BELVEDERE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

2026-2027

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Approvals:			
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Signature		*Date:*	10/10/26
BIS Board of Governors	**Dr. Naim Alradi**		
Signature		*Date:*	12/10/26

NOTE: BIS sections within this policy contain English UK spellings however, sections taken directly from the source ADEK policy will contain English US spellings.

1. Introduction

Belvedere International School (BIS) is passionately committed to nurturing a supportive and safe environment that puts the wellbeing and positive mental health of all students, staff, and community members on a pedestal.

We recognize that academic progression and success are intrinsically linked to a student's mental and emotional fitness. BIS nurtures a culture where community members are actively involved in the wellbeing vision, ensuring students are equipped with the emotional literacy, resilience, and support necessary to thrive and reach their full potential. Robust referral procedures and proactive data-gathering guide nuanced, early interventions across the School community.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions shall apply, consistent with ADEK guidelines:

Wellbeing Policies	The group of BIS policies that relate to student and/or staff wellbeing includes the following policies: • *BIS School Wellbeing Policy* • *BIS Behaviour Policy* • *BIS Inclusion Policy* • *BIS Missing Child Policy* • *BIS Curriculum Policy* • *BIS Safeguarding and Student Protection Policy 2025-2026* • *BIS Anti-Bullying Policy* • *BIS Cyberbullying Policy* • *BIS Student Code of Conduct Policy* • *BIS School Physical Education and School Sports Policy*

Additional Learning Needs	Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within a school setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by students of determination and those who have special educational needs and/or additional barriers to learning, access, or interaction in that specific context (e.g., dyslexic, hearing or visually impaired, twice exceptional, or gifted and/or talented). For example, a student with restricted mobility may require lesson accommodations to participate in Physical Education and building accommodations to access facilities but may not require any accommodations in assessments. Equally, a student with hearing impairment may require adaptive and assistive technology to access content in class and may also require physical accommodations (e.g., sit in the front of the class to be able to lip read) to access learning.
Behaviours of Concern	A significant change in behaviour (observed in relation to academic performance, interests, social activities, or ability to perform familiar tasks) with the potential to negatively affect an individual's wellbeing or that of others. This also includes "any repeated pattern of behaviour or perception of behaviour, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning, wellbeing, physical safety, and/or engagement in pro-social interaction with peers and adults" (Smith & Fox, 2003) and includes risky or illegal habits.
Confidentiality	A professional's promise or contract to respect a counselee's privacy by not disclosing anything revealed during counselling, except under specific, agreed-upon conditions (Glosoff & Pate, 2002).
Coping Mechanism	Any conscious or nonconscious adjustment or adaptation that decreases tension and anxiety in a stressful experience or situation (APA, n.d.).
Counselling	Highly personalized therapeutic support provided to an individual by qualified professionals to promote their wellbeing by addressing their academic, career, and social-emotional development needs.

Cycle	A stage in the primary and secondary educational process and is classified in Abu Dhabi as the following: Kindergarten (Pre-KG/FS1- KG2/Y1), Cycle 1 (G1/Y2-G5/Y6), Cycle 2 (G6/Y7- G8/Y9), and Cycle 3 (G9/Y10-G12/Y13). Private schools teaching the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum may follow MoE cycles: KG, Cycle 1 (G1-G4), Cycle 2 (G5-G8), and Cycle 3 (G9-G12).
Documented Learning Plan	A plan which outlines any personalized learning targets, modifications to curriculum, additional support, or tools for learning which are agreed by school staff, parents, and students (where appropriate), including Individual Educational Plans (IEP), Individual Support Plans (ISP), Individual Learning Plans (ILP), Behaviour Support plans (BSP), Advanced Learning Plans (ALP), etc. This may be to address any specific identified academic, behavioural, language, or social and emotional need.
Emotional Regulation	A measure of an individual's ability to appropriately feel, identify, reflect, and act on their emotions/ emotional states to internal as well as external stimuli, dependent on time, place, and circumstance.
Mental Health	A state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community (WHO, 2022).
Neglect	Failure of a parent or any adult supervising a student to provide for the basic needs and rights of a student towards their physical safety, development, and wellbeing, which may lead to a failure to thrive in the context of the resources reasonably available to the parent. Such failure causes or has a high probability of causing significant harm to the student's health and/or physical, social, educational, mental, spiritual, or moral integrity.
Parent	The person legally liable for a child or entrusted with their care, defined as the custodian of the child as per the Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 Concerning Child Rights (Wadeema).

Protective Factor	Behaviour or characteristic that reduces the likelihood or impact of negative outcomes on an individual (e.g., having social support networks).
School Counsellor	A social care professional who provides social, emotional and academic support, guidance, and counselling to students by designing, implementing, evaluating, and enhancing programs and initiatives related to academic, social, and emotional wellbeing.
Social and Emotional Learning	The acquisition and application of knowledge and skills that enable self-awareness, emotional regulation, meaningful social relationships and interactions, constructive choices, and resilience.
Social Worker	A professional who supports individuals, families, or groups of people (including children, the elderly, and People of Determination) with social problems, by conducting an assessment of their needs, causes and impact, and working with them and/ or their caregivers to identify, coordinate and manage appropriate solutions to enhance their personal, social, and economic competencies (DCD, 2020).
Suicidal Ideation	Thoughts about or a preoccupation with killing oneself.
Wellness Space	An area in the school that is accessible to all students and is designated for the purpose of recuperation and the promotion of calmness and mental and emotional health.

Policy

3. Key Policy Requirements

BIS adheres to the following mandatory requirements, in line with ADEK guidance:

Policy Area	Requirement
Student Awareness and Education	Implement programs and activities (e.g., within PSHE) that educate students on balanced living, mindfulness, social and emotional learning (SEL), stress management, and emotional regulation.
Specialist Wellbeing Support and Digital Platforms	The school provides tiered support for students: 1. School Wellbeing Specialist: The specialist focuses on psychoeducation, proactive intervention, and immediate emotional support. They are responsible for managing internal referral pathways and documenting all intervention steps in line with the ADEK School Reporting Policy. 2. Digital Platform: Students have access to the outsourced digital wellbeing platform, Komodo, for use in their own time. This platform serves as a non-clinical resource for self-help, general wellbeing maintenance and overall student wellbeing surveying, but it does not replace the school's formal intervention process. 3. Students' wellbeing is surveyed weekly and termly, whereby reports are generated and shared with the Senior Leadership Team for data-to-action cycles.
Confidentiality	The school adheres strictly to confidentiality requirements, sharing information only when necessary to protect the student's best interests or when legally required. Parental consent is obtained for regular, structured wellbeing sessions. Consent is waived when sharing information is necessary to protect the student's best interests, when legally required, or when the School Wellbeing Specialist deems it necessary to prevent potential significant harm to the student.

Referral Pathways	Established and clearly communicated explicit procedures are set for students, staff, and parents to refer individuals for mental health support, and these pathways are published in the Parent Handbook 2026/27.
Support During Vulnerable Phases	Developed strategies support students during high-stress periods, such as examinations, transitions between Cycles, and other times of high emotional vulnerability.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	Holistic support is provided for all students with ALN, considering their mental health needs in all Documented Learning Plans and offering reasonable accommodations (e.g., flexible timetables) as required.
Wellness Resources	Accessible wellness spaces are available, along with resources that promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all students.

4. Student Wellbeing Strategy

4.1 Obligation of Duty of Care

BIS affirms its fundamental Duty of Care towards all students. The Principal, supported by the Board of Governors and the Pastoral Team, is responsible for ensuring this obligation is met by providing a safe, supportive, and emotionally secure learning environment.

4.2 Holistic Wellbeing Framework

Our framework organizes mandatory ADEK requirements into three key dimensions, ensuring comprehensive support for student growth and mental resilience:

1. Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

2. Intellectual Wellbeing and Learning
3. Social and Physical Wellbeing

4.2.1 Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

This dimension focuses on a student's capacity for emotional regulation, stress management, and access to therapeutic support.

Commitments and Strategy:

- Provide tiered support, including the School Wellbeing Specialist (psychoeducation, proactive intervention, internal referral pathways), access to the student digital wellbeing platform; Komodo, and on-going termly student wellbeing workshops and/or campaigns.

- Adhering strictly to confidentiality requirements, sharing information only when necessary to protect the student's best interests or when legally required. Parental consent is acquired for regular, structured counseling. Parental consent is waived when sharing information is necessary to protect the student's best interests or when legally required, or when the School Wellbeing Specialist deems it necessary to prevent potential significant harm to the student.

- Vulnerable Phases Support: Developed and implemented proactive strategies to support students during high-stress periods, such as examinations and transitions between Educational Cycles, via Guided Morning Stress Relief Breathwork and Stress Management Workshops.

4.2.2 Intellectual Wellbeing and Learning Support

This dimension ensures students develop emotional literacy and have their learning needs accommodated to minimize academic stress.

Commitments and Strategy:

- Student Awareness and Education: mandatory programs are in plan and continuously implemented, along with activities (e.g., within PSHE) that educate students on balanced living, mindfulness, Social

and Emotional Learning (SEL), stress management, and emotional regulation.

- Additional Learning Needs (ALN): holistic support is provided for students with ALN, considering their mental health needs in all Documented Learning Plans and offering reasonable accommodations (e.g., flexible timetables) as required (see BIS Inclusion Policy)

- **Language of Instruction Policy**: BIS mandates the exclusive use of the designated medium of instruction (English) during all English-medium subjects (e.g., English Language, Mathematics, Arts, History, Science) to promote an immersive learning atmosphere, maximize intellectual engagement, and enhance skill acquisition. This is a safeguarding measure so that all students and teachers can understand each other. Adherence to this core behavioral expectation is managed in accordance with the **BIS Student Behaviour Policy 2025-2026**.

4.2.3 Social and Physical Wellbeing

This dimension fosters positive relationships, a sense of belonging, and encourages the use of safe, dedicated spaces for recharge and collaboration.

Commitments and Strategy:

- Wellness Resources: accessible, quiet, and safe wellness spaces and resources are available that promote positive mental health and physical wellbeing for all students (see BIS School Physical Education and School Sports Policy).

- Inclusion: BIS continuously promotes an inclusive school environment where students feel a strong sense of belonging and are encouraged to monitor their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their peers.

4.3 Wellbeing Committee and Initiatives

The existing Pastoral Team liaises with the School Wellbeing Coordinator on a termly basis to centralise the planning and execution of all student wellbeing initiatives, including:

- Developing and reviewing wellbeing initiatives that address all dimensions of the Holistic Wellbeing Framework; including but not limited to BIS Steps Challenge, Powering a Growth Mindset Workshop and Brain Breaks; a workshop and potentially podcast.

- The publishing of clear, accessible Referral Pathways for students, staff, and parents in the Parent Handbook 2026/27.

- Organising student events; communicated weekly to parents via What's On email, and activities that promote overall wellbeing awareness, social inclusion, stress reduction, and emotional literacy.

- Coordinating with the Curriculum Lead at School to ensure the integration of wellbeing into all subjects as per the BIS Curriculum Policy 2026/27, and organising lessons that integrate wellbeing into the subject being taught (e.g., importance of screen time breaks in ICT).

5. Supporting Student Wellbeing and Intervention

5.1 Core Support Mechanisms and Confidentiality

BIS utilizes a structured, three-tiered approach to ensure students receive the appropriate level of care, escalating support based on the severity and complexity of the need:

Tier	Level of Need	Key Actions & Stakeholder
Tier 1: Universal & Initial Support	Emerging concerns, low-to-moderate risk, general support needs.	Pastoral Team (Tutor/HoS) performs initial check-ins, utilizes non-specialist support mechanisms, and monitors attendance and behaviour patterns.
Tier 2: Targeted & Specialist Intervention	Persistent or moderate concerns, requiring specialized intervention and short-term therapeutic support.	School Wellbeing Specialist conducts psychoeducation, short-term confidential counselling, develops a formal internal support plan, and documents all intervention steps in line with the ADEK School Reporting Policy.

Tier 3: External & Long-Term Therapeutic Care	Severe or complex needs, high risk, requiring continuous or long-term therapeutic intervention.	Wellbeing Specialist and SLT facilitate external referral to licensed health professionals, and In School Support Services (ISSS). For high-risk concerns (including Suicidal Ideation or severe self-harm), the School Wellbeing Specialist shall immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to coordinate the mandated response. Informed, written parental consent (unless immediate risk applies or is against the student's best interest) will be obtained.

5.2 Wellbeing and Support Teams at BIS

- Pastoral Team:

  Key roles are filled by pastoral care coordinators, school social workers, heads of year, and safeguarding officers. These staff work to ensure student wellbeing by monitoring behaviour, offering guidance and counselling, supporting attendance, and helping students overcome personal difficulties (UAE School Inspection Framework, PS5).

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

  Senior leader responsible for ensuring mental and physical wellbeing considerations are embedded within all safeguarding and child protection practices, and for receiving immediate notification and coordinating the school's response in all high-risk mental health and self-harm incidents.

- Student Care & Support Team:

  Qualified professionals who provide confidential wellness sessions and support to students needing emotional support or looking to improve their overall sense of wellbeing.

- Student Leadership:

  Provides a platform for students to raise wellbeing matters, shape initiatives,

and ensure the student voice is actively incorporated into the school's wellbeing vision.

The Student Leadership Team includes the overall Prefect Team, Student Council Representatives, Environmental Ambassadors, House Captains and Safety Ambassadors.

5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

BIS Community Member	Key Mental Health Responsibility
Staff at BIS	Act as positive role models, monitor the wellbeing of pupils within their care, and promptly refer any concerns or observations to the relevant Pastoral Team member or School Wellbeing Specialist.
School Leadership Team (SLT & MLT)	Promote a culture of respect and trust; ensure staff access relevant training (e.g First Aid Training); ensure staff supporting pupils through challenging situations (e.g., self-harm) are well supported via debriefs with the School Wellbeing Specialist.
BIS Students	Engage in all wellbeing activities; monitor their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others; communicate concerns to staff, parents, or peers.
BIS Parents	Support the wellbeing practices delivered by the School; communicate concerns about their child's wellbeing promptly to the class teacher, tutor, or School Wellbeing Specialist.

Compliance and Review

- Effective Date: This policy is effective from the start of Academic Year 2026/27 (Fall term).
- Full Compliance: Full compliance across all procedures is expected by the start of Academic Year 2026/27 (Fall term).
- Accountability: Non-compliance shall be subject to legal accountability and penalties as per ADEK's regulations.

The Principal and the Wellbeing Committee shall review this policy annually to ensure continued alignment with ADEK requirements and best practices.