

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS POLICY MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, AHMEDABAD

A. About the School

MGIS promotes the free expression of feelings, thoughts and ideas, be it verbal or nonverbal. It is a place where we give students tools to communicate through our unique multi-sensorial methodology and active learning pedagogy. Diversity here is a tool in the learning process and this diversity is reflected in the student and teacher profile, the range of teaching methodology and the use of resources. Our approach is holistic and student centered. We cater to individual needs and adapt to the background of each student through differential teaching and spiral learning

B. Introduction

As the school's Admissions Policy states, the school counselor participates in the parent/child interaction at the time of the admission process to evaluate if the child has any Special Education Needs.

The pedagogy of Mahatma Gandhi International School (MGIS) is enriched by the diversity it encourages within the school and strongly believes in providing quality education to all children. With this in mind, it recognizes the need for a coherent and strong guiding policy for students with special learning needs, so that they have the opportunity to access learning and be integrated into mainstream classrooms without fear of discrimination or distress.

C. Guiding Principles

The school follows the IB guiding principles in formulating this policy on Special Educational Needs.

Article 16: Definition of special needs

A special need is any permanent or temporary diagnosed need that could put a student at a disadvantage and prevent him or her from being able to demonstrate skills and knowledge adequately.

Article 17: Eligibility

Students with diagnosed special needs are not prevented from following the MYP / DP or from being eligible for the DP diploma/certificate and MYP record of achievement. However, where a student's special needs make assessment of some of the objectives impossible the student's eligibility for the MYP/DP certificate may be affected.

Article 18: Applicable procedure

18.1 Special needs must be reported by the candidate's legal guardian to the school's DP/ MYP coordinator as early as possible after identification. The IB Organization must be informed—as soon as possible but no later than the end of the year 4 of the student(s) concerned—of any case where a diagnosed special need makes assessment of some of the course objectives impossible.

18.2 In these cases, schools are expected to make every effort to accommodate the needs of the student. The IB Organization will consider any requests for special arrangements according to principles stated in the current DP/ MYP Coordinator's handbook.

18.3 When the special needs of a student are such that an objective for a subject cannot be assessed, a grade for that subject cannot be awarded. However, the IB Organization may, in certain circumstances and under certain conditions, where a request from the school has been supported by all the necessary information and documentation, as well as evidence of work achieved, award the DP/MYP to a student with special needs who has not met all the objectives for a particular subject, provided all other conditions for the award of the DP/MYP certificate have been met.

D. Policy Statement

The school mission statement to make quality education accessible to all children inspires the forming of a Special Education Needs Policy.

At the time of admission for new students or at any point in the student's time at school, the school counselor is available on hand to identify children who require special attention in regard to social behavior, adapting to the local and school environment as well as those who require academic differentiation in terms of learning difficulties or learning challenges.

SEN provides Learning Support for students who have barriers to learning and who require special support to participate in the school's programs. The school counselor carries out classroom observation and discuss any further details if necessary with teachers and parents.

This policy addresses the Education Needs of three types of students:

- a. Students facing learning challenges
- b. Students who require additional support, due to extraordinary talent in a subject or extra-curricular area.
- c. Students facing behavioral challenges

E. Procedure for Identification and Diagnoses

If a special educational need for a student has been previously unidentified, or undisclosed by the parents, and the first instance is noticed by the teacher during their interaction with the child in the classroom, the teacher consults with the school counselor. The teacher submits the initial identification and referral form to the counselor who then sets up an observation schedule with the class teacher where she is able to observe the child within the class room.

If a special need is identified, the counselor consults with the parents of the child to finalize a schedule and a differentiation program if required. In severe or clinical cases, where the counselor is not authorized to perform a medical diagnosis, the child is referred to external support services (Therapist- Speech, Occupational, Educational Psychologist) for further consultation.

F. Guidance Committee:

The Guidance Committee for Special Needs consists of the Head of School, the School Director, the Co-ordinators of the three programs and the school counsellor. The roles of each of these members is defined clearly in this policy document

Head of School & School Director: make the overall decision on the differentiation plan for each child with an identified Special Need.

Program Co-ordinators: are responsible for ensuring that the SEN needs of the children in the program are being met.

School Counsellor: is responsible for working with the class teachers in identifying the special educational need of a child and formulating a strong differentiation programme based on the identified needs of the child.

Class teachers: is aware of the possibility for the challenges that may be faced by their students and consults the school counselor when required to work towards identifying and providing special education needs of their students.

G. Differentiation Planning:

Students facing learning challenges

Once a special education need is identified, the HOS along with the class teacher and school counselor formulate a plan of differentiated learning and engagement for the student. Teachers have the support of the school's unique pedagogy which allows them to meet the needs of specially abled children within the main stream classroom.

Our pedagogy involves the use of multi-sensorial tasks which are meaningful and based on real-life experiences. They encourage active corporeal involvement to facilitate understanding. The activities and the assessment tasks are ideally suited to differentiation in terms of expected criteria and generated resource, so that a student may choose the means best available to them to demonstrate their understanding of a concept.

Students who require additional support, due to extraordinary talent in a subject or extra-curricular area.

Students who show an extraordinary talent for languages and possess a strong command of English which is higher than the rest of their class are given the opportunity to join the multilingual section, which allows them to acquire french as an additional language. This ensure that while the class is developing their language skills in the language of instruction, these students are able to learn a foreign language, which will provide them with more opportunities in later life.

Students facing behavioral challenges

It is the school's experience that a lot of behavioral challenges children display are a result of incorrect pedagogy. Our unique pedagogy engages children with behavioral issues by involving them corporeally in the learning task. Each activity is meaningful and based on real-life experiences, allowing the child to identify with the task and be fully engaged in the class.

G.1 Counselling for SEN

Counseling is a way of working together in a unique and confidential helping relationship, developed between a counselor and the student. While building this relationship, the counselor acts as a facilitator who helps the student understand and interpret themselves and the world around them. The counselor and the student explore the student's feelings and behaviors, their relationship with others, and their choices and decisions.

Why do students seek counseling?

Students who might require counseling with the scope of this document fall under the categories below:

- Low self-confidence
- Finding, helping or losing a relationship
- Family concerns
- Getting better grades
- Self defeating behaviors
- Depression
- Decision making
- Careers, life planning and development.

What happens during counseling sessions?

Counseling sessions are planned and carried out in the counselor's office, a space that offers privacy and confidentiality. Discussions between the counselor and the student are based on the principle of mutual respect. All conversations are confidential and the student's right to privacy is respected in all cases except those where the counselor may suspect the occurrence of immediate harm. The students have the opportunity of discussing their fear, feelings, and emotions without the fear of being judged. During the counseling the students are able to speak openly and honestly about issues or concerns. Sometimes this is enough for people to resolve an issue. However, if there are ongoing concerns the counselor may seek to develop a therapy plan with external experts, in consultation with the student and parents.

Record Keeping

The counselor maintain records of current and past clinical cases in accordance with the standards of the profession.

H. Follow-up & Assessment of Clinical Cases

The guidance committee meets regularly to assess the progress and adjust the differentiation needs for each clinical case identified within the school. All or part of the committee also meet outside of the scheduled meeting time in specific cases when the need arises.

I. Parent Participation

Parent co-operation is essential to meeting the needs of the students in terms of Special Needs. The school works closely with parents to this regard, ensuring that parents are kept fully informed about their child's differentiation program. The school counselor routinely counsels the student within and without the school environment to ensure a uniform approach of handling the child's requirements.

J. Policy Steering Committee & Signing off on Policy

A Policy Steering Committee is defined, and roles and responsibilities of the members assigned with a view to periodically reviewing the SEN Philosophy and Policy of the school. This policy and all further amendments to the same should be approved and signed off by the Policy Steering Committee and School Management.