



## German International School Sydney

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# Behaviour Guidance Policy

## 1. Scope, Principles and Intent

- 1.1. The German International School Sydney (**GISS**) does not tolerate any form of violence, intimidation or humiliation and abides to the respective laws and requirements.
- 1.2. **Purpose of this policy** is to guide the school community towards developing positive and **effective approaches to educating and assisting students in their development**. GISS aims to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, take responsibility for their own actions, for their community and their environment.
- 1.3. This policy is based on the following **guiding principles**:
  - a. GISS aims to develop students into responsible, reliable, competent and confident people. Tolerance, acceptance, shared responsibility and initiative are important educational objectives.
  - b. GISS provides a quality education and our teaching methods are based on highly academic principles.
  - c. GISS offers comprehensive, coeducational teaching methods at the highest level from Preschool to IB.
  - d. GISS teaching methods represent a holistic learning concept.
  - e. The GISS curriculum emphasises the importance of languages and natural sciences. German and English are taught to a native level.
  - f. GISS offers a safe and open learning environment.
  - g. GISS encourages a close 'meeting of minds' with Australia and promote environmental awareness and our responsibility for the environment.
  - h. GISS nurtures a culture of feedback.
  - i. GISS is committed to the highest quality teaching.
- 1.4. This policy should be read in conjunction with the **GISS employee code of conduct**, the **School Community Code of Conduct**, the **Discipline Policy**, and the **Child Protection Policy and Procedure**.

### 1.5. Goals and Objectives

- a. For students to strive to be critical thinkers, inquirers, communicators and risktakers who are knowledgeable, , balanced, respectful, , principled, competent, open-minded, caring, , resilient and reflective.
  - b. GISS strives to provide an environment in which everyone feels welcome, accepted, respected, worthy and safe and endeavours to meet the developmental and individual needs of all students while remaining focused
  - c. on their personal abilities and strengths. Using a guidance approach, we want students to learn to be considerate (to consider the effects of their actions on others).
  - d. For the students to focus on what they value and what makes them excited about learning (rather than to look for adult approval or follow an external locus of control).
  - e. GISS holds to the ideology of global tolerance and its teaching is embedded in European educational culture. GISS enables students to adapt readily to other German schools in Europe and the rest of the world. GISS offers its students excellent educational opportunities.
  - f. GISS upholds the image of children/young adults as strong, capable learners in which they are intrinsically motivated to learn and be the best that they can. With support, students have skills with which to solve problems and work through conflicts typical of childhood and adolescence. GISS believes that students are not 'becoming' but that they are 'being', meaning that GISS is not only interested in what they could become in the future, but what they are in their present selves and understands that the wellbeing of the children and adolescents is developed by having their needs met in the present.
- 1.6. In assisting students towards managing their behaviour, GISS encourages the development of an internal locus of causality whereby the students' internal needs determine their actions. **GISS promotes strategies that are focused on encouraging intrinsic motivation and encourage the students to take responsibility for their own behaviour** as opposed to creating discipline through punishment and reward systems, which merely focus on compliance, obedience or make students dependent on external approval. GISS aims to achieve this through commitment, consistency and long-term outcome-focused approaches which foster problem solving abilities and teach conflict resolution skills. GISS aims to build positive, mutually respectful relationships while influencing the student's behaviour through guidance and education rather than trying to control it. This requires the commitment of students and teachers alike.

### 1.7. Adult's role:

- a. To actively engage and empower students in regard to matters that affect them (either directly or as part of the school community) and encourage them to resolve issues constructively.
- b. GISS maintains a culture of communication based on respect and which encourages openness as well as constructive criticism. GISS actively supports students with finding adequate ways to express their needs and emotions thus largely eliminating the need for them to display challenging behaviour.
- c. GISS is aware that, just like with all other skills, social and emotional skills are gradually acquired, taught and learnt. This requires social experiences, time and consistent feedback. GISS consistently acknowledges and comments on socially responsible behaviour and student's strengths and promptly addresses behaviour which may impact negatively on others.
- d. GISS acknowledges that all behaviour occurs for a reason and is maintained by the environment. When dealing with difficult behaviour, GISS reflects on the specific circumstances as well as the hypothesised reasons for this behaviour and takes these into consideration when determining behaviour management and guidance strategies. When necessary, teachers will collaborate and develop individual support plans for students.
- e. GISS understands that teachers and employees are role models and facilitators for social and emotional learning and take responsibility for ensuring all approaches are consistent with this policy.
- f. GISS is committed to continuous professional development to ensure our pedagogical practices are based on sound knowledge, remain consistent with current research and that teachers will feel sufficiently competent to deal with challenging behaviour in effective ways.

## 2. Theories

- 2.1. **Educational** theory: At GISS students are encouraged to work within a **constructivist approach whereby they learn by 'doing'**. Students learn by working on projects that are applicable to their interests and age/stage of development. Teachers have implemented a 'Methodencurriculum' by setting up classroom environments that are conducive to group work and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. The various curricula taught in the school are based on students having an **overall sense of community with the idea of 'belonging'**, which is also conducive to the constructivist approach. The approach also correlates with the as outlined at the beginning of this document in that it is the overall goal that by the end of their schooling **students are able to**

**take responsibility for themselves, their community and the environment** as citizens of the world.

- 2.2. Theory of **discipline**: Guidance has been chosen as the method in which to work with as it is compatible with GISS' educational practices, curricula and methodologies. It focuses on the community becoming more skilled and caring, and therefore works well in conjunction with the GISS vision and mission. The focus is on encouraging the community to be mindful in their interactions with the emphasis on teaching students to become considerate.
- 2.3. **Definition of behavioural problems**: Behavioural problems are those behaviours that inhibit a child's social functioning or progress. They can be termed a 'problem' when they reoccur over time or persist beyond the age/stage when they should no longer be a problem. Often they are evident in several settings.
- a. Internalising behaviours are those that are self-focused and characterised by under-control and often referred to as emotional difficulties and are a problem because the child's affliction can lead to poor adjustment to school and trigger disruptive behaviour.
  - b. Externalising behaviours are those that are directed against others. Overt forms include outbursts of aggression, impulsivity, disruptiveness and defiance. Covert forms include relational bullying, telling lies, gossiping, vandalism and theft.
- 2.4. **Educational Issues**: At times students can (and will) act out due to a variety of other issues (which is why it is important to look at why a student is acting out in the first place).
- a. It could be that they have an **underlying condition or learning difficulty** which prevents them from learning effectively (such as ADHD or other attention deficits that impede learning), that they are **not in good physical health** or **lack good nutrition** or that there is **family stress** at home.
  - b. It could also be that the **classroom environment** does not cater adequately for their needs and therefore different teaching/ learning strategies and classroom organisation should be investigated and implemented (e.g. opportunities for working with peers, furniture arranged to encourage peer collaboration). Some teachers could struggle with minor disruptions and find themselves becoming involved in daily battles with these (usually with a small number of students). It is often better to maintain a positive classroom climate by not dwelling on the trivial or becoming involved in these battles. Maintaining high expectations and developing a positive atmosphere and encouraging a sense of community and belonging often pre-empt difficult behaviour from occurring (this has been documented in a large body of research world-wide).

### 3. Practices

#### 3.1. Recognition of student achievements

- a. Recognise student achievements in ways that **acknowledge their work without the use of rewards** (certificates, stars, stickers or other tangible rewards). Rather students are to be engaged in **authentic feedback and assessment that relates directly to their work**. Students are offered **constructive feedback** about their work that is authentic and genuine and focuses on effort as well as outcome. They are asked whether they are pleased with the way things are, if they enjoy what they are doing or how others might feel (depending on the situation).
- b. Feedback is a valuable and efficient tool to help build self-esteem and respect when used genuinely. Other forms of praise can be manipulative in many ways and have undesirable negative outcomes. We therefore are consistently be aware of what impact praise might have. Positive feedback is best for building good relationships when it is offered spontaneously and genuinely.
- c. **GISS teaches students to focus on the outcome** on the learning process or the enjoyment of doing things (instead of praise or reward). Praise can be misused as a controlling factor and does not promote an authentic sense of self in the child. Instead of praise GISS expresses appreciation by **giving positive feedback** using "I" statements, asking the students whether they are pleased with the way things are, if they enjoy what they are doing or how others might feel. The above mentioned also applies to rewards. **GISS does not promise rewards** because this is not best practice in the process of supporting learning of any kind.
- d. The teachers are aware that GISS does not want students to become "consumers only" or "people pleasers" but instead **thoroughly and genuinely enjoy what they are doing or learn to intrinsically motivate themselves** even if challenges persist.
- e. Instead of praise GISS expresses appreciation by **giving positive feedback** using "I" statements, asking the students whether they are pleased with the way things are, if they enjoy what they are doing or how others might feel.
- f. GISS does **not use generic and non-specific phrases like "Good boy" or "Good girl"** as we want to comment on the behaviour and not on the individual person and promote a growth mindset. Positive feedback is best for building good relationships when it is offered spontaneously and genuinely.

### 3.2. Prevention

- a. Develop a community in which the students' needs are met, particularly in relation to 'belonging' and where the students' self-esteem and autonomy are recognised, and the required skills are actively taught. In doing so, a number of preventative measures have been adopted GISS-wide with a focus on 'prevention is better than a cure' in relation to student behaviour.
- b. All **students** have the **right to express their feelings**. It is acknowledged and accepted when students are upset, frustrated, sad, angry, or do not want to participate. Only **when behaviour starts having a negative impact on the student themselves or on others is it no longer acceptable**.
- c. Options for **responding to inappropriate behaviour** include:
- d. the student the choice to stop or making them aware of the subsequent outcome of their behaviour
  - giving positive feedback to a nearby student who is doing the right thing
  - not interfering with minor incidents but continuing to observe closely to see if students can cope by themselves
  - clearly saying "no" or "please stop" and redirect the student when necessary
  - removing oneself and others from the situation
  - identifying strategies that will prevent, diffuse or interrupt inappropriate behaviour
  - Assessing the reason for the behaviour in order to find an appropriate response or solution

## 4. Available support

### 4.1. Structural Support

- a. The school day is structured so that there are breaks throughout the day where students have opportunities to rest, eat and drink and move (see support document for more on meeting student needs). These break times vary according to student age groups.
- b. We provide an enriching physical environment where students want to learn and be active participants in their learning. This includes aesthetically pleasing, inviting and clean indoor and outdoor facilities and opportunity for self-directed play and learning.

#### 4.2. Emotional Support

- a. Transition from Preschool to Primary School: during the last term of Preschool children embark on a transition program where they begin to prepare for formal schooling. They meet with various teachers and visit classrooms in the Primary School and have opportunities to establish buddy relationships with one chosen class. These buddies then assist the children in the playground or with if they have any concerns once they start school. Having the opportunity to develop these relationships and build on the idea of 'belonging' supports the younger children through this major transition.
- b. Class meetings: Class meetings are held throughout the school to discuss issues and communication, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills are taught during these sessions.
- c. Class teachers as support: Class teachers build relationships with students that are authentic, friendly and warm as a measure to enhance the class environment.

#### 4.3. Supportive Measures

- a. GISS aims to identify and intervene as early as possible with students with **learning difficulties**. A learning **support teacher is available** in the primary years to assist with identifying students with learning difficulties and support them with their schoolwork, in particular with literacy and numeracy difficulties.
- b. Specialists are employed at the school – learning support teacher(s) and counsellor(s). Both support students in their individual development, including students with behavioural and emotional demands and challenges.
- c. The counsellor(s) work(s) predominantly with individual students in the Senior Secondary level whereas the focus of the learning support teacher(s) is in Primary School.
- d. If a teacher or parent is concerned about a child's behaviour, the following measures will be taken:
  - the learning support teacher will observe the student in the classroom, meet with all teachers involved in a class conference to collect information and exchange observations
  - subsequently, the same group of teachers and learning support or/and the counsellor will meet with the parents.
  - If an external specialist should get involved for assessment or therapy, this will be discussed in depth with the parents. It will be evaluated what kind of support the school can provide and which external resources should be used to best support the student's needs.

- The counsellor and learning support teacher have established contacts to a variety of different specialists and institutions and can provide appropriate contact details to the parents.
  - Often psychologists contact teachers for further information for their evaluation and therapy.
- e. Regular communication with all parties involved supports the development of a student with behavioural management needs.

#### 4.4. Collegial support for teachers

- a. At GISS teachers work collaboratively and share their knowledge and ideas with their colleagues.
- b. A formal KUH system ('Kollegiale Unterrichtshospitationen') has been introduced where **teachers visit each other's classes and offer assistance or ideas from their observations as part of continuous professional development.**
- c. Subject teachers share observations with class teachers, who then provide feedback to students.
- d. **Heads of School assist teachers and staff who need support** with implementation of this system.

### 5. Student participation and Parent collaboration

#### 5.1. Student Participation

- a. Students can participate in the life of the school in a variety of ways and add their voice to various decisions made. Students are encouraged to participate in leadership and decision-making in the school.
- b. The Student Representative Council (**SRC**) members are encouraged to form committees to affect positive change in the school environment.
- c. Students have the right to be present at meetings concerning them (e.g. meetings between teachers and parents) and, as they are generally the experts of their own problems, can advise adults on how to respond.

#### 5.2. Parent collaboration

- a. Parent collaboration exists within a variety of forms. Parents from Kindergarten onwards regularly meet with the teachers, however, requests for interviews outside of these scheduled times can also be arranged.
- b. Parents from Preschool can make appointments to meet the teachers at any convenient time and receive daily updates during pick-up and drop-off times.

- c. As parents usually have a very good understanding and intimate knowledge of their children's emotional wellbeing, they are invited to offer their ideas and expertise to assist with finding solutions to any behavioural issues/problems.

## 6. Handling of specific behaviour Issues

- 6.1. It is important that the school's vision and mission is shared amongst all parties and that all have a good understanding of it.
- 6.2. Aggressive students are likely to retaliate against adult imposed/authoritarian approaches and therefore must be involved in shared decision making, whereby the focus is kept on the school's overall vision.
- 6.3. There are a range of strategies for working through specific issues and again, most are based on the idea of prevention. These include:
  - a. supervision (although this cannot suppress all aggression and bullying, it is necessary at reasonable levels)
  - b. providing enriching materials and structured activities at break times,
  - c. extra-curricular activities
  - d. having a 'home-room' or class teacher to who students can report (in cases of bullying or aggressive behaviour
- 6.4. It is important that in severe cases the **physical and psychological health of the victim takes priority over the perpetrator's rights.**
- 6.5. If there are cases where the student has had every opportunity to change his or her behaviour (occurrences should be documented) but has been unwilling to do so, **disciplinary measures as per the Discipline Policy are to be considered.**
- 6.6. In the event of **bullying please refer to the GISS Anti-bullying Policy.**
- 6.7. **No form of harassment is tolerated at GISS.** Please refer to the **Child Protection Policy** and the **Anti-Bullying Policy** on how to deal with these issues.

**Document Management**

Policy name	D-15 Behaviour Guidance Policy
Version	1.0
Version history	
School responsible	Principal
Board portfolio	D) Pedagogical and School Community
Related documents	
Status	Approved on 29 July 2017
Approved by	Erhard Seifert (Principal) and Dr. Ralf Dicke (Director)

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