



## **MATER DEI COUNSELLING SERVICES (STUDENT) POLICY**

Within a school environment students may experience a wide range of behavioural, emotional, social and psychological issues that, if left untreated, may jeopardise their wellbeing and learning. Examples include mental illnesses, friendship difficulties, family breakdowns, relationship issues, eating disorders, bullying, traumatic events, alcohol and substance abuse, self-esteem and identity difficulties.

Mater Dei School is committed to providing a safe environment and assisting students develop appropriate skills and attitudes to resolve problems in academic, psychological, emotional and social contexts, through the provision of professional counselling services to assist them and their families deal with issues that may hinder their development.

It is our policy that:

- Professional counselling services are made available to all students at no additional charge;
- The school's counselling services be highly visible to students and the general school community; and
- The school's counselling services are easy to access.

### **Visibility of Counselling Services**

The availability of the school's counselling services are highly visible to students and to the wider school community. Initiatives to ensure the visibility of the school's counselling services include:

- Training all staff as to the nature and availability of the services;
- Providing contact details for counselling services on the school's public website;
- Providing contact details for counselling services in the school's Parent Handbook;
- Providing details of counselling services in the school Staff Handbook; and
- Providing students and parents/guardians with information regarding counselling services at induction.

### **Accessing of Counselling Services**

Students need a referral to access the school counselling services. This referral may come from a staff member or parent or may be a self-referral.

- Parent referral – parents may refer their child by speaking to a staff member or to the school psychologist directly.
- Self-referral – a student may self-refer by speaking to a staff member or the school psychologist directly

•Staff referral – staff may refer a student by completing a Student Referral Form. This form is available from outside the School Psychologists office or in the Admin pigeon holes.

### **Counselling Sessions**

Counselling sessions will focus on being supportive and offering problem centred outcomes. If appropriate, the counsellor may take a joint approach and include other staff.

Counselling sessions may be held during class time, in breaks or before or after school.

### **Parents/guardians**

Parents/guardians will be involved with the student's counselling from the initial stages.

Parents/guardians may seek advice from the school psychologist about their child's progress and information about assistance from other agencies.

### **Referrals to External Specialists**

In as many situations as appropriate, referrals will be made by the school psychologist to external professionals such as paediatricians, psychiatrists, occupational or speech pathologists. This may be the case depending on the nature of the required intervention or the degree of involvement required.

Referrals to specialists outside the school will be discussed with the student and their parents/guardians, and the rationale for this will be explained.

A list of suitable practitioners will be given to the student or parent/guardians. The school psychologist will facilitate referrals upon request and will be entitled to receive reports from the external practitioner.

### **Confidentiality**

Discussions held between the student, their parents/guardians and the school psychologist are confidential to the extent that information will only be made accessible to other school staff on an as needed basis.

Confidentiality practices will be explained to students prior to counselling.

### **Involvement of Other School Staff**

Where necessary and appropriate, the school psychologist may discuss the student's circumstances with the student's teachers, having regard to confidentiality.

Teachers are encouraged to discuss concerns they may have, regarding individual students in their class who are attending counselling.

The school psychologist will report to the Assistant Principal and Leader of Pastoral Care regularly to provide general feedback on counselling services within the school and specifically on individual matters on an as needed basis.

---

## **Records**

Appropriate records must be maintained including details of the student's name, the date of each session, those present at the session and a brief summary of the main issues discussed.

Similarly, meetings and/or telephone conversations regarding the student with parents, staff and external specialists must also be recorded.

All records written by the school psychologist remain the property of the school. Access to counselling records will only be provided where appropriate legal requirements are met.

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

All employees are responsible to:

- Make themselves familiar with the school's counselling services;
- Bring to the attention of the school psychologist any specific issues of concern relating to students under their care;
- Encourage students to see the school psychologist where they feel the student would benefit from these services; and
- Follow the guidelines as set out in this policy.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training in identifying vulnerable students and effective referral processes;
- Student and parent/guardian education and information;
- Development of a culture of awareness where students look out for other students and encourage each other to seek help;
- Effective referral management within and outside the school community;
- Effective communication and incident notification procedures;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

## **Discipline for Breach of Policy**

Where a staff member breaches this policy Mater Dei School may take disciplinary action.

## **RELATED POLICIES/STATEMENTS**

Mater Dei Student Duty of Care Policy

---

Mater Dei Pastoral Care Policy

Mater Dei Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures

Mater Dei Crisis Management (Traumatic Events) Policy

Approved at Leadership Team YES / NO / NA	Signed	Date
Approved at Board YES / NO / NA	Signed	Date
Staff Briefed YES / NO	Signed	Date
Review Date February 2016		