

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS POLICY

Rationale

The school's guiding statement stresses on belief, support and encouragement. At MICS we believe that with the necessary intervention and support given to learners they would be able to maximize their potential.

All students should have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programmes. Inclusion programmes and services enable students with learning support requirements to have suitable access to learning and opportunities to pursue and achieve their goals of their educational programmes. The Inclusive Education Team (Learning Support Coordinator, Career and Guidance Counsellor and the Emotional Counsellor) of the school is to provide leadership, guidance, and support to the school community in order to maximize learning for all students within an inclusive environment so that each student can contribute to and benefit from our diverse society.

IB Requirements

IB 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." (IB mission statement 2004).

The International Baccalaureate embraces inclusive practices where all teachers and specialists of a school share the development of learning of all students. Difference and diversity are central in IB World Schools where all students enrolled in IB programmes should receive meaningful and equitable access to the curriculum. Enhancing the motivation to learn from multiple perspectives, through collaborative teaching approaches, can lead to positive outcomes for all students. These outcomes include improved academic and social skills, increased self-esteem, and more positive relationships with others in the community.

The IB supports the following principles of an inclusive education:

1. Inclusion is a process by which schools and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include all students.
2. An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice, incorporating the views of all stakeholders.
3. The interests of all students must be safeguarded.
4. The school community and other authorising bodies should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.
5. All students should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential.
6. With the right skills training, strategies and support, the majority of students with learning support requirements can be successfully included in mainstream education.

7. Mainstream education will not always be appropriate for every student all the time. Equally, just because mainstream education may not be appropriate at a particular stage, it does not prevent the student from being included successfully at any other stage.

IB Principles of Inclusive Education

The IB supports the following principles of an inclusive education where:

1. Education for all is considered a human right
2. Education is enhanced by the creation of affirmative, responsive environments that promote a sense of belonging, safety, self-worth and overall development and growth for every student.
3. Every teacher is responsible for the education of all students
4. Learning is considered from a strength-based perspective
5. Learning diversity is valued as a rich resource for building inclusive communities
6. All learners belong and experience equal opportunities to participate and engage in quality learning
7. Full potential is unlocked through connecting with, and building on previous knowledge
8. Assessment provides all learners with opportunities to demonstrate their learning, which is rewarded and celebrated
9. Multilingualism is recognised as a fact, a right and a resource
10. All students in the school community fully participate in an IB education and are empowered to exercise their rights and accept their responsibilities as global citizens
11. All students in the school community have a voice and are listened to so that their input and insights are taken into account
12. All students in the school community develop the IB Learner Profile attributes and develop into inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect
13. Diversity is understood to include all members of a community
14. All students experience learning as a key component of success.

Learning Support Requirements

Support and/or access required to enable some candidates, who have the aptitude to meet all curriculum and assessment requirements, reach their full potential in learning and assessment. Candidates who require inclusive assessment arrangements may have learning support requirements due to one or more of the following:

- * Autism spectrum/Asperger's syndrome
- * Learning disabilities
- * Medical conditions
- * Mental health issues
- * Multiple disabilities
- * Physical and/or sensory challenges

Social, emotional and behavioral difficulties

* Specific learning difficulties

* Speech, language, and/or communication difficulties (IBO, 2013, 2)

Goals of the Policy

The main goals of this policy are:

- To create a welcoming environment for each student
- To ensure that the learning support requirements of students are identified early, assessed, and provided for
- To clarify the expectations of families, teachers, administration, and students
- To identify staff roles and responsibilities
- To enable all students to have full access to all elements of the school curriculum and assessment policy.

Teachers, staff, and administration acknowledge that:

- Students have different educational and learning needs, abilities, profiles and aspirations.
- Differentiation and scaffolding promote effective learning
- Students gain knowledge and skills at different rates through different means
- Students are all capable and unique
- Students are lifelong learners
- The school is welcoming to all students.

Learning Support Department

The services consist of providing in-class support and/or differentiated instruction to develop the skills and knowledge of individual learners. MICS supports the premise that schools should be organised in such a way that student diversity of all kinds can be included as a resource, seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed but as opportunities for enriched learning. Diversity is a positive resource with regard to what it means to be internationally minded and inter-culturally aware.

MICS believes that collaborative planning by all teachers who are part of a student's education at all points along the learning continuum is essential in supporting students with difficulties to provide a holistic view of the development and status of every child in various learning areas.

MICS believes that the school and parents must work collaboratively to ensure that students with learning support requirements are able to progress.

Gifted and Talented at MICS, we have agreed that the term 'Gifted and Talented' includes a student's high ability in one or more of the following areas:

- General intellectual ability or talent
- Specific academic aptitude
- Visual arts and performing arts
- Sports
- Mechanical ingenuity
- Creative thinking

A student could be identified as gifted and talented based on existing school data and track records, teacher identification, self-nomination, parents, or from external sources (i.e., an official IQ result). When a student is identified as being gifted and talented, teachers are to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of the student.

At MICS, gifted and talented students are mainstreamed in general education using differentiation for deeper rigor and challenge. The school will collaborate with parents actively in sourcing for platforms and avenues for these students to unleash their talents and continue to hone their skill(s) in their recognised outstanding ability. In addition, students take part in local/national/international activities and events which encourage advanced learning and challenging undertakings.

Additional school action will be triggered if a concern is registered regarding a student, backed by evidence, who, despite differentiated classroom strategies:

- Make little or no progress
- Shows signs of difficulty in developing Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills, which result in poor performance in some curriculum areas
- Presents emotional or behavioral difficulties which are not mediated by the behavior management techniques employed by the school
- Has diagnosed learning differences or impairment.

In some cases, outside professional support from health care services may already be involved with the student. The programme coordinator or the school counsellor will contact them. If authorised by the parents or legal guardians, support for the student will be discussed and action taken.

In some cases, students already have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The programme coordinator or the counsellor will communicate with the parent or legal guardians' authorisation, the recommendation of the IEP to the teachers and staff. In the case where a counsellor or inclusion specialist is not present in the school, the array of possible interventions is limited to:

- Learning support classes
- Academic tutoring
- Supervised homework session
- Provision of a teacher-advisor who is responsible for student pastoral care Individual Educational plan (IEP)

If the school receives an I.E.P from public or private health agencies, through consultation with parents/guardians, the school can grant additional external support in cooperation with teachers. These agencies can provide advice on appropriate support for the student. In case of a school developing an I.E.P based on the IB guidelines, the school counsellor will be able to develop an I.E.P based on the recommendations from the professionals in the field like registered Psychology assessment centres, clinical psychologists or medical health professionals. In such cases, the school will provide a list for consultation for assessments and stakeholders are expected to choose one among them.

Inclusive Assessment Arrangements Ongoing assessment will be differentiated according to the teachers.

For major examinations, IB external and internal assessment, the IBO authorises the school, under certain conditions, to proceed to "assessment access requirements" regarding examinations. In any case, a professional assessment by a healthcare professional(s), not older than two years old, must be provided to the school and to the IB organisation. No special arrangement will be done without these documents and only the IB is authorised to allow "assessment access requirements". When granted, these arrangements may include:

- Modification to exam papers
- Extension to deadlines
- Assistance with practical work
- Additional time
- Rest periods
- Information and communication technology
- Scribe and transcription
- Readers.

Responsibilities of the School

- Provide training and instruction to teachers and staff to support individual learning requirements and differentiation.
- Raise teacher and staff awareness of the individual needs of students with learning support requirements.
- Provide appropriate resources for the implementation of the policy.
- Responsibilities of the Programme Coordinators/ Senior Team Leaders/Homeroom Teachers
- Work collaboratively with faculty to support students with learning support requirements
- Elaborate with the teachers' Individual Educational Plan for students with learning support requirements or students who are struggling
- For the DP students, inform the IB
- Maintain records
- At enrollment, advise parents of the rigorous programme requirements to ensure appropriate placement. Communicate key documents such as Candidate with Special Assessment Needs.

Responsibilities of the Teachers

- To comply with all school policies.
- The teacher teaches in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, sex, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, disabilities, age, ancestry or place of origin.
- The teachers are responsible for diagnosing educational needs, prescribing and implementing instructional programs and evaluating progress of students.
- To report any concerns and to follow the advice given through IEPs.
- Homeroom Teachers will spend at least 10-minutes each day with the class to maintain pastoral care. When the need arises, individual appointments can be scheduled to meet with students personally to provide support for in-school learning.

Responsibilities of the Parents

Parents of children with learning support requirements are treated as partners. They should be supported so as to be able to:

- Recognise and fulfil their responsibilities as parents and play an active role in their child's education;
- Have knowledge of their child's entitlement within the Policy
- Have access to information, advice, and support.

To make communication effective with the school, parents should:

- Communicate to the school all documents regarding their child's learning support requirements
- Communicate with the school any changes regarding those requirements.

Responsibilities of Students

Student's views are always valuable. In order to participate in decision making, students can work toward (with adult encouragement):

- Expressing their feelings and their needs;
- Participating in discussions;
- Indicating choices.

Responsibilities of the School Counsellor

- Conduct class observations.
- Counsel - carrying out individual and/or group counselling when the need arises or when a student is referred.
- Conduct programmes and workshops to inform the school stakeholders on inclusive education.
- Conduct talks for students (e.g. self awareness, body image and/or other suitable topics).

- Maintain confidentiality and storage of documentation regarding counselling sessions and class observations.
- Collaborate with the Programme Coordinators and school principal to curb student issues.

Guiding Principle for In-School Counselling

In alignment with the MICS Inclusion Policy, we aim to support the emotional and spiritual needs of the students here. We acknowledge that extraneous stressors may be difficult to cope with, and hence we strive to equip the students with more than just coping skills but enhancing a nurturing social and emotional environment. This counselling service aims to facilitate personal and social development, which will then affect the educational development of the students. For the counselling service to be fully functional, the partnership of the administration and academic team, parents and students are welcomed.

It is important that the School Counsellor operates within the school in collaboration with the school process and culture - promoting a nurturing social and emotional environment for students, and academic and administrative staff.

The goal of the provision of the counselling service is for the holistic development of each and every individual learner;

1. Emotional and Spiritual Development.
2. Personal and Social Development.

Types of Counselling

The counselling process is an interactive process between the School Counsellor and student, whether individual or group, with approaches tailored to the emotional, spiritual, personal, social and educational concerns involved. Counselling is a service that is available for all students at MICS—whatever the concern may be, within the limits of the abilities of the School Counsellor but not limited to;

1. Academic concerns - scholastic underachievement, poor school management skills, transitional concerns.
2. Social concerns - bullying, racism.
3. Emotional concerns - developing mental resilience.
4. Spiritual concerns - coming to grips with existential concerns.

MICS also recognises the occasional need to include other parties in consultations - advice, information or counselling, while striving to always recognize the primacy of the student's integrity and the necessity for appropriate confidentiality (American Psychological Association, 2010).

These sessions are encouraged to be done after school hours or on weekends before or after prep to avoid time constraints which may hinder the counselling process. However, each session will run for no more than an hour. A follow-up session will be made if needed.

The types of counselling are as follows;

Individual Counselling - two-way communication process that aims to explore the concerns raised and to encourage preferential self-discovery of strategies that can be implemented by the individual.

Group Counselling - any session that includes more than one student aiming to either mediate a conflict or to encourage strategies that are acceptable to all parties regarding concerns raised.

Intervention Based Counselling - any session that includes a student and an individual from the administrative team or academic team aiming to increase understanding between either parties regarding an issue and agree on acceptable approaches that can be implemented available for the parties involved.

Ethical Concerns Confidentiality

The content of counselling sessions are confidential and are strictly between the School Counsellor and the individual(s) present at the session unless the student has revealed damaging information pertaining to safety and welfare to which, the necessary steps will be taken by the school counsellor and administrative team in notifying the obligatory authorities. However, for an efficient counselling process to occur, the School Counsellor practises confidentiality through the concepts of in loco parentis, need-to-know rule and qualified privilege (Ethical Standards for School Counsellors, 2010).

The legal doctrine of "in loco parentis" maintains that academic staff assume custody of students while in school therefore, the School Counsellor may reveal information to educators who are in the position to benefit from need-to-know information while exercising reasonable care to protect the students' rights to confidentiality. Qualified privilege protects the staff at MICS from revealing unfavourable information about students; in fulfilling the obligation to educate and care for the students.

Standards of Conduct

The School Counsellor is aware that he / she has an obligation to operate in policy and practice in an ethical manner. The main concern of the School Counsellor is first and foremost the welfare of the students and hence, ethically bound to act in the best interest of the students.

Furthermore, the seeking of new developments to be implemented in the personal, social, emotional, spiritual and educational fields in view of improving the counselling service provided as a whole is part of the ethical concerns of the School Counsellor.

Documentation

Access to Documentation

It is the responsibility of the School Counsellor to maintain records of formal counselling sessions done.

These written reports by the School Counsellor are not accessible unless;

1. The child presents a serious danger to themselves and/or others.
2. The child discloses about being abused (physically or sexually) and/or neglected.

3. The child reports being abused (physically or sexually) and/or neglecting an elderly person or another minor.
4. There is a legal implication for records to be released. This is to ensure accountability while maintaining confidentiality.

The counsellor is mindful of obligations first and foremost to the students and therefore will only disclose information with aforementioned discretion and only relevant and pertinent information. This is to ensure accountability of the School Counsellor and for year-to-year evaluations for the improvement of the in-school counselling service provided.

Storage of Documentation Records will be kept for seven years after students have left MICS. The rationale for keeping the records is as follows; in the incident whereby the student graduates and goes on to see a hospital or private psychologist, the intention is to facilitate the continued systematic process of helping.

However, after a seven-year period, the records will be destroyed accordingly. Records are usually maintained digitally with privacy settings maintained for the individual(s) involved. Counselling appointment and referral forms are also done digitally for the ease and privacy of everyone involved.

Besides, anecdotal records from class observations made by the School Counsellor will also be recorded digitally and stored in cloud storage which is also included in the Appendices.

General Information for Students

As part of introducing elements of the service and in consultation with the school leadership team (i.e. coordinators and principal), the School Counsellor reserves the right to visit each class to let it be known to students of the availability of this service as a new educational resource.

Information for Parents

It is also of equal importance for parents to feel free to make referrals with relevant information when necessary on behalf of their children.

Overall school information dissemination would also be made available as required over the academic year.

Termination of Counselling

Once concerns and issues have been worked on and observable maintenance of change has occurred, there will be a termination of the counselling relationship at the discretion of the School Counsellor and school leadership team. This is due to the fact that there is no further benefit that will occur from continued service as well as to discourage incidents of co-dependency and transference. However, if there are new concerns and issues raised, the counselling relationship may be renewed.

Adopted	August 2015
Amended	August 2019
Modified	January 2024

References

IBO (2020). The IB guide to inclusive education: a resource for whole school development

IBO (November 2018). Access and Inclusion Policy

IBO (November 2022, November 2023) Access and Inclusion Policy updated

American Psychological Association (2010) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.