

Student Wellbeing Policy



Al Mawakeb School

A. Student Wellbeing Policy

1.0 Rationale

Al Mawakeb Schools promote a vision that is focused on building individual and collective wellbeing. It is our mission to continually support students to reach their full potential by ensuring they develop academically as well as socially and personally. The vision of “Working together to promote the wellbeing and happiness of our children” is at the core of what Al Mawakeb represents. Mental health problems manifested in stress, anxiety, and worries can adversely affect the academic performance of a student as well as his/her overall wellbeing. This makes the health and wellbeing of each student a main target as these are prerequisites for sustainable academic and personal development.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to:

- Promote positive wellbeing awareness among all students and staff
- Increase student and staff awareness of common wellbeing issues
- Highlight existing support for students experiencing mental health problems
- Highlight venues for students to seek help and find necessary support
- Alert staff about early warning signs of mental health issues students may be experiencing
- Promote staff confidence in responding to our students’ wellbeing concerns

3.0 Policy Statement

- 3.1 The school shall create a wellbeing team that includes members with experience in dealing with student wellbeing issues.
- 3.2 The wellbeing team shall include representatives from the different stakeholders of the school (e.g., Principal, HoS, SCs, Inclusion Department, medical team, Activities Coordinator, teachers, and students)
- 3.3 The school shall create a safe and supportive environment where students who experience wellbeing-related difficulties can access the necessary support.
- 3.4 The school shall establish and implement proactive working procedures to ensure that student wellbeing is prioritized and that wellbeing issues are addressed immediately and appropriately.
- 3.5 The school shall encourage students to share any mental health concern or need they may have as early as possible so that the necessary support can be provided.
- 3.6 The school shall ensure a digitally safe environment for students by developing the necessary cyber safety skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors for using digital technologies effectively and appropriately.

- 3.7 The school shall promote student engagement and voice through opportunities and forums that empower them to give feedback on matters related to their own wellbeing.
- 3.8 The school shall conduct training sessions for academic staff focused on wellbeing, growth mindset, and Social-Emotional Learning.
- 3.9 The school shall monitor the wellbeing of any student experiencing wellbeing issues and the wellbeing of students of determination through close follow-up and coordination with parents.
- 3.10 The school shall conduct valid and reliable student and parent surveys and use the results to set strategies that enhance wellbeing.
- 3.11 The school shall engage parents to be actively involved in their children's wellbeing through multiple forums for communication, and through participating in a range of programs, events, and initiatives.
- 3.12 All individual cases of wellbeing-related problems shall be treated with absolute confidentiality. Disclosure of information shall be allowed only after consulting with the Principal.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities:

4.1 The Governing Body

The role of the Governing Body is to:

- Advocate for and promote a wellbeing vision that is focused on building student individual and collective wellbeing.
- Ensure that the school prioritizes wellbeing as a target for improvement.
- Ensure there are provisions in place to support students to achieve positive wellbeing.
- Monitor the wellbeing performance of the school and review it with the SLT.
- Comply with UAE legislative requirements in relation to student wellbeing and engage with external agencies as needed.

4.2 The Principal

The role of the Principal is to:

- Ensure the provision of a healthy working environment.
- Promote a family ethos and encourage a sense of belonging and community in the school.
- Work with the Wellbeing Team to build staff capacity around student wellbeing issues.
- Ensure that provisions are in place to support student health and wellbeing.
- Monitor and review the wellbeing performance of the school with the other school leaders.

- Comply with UAE legislative requirements in relation to student wellbeing and engage with external agencies as necessary.
- Ensure that policies and procedures related to student wellbeing are reviewed and updated as required.

4.3 The Head of Section

The role of the Head of Section is to:

- Promote and support the wellbeing of all students in their section.
- Address any concerns about student wellbeing.
- Conduct face-to-face individual sessions with students to listen to identified issues, provide appropriate advice, and assess whether further support is needed.
- Liaise with relevant parties (e.g., Wellbeing Team, Principal, Counselors, Health and Safety Committee, Inclusion Coordinator, parents), regarding students struggling with specific wellbeing issues that are adversely affecting their social/emotional wellbeing and/or their academic performance.
- Communicate with parents and students on issues related to student wellbeing in an atmosphere of positivity and family.
- Maintain confidentiality when dealing with issues related to student wellbeing.

4.4 The Inclusion Coordinator

The role of the Inclusion Coordinator is to:

- Embed effective collaborative systems to draw on the knowledge and competencies of educators, therapists, and other members of staff to assist each other in meeting the social emotional needs of students.
- Make sure that support teachers (ST) and learning support assistants (LSA) available to the school team to assist classroom teachers in providing effective instruction to students in need of support.
- Consult and collaborate with parents and caregivers of students who are struggling socially or emotionally to ensure appropriate and adequate provisions, accommodations, modifications, and services are provided.
- Partake in the organization and preparation of CPD or training related to SEL and wellbeing for all stakeholders.
- Coordinate with external agencies such as psychologists, social services and learning support agencies whenever needed.
- Establish and operate collaborative problem-solving processes and approaches with teachers to identify and deal with problems and challenges that emerge among students.

4.5 The Teacher

The role of the teacher is to:

- Create and maintain a safe and positive learning environment for students.
- Model and promote socially responsible values and behavior.
- Promote and support the wellbeing of all students in class.
- Develop positive relationships with students which promote and support their overall wellbeing.
- Attend all wellbeing-related training and be aware of the procedures in place to support student wellbeing.
- Implement strategies in their class that promote student wellbeing.
- Promptly raise concerns related to specific students on any wellbeing-related issue.
- Maintain confidentiality of information related to identified students who face wellbeing difficulties.

4.6 The Wellbeing Team

The role of the Wellbeing Team is to:

- Provide consultation to the Principal about the development of a strategic whole school approach to student wellbeing.
- Implement and promote the Student Wellbeing Policy in the school.
- Monitor the implementation of the policy and its related procedures at all levels in the school.
- Organize appropriate activities to promote student health and wellbeing.
- Act as the focus group for consulting on the effectiveness of implementation of wellbeing action plan.
- Build the capacity of school staff to support the wellbeing of all students.
- Coordinate the delivery of appropriate training to academic staff that serves to increase awareness of the factors that could affect the physical and mental wellbeing of students.
- Conduct student wellbeing surveys, analyze survey results, and recommend or take actions to address areas of concern.
- Conduct an annual review of the Student Wellbeing Policy and suggest updates as appropriate.

4.7 The Medical Team

The role of the Medical Team is to:

- Guide the school administrators, teachers, and parents in discussions about any health problem of a student, as required.
- Advise on the mental and physical conditions of a referred student after conducting the appropriate assessment.
- Refer children assessed who may have psychological or emotional disorders like anorexia, self-harm, addiction, abuse etc. as appropriate.

- Follow the set protocols of health and safety in handling emergencies related to mental health issues.
- Participate in planning and conducting wellbeing and health education activities in the school.
- Educate students and staff on healthy habits, such as proper nutrition and hygiene.
- Send reports as prescribed in the DHA School Clinic Regulation to Health Regulation Department in a timely manner.
- Stay updated with knowledge, skills, and practice related to school health.

5.0 Procedures:

5.1 Procedures for enhancing the Social-Emotional Wellbeing

The school shall enhance the Social-Emotional Wellbeing of students through the following:

- 5.1.1 Promoting a growth mindset among students.
- 5.1.2 Conducting awareness meetings with groups of students which focus on the importance of “progress” rather than “the end product” and encourage them to adopt a growth mindset.
- 5.1.3 Developing long term goals to integrate social and emotional learning in the curriculum.
- 5.1.4 Implementing wellbeing-related activities and initiatives.
- 5.1.5 Celebrating student achievement through different venues (e.g., social media, academic awards, etc.)
- 5.1.6 Exercising an open-door policy with students on wellbeing issues and provide counseling sessions to students as needed.
- 5.1.7 Providing counseling for students experiencing difficulties or students needing urgent help in coordination with parents as needed.
- 5.1.8 Taking early intervention and prevention steps to ensure that any student experiencing wellbeing-related difficulties will have the necessary support.

5.2 Forms of support

Social-Emotional Wellbeing Support shall take different forms including but not limited to:

- 5.2.1 **Teacher-student support:** Teachers are often a student’s first point of contact as they know them best. Therefore, it is important that teachers are trusted and are confident about responding to student concerns. Teachers will be trained on how to detect early signs of social and emotional difficulties and how to address them¹.
- 5.2.2 **Counseling Service:** This form of support or service will be provided to students in need after confirming this need. The school will ensure that

¹ Refer to Appendix A

the person who provides this service is experienced in this role. Referral to external agents may be recommended after consulting with parents.

5.2.3 **Awareness meetings and campaigns:** These can take different forms, including but not limited to the following examples:

- Emails from Principal to parents, students, and teachers about student wellbeing.
- HoS talks with groups of students.
- Wellbeing-related messages on social media to school community.
- Sharing newsletters with parents that focus on the general wellbeing.
- Facilitating meetings with different stakeholder groups during the school year.
- Awareness campaigns conducted by external agencies.
- Hanging posters that promote growth mindset and wellbeing across the campus.

5.2.4 **Venues for exercising voice;** some examples that the school can choose from:

- **Let's Talk:** This is a 15-minute discussion between the HoS and different groups of students on different social and emotional topics. Groups are formed by selecting one student from each class of two grade levels. This discussion takes place every Monday and Tuesday. The HoS and the students alternate weekly in the choice of the topics to be discussed.
- **We Hear You:** This venue can happen in two ways:
 - 1) a QR code is posted for students, parents & staff on campus that when scanned, opens a form in which they can post any wellbeing concerns and/or suggestions.
 - 2) a module on the school portal serving the same purpose.
- **Feeling Indicator Wall:** This is a wall in the elementary section dedicated for students who want to express how they feel. It teaches them to be aware of their feelings and be confident about expressing themselves.
- **De-Stress Corner/ Wellbeing room:** This is a safe area in school where students are provided a chance to relieve tension and regain their calm. In this area, there are bean bags, pillows, posters, and signs to guide them how to reduce stress and find ways to regain their calm. They can read calming literature, listen to calming music, and color calming Mandalas.
- **Walk-the-Talk Activity:** This is a set of virtual assemblies with the school Principal that take place the first Monday of every month. In

these assemblies, the Principal discusses specific topics around student life, needs, challenges, future choices, academic expectations. Students of G5-12 can post their questions through a discussion board around the topic before the assembly a week in advance.

- **Monday Soundbites:** These are short videos or audio clips that are published weekly on the school website and include bursts of interesting information, ideas or lessons learned about various topics, including physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Morning Music:** This is played from 7:00 am until 7:30 am. This background music encourages students to stay focused, self-regulate their behavior, be more motivated, and show less stress.
- **Mindfulness – Check in Feeling:** This is where students pick from an envelope the color that expresses their feeling according to a legend and write their names on the card. The HoS then collects and sorts the cards and meets the students to either encourage having a positive practice or to support in case there is any problem. An action plan/summary is then written at the end of every meeting and parents are notified about their child’s status. Tips and encouragement are always given to students.

5.2.5 **Praise and recognition;** some examples:

- Wall of Fame
- Merit system
- Additional praise systems for students (certificates, shining stars, academic awards, etc.)
- Praise and encouragement letters from HoS to students on school portal
- Encouraging students to discuss and celebrate their different areas of success.

5.2.6 **Academics;** some examples:

- Building on strategies and routines to help students develop perseverance and to effectively engage in productive struggle.
- Increasing curriculum offerings of course electives that target wellbeing. (e.g., Nutrition, Psychology, AP Psychology, Health and Fitness)
- Ensuring that lesson plans across subjects and phases contain connections to crucial learning for wellbeing.
- Revisiting assessment procedures to decrease load on students with a focus on quality assessments vs quantity assessments.

5.2.7 **Academic-related support;** some examples:

- Ensuring workload allows for more focus on student wellbeing rather than attainment.
- Ensuring there are flexible ways for students to submit their assignments, homework, assessments, etc. using LearnOnline, MS teams, Class Notebook, or even click a picture and post it on a specific WhatsApp group as per student convenience.
- Adapting assessment requirements that target simultaneously student wellbeing and academic issues.
- Extending deadlines of submissions and allowing students to sit for test retakes in case of genuine reasons.
- Training students on skills related to time management and organization.

5.2.8 **Physical wellness and healthy lifestyle;** some examples:

- Initiating activities that focus on health and wellness.
- Conducting awareness sessions that emphasize the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle (e.g., regular sleep patterns.)
- Ensuring that the cafeteria service provider offers a menu that includes healthy food choices with low calorific intake.
- Seeking opportunities to partner with outside organizations that offer activities which promote physical and mental wellbeing (e.g., sports, yoga, meditation classes, etc.)
- Inviting external agencies and presenters to conduct awareness sessions.
- Collaborating with the Health & Safety Committee on health and safety initiatives.

5.3 Support for Students of Determination

Students of determination can benefit from the above-mentioned forms of support as needed. The Wellbeing Team will also help students of determination with matters such as modifications and accommodations for learning. The Wellbeing Team shall coordinate its activities with the Inclusion Department represented by the Inclusion Coordinator.

5.4 Parent Involvement

The school shall take steps to involve parents in workshops, awareness campaigns, regular consultations, and subject focus meetings that target adolescence and mental wellbeing. The school shall also promote an “open door” policy with parents to discuss wellbeing issues related to their children. The school may also opt to include parents on the Wellbeing Team of the school when and if appropriate.

5.5 Wellbeing Training for Staff

As part of their regular ongoing professional development training, staff will receive regular training about recognizing and responding to mental health issues to enable them to keep students safe.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part capacity building process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes needed due to developing situations with students.

Appendix A summarizes key principles in enabling staff to feel confident in responding to students in crisis or distress. It also highlights ways to respond to a student whom one may have concerns about.

Appendix A

Staff don't need to be mental health experts to intervene or respond to students' mental health needs. Just being present, listening without judgement, and taking student concerns seriously, can make a difference in letting a student feel supported.

Signs of concerns

Mental health problems can adversely affect the student's studies. Stress and challenges are part of the student's school experience. While challenge and stress can have a positive impact on motivating a student to achieve their best, there may be instances when these may become too much for students to cope or overcome thus manifesting in worries and anxiety, among other symptoms. The best way to prevent students from stress-related issues and mental health problems is to intervene early and be aware of early signs of concern.

These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to relevant colleagues as soon as possible.

Possible warning signs include but not limited to:

- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- A trend of regress in academic achievement
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or loss of hope
- Increased isolation and/or becoming socially withdrawn
- Sudden changes in activity, appearance, or mood
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Talking or joking about self-harm
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Any teacher who detects the above signs and is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should address this as soon as possible with the Head of Section. If the student presents a medical emergency, then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed.