

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS POLICY MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, AHMEDABAD

A. About the School

Mahatma Gandhi International school believes in the ethos of joyful learning and meaningful experiential pedagogy. MGIS promotes the free expression of feelings, thoughts and ideas, through verbal and non-verbal communication. 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 centred. 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 as and when required 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 facing special learning needs, so that they have the opportunity to access learning and be integrated into mainstream classrooms without fear of discrimination or distress.

Integrating these children into the mainstream classroom serves a two-way purpose. It allows the child to form meaningful social peer relations, and equally importantly, enriches the other class children in that they understand and appreciate the differences and internalise and emulate compassion towards differently abled children. We are convinced that this is to the benefit of each member of the community and develops them into compassionate human beings.

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 or from being eligible for the MYP 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 certificate may be affected. For more through check the IQ is checked. There is also a test conducted at grade 8 level to assess the different parameters and if there is any SEN student at this level.

Article 18: Applicable procedure

18.1 Special needs must be reported by the candidate's legal guardian to the school's MYP coordinator as early as possible after identification. The IB Organisation 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 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 Organisation 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 MYP certificate and MYP record of achievement 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 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 counsellor is available on hand to identify children who require special attention in regard to social behaviour, 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 face barriers to learning and who require special support to participate in the school's programs. The school counsellor carries out classroom observation and discusses any further details if necessary with teachers and parents.

The class teachers conduct home visits every academic year in order to collect data, and observe the child's natural environment and family dynamics with a view to understand its impact on the child. If required, the school counselor also makes the home visit with the class teacher.

At MGIS, we strongly assert that a child does not HAVE learning or behavioral difficulty, and disagree with such nomenclature which tends to internalize the problem as something inherent within the child. We believe that the child is merely facing learning or behavioral challenges and in order to counter it, the difficulty MUST be externalized. To this extent, we vehemently assert that a properly built and coherent experiential pedagogy has a therapeutic effect, as in the case of Generated Resource Pedagogy developed and practiced at the school. We provide an opportunity for the child to be removed from the situation, which is a cause for the challenge, and focus on the child rather than the difficulty.

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 along with the team(class teacher, Coordinator), consults with the parents of the child to finalize a schedule and a differentiation program if required. In severe or differential cases, where the counselor is not authorised to perform a medical diagnosis, the child is referred to external support services (Therapist- Speech, Occupational, Educational Psychologist, special educator, developmental pediatrician) for further consultation.

The school counselor also works with the class to create awareness and sensitise the teachers and students towards the needs of the child facing challenges. The class teacher and counselor are in constant touch to ensure that the child is integrated smoothly and without prejudice into the classroom, and work towards resolving issues which hinder this endeavor.

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 counselor. 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 Counselor: is responsible for working with the class teachers in identifying the special educational need of a child and formulating a strong integration 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 counsellor 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 facing behavioural 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.

Use of Technology in Differential Pedagogy

The school uses various technological tools to assist children facing challenges, in an effort to integrate them into the mainstream classroom. The school has acquired a dedicated iPad for the use of the school counselor when working with children with special needs, and has purchased many apps like proliology

– a text to speech software, image based scheduling apps, text-to-speech and speech-to-text accessibility features as well as a highly specialised app for autistic learners.

G.1 Counseling for SEN

Counseling is a way of working together in a unique and confidential way helping relationship, developed between the 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 behaviours, 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 behaviours

Depression

Decision making

Careers, life planning and development.

What happens during counselling sessions?

Counseling sessions are planned and carried out in the counsellor's office, a space that offers privacy and confidentiality. Discussions between the counsellor 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 counsellor 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 counselling 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 counsellor may seek to develop a therapy plan with external experts, in consultation with the student and parents.

Record Keeping

The counsellor maintains records of current and past counselling cases in accordance with the standards of the profession in confidentiality.

H. Follow-up & Assessment of Clinical Cases

The guidance committee meets regularly to assess the progress and adjust the differentiation needs for each 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 counsellor routinely counsels the student within and without the school environment to ensure a uniform approach of handling the child's requirements.

J. Core Committee & Signing off on Policy

A Core 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.