Student Referral Policy for School Counseling Services

The British International School, Belgrade (BIS) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the BIS Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Antibullying Policy, SEN Policy, Behaviour Policies, Staff Code of Conduct, E-Safety Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

Created: June 2026

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School Counselor: Milica Jevtic

BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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Introduction

At British International School, Belgrade (BIS), we are committed to fostering the emotional, social, and academic well-being of our students. To support this mission, our school counseling services provide a safe and confidential space for students to address their challenges and develop skills for personal growth. This policy outlines the procedures for referring students to the school counselor, ensuring timely and appropriate access to support. Our goal is to create an inclusive and collaborative approach to student care, involving teachers, parents, and relevant stakeholders while respecting students' individual needs and privacy.

School counselling forms part of BIS's wider safeguarding and pastoral support framework. While counselling provides emotional wellbeing support and early intervention, any concerns indicating that a child may be at risk of harm will be managed in accordance with the BIS Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The role of the School Counselor

The school counselor is a trained professional dedicated to supporting students' academic, emotional and social development. Their role is integral to creating a safe and inclusive school environment. Key responsibilities of the school counselor include:

- Providing individual counseling to help students address personal & social challenges.
- Identifying and assessing student needs through observation, consultation, and evaluation.
- Developing and implementing interventions and strategies to support student growth.
- Assisting students in developing basic social-emotional competences.
- Offering academic and career guidance to assist students in planning and goal setting.
- Collaborating with teachers & parents to ensure student well-being.
- Addressing crises & mediating conflicts to maintain a safe school environment.

Problems Addressed by the School Counselor

The school counselor addresses a certain spectrum of issues that may impact students' well-being and academic success. These include:

- Managing anxiety, depression, stress, grief, and self-esteem issues.
- Supporting students facing family disruptions, identity exploration, or personal growth challenges.
- Supporting students in understanding others, seeing their point of view, enhancing social skills & developing empathy.
- Assisting with poor performance, motivation, learning difficulties, and study habits (provide that the underlying cause is emotional distress).
- Providing immediate support in response to critical incidents such as self-harm, suicidal ideation, or threats to safety, while implementing safeguarding procedures where required.

Referral process

A structured referral process is in place to ensure that students receive appropriate support from the school counselor. Before referring a student, teaching staff are expected to implement certain preliminary steps, such as observing the student's behavior, documenting specific concerns and attempting individual or classroom-based interventions. These measures help to identify and address challenges while providing valuable context for the school counselor. If these steps do not adequately resolve the issues, the Form Tutor can initiate a formal referral by completing the required *Student Referral Form for School Counselor (Appendix 1)* and consulting with the counselor to determine the best course of action. This collaborative process ensures that referrals are made thoughtfully and with the student's best interests in mind. The Form Tutor can also initiate the referral process on student's or parent's request, but is still expected to implement the mentioned preliminary steps before the referral is made.

Exception to the Referral Process

Students who are experiencing emotional distress or disturbance, such as anxiety, depression, grief, or crisis situations, are exempt from the standard referral process. In such cases, teaching staff are encouraged to refer the student directly to the school counselor to ensure they receive immediate support. Prompt action in these circumstances prioritizes the student's emotional well-being and safety.

Concerns suggesting abuse, neglect, self-harm, suicidal risk, exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, or any other safeguarding risk should not be managed solely through the counselling referral process. Such concerns require immediate action in accordance with the BIS Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and must be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. Where the Counsellor is also the DSL, they must ensure that the concern is managed under safeguarding procedures rather than through counselling support alone.

What is expected from Form Tutors?

Before formally referring the student to a school counselor, the Form Tutor should:

- Determine the type of concern (academic, behavioural, emotional or social difficulties)
- Consult the School Counselor about their concern
- Inform the KS Coordinator (in agreement with School Counselor on what information can be shared - to ensure respecting student's privacy & maintaining confidentiality)
- Observe the student for minimum two weeks and:
    - determine specific behaviours or challenges
    - determine specific situations in which these behaviours occur
    - assess student's interactions with peers
    - assess changes in their academic performance
    - pay special attention to *changes in their behavior* (withdrawal, aggression, conflicts with peers or teachers, anxiety, shouting or crying…)
- During this time, attempt working with the student to provide additional support.

  - Inform their parents/caregivers of the concern

- Schedule a meeting with the parents
  - discuss their view of the issue & methods they use at home to address it
  - gather any other relevant information (for example, regarding the family situation, major life events, medical conditions, cultural differences...)
- Work with the class on group dynamics with the aim of supporting or reintegrating the student back into a group.
- Collaborate with the Form Tutors of other classes if the behavior of their students is relevant to the issue concerning the student in question.

What is expected from teachers?

Teachers are expected to:

- communicate with the Form Tutor or School Counselor upon noticing any significant changes in a student's behavior and seek advice if needed;
- implement the methods & strategies developed collaboratively by the Form Tutor and School Counselor, if instructed to do so.

The Counseling process

Working with the student

Upon receiving the formal referral, the School Counselor will first review it to ensure that all necessary preliminary steps have been taken and determine if any additional actions can be implemented to further support the student. If the criteria are met, the School Counselor will begin the counseling process, which involves a series of one-on-one sessions with the student. The frequency of meetings will be determined in collaboration with the student and their parents, depending on factors such as the type of problem, its severity, and the goals set. The fundamental components of the counseling process include:

- Providing a non-judgmental and empathetic space for the student to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Helping students identify negative thought patterns and replace them with healthier, more constructive way of thinking & behaving.
- Focusing on the student's strengths and resources to identify solutions and set achievable goals, rather than dwelling on problems.
- Using reinforcement strategies to encourage positive changes in behavior and habits.
- Focusing on the student's past successes to build their confidence and empower them to tackle current challenges.
- Setting specific, measurable, achievable (realistic), relevant (meaningful) & time-framed goals ("S.M.A.R.T. goals) and creating a plan of action to work towards them.
- Working with the student on developing effective communication, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills, which can improve their relationships with peers and teachers.
- Educating the student about mental health, emotional regulation, stress management, and coping strategies to build their emotional competence and self-awareness.

Collaborating with the parents/caregivers

The school counselor will collaborate with parents when working with students to ensure a holistic approach that addresses their academic, emotional, and social needs. The key components of this collaboration include:

- Asking for a formal Parent/Carer consent for School Counseling services
- Introducing the purpose of collaboration and setting a positive tone for communication.
- Discussing the student's needs, challenges, and progress.
- Obtaining relevant insights from parents about the student's home environment, family dynamics, significant life events, or other factors influencing the student's well-being.
- Sharing observations about the student's behavior, academic performance, or social interactions.
- Identifying shared goals for the student's development & aligning the expectations.

- Offering guidance to parents to support their child's development at home and informing them of community services if necessary.
- Encouraging parents to actively participate in implementing strategies or reinforcing them at home.
- Maintaining regular communication about student's progress through follow-up meetings, emails or phone calls.
- Ensuring that all discussions maintain the student's privacy and adhere to ethical and professional standards.

Collaborating with the special needs specialist

The school counselor collaborates regularly with the special needs specialist to ensure an integrative approach to student well-being. This collaboration allows for the development of tailored strategies that address the diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of all students, fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment.

Working with the teachers

The school counselor collaborates with teachers and key stage coordinators to ensure they adjust their approach based on recommendations that align with the students' needs. This collaboration also facilitates valuable feedback from teachers and coordinators, enabling the school counselor to refine strategies and provide more effective support for the students.

Referral to outside institutions

When necessary, the school counselor may encourage parents to refer their children to external institutions or specialists for additional support or evaluation. This ensures that students receive comprehensive care beyond the scope of the school's resources, addressing their specific needs effectively.

Confidentiality & information sharing

The school counselor will maintain confidentiality wherever possible and will only share information on a need-to-know basis. This ensures that the necessary details are provided to support the student effectively while respecting their privacy. Similarly, the counselor cannot

disclose all the information to parents either, as the privacy and well-being of the child remain the central priority in all decisions and interactions (for example, the school counselor will share the impressions about the overall progress of the student, but will refrain from talking about specific details or situations, as to respect the student's trust & privacy). Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where there are concerns that a student may be at risk of harm or where safeguarding obligations require information to be shared.

Recording, monitoring and evaluation

The school counselor is responsible for accurately recording relevant information about student interactions, referrals, and interventions while adhering to confidentiality and data protection policies. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the student's progress are integral to ensuring the effectiveness of counseling support. This includes documenting observations, assessing the outcomes of implemented strategies, and updating plans as needed. All records are maintained securely and used solely to **enhance the student's well-being.**

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Appendix 1: Student Referral Form for School Counselor

Note: This form is confidential and should be completed with accurate and detailed information to support the student effectively.

Student information

Student's name:		Year group:	
Form Tutor name:		Time at BIS:	

Reason for Referral

What are the specific concerns that prompted this referral?
(Check all that apply)

- Academic difficulties
  (Should be referred to Form tutor unless the underlying cause is an emotional distress)
- Behavioral challenges
  (Should be referred to a KS Coordinator unless the underlying cause is an emotional distress)
- Emotional concerns
  (e.g., anxiety, sadness)
- Social difficulties
  (e.g., peer relationships, isolation)

Describe the concern:

▪

Have you discussed your concerns with the Key Stage Coordinator? (mandatory)

	Yes
	No

Observation and Documentation

The behavior of the student should be actively observed for at least 2 weeks before making a referral.

How long have you observed the student regarding these concerns?

-

Provide specific examples of the student's behavior or challenges:

-
-
-
-
-
-

When and where are the concerns most noticeable?
(e.g., during specific lessons, breaks, outside of school)

-

Interventions tried

This step is mandatory before referring the student to a psychologist.

What strategies or interventions have you already implemented?
(talking to the student, contacting the parents, working with the group…)

-
-
-
-
-

Describe the outcomes of these interventions:

▪

Social and Emotional Behavior

How does the student interact with peers?
(difficulty making friends, conflicts with others, isolated or withdrawn…)

▪

Have you noticed any emotional signs, such as frequent sadness or crying, anxiety, irritability?

▪

Communication with Parents/Guardians

This step is mandatory before referring the student to a counsellort.

Have you discussed your concerns with the student's parents/guardians?

	Yes
	No

Summarize their feedback or any relevant information shared:

▪

*Provide the date of the meeting with the parents.

Academic achievement

How is the student performing academically?
(average, below/above average)

▪

Have you noticed any specific difficulties regarding learning?

▪

▪

▪

Additional Information

Are there any other factors that might be relevant to this referral?
(medical, cultural, family situation…)

▪

Teacher's signature:

Teacher referring: -

Date of referral: -

BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

British International School Belgrade
Neznanog junaka 36, Beograd
Email: info@bis.edu.rs
Phone: +381 11 3066-096

To: Parents/Careers of [Student's Name]
Subject: Consent for School Counseling Services

Dear Parents/Careers,

At *British International School Belgrade*, we are committed to supporting the academic, social, and emotional well-being of our students. As part of our student support services, we offer school counseling to help students navigate personal challenges, improve their emotional resilience, and foster a positive school experience.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in school counseling, please sign the Consent Form given below and return it to us. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us via the email or phone number provided in this letter.

The sessions will be conducted by our School Counselor & Designated Safeguarding Lead, Milica Jevtić, in a confidential and supportive environment. Please note that participation in counseling is voluntary, and information shared during sessions will remain confidential except in situations where there is a concern for the student's safety or as required by law.

Thank you for your continued support in fostering your child's well-being and success.
Sincerely,

British International School Belgrade
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Parental Consent Form for School Counseling Services

I, _____, parent/career of _____ (Student's Name), grant permission for my child to participate in school counseling services provided by British International School Belgrade. I understand that the sessions are confidential, except in cases where disclosure is necessary for safety or legal reasons.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Number: _____