



**Bishkek
International
School**

Counselling Policy

Reviewed by the Management Board: August 2024
Previous Review: NA

Approved by the Governing Board: August 2024

Preface

Mission, Policies, Handbooks and Regulations

The Mission of Bishkek International School is to enable our students to:

- Develop their intellectual curiosity and achieve their academic, sporting and creative potential;
- Be confident in their abilities and respectful of others;
- Learn about local and global issues and prepare to tackle common challenges, in a school which:
- Delivers and celebrates excellent teaching for internationally accredited education;
- Values and demonstrates diversity and inclusivity;
- Promotes the well-being of the whole school community;
- Contributes positively to the development of the Kyrgyz Republic.

This policy is one of several policies, procedures and related documents that guide operations at Bishkek International School (BIS) and help to facilitate the achievement of our mission. The full list of relevant documents, prepared by the Management Board and approved by the Governing Board, comprises:

Policies:

1. Vision, Mission and Development Policy
2. Admissions Policy
3. Learning Diversity and Inclusion Policy
4. Counselling Policy
5. Language Policy
6. Academic Integrity Policy
7. Assessment Policy
8. Health & Safety Policy
9. Child Protection Policy
10. Educational Visits Policy
11. Ethics Policy
12. Environmental Policy
13. Accounting Policy

Handbooks:

1. Staff Handbook
2. Parents & Guardian Handbook
3. Student Handbook

All Governing Board members and all staff must be aware of each of these documents and their contents. All policy documents and handbooks are available to students and parents/guardians via the BIS website or provided in PDF form to parents/guardians on request. All policy documents and handbooks are reviewed and revised by the Management Board every year for approval by the Governing Board in June for the following academic year. All students, parents and staff are invited to send comments and suggest any changes to the Management Board at any time before the end of May each year for consideration for policies/handbooks for the next academic year.

Overall Governance of BIS is guided by the legal charter and various internal regulations. These are:

1. Legal Charter of 'Bishkek International School'
2. Regulations of the Governing Board
3. Regulations of the Parents Association

4. Regulations of the Advisory Council

International Baccalaureate

BIS is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), and the Primary Years Programme (PYP). IB World Schools share a common philosophy and commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that BIS believes is important for our students. For more information about IB see www.ibo.org

International Baccalaureate Mission Statement

“The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right”

International Baccalaureate Learner Profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities. As IB learners we strive to be:

1. **Knowledgeable:** *We love learning new things.* We explore concepts, ideas, and issues that have local and global significance. In doing so, we acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
2. **Thinkers:** *We think about everything and make good decisions.* We exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
3. **Inquirers:** *We like to find out how things work and why they work this way.* We develop our natural curiosity. We acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. We actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout our lives.
4. **Caring:** *We care about other people and want to make them feel good.* We show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. We have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.
5. **Principled:** *We are responsible for our own actions. We always try to do what is right.* We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups, and communities. We take responsibility for our own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
6. **Reflective:** *We think about what we have learnt and what we have done, to be better in future.* We give thoughtful consideration to our own learning and experience. We are able to assess and understand our strengths and limitations in order to support our learning and personal development.
7. **Balanced:** *We have a balanced life with lots of learning, lots of activity, and lots of friends.* We understand the importance of intellectual, physical, and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for ourselves and others.
8. **Risk-Takers:** *We are not afraid of trying new things, and we are brave.* We approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies.
9. **Open-minded:** *We understand different cultures and different ways of doing things.* We understand and appreciate our own cultures and personal history, and we are open to the perspectives, values, and traditions of other individuals and communities. I am accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and am willing to grow from the experience.
10. **Communicators:** *We can speak in more than one language. We are good at working with others.* We understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. We work effectively in collaboration with others.

In BIS we also have an additional profile, which is essential for wellbeing and success:

11. **Resilient:** *The path may be difficult, but we will succeed.* We are resilient and capable of overcoming any challenge that comes our way. We have the inner strength and determination to navigate through difficult times and emerge stronger than before.

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[A list of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in BIS is linked here](#)

1. INTRODUCTION

At Bishkek International School we recognize the uniqueness of each child through a programme of learning that promotes challenge and personalised learning at all levels and by providing an enabling, inclusive environment which empowers all children to achieve. We encourage creative and critical thinking within the context of meaningful and stimulating experiences.

School counsellors work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure equity, access and success of all students. They have the responsibility to provide a school counselling program that supports students in academic, career and social/emotional development. School counsellors are prepared to support students with guidance and access to tools and resources required to reach their potential.

Counselling is a goal-oriented relationship between a professionally trained, competent counsellor and an individual seeking help for the purpose of bringing about a meaningful awareness and understanding of the self and environment, improving planning and decision making, and formulating new ways of behaving, feeling, and thinking for problem resolution and/or development growth.

School counsellors also provide programs to promote student achievement, enhance the learning process for all students, and their personal and social development.

This policy document draws heavily on school counselling policies from public schools in North America, adapted for the specific circumstances of Bishkek International School (BIS)

2. STATUTORY CONTEXT

BIS operates according to the law of the Kyrgyz Republic. Legislation relating to child protection includes

1. The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic dated June 27, 2010;
2. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, dated November 20, 1989;
3. The Law on Education, dated April 30, 2003;
4. The Family Code, dated August 30, 2003;
5. The Provision on Children's Rights and Interests Protection, dated May 15, 2007;
6. Children's Code, dated July 10, 2012.

For all issues related to child protection, see the BIS Child Protection Policy for further guidance.

3. COUNSELLING PROVISION IN BIS

BIS has full time school counsellors for each section of the school, the Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, and High School, with the High School Counsellor also supporting the Senior University and College Counsellor in assisting students to apply to university. A part time School Psychiatrist and Behavioral Specialist provides support in assessment and behaviour management in all sections of the school.

School counsellors in BIS are part of the Learning Diversity, Inclusion and Counselling (LDIC) Team, which works collaboratively, under the guidance of the LDIC Coordinator, to assist students with needs for Special Education, Language Support, Gifted and Talented, and students with physical or sensory impairments.

School Counselling services are short-term services aimed at the more effective education and socialisation of a child within the school community. These services are not intended as a substitute for diagnosis or treatment for any mental health disorder or needs. BIS counsellors offer short-term (no more than 6 months) individual counselling to students, as well as small group counselling. Skill areas that may be addressed in these settings include: Social Skills; Friendship and Relationship issues; Dealing with Anger,

Anxiety, Sadness or Loss; Learning Self Control; Improving Self Esteem; Leadership Skills; Fears and Worries; Depressive episodes; Time-Managements and Organisational Skills; Self-Identification; Managing Emotions and Impulse Control; Conflict Resolutions; Academic Progress; Adjustment and Transition; and Making Responsible Choices.

4. SERVICES FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Counselling and support services are available to all students on an equal basis. Differentiated services are provided to students based on their needs. The school offers a comprehensive array of services catering to the academic, mental, and behavioural needs of all students. School counsellors work in tandem with other school staff to deliver both hands-on and supportive services to students and their families. These services involve a collaboration of students, teachers, school counsellors, administrators, families, and caregivers to support students in their educational journey.

School counsellors are well-versed in the principles and research concerning social-emotional well-being, resilience, and risk factors that can impact learning and mental health. Drawing on their knowledge, they collaborate with educational and community stakeholders to develop tailored multi-tiered prevention programmes and health promotion initiatives. They prioritise creating a safe and supportive educational environment by advocating for evidence-based strategies. In tandem with other professionals, school counsellors proactively design and implement mechanisms for crisis prevention, immediate protection, effective mitigation, prompt response, and thorough recovery.

School counsellors work with students, families, and educators to:

- Improve academic achievement through collecting and interpreting student and classroom data, consulting about student and classroom behaviour, and conducting psychological screeners and questionnaires.
- Promote positive behaviour and mental health through individual or group counselling about coping skills, anger management, social skills, and conflict resolution, conducting psychological screenings of social-emotional and behavioural needs, and working with community-based providers.
- Support diverse learners by providing culturally and linguistically responsive evaluations of students' unique and diverse learning needs and collaborating with school teams to help improve student engagement and learning through understanding and respecting each student's cultural experiences and background.
- When assessing students who are English learners or come from different linguistic backgrounds, use assessments that are validated for their specific cultural and linguistic group to ensure accuracy. Where possible, enlist the help of a translator or interpreter during evaluations.
- Create safe, positive school climates through the implementation of school-wide positive behaviour interventions and supports and through the provision of crisis prevention and intervention services.
- Strengthen family-school partnerships by helping families understand their children's learning and mental health needs.
- Improve school-wide assessment and accountability through consultation with school teams monitoring student, classroom, and school-wide progress with academics and behaviour.
- Implement effective student and staff support and guidance. This includes understanding oneself and others, coping strategies, peer relationships, social skills, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills.

- Provide individual and small group counselling to deal with issues such as self-image and self-esteem, personal adjustment, family issues, loss and grief, interpersonal concerns, academic development, and behaviour.
- Promote and foster student and staff wellbeing.

5. STUDENT REFERRAL AND CONSENT

Parents/guardians or school staff may refer students for counselling, or students may request counselling for themselves.

Referrals to access the counselling service can be made at any time by teachers, parents, peers, or students who self-refer. Children and young people have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time, and it is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure that the student's rights to autonomy are respected. It is important to recognise that students can only benefit if they want to be involved in the counselling process.

Referrals can be made in person to a BIS Counsellor or to the LDIC Coordinator, or via a referral form here: [Teacher Referral Form](#); [Parent Referral Form](#); [Self Referral Form](#).

Upon receiving a referral for a student's counselling, it is a standard procedure to obtain parental consent, where deemed appropriate, before initiating the counselling process. This ensures transparency and collaboration between the school and parents in supporting the student's well-being.

In Preschool and Primary School, parental consent for counselling of students in Primary school must be received in a written form before initiating counselling sessions in normal circumstances, using the consent form in Annex 1. While we ensure the confidentiality of the counselling sessions, there may be instances where selective information needs to be shared with parents or staff, always considering the child's knowledge and agreement. However, in situations concerning Child Protection, the school might proceed with necessary interventions without prior parental consent.

In Middle and High School, students may consent to counselling themselves, provided they must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid written counselling contract between them and a counsellor, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality and the need for this to be overridden where there is a risk of harm. Our assessment of ability to consent is based on the [Gillick competency and Fraser Guidelines](#). As a general principle, it is acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent, provided they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence. In cases where the child is competent to agree, based on the Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines, and parental consent is NOT forthcoming, BIS will continue to engage the parents via an invitation to meet the Counsellor or discuss the issue the LDIC Coordinator.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Given that counselling hinges on a trusted bond between the counsellor and the student, school counsellors prioritise maintaining confidentiality. However, there may be select instances where information sharing is vital. School counsellors will only disclose details to parents/guardians, the student's teacher, and relevant administrators when absolutely necessary, ensuring a coordinated approach to support the student while upholding the highest levels of confidentiality.

Under the given situations, school counsellors are mandated to relay information to the LDIC Coordinator, the school Management Board, and the Child Protection Team:

1. When a student expresses intentions or thoughts of self-harm or harming another individual;
2. Upon discovery or disclosure of any form of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) or neglect;
3. Any threats or actions that comprise school safety and security;
4. In the event that counselling records are subpoenaed by a court;

5. Reports or evidence of serious rule or law violations, such as weapon possession or drug distribution within school premises;
6. If a student provides information about impending criminal activities or threats to public safety;
7. When collaboration with outside mental health professionals is deemed necessary for the well-being of the student, with proper consent;
8. If there are concerns related to severe food insecurity, homelessness, or other dire circumstances impacting the student's well-being.

The role of school counsellors regarding confidentiality is:

1. To support the student's right to privacy and protect confidential information received from students, their families, guardians, and staff members. Any data shared with counsellors or with other relevant parties is solely for the purpose of enhancing the student's welfare and learning experience and is done so strictly in accordance with the consent given by the student.
2. To explain the meaning and limits of confidentiality to students in developmentally appropriate terms.
3. To provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding the counselling relationship and confidentiality. In the event of a crisis where the student poses a danger to themselves or others, the issue of consent might be superseded by necessary actions to ensure the safety of the student and others. In such scenarios, counsellors adhere strictly to duty of care responsibilities and legal obligations, ensuring that any breach of confidentiality is minimised and justifiable.
4. To inform students and their families of the limits to confidentiality when:
 - the student poses a danger to themselves or others;
 - there is a court-ordered disclosure;
 - consulting with other professionals, such as colleagues, supervisors, treatment teams and other support personnel, in support of the student;
 - privileged communication is not granted by law and or BIS policies);
 - the student participates in group counselling;
 - substance use and treatment are a concern.
5. To keep personal notes separate from any educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exceptions exist, such as abuse or neglect, risk of harm, court orders, informed consent, etc.
6. To communicate highly sensitive student information via face-to-face contact, not by e-mail or inserting into the educational record
7. To advocate for security-level protocols within student information systems allowing only certain staff members access to confidential information.
8. To assert their belief that information shared by students is confidential and should not be revealed without the student's consent

7. BIS COUNSELLOR RESPONSIBILITIES

All Counsellors in BIS will:

1. Have a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals.
2. Aim to provide counselling to students in a short-term context and support students and

families/guardians in obtaining outside services if the student needs in counselling sessions long-term or requires clinical counselling.

3. Understand how a student's diagnosis can potentially affect the student's academic success.
4. Acknowledge the vital role of parents/guardians and families.
5. Be aware of students' academic, career and social/emotional needs and encourage each student to fulfil their maximum potential.
6. Respect students' and families' values, beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identification/expression and cultural background, and exercise great care to avoid imposing personal beliefs or values rooted in one's religion, culture, or ethnicity.
7. Uphold strict professional boundaries for both direct interactions and virtual communications.
8. Actively educate stakeholders about the ethical guidelines and legal requirements surrounding student confidentiality, including clearly outlining the circumstances and procedures for sharing student information with school personnel.
9. Clarify the purposes, goals, techniques, and procedures of counselling to students. This discussion includes obtaining informed consent and defining the boundaries of confidentiality. For informed consent to be meaningful, students must possess the competence, willingness, and understanding to grasp these boundaries. This can be challenging for students at particular developmental stages, English-language learners, and those with special needs. When feasible, and if the student is equipped to provide assent or consent, counsellors strive to secure this before sharing confidential details.
10. Recognise that while they strive to obtain informed consent, it's not always feasible. In such instances, they make decisions in the best interests of the students, always prioritising their welfare and well-being.
11. Explain the limits of confidentiality in developmentally appropriate terms through multiple methods, such as student handbooks, school counsellor department websites, interactive activities and orientation sessions during school assemblies, school counselling brochures, classroom curriculum, and/or verbal notification to individual students.
12. Keep information confidential unless legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed or a breach is required to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to the student. Serious and foreseeable harm is different for each minor in schools and is determined by students' developmental and chronological age, the setting, parental rights, and the nature of the harm. School counsellors consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.
13. Collaborate with administration, teachers, staff and school leadership in order to support the school's vision and mission. around school improvement goals.
14. Provide students with a comprehensive school counselling programme that ensures equitable academic, career, and social/emotional development opportunities for all students.
15. Cooperate with all relevant stakeholders, including students, educators, and parents/guardians when student assistance is needed, including the identification of early warning signs of student distress.
16. Gather and provide a list of resources of outside agencies and resources in their community to student(s) and parents/guardians when students need or request additional support.
17. Prioritise the safety of students above all. If a student exhibits signs of being a danger to

themselves or others, they should not be allowed to leave without ensuring appropriate support is in place. Should parents/guardians be unable or unwilling to provide the necessary support, counsellors have the responsibility to emphasise the critical nature of seeking immediate assistance. If necessary, for the safety of the student, a report to child protective services may be initiated.

18. Report to parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities (counsellor's line manager and the relevant Assistant Principal) when students disclose a perpetrated or a perceived threat to their physical or mental well-being. This threat may include but is not limited to, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, violence, bullying or sexual harassment. The school counsellor follows applicable Kyrgyz Republic Law and the School Child Protection Policy.
19. Conduct specialised, time-limited group sessions tailored to address specific academic, career, or socio-emotional challenges faced by students. Prior to initiating these group sessions, ensure that parents or guardians are notified and informed about the purpose, content, and duration of their child's involvement in such groups.

8. DATA USE AND PROTECTION

All students referred to counselling sessions will be enrolled in designated software platforms. All data stored will be accessible only to the Counsellor involved in the case, the LDIC Coordinator, system administrator and, where applicable to the Head of School and Assistant Principals.

Notes from counselling sessions are confidential and are stored in a locked drawers, or if electronic notes, in a computer, to which only the counsellor has access. The designated Counsellor prepares and shares "Counselling Progression reports" with the LDIC Coordinator at the end of each Semester to provide a brief overview of their sessions, progress and challenges, in order to collaboratively decide on the further actions.

All data gathered by school counsellors will be securely stored for the duration of a student enrolment at BIS and for two years after leaving BIS, including notes and hard copies in a locked cabinet, with the keys accessible only to the Counsellor and the LDIC Coordinator. This ensures the confidentiality and safety of the information. Any digital data saved on cloud storage drives is also protected and accessible only to the designated personnel. Following a period of two years after leaving BIS, all physical data will be systematically destroyed, and any digital data will be permanently deleted from the drives.

Colour coding system for counselling cases

Counsellors use a colour coding system for cases in counselling to classify the level of concern for the student and actions required. Categories used to decide on priorities and actions are:

1. Green (no further support required)

Indicative of:

- a. Students who have successfully met counselling objectives and goals.
- b. Students who presently do not require counselling support.

Action Required:

- a. Acknowledge achievements and potentially phase out active counselling, with option for re-engagement if needed in the future.
- b. Initiate periodic discussions with parents or guardians to keep them informed and to get their perspective on any changes they might observe at home.
- c. Complete and prepare the reports about the terminated sessions and keep them in the Counselling database.
- d. Correspondence to parents, students, and their homeroom/form teachers should be direct

and include only the LDIC Coordinator in the cc field.

2. Grey (neutral)

Indicative of:

- a. Students who are functioning appropriately but may still have underlying emotional needs or potential concerns.
- b. Stable, but with potential to shift to either Green or Amber based on circumstances

Action Required:

- a. Monitor and provide support as necessary.
- b. Engage relevant teachers to ensure they are aware of the student's challenges and can make classroom accommodations if necessary.
- c. Communications to parents, students, and their homeroom/form teacher should be direct and include only the LDIC Coordinator in the cc field.

3. Amber (moderate concern)

Indicative of:

- a. Recognisable challenges affecting socioemotional well-being.
- b. Moderate concerns affecting academic performance.

Action Required:

- a. Dedicated attention and support.
- b. Schedule routine check-ins to monitor progress, address concerns, and provide consistent support.
- c. If the school has a broader network of professionals, consider referring the student to external counsellors, therapists, or programmes that can offer specialised
- d. Communications to parents, students, and their homeroom/form teacher will always include the LDIC Coordinator in the cc field. The LDIC Coordinator may inform the relevant Assistant Principal if necessary.

4. Red (high risk)

Indicative of:

- a. Immediate danger to oneself or others, such as suicidal ideation and/or self-harming tendencies.
- b. Significant impact on day-to-day functioning, even if it is not always outwardly visible.

Action Required:

- a. Immediate attention and support.
- b. Notification and email communication to LDIC coordinator, chair of MB, or designated personnel are mandatory.
- c. If the school has a broader network of professionals, consider referring the student to external counsellors, therapists, or programmes that can offer specialised assistance.
- d. Communications to parents, students, and their homeroom/form teacher will always include the LDIC Coordinator, the Head of School, and the respective Assistant Principal in the cc field.

Annex 1: Written consent for counselling

Parent/Guardian agreement for counselling for students under 18 years old

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

I, _____, am the legal parent/guardian of _____

I have read, understand, and agree to the terms of the School Counseling Informed Consent. I give permission for my child to receive counselling services while attending at BIS. I understand that I may withdraw this content at any time by signing and dating a written notice requesting termination of counselling services(or send an email).

Parent/Guardian signature _____ Date _____ Email _____

BIS Student Self-Referral Counseling Agreement:

This agreement is made to ensure that students who voluntarily seek counselling services from the school counsellor are informed and consenting participants. By signing this agreement, the student acknowledges understanding the terms and conditions of the counselling services provided at BIS. By signing this document, both parties acknowledge their understanding and agreement to the terms presented.

Student's Declaration:

I, _____, as a student of BIS, acknowledge my right to self-refer for counselling services. I am seeking these services willingly and am aware of the procedures and confidentiality policies associated with these services.

Termination of Services:

I am aware that I can discontinue counselling services at any time. To do so, I can either provide a signed and dated written notice or send an email to the school counsellor expressing my wish to terminate the sessions.

Confidentiality and Its Limits:

I understand that the information I share during counselling sessions will be kept confidential. However, there are exceptions to this confidentiality, including:

- If there's a risk of harm to myself or others.
- Disclosure of abuse or neglect.
- Threats to school security
- If counselling records are requested by a court.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____ Grade/Class: _____ Email: _____

Counselor's Acknowledgment:

I, _____, as the designated school counsellor, confirm that I have explained the content and implications of this agreement to the student. I commit to respecting the terms herein and providing the necessary support as per BIS's counselling protocols.

Counsellor Signature: _____ Date: _____ Email: _____

Note: This agreement remains valid for the duration of the student's enrollment at BIS unless terminated by the student as stipulated above.