

Cambridge International School

Student Mental Health and Well-being Policy and Procedures

NAME OF POLICY	Student Mental Health and Well-being Policy and Procedure
APPROVED BY	Principal
LAST REVIEW DATE	September 2026
NEXT REVIEW DATE	August 2027
RELATED POLICIES	• GEMS Safeguarding Policy • E-Learning Policy • Anti-Bullying Policy • Student Code of Conduct Policy • Attendance Policy
OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS	• Be A GEM Handbook, published June 2025 • Leadership Gemstones Playbook, published May 2025 • Leadership Gemstones Stand Up. Speak Out. Playbook published 2026

Purpose

At Cambridge International School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional well-being to all students, their families, staff, and LAB members. Well-being is at the heart of everything that we do! Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and by using effective policies and procedures, we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all.

At CIS, student wellbeing is delivered through the GEMS Culture of Excellence Framework. Our wellbeing provision supports:

- Belonging through inclusion, student voice and family partnerships.
- Care through safeguarding, early intervention, counselling and targeted support.
- Character through Leadership Gemstones and Stand Up, Speak Out.
- Leadership through student agency, wellbeing ambassadors and peer leadership.
- Purpose through careers education, service learning and personal development.
- Potential through personalised learning and wellbeing support systems.

Vision: *At CIS we collaborate with passion, innovate with purpose and succeed with excellence.*

Mission: *At CIS, we prioritise wellbeing and inclusion, fostering a nurturing community where every student thrives as a high-performance learner. Guided by our core values of respect, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and perseverance, we empower students to collaborate, innovate, and succeed.*

Scope

This policy guides all parents and staff – including non-teaching and LAB members – outlining CIS's approach to promoting mental health and emotional well-being. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies. We uphold GEMS values and pledge to **care** for all stakeholders within our school

Excellence Plan:



CARE

I respect the needs of my stakeholders. I will ensure they feel listened to and cared for.

- **At CIS** we will embed Leadership Gemstones throughout the school placing leadership and character building at the heart of our school community.
- **At CIS** we will continue to develop and deliver outstanding practice in the areas of inclusion and continue to support our most vulnerable students.
- **At CIS** we will ensure that the wellbeing of students and staff is considered and prioritized at all times.
- **At CIS** we will secure outstanding ratings for all aspects of Safeguarding and Health and Safety.
- **At CIS** we will actively promote and integrate UAE national identity, Emirati culture, and the National Agenda throughout the curriculum and school life, ensuring students develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the values, heritage, and vision of the United Arab Emirates.

Policy Aims

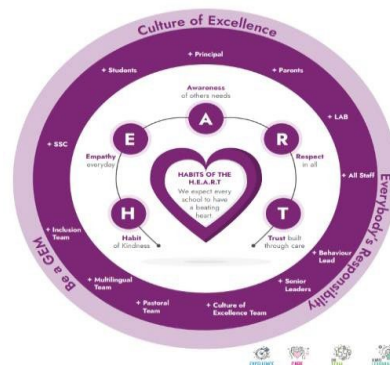
- Promote positive mental health, resilience, and emotional wellbeing for all students.
- Provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment responsive to the needs of each learner.
- Foster positive relationships between students, staff, and parents.
- Ensure early identification of mental health needs and timely intervention.
- Embed wellbeing in daily practice through evidence-based approaches, curriculum, and culture.
- Measure and evaluate wellbeing outcomes through stakeholder voice, attendance, behaviour, PASS, Upstrive and counselling data.
- Demonstrate the impact of wellbeing initiatives through continuous monitoring and improvement.

Culture of Excellence and Be A GEM Ethos

At CIS, wellbeing is inseparable from our Culture of Excellence. This culture is underpinned by the GEMS values of *Care, One Team, Always Learning and Excellence* and is lived daily through the Be a GEM ethos.

The Be a GEM approach ensures:

- Accentuating the Positive: We deliberately highlight, praise, and reward behaviours that reflect our values, ensuring positive recognition outweighs negative consequences.
- Finding the Genius: We actively look for moments where students shine, reinforcing confidence, resilience, and a growth mindset.
- Shared Routines: Consistent routines across the school (e.g., the GEMS Gateway greeting, positive endings to each day) build rhythm, security, and belonging.
- Celebration and Recognition: Students are regularly recognised through certificates, postcards, GEM of the Week, Sparkling GEMS awards, and Leadership Gemstone celebrations.



Through this ethos, we cultivate a school environment where students are encouraged to be the best version of themselves: resilient, respectful, and ready to learn.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students; however, key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- HOY, Class teachers, TAs, LSAs
- Head of Inclusion
- School Counsellors
- Student Mentors
- Student Support Managers
- Mental Health First Aid trained staff and students
- HODs Moral, Social, Cultural Studies
- Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy DSLs
- The Wellbeing Core Team
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Wellbeing Governance

Cambridge International School maintains a Wellbeing Core Team consisting of:

- Principal
- DSL
- Director of Wellbeing
- Pastoral Deputy Heads
- School Counsellors
- Inclusion Representative
- Student Voice Representative (where appropriate)

The Wellbeing Core Team meets regularly to monitor wellbeing provision, review data and coordinate interventions. The WCT reviews wellbeing data termly and develops 90-Day Wellbeing Action Plans. These plans identify priority actions, ownership, evidence requirements, success measures and review dates.

School Counselling Services

School counselling services operate in alignment with the GEMS Caring GEMS Framework and contribute to the Multi-Tiered System of Support:

- **Tier 1** Universal Support
- **Tier 2** Targeted Support
- **Tier 3** Intensive Support

Counselling provision is integrated with safeguarding, inclusion and pastoral systems.

Pastoral Leads

Deputy Heads of Pastoral provide strategic oversight of wellbeing, behaviour, attendance and pastoral provision across the school. They support and challenge Heads of Year, monitor the impact of interventions,

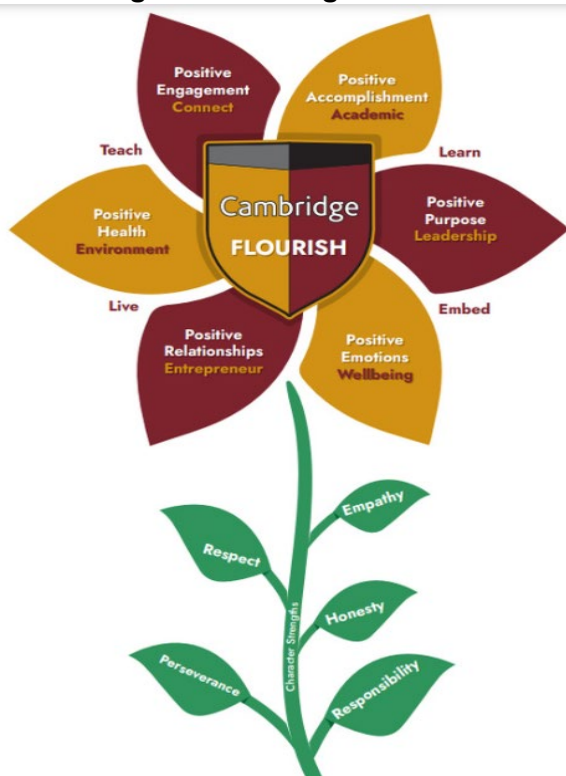
and ensure the consistent implementation of whole-school wellbeing priorities, including Leadership Gemstones, Stand Up, Speak Out and BEYOND100.

Heads of Year are key pastoral leaders responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and support of students within their year group. They actively:

- Lead and oversee programmes that promote student wellbeing, belonging, resilience, and personal development.
- Analyse wellbeing, PASS, attendance, and behaviour data to ensure timely and appropriate interventions.
- Support Learning Managers in using Upstrive (Years 2-13) and ensure daily wellbeing check-ins in EYFS.
- Monitor and promote the implementation of Leadership Gemstones, Stand Up, Speak Out, and BEYOND100, ensuring consistent student engagement and participation.
- Communicate effectively with students, parents, and staff regarding wellbeing, behaviour, and attendance.
- Liaise with school medical staff, counsellors, inclusion teams, and safeguarding staff to support students' needs.
- **Secondary:** oversee Unifrog, My Mentor, Lifeology, and My Compass, and monitor engagement and impact data.
- **Primary:** oversee Squirrel, Earth Cubs, and My Compass, supporting Learning Managers with implementation.
- Contribute to the development, implementation, and review of pastoral, wellbeing, behaviour, and attendance policies and procedures.
- Work closely with Deputy Heads of Pastoral to ensure high-quality pastoral support and positive outcomes for all students.

If staff have concerns about a student's mental health or wellbeing, they should first inform the **Head of Year** and, where needed, refer to the **School Counsellor** (see Appendix 1). All concerns are shared with the Head/ and Deputy Head of Pastoral during weekly and SLT wellbeing meetings. If a student is at **immediate risk of harm**, staff must follow child protection procedures, notify the **DSL/Deputy DSL** without delay, and follow medical emergency protocols, including contacting emergency services if required.

Teaching and Learning – Curriculum for Life



At CIS, we recognise the importance of Martin Seligman's Positive Education approach in promoting flourishing, resilience, and positive mental health. Our Curriculum for Life (CFL) provides a proactive, whole-school approach to developing the knowledge, skills, values, and habits that enable students to thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and personally.

Aligned with the GEMS Wellbeing Framework, our curriculum focuses on fostering a strong sense of belonging, care, character, leadership, potential, and purpose. Through explicit teaching and meaningful opportunities for reflection and personal growth, students develop self-awareness, emotional literacy, resilience, healthy relationships, and the confidence to navigate challenges successfully.

Our approach is strengths-based and grounded in positive education principles. We encourage students to recognise their strengths, learn from setbacks, make positive choices, and develop the skills needed to maintain their wellbeing throughout their lives.

The Curriculum for Life (CFL) is continually reviewed and adapted to meet the evolving needs of our students and includes:

- Leadership Gemstones, providing a shared language for character development, leadership, values, and positive contribution to the school community.
- Stand Up, Speak Out, empowering students to be respectful, responsible upstanders who promote

- inclusion, kindness, and positive relationships while preventing bullying and discrimination.
- BEYOND100, supporting students to develop lifelong longevity habits through the five pillars of Move Beyond, Nourish Beyond, Rest Beyond, Think Beyond, and Align Beyond.
- Philosophy for Children and Global Citizenship, encouraging critical thinking, ethical decision-making, cultural awareness, and social responsibility.
- Financial Literacy, Future Careers, and Sustainability Education, preparing students for life beyond school and helping them develop a sense of purpose and aspiration.
- Upstrive Wellbeing Sessions, supporting emotional regulation, self-reflection, mental health awareness, and help-seeking behaviours.

Through CFL, students are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to flourish, contribute positively to their communities, and navigate life's opportunities and challenges with confidence and resilience.

The time spent teaching the CFL differs across departments and year groups and is reviewed annually:

Programme	EYFS	Y1-Y6	Y7-Y9	Y10-Y13
	Daily (15 mins) delivered during CFL. Friday Align Beyond activity shared with families via the weekly newsletter and reviewed in class.		Daily (15 mins) delivered through CFL. Where assemblies occur, delivery may be combined across two sessions within the week.	
 Stand Up, Speak Out	CFL (2x 15 mins)	CFL (2x 15 mins)	Daily Registration	Daily Registration
	Teachers share the weekly video, Word of the Week and metaphor image before facilitating discussion and completing the activity. Stand Up, Speak Out themes are taught through Leadership Gemstones.			
	Age-appropriate careers awareness activities as scheduled.	-One CFL session (15 mins Primary/ 25 mins secondary) per week plus follow-up/home learning activities where directed.		-
	-	CFL (1x 15 mins) Financial Literacy	-	-
	-	-	-	CFL (1 x 25 mins) minimum, plus additional sessions as required for destinations, applications and career planning.
Emotion Check-ins 	Daily Registration	Daily Registration	Daily Registration	Daily Registration

Teaching about Mental Health

Wellbeing skills are explicitly taught through the **CFL**, assemblies, and the *Mental Health First Aiders* and *Happiness Ambassadors* plan awareness weeks throughout the year, such as online safety, anti-bullying, autism awareness. Lessons build coping strategies and resilience, aligned with MSCS guidance. Additionally, we use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

The Four Quadrants

The Four Quadrants provide the operational drivers through which the CIS wellbeing strategy is delivered

and monitored:

Student Voice

We empower students to take ownership of their wellbeing. In FS, children share feelings at registration using visual prompts, while from Year 3 onwards they use Upstrive to identify emotions, make choices, and seek support. All students can raise concerns via *Speak Up* and *Phoenix*, monitored by the School Counsellor. Roles such as *Well-being Leaders* and *Mental Health First Aiders* further encourage peer support and advocacy.

Student Wellbeing

Every CIS student has the right to be respected, to learn, and to feel safe. Our leadership teams, LAB, and Parent Wellbeing Team keep wellbeing at the heart of our school. Staff act as trusted adults, supported by School Counsellors, and we celebrate achievements through daily *Phoenix Points* as rewards to support a culture of positivity, *Weekly Awards* that recognise students who exemplify our GEMS values, *Positive Postcards* to acknowledge students who have achieved point thresholds, and *Monthly Awards* recognise our Leadership Gemstone. Half-termly **Sparkling GEMS Assembly** recognises students that uphold GEMS values as we celebrate collectively.

Personalised Learning

The *Curriculum for Life (CFL)*, built upon Positive Education principals, explicitly teaches wellbeing skills to help students flourish. Tools like the *PASS survey* and *Leuven Scale* track needs, while targeted interventions with teachers, parents, and external experts provide holistic support.

Preparing for the Future

Through CFL, students build independence, resilience, and life skills. They engage in financial literacy, sustainability, and career programmes such as *Squirrel*, *Earth Cubs*, *My Compass*, and, in Secondary, *Unifrog*, *My Mentor*, and the *Duke of Edinburgh Award*.

Resilience and Anti-Bullying

Resilience is crucial in helping students stand strong, overcome challenges, and support one another. At CIS, resilience links directly to **Leadership Gemstones** and the **Stand Up, Speak Out** message on bullying. We teach that resilience includes:

- Finding the courage to speak up and be an Upstander.
- Standing with and for others.
- Creating a culture where bullying, exclusion, and unkindness are not tolerated.

Our **anti-bullying framework** is aligned with the Leadership Gemstones. Monthly themes proactively teach students how to be upstanders, equipping them with the confidence and strategies to support peers and maintain a safe, respectful school environment.

Despite all we do to promote positive mental health and well-being we know that some students may suffer from poor mental health

Identification process

We aim to identify student wellbeing and mental health needs as early as possible through proactive systems and regular monitoring. Key areas such as safeguarding, attendance, welfare, and health and safety are standing agenda items, ensuring emerging concerns are swiftly acted upon.

How We Identify Needs

- Wellbeing calendar, surveys, and behaviour/attendance analysis.
- Staff reports, pupil progress reviews, and assemblies focusing on wellbeing themes.
- Transfer information from previous schools.
- Parent meetings, coffee mornings, and open channels for concerns.
- Student self-referrals via teachers, **Stand Up. Speak Out.**, or **Phoenix**.

Attendance is closely tracked, as persistent absence may signal safeguarding or mental health concerns.

PASS

Students flagged through **PASS surveys**, poor attendance, diagnosis, or external support are referred for intervention. Strategies are noted on lesson plans, including:

- Key actions and performance indicators to indicate small, achievable targets.
- Notes on condition/diagnosis, special requirements, or medication.

Upstrive

'Upstrive' an online application is used daily from Y2-Y13 to monitor student well-being. Students complete their daily 'check-in' at the start of each morning which their Learning Manager views. The check-in asks, 'How are you feeling today?' each student's response is confidentially shared with their teacher. The student also has the option to write and disclose why they are feeling this way. Responses are reviewed by Learning Managers, Heads of Year, and School Counsellors, who act on any disclosures.

Signposting

Information about internal, local, and national support services is shared via the screens in corridors, displays, newsletters, and the school website so students and families know: *what help is available, who it is for, how to access it, and what to expect*. The Safeguarding core team, Student Support Mentors and MHFA posters are positioned around the school.

Sources of support at school and in the local community / School based support:

Local Support

In Dubai, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support for mental health. A Government portal for Mental Health is available here - [Mental health - The Official Portal of the UAE Government](#)

Emirates Health Services which provides Mental Health Services - [Mental Health Services | Services Directory | Services | Emirates Health Services - UAE \(ehs.gov.ae\)](#)

Warning signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student or colleague is experiencing mental health or emotional well-being issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should alert one of the Key Staff Members noted on page 2.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity and mood.
- Lowering of academic achievement / enthusiasm for vocation.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- Abusing drugs or alcohol.
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or loss of hope.

Targeted Support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health (e.g., young carers, those in care, experiencing trauma or family mental illness) and they receive tailored interventions from School Counsellors, the wellbeing team, and external agencies. Support may include care plans, early intervention strategies, and referrals.

Multi-Tiered System of Support

Cambridge International School adopts a Multi-Tiered System of Support:

Tier 1: Universal wellbeing provision for all students.

Tier 2: Targeted support for students requiring additional intervention.

Tier 3: Intensive and specialist support for students with significant needs.

Referrals may involve counsellors, safeguarding teams, inclusion staff and external agencies.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural challenges.
- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems.

- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach.
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs.
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, so that emotional, social, and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur.
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality.
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers.

*It is essential all staff members to recognise the boundary between support and professional health care. **Only suitably trained healthcare professionals are qualified to diagnose and treat health conditions, whether mental or physical.***

Managing disclosures

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive, and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be recorded confidentially using 'Guard' and raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy DSL). Our Mental Health First Aiders are trained so that any disclosures made to them will immediately be reported to the School Counsellor (who coordinates them) and ultimately Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy DSL as appropriate. Support will be available for Mental Health First Aiders through regular meetings with the School Counsellor.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on serious concerns about a student to someone outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student and/or parents. We will tell them:

- ☐ Who we are going to tell
- ☐ What we are going to tell them
- ☐ Why we need to tell them
- ☐ When we are going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student and/or parents first; however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as when students are deemed to be in danger of harm. It is important to also safeguard staff emotional well-being. Sharing disclosures with a Key Staff Member or DSL as appropriate ensures one member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support. If a student gives us reason to believe that they are at risk or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Parent Partnership

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents of any concerns, there are questions we consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Can the meeting take place somewhere quiet without disturbance?
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents, Key Staff Members etc?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for any parent, hearing about concerns for their child can be upsetting and distressing. Staff should allow time for parents to reflect, while offering reassurance and signposting to further sources of support where helpful. Clear communication must be maintained after the meeting, with follow-up arranged if needed. A record of the discussion and agreed actions should be added to the student's Guard record, and an Individual Care Plan created where appropriate.

Supporting Parents

We recognise that the family plays a key role in influencing students' emotional health and well-being; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and well-being by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to material promoting social and emotional well-being and preventing mental health problems.
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (social media, newsletters etc.).
- Offering support to help parents develop their parenting skills as appropriate.
- Offering bespoke 1:1 support and advice through our School Counsellors.
- Having open lines of communication between parents and class teacher or tutor, Head of Year and/or Key Staff Members.
- Well-being seminars to be held for parents by the School Counsellors.

Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from poor mental health, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support them but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one-to-one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents, with whom we will discuss:

- What is it helpful for friends to know, and what should they not be told?
- How can friends best support and provide safe sources of further information?
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset.
- Signposting where and how to access support for themselves.
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

Training and Staff Wellbeing

All staff receive regular training in recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of child protection. Further training on supporting children's mental health is provided, with access to the **MindEd** online learning portal for self-directed learning. Additional CPD and targeted training are offered through performance management and in response to emerging needs. Staff are encouraged to discuss CPD suggestions with SLT and School Counsellors, who can advise on suitable opportunities.

There is a dedicated Director of Wellbeing, Deputy Pastoral Leads and the Staff Wellbeing Team (which includes school counsellors) that promote well-being throughout the school. An additional policy for Staff Well-being includes the procedures at CIS. The Staff Well-being policy is shared with staff and outlines pillars for support and tools to promote well-being. All staff have access to the school counsellors and can be signposted to external counsellors. Staff well-being feedback is collected and the data is analysed, an action plan is then created and processes and policies are reviewed accordingly.

All staff will:

- Treat all people with dignity and respect;
- Leaders and staff lead by example and execute routines exceptionally well using Be A GEM: Leadership Habits
- Understand their safeguarding duties concerning students' mental and physical health and well-being, and raise any concerns promptly with the DSL or other members of the safeguarding team;
- Adhere to this policy and any related policies and procedures.

CIS creates a supportive environment which allows students to flourish and live the core values of GEMS: *Care, One Team, Always Learning and Excellence*. Relationships are key to our success. Our approach to developing positive relationships and a school with a strong heart beat are summarised in the acronym HEART:

- » H – habit of kindness
- » E – Empathy everyday
- » A – Awareness of others' needs
- » R – Respect in all
- » T – Trust built through care

Wellbeing Audit and Continuous Improvement

Cambridge International School conducts an annual Wellbeing Audit aligned with the GEMS Wellbeing Framework.

Evidence is reviewed against the ten key areas of wellbeing provision and informs:

- School Self Evaluation
- Improvement Planning
- Leadership Monitoring
- Stakeholder Feedback
- Wellbeing Priorities

Findings are used to create a 90-Day Wellbeing Action Plan with clear responsibilities and measurable outcomes.

APPENDIX 1: Counselling Referral Procedure Flowchart

Counselling Referral Procedure Flowchart

