



THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS AT RISK

Premise or Rationale

The Friends' School is concerned for the academic, cultural, physical, social and spiritual development of each person in our care. This includes catering for those young people whose circumstances may place them at risk of physical, social or emotional damage.

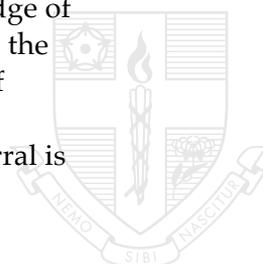
Guidelines

Behaviours that may indicate distress and students at risk

- Unexpected reduction of academic performance
- Ideas and themes of depression, death and suicide in books, essays, conversation, artwork
- Change in mood – withdrawal, sudden tearfulness, remarks which indicate profound unhappiness, despair, hopelessness, helplessness.
- Change in behaviour – acting out, aggression, regression, stealing
- Anger at self, increased irritability, moodiness and aggressiveness.
- Grief about a significant loss such as family breakup, recent death or suicide in family or friends or a break up with a boyfriend / girlfriend.
- Withdrawal from relationships with friends and classmates. Loss of interest in co-curricular activities and may drop out of sports and clubs. Begins spending long periods of time alone.
- Absenteeism
- Physical symptoms with emotional cause such as eating disturbances or chronic complaints such as headaches, stomach aches, fatigue, body aches, scratching or marking of the body, or other self-destructive acts. Reduced personal hygiene and self care
- High-risk behaviours such as increased use of alcohol and drugs, driving dangerously
- Disclosure or information from friends that a student is 'at risk'

Referral to School Counsellor

Students experiencing mild transitory distress such as from a breakup of a friendship, may be best supported by their tutor, class teacher or Head of School. However if a staff member has identified a student who they consider to have a number of these symptoms, who is likely to be distressed, and where the staff member judges there to be some risk (no matter how small), then the staff member must make a referral to the School Counsellor in High School and Clemes or to the Head of Learning Support in Morris. The staff member should decide to refer a young person based on the overall severity of the symptoms and their knowledge of the student, rather than the number of symptoms. In High School and Clemes, the staff member should inform the student's tutor, Head of School and Director of Residence (if a boarder) and arrange for an appropriate support person (i.e. themselves, another member of staff, family, responsible friend) while the referral is being organised.



Role of the School Counsellor

- provide an initial assessment of student, identify the level of risk
- communicate with the family as appropriate
- refer student for professional support eg clinical psychologist, psychiatrist, medical doctor as appropriate (or encourage parents to make such as referral)
- where the support needs of the student are high, the counsellor coordinate the school-based management plan and team involving other staff , family and external health professionals as appropriate
- maintain ongoing communication with external health professionals where possible
- provide counselling and ongoing support to 'at risk' students
- liaise with teachers/ tutors about any special arrangements / considerations
- ensure Head of School is kept informed of the management plan
- maintain adequate documentation and records at all stages of the management of a student 'at risk'
- provide support for staff throughout a critical time, and follow up as appropriate
- provide support for the friends of a student 'at risk' as necessary

Role of Teachers

- monitor students' wellbeing and identify students 'at risk'
- refer 'at risk' students to the School Counsellor or the Head of Learning Support in Morris
- provide ongoing support and assistance to students/ families as part of the management plan, coordinated by the School

Role of Head of School

- Head of School will often be a member of the support team for a student 'at risk'
- ensure that the management plan for a student 'at risk' addresses the School's duty of care for that student
- establish clearly with parents and external health professionals the limits of the School's duty of care e.g. the School cannot be responsible for a student who signs out but does not proceed to the designated destination
- negotiate withdrawal of the student from School if we do not have sufficient resources (time and staff) to guarantee the student's safety whilst at school or if the student's behaviour is having a detrimental impact on other students or if the student refuses to comply with a behaviour contract
- oversee a return to School contract after a period of absence due to treatment or suspension

Role of the Director of Residence

- must be informed of concerns about the wellbeing of a student residing at Walker House or in homestay
- the Director will be included in any support team formed to manage a resident 'at risk'



- the Director will communicate with the family of the young person
- the Director will ensure that any management plan includes support and duty of care for a young person outside of school hours
- the Director will inform the Principal if the School is unable to ensure the safety of a young person 'at risk' in the residential situation
- the young person 'at risk' may be asked to return to the care of their parents

Role of external health professionals

- provide specialist intervention and support to students 'at risk'
- contribute to School's management plan/ongoing intervention for high-risk students
- if the risk is high, the student must not return to school until an external assessment from a health professional indicates that a safe return to school can be made

Role of parents and friends

- parents and friends are integral to the School management plan; hence it is important that the School maintain close liaison with the family, via the School Counsellor and/or Director of Residence

Role of Principal

- the Principal is the 'Responsible Officer' for all duty of care issues concerning students. He has a designated person to act on his behalf – the School Counsellor, for the management of students 'at risk'.
- the Principal is informed of any students considered at a high level of risk.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality issues arise when the trust relationship between the student and School personnel comes into conflict with the need to ensure the safety of the student and/or others. Ideally every effort should be made to encourage the young person to share their concerns with others. However decisions must be made in terms of the best interest of the young person, which may place their right to privacy second to the need to ensure their immediate safety. In the case of young children, it is recognised that the class teachers provide significant support for their students and are usually informed of distressing circumstances. Decisions about confidentiality with young children are made by adults with their best interest in mind. A relationship of trust needs to exist between members of staff and those who have confidential information, generally the School Counsellor and Principal or Deputy Principal. The School expects staff to act on advice or instruction from the School Counsellor or the Principal even if they are unable to be supplied with full information and/or disagree with the Principal or School Counsellor's assessment. Staff disagreeing with the Student Counsellor/Principal's assessment and decision must provide that information and/or opinion to the Student Counsellor and Principal. If the staff member still disagrees after discussion, the staff member is asked to act in support of the decision. Independent actions by staff members may place the student at further risk.

The Friends School acknowledges the work and support of Michael Carr-Gregg in the preparation of this document.

