



**COUNSELLING
POLICY**



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DEFINITIONS:

Counseling:

Counseling takes place when a counselor sees a student in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the student is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps a dissatisfaction with life, or a loss of a sense of direction or purpose. It may be at the request of the student, recommendation from a teacher or personal observation from the school counselor.

School Counselor:

The ‘school counselor’ refers to the qualified members of faculty employed by the school in the role of a ‘school counselor’ who carry out counseling and other related mental health roles

The school:

The ‘school’ refers to the Light International school, Mombasa.



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The coordinators:

The ‘coordinators’ refers to the leaders in charge of Kindergarten, Junior School and High School. This also includes the leaders of different Key Stages in junior school and High school.

Class mentors:

The ‘Class mentors’ refers to the class Teachers based on grade and gender; for example, Year 10 Girls class mentor and Year 10 Boys Class mentor for all classes.

1. Role of the School Counsellor

School counselors offer a student a safe and supportive environment to talk over difficult issues in confidence and will listen to their views, experiences and feelings without judgment, in an atmosphere of respect and empathy, based on a secure and trusting working relationship.

School counselors enable the student to focus on their concerns, giving them a vehicle to explore specific problems, make choices, cope with crises, work through feelings of conflict and improve relationships with others.

The role of the school counselor is to:



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- Provide counseling services and other mental health services to students enrolled from Early Years to A Level at Light International School Mombasa.
- Communicate and liaise with school faculty members in the best interest of the student, while within the limits of student confidentiality

Encourage partnership with the student's family when appropriate and beneficial

Liaise with coordinators in making referrals to other agencies or professionals where need arises

- Conduct classroom observations to identify students who may be experiencing emotional difficulties stemming from learning difficulties or other causes.
- Providing teachers with behavioral strategies to better manage students and effectively guide them through their studies.
- Support the discipline committee to evaluate behavioral issues and identify the best cause of action.
- Act as a resource to school faculty members and students by offering an insight into counseling and promoting the service where possible
 - Maintain accurate counseling session records and write reports as and when required
 - Maintain and develop professional practice through regular and ongoing management and clinical supervision and training, and through involvement in service evaluation and auditing



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- Practice counseling in accordance with ethical principles, as a member of a counseling/psychotherapy professional body
- Implement effective student and faculty member support, guidance and facilitation programs. This includes understanding self and others, coping strategies, peer relationships and social skills, communication, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, and study skills.
- Assist parents and the school community with information regarding mental health issues and challenges and actively create awareness on effective ways to boost mental health at LIS Mombasa.
- Work proactively with the school community to promote and foster student wellbeing in collaboration with other departments such as Child Protection, Service Learning, Class Mentors and most importantly, the Learning Support Department.

2. Types of Issues Brought to Counseling

Children and young people may choose to access counseling for a variety of reasons, e.g. family, anger, stress, anxiety and self-worth. No issues are off-limits in a counseling session and this should be respected by faculty members and parents. A counseling room is a safe space for the student to speak freely, openly and honestly, without judgement.

3. Leadership and Management



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In order to achieve these aims, the school must actively support the Counselling Service to seek, to identify and to meet the very diverse needs of our students. This is achieved through referring any students who may present to have emotional or mental health challenges.

The Leadership gives insight into any opportunities for Professional Development for the counselling department and offers support when such opportunities arise.

The school counsellor takes the lead role in coordinating counselling support and service provision, particularly regarding students and families.

Coordinators and head mentors identify areas they may require psychological support or input in their forums and invite the school counsellor to expand the whole school impact.

While sending reports and recommendations, confidentiality is maintained on student issues and only techniques, strategies and areas of concern are communicated to the Principal, Deputy principal and coordinators.

In partnership with the coordinators, head mentors and the deputy principal, the school counsellor monitors, advises, evaluates and plans for the development of counselling provision across the school.

Successful inclusion should result in every student feeling safe, confident and happy at school, whilst making the best progress towards achieving their potential; be it in lessons, during their play or lunchtimes



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or when involved in any of our school excursions and extra curricular activities

4. Ethical Framework & Complaints Procedure

All school counsellors must be members of a regulatory professional body in Kenya related to counselling or psychotherapy and adhere to an ethical framework or code. The code should be underpinned by ethical principles that give guidance and standards for good practice.

There are a few licensing counselling bodies in Kenya as follows:

a) Kenya Association of professional Counsellors (KAPC)

b) Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA)

The Kenyan Counselling regulatory bodies recommend following the American Psychological Association (APA) code of ethics that is used in our Kenyan Local Universities.

In accordance with the guiding body, the American Psychological Association, the ethical principles of Counselling for our school are:

a) Beneficence & No maleficence- a commitment to promoting the student's well-being and to avoiding harming the student.

b) Fidelity & Responsibility- honoring the trust placed in the professional and leading by example.



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c) Integrity- Being honest, meaning what you say and saying what you mean and delivering on what you say you are going to deliver.

d) Justice- the fair and impartial treatment of all students and the provision of adequate services.

e) Respect for People's Rights & Dignity- Upholding the student's reputation and being present for them as required

School counsellors will try their best to adhere to these principles as follows: ➤

Put students first by:

- making students their primary concern while working with them
- providing an appropriate standard of service to students

➤ ***Work to professional standards by:***

- working within their competence
- keeping their skills and knowledge up to date
- collaborating with colleagues to improve the quality of what is being offered to students
- ensuring that their well-being is sufficient to sustain the quality of the work
- keeping accurate and appropriate records

➤ ***Show respect by:***



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- valuing each student as a unique person
- protecting student confidentiality and privacy
- agreeing with students on how they will work together
- working in partnership with students

➤ ***Build an appropriate relationship with students by:***

- communicating clearly what students have a right to expect from them
- communicating any benefits, costs and commitments that students may reasonably expect
- respecting the boundaries between their work with students and what lies outside that work
- not exploiting or abusing students
- listening out for how students experience their working together

➤ ***Maintain integrity by:***

- being honest about the work
- communicating qualifications, experience and working methods accurately

○ working ethically and with careful consideration of how they fulfil

their legal obligations ➤ ***Demonstrate accountability by:***



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- o being willing to discuss with students openly and honestly any known risks involved in the work and how best to work towards their student’s desired outcomes by communicating any benefits, costs and commitments that students may reasonably expect
- o ensuring that students are promptly informed about anything that has occurred which places the student at risk of harm or causes harm in their work together, whether or not students are aware of it, and quickly taking action to limit or repair any harm as far as possible – reviewing their work with students in supervision
- o monitoring how students experience their work, and the effects of their work, together with them.

Complaints Procedure

If necessary, complaints alleging a breach of professional standards, including confidentiality, will be dealt with by reference to the coordinators. The coordinators will take responsibility for investigating the nature of the complaint.

5. Referral Process Within School

Referrals to access the counselling service can be made at any time by teachers, parents, outside agencies, peers, or students who self-refer.

Students have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time, and it is the school counsellor’s responsibility to ensure that the student’s rights to autonomy are respected. It is important to



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recognize that students can only benefit if they want to be involved in the counselling process.

Referrals to consult a school counsellor are made by approaching the school counsellors directly in person or via email.

It is the school counsellors' responsibility to ensure a Referral Form (see Appendix 1) is completed for every referral by teachers.

Faculty members may also seek assistance from Counselling service for classroom or group intervention to provide psychosocial education or support to address generic or specific needs. This may take the form of classroom lessons, observations, workshops, presentations or programmes. Consultation with school counsellors is required to ascertain how best to proceed.

6. Potentially vulnerable groups

There are a number of identified groups of students and families for whom this policy is particularly pertinent:

- Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Students whose home language is not English (ESL)
- Students with physical or sensory impairments
- Students who might be subject to abuse or harassment, for whatever reason



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- Students whose family are in crisis or under great stress
- Students at risk of significant harm or neglect
- Students with poor attendance and/or punctuality
- Students who are at risk of expulsion from school due to misbehavior
- Students who have a temporary high-level need

7. Consent

Parental consent for counselling of students is agreed upon when signing the acceptance to Light International School, where appropriate.

In Junior school, there is an understanding that while the majority of counselling is kept confidential, there may be some sharing of information and liaison with parents and faculty members, with the child's knowledge and consent.

It is our protocol at Light International Mombasa to work in partnership with parents wherever possible, except in circumstances involving Child Protection concerns.

For a student to be eligible to receive counselling, s/he must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid verbal counselling contract, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality and the need for this to be overridden where there is a risk of harm.



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Students can consent to attending counselling without the parent/career's involvement, if that student is deemed competent. "As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing, they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence."

As guidance, the School Counselling Service at Light International school will take the following into consideration:

- o The young person has explicitly requested that their parents/guardians have no knowledge about them receiving counselling.
- o The school counsellor has done everything they can to persuade the young person to involve their parents/guardians.
- o Documentation clearly states why the young person does not want their parents/guardian to be informed.
- o The young person understands the advice/information they have been given and has sufficient maturity to understand what is involved and what the implications are.
- o They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling.
- o The young person can communicate their decisions and reasons for it.
- o This is a rational decision based on their own value system or religious belief.
- o The young person is making the decision for



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themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person.

- o The school counsellor must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person.
- o Without counselling, would the young person's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?

In cases where the child is NOT competent and parental consent is NOT forthcoming, Light International Mombasa will continue efforts to engage the parents via invitation to meet the school counsellor, class mentors and coordinators to discuss the issue.

8. Session Allocation

Appointments are made subject to availability and to urgency.

Sessions will generally be weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, depending on the need, for a maximum of 6 sessions. Any extension to this will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of the individual student. After the 3rd consecutive counselling session, a review session with the student will be conducted by the school counsellor to track progress and revise counselling goals.

Sessions will be for an average of 20 minutes, with a maximum of 40 minutes for secondary students, in exceptional circumstances. Junior school counselling sessions are generally for 20 minutes.

Appointments are to be timetabled in class time, using free periods or during supervised study periods (e.g., Dear Time, P.S.H.E) where possible, in consultation with the student and teachers regarding



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important learning deadlines. Release from lesson times is to be spread across the individual timetable to minimize disruption from subject learning. Communication regarding appointment times will be made via WhatsApp by the school counsellor to the relevant teachers at the beginning of each week and day depending on changes arising during the week.

The school counsellor will not advise the reason for consultation to teachers without parent and/or student consent.

Students should not be marked as absent in class, when they have visited the school counsellor.

9. Where Counselling will take place

Counselling will take place in the Counselling office. Sessions may take place in a different location if agreed upon by the school counsellor and student, and the relevant coordinator will be notified.

10. Privacy and Confidentiality

A student's right to privacy and confidentiality is the basis for an effective counselling relationship. They are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the student's autonomy. Good practice dictates the use of a clear contract to explain to students the boundaries of confidentiality a school counselling service can offer.

The aims of this explanation are:



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- To enable the young person to develop a trusting relationship with the school counsellor.
- To allow the young person to open up and share feelings without blame or reprisal.
- To allow the young person to speak freely about issues concerning them.
- To encourage others to come forward for counselling.

Student consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving dilemmas over confidentiality.

Exceptional circumstances may prevent the school counsellor from seeking consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation. In such circumstances the school counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balances the student's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others.

11. Breaching Confidentiality

At the initial session, the school counsellor will make it clear to the student that they may need to breach confidentiality in terms of telling others and seeking help. This may happen when the young person, or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm or danger.

In the case of threats of suicide or severe self-harm (as described below), there is a general acceptance of a need for intervention and of breaking confidentiality.



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The school counsellor will discuss the possibilities of breach again if the need arises during the counselling relationship. Where possible, the school counsellor will keep the young person informed and involved in the process of gaining assistance from others.

The school counsellor is NOT required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the school counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime.

Although self-injury is non-suicidal behavior and relied on as an attempt to cope and manage, it must be recognized that the emotional distress that leads to self-injury can also lead to suicidal thoughts and actions.

It is therefore of utmost importance that all incidents of self-injury are taken seriously and that the underlying issues and emotional distress are thoroughly investigated and necessary emotional support given, in order to minimize any greater risk.

12. Reports of Suicidal Ideation/Intent

Suicide refers to the deliberate act of taking of one's life. Suicidal behavior includes the spectrum of activities related to suicide, including suicidal thinking (ideation) and suicide attempts. Some people include risk-taking behavior in which there is some risk of immediate or later self-harm e.g. substance use, disordered eating, over exercising.



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Light International Mombasa is committed to the creation of a school environment that helps to build protective factors within our students and school community that will reduce the risk of a student resorting to suicidal behavior.

This includes activities, policies and programs that help to build:

- a) **Connectedness** - a sense of belonging with others and connectedness to our school and community.
- b) **Resilience** - the development of capacities within a person that promote positive outcomes, including personal coping skills and strategies for dealing with adversity, such as problem solving, communication and social skills, optimistic thinking and help seeking.
- c) **A sense of personal safety** - through the implementation of our Positive Peer Relationships Anti- Bullying Policy. Students are taught that it is right to seek support for a friend that they fear may be at risk of suicide.

The school will NOT ignore and will follow up immediately;

- o *any student, parent or faculty “rumors” about a possible suicide attempt*
- o *any suicide notes/emails/messages communicated to peers, faculty and faculty members by students.*

If a student verbally reports suicide ideation to any staff member:

- i. The staff listens in a kind and calm manner



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- ii. The staff should use “I” statements, e.g. “I am concerned about you,” or “I am worried about you”, or “I will help you find someone who can help you.”
- iii. The staff explains to student that it is his/her responsibility to report student’s situation to the school counsellor and principal to help the student receive the support that is needed. The immediate safety of the student is paramount and an adult should remain with the student at all times
- iv. The staff should accompany the student to the principal/school counsellor/student health officer or find someone to bring one of these people to them
- v. If a student sends a suicide ideation note, email or message to a teacher or staff member, the teacher or staff member MUST contact the principal and school counsellor immediately.
- vi. If, after following up on notes or rumors, a student is found safe in the school, the counselor will meet with them immediately to assess their well-being and the background of the suicide concern.
- vii. The information will be shared with the student’s parents with the recommendation of referral to an outside mental health provider if one is not already involved. ix. If the student cannot be located at school, the family will be contacted immediately. If the parents are unaware of the student’s whereabouts and safety, the parents will be asked to contact the police.



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The school counsellor does not have to break confidentiality if a student discusses suicidal ideations, with no intention of planning, nor completing suicide. A risk assessment will be completed at the discretion of the school counsellor. The school counsellor will report them

concern to the appropriate coordinator without providing confidential information. This can be actioned without the consent of the student, although it is preferred that they agree.

12.1 Attempted Suicide

In cases where a suicide attempt has been disclosed to a school counsellor or member of the staff, student's parents must come to school to collect them immediately. The student **cannot** be left alone within the school. This is a non-negotiable decision, as the school must also consider the safety of our community, and the best interest of the student at risk.

The student is **NOT** allowed back into school until a follow up risk assessment has been completed by a mental health professional (e.g. clinical psychologist, psychiatrist) and a report has been submitted to the school. Following this report, it is at the school's discretion whether or not the student is allowed to return.

If a student has attempted suicide and is deemed ready to return to school, the school will work closely with the student, family and any involved mental health professionals, to support the student upon their return.



This would include the development of a Student Safety and Support Plan that outlines:

- o Regular contact and communication times with the student to check on their health and well being
- o Any flexible timetable arrangements that may be needed and for what length of time
- o Activities, plans and goals to assist the student's well-being at school
- o People the student can talk to and their locations.

The student is an active participant in the development of this plan.

12.2 Other members of the school:

Support will also be available to any faculty members and friends of the student if they would like or need it as the welfare of the community is paramount. Particular attention is also paid to identifying any other at-risk students.

12.3 Child Protection policy

The school counselling service will be familiar with the LIS Mombasa Child Protection policy and procedures in suicidal attempts or cases of child abuse.

There will be a need to breach confidentiality in the interests of child safety if a student confides about abuse (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or other abuse) or neglect, to self or another juvenile or minor (less



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than 18 years). The need to safeguard children will always take precedence over the child’s right to autonomy and to confidentiality. The reporting body will be decided by the designated child safeguarding officers.

The school has a legal obligation to report any cases of abuse (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or other abuse) or neglect to the Children’s Department as quickly as possible. The school does not require the parents’ permission for this contact to be made. However, depending on the circumstances, the school will try to notify the parents before contacting the Children’s Department or Police.

The relevant Children’s Department is dependent on the County of the student’s home address. Once the relevant Children’s Department has been notified of the abuse/neglect, the school will continue to support the student, and the Children’s Department will conduct the investigation into these allegations.

Assessment needs to be conducted as to whether the child is “in need” or “at risk of significant harm”. This enables the necessary early intervention of family support to be implemented as a preventative strategy before the situation deteriorates.

12.4 Court or other Legal proceedings

Confidentiality may be breached by law, if school counselling faculty members at Light International School Mombasa are summoned to attend a hearing or other court proceeding. For this reason, the school



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counselling team cannot guarantee that they will testify in a court of law unless there is no other alternative to handle the case at hand. If this situation arises, Light International Mombasa will advise in advance and work with parents to handle this situation as respectfully as possible.

If a school counsellor at Light International Mombasa is given a court order to appear in court or produce their counselling records, they will report to the principal and deputy principal and will refer to the school's legal representative to obtain legal advice to limit disclosure of non relevant sensitive student information. Due to the sensitive nature of counselling young children and adolescents, school counsellors should be fully aware of the risks of litigation arising from, for example, claims of negligence or breaches of confidentiality.

13. Sharing Information with Other Stakeholders

The school counselling team will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school faculty members, other agencies and specialized services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality.

In regard to school staff members and academic goals, school counsellors are asked to “test” sharing of counselling goals by considering 2 questions:

a) Do team members need to know this?



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b) How will knowing this help the team make decisions that will facilitate the student's educational progress?

It will be common for the relevant teachers, class mentors, coordinators, deputy principal and principal to be informed of students accessing counselling services, however not necessarily the reasons or contents of sessions. This can only be shared subject to parental/student consent.

A general update regarding progression is considered sufficient, unless conducive to student wellbeing and academic success.

When the need arises, liaison with outside agencies to support a student's mental health issues is necessary and a written consent to provide/seek additional information to a Third party from parents and/or students will be obtained.

14. Other Professionals

At times, it may be necessary to refer students or staff members to outside agencies for specialist therapeutic intervention. Serious, ongoing mental health issues and family-based problems

are referred to appropriate outside professionals/agencies for full assessment and support. Light

International School will not accept responsibility for individual referrals to practitioners. The school can recommend providers; however, the selection of outside agencies and practitioners will remain the sole discretion of the parents or staff members seeking assistance.



15. Supervision

All school counsellors need to engage in regular clinical supervision, (also known as external consultative support) to ensure that the school counsellor maintains ethical competence and confidence in their work. Requirements for supervision are clearly described in APA (American Psychological Association) Ethical Framework (We use this for our counselling practice in Kenya).

School counsellors at Light International Mombasa will undertake regular counselling supervision sessions with an external Supervisor who is qualified and has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting. School counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision. Supervision will take place outside school hours, with costs covered by the counselor.

The school counsellor will also require separate line management supervision to help with administrative requirements, accountability, and the development of the service. This is not the same as counselling supervision and the two fulfill different functions.

Peer supervision is also recommended through school counsellors' networks. Regular meetings are encouraged to foster best practice and provide opportunity for monitoring of caseloads and sharing of resources.

16. Record Keeping



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The school handles student data in accordance with Kenyan laws related to privacy and protection of personal information and reflects best practice in data management. Each student's records are stored in a locked filing cabinet. These filing cabinets are used by the school counsellors only. The files are shared with principal and the deputy principal, in case of emergency.

17. Evaluation and Recording

The school counselling team, the coordinators and class mentors will meet regularly to review the service and address any issues arising.



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