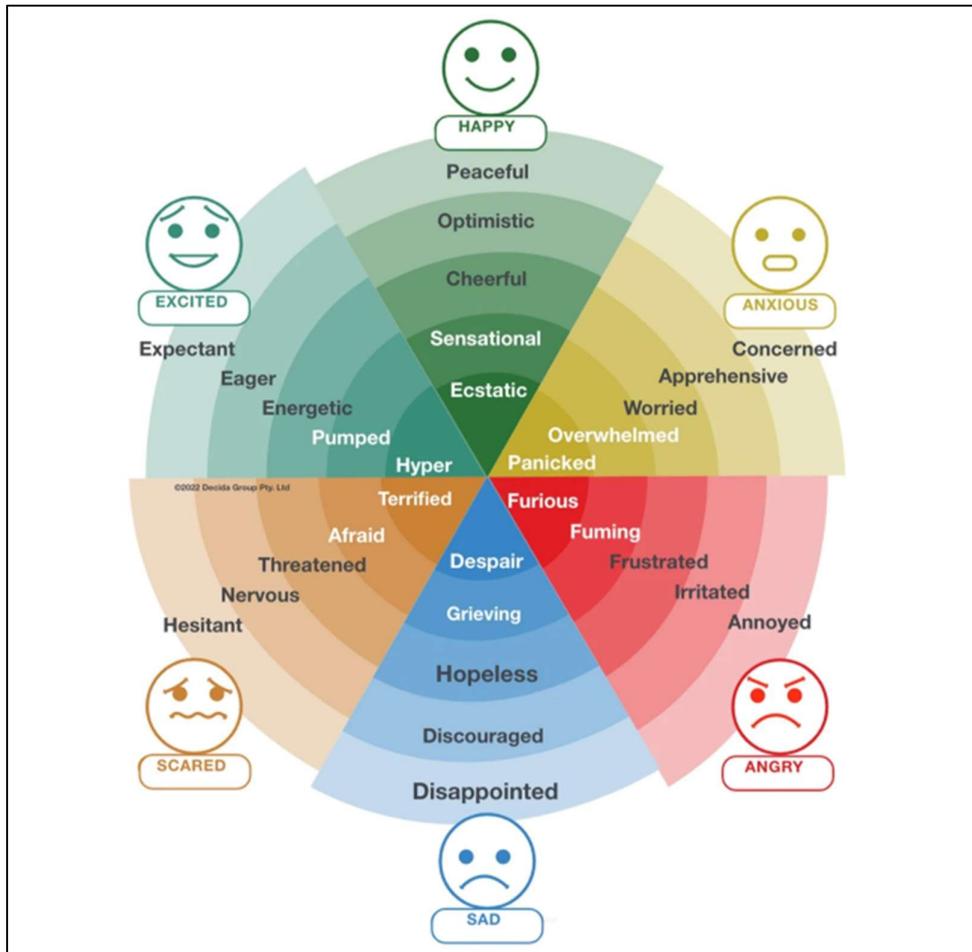
- Parental consent is not necessary for informal counseling (e.g., spontaneous conversations) or when the counselor believes it is in the student's best interest to proceed without informing the parents, especially in situations where parental involvement may harm the student's wellbeing.
- If parental refusal to consent could result in significant harm to the student, the situation will be reported in line with the ADEK Student Protection Policy.

#### 7. **Daily Wellbeing Check-In: "How Are You Feeling Today?"**

##### **How It Works:**

Every morning, during the first period, teachers will ask students, "How are you feeling today?" This allows students to identify and label their emotions.

Teachers will guide students through brief activities, that help them manage their emotions and prepare for the day. These activities, such as breathing exercises or stretching, create a positive classroom environment, promoting emotional wellbeing and focus for learning.



### Steps for Teachers Based on Student Responses

- a. **Happy**
  - Acknowledge and encourage their positive mood.
  - Motivate them to spread positivity in class.
- a. **Excited**
  - Celebrate their enthusiasm.
  - Channel their energy into participation or a creative task.
- b. **Anxious**
  - Reassure them (e.g., "It's okay to feel this way.")
  - Encourage deep breathing or a short break.
  - Offer one-on-one support if needed.

#### a. Scared

- Provide a calm, safe space.
- Listen and validate their feelings.
- Offer a quiet activity to ease nerves.

#### b. Angry

- Stay calm and avoid confrontation.
- Encourage deep breaths or a movement break.
- Give them space, then discuss solutions privately.

#### c. Sad

- Check in privately and listen with empathy.
- Encourage self-expression (e.g., journaling, drawing).
- If persistent, refer to a counselor.

### III. Referral Pathways

#### 1. External Referral

When a student requires specialized support beyond the expertise of the school counselor, they will be referred to external professionals for further assistance.

#### 2. Development of Referral Pathways

Clear and structured referral pathways are in place, ensuring alignment with the ADEK In-School Specialist Services Policy and the ADEK Inclusion Policy. These pathways outline the following:

- **Referral Procedures:** Both students and staff can report concerning behavior to school counselors, social workers, or external professionals. This includes identifying young caregivers and referring them to the Family Care Authority (FCA) for appropriate counseling.
- **Parental Engagement:** The school administration follows a clear procedure to inform and engage with parents when concerning behaviors are identified. The decision to inform parents is made with the student's best interests in mind, ensuring confidentiality and appropriate communication methods.
- **Monitoring Student Wellbeing:** A procedure is in place to collect information from students to regularly monitor their mental health, helping to identify any changes or concerns early.

#### 3. Communication

The referral pathways are communicated to all relevant stakeholders, including parents and staff, and are published in the Parent Handbook to ensure transparency and accessibility.

#### 4. Confidentiality

All information reported through the referral pathways is handled with strict confidentiality, in accordance with legal and ethical standards.

#### IV. Support During Vulnerable Phases

1. **Identification of Vulnerable Phases**

Key periods like exams, university applications, and grade transitions are recognized as times of increased stress, with measures to support students' mental health.

2. **Study Leaves**

Students are given up to 4 weeks of study leave for board or pre-collegiate exams, as per the ADEK Assessment Policy.

3. **End-of-Semester Office Hours**

Teachers offer brief one-on-one sessions at the end of each semester to provide feedback and support students.

4. **Workshops**

Individual or group workshops are held to help students manage stress and build coping skills during vulnerable phases.

#### V. Support for Students with Additional Learning Needs

1. **Collaboration for Mental Health**

The Head of Inclusion works with teachers, specialists, parents, and counselors to safeguard the mental health of students with additional learning needs. All Documented Learning Plans (DLP) are comprehensive, considering students' functioning levels.

2. **Reasonable Accommodations**

Accommodations are provided to support the mental health of students with additional learning needs, such as:

- Shortened timetables and breakout sessions for students with high anxiety.
- Flexible uniform policies for students with sensory needs.
- Close monitoring of students at risk of bullying or teasing.

#### VI. Monitoring and Reviewing

The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy at Al Adhwa Private School will be monitored by the dedicated Wellbeing Committee. We will regularly conduct online surveys and gather feedback from both staff and students to assess the effectiveness of the policy. This ongoing analysis will enable us to make informed adjustments, ensuring we effectively support the wellbeing of our entire school community.

**Ms. Amira Gafer Goraish**

Al Adhwa Private School

