INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ESTONIA

Student Support Services Handbook

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Welcome Message - Purpose and Scope 3
Vision, Mission, and Core Values 4
Student support philosophy 4
Overview of Student Support Services 5
Principles that guide support 5
Student Support Team Structure 6
Identification and referral process 6
Tiered support model - Student Support Procedures 7
Roles and Responsibilities 8
Learning support 9
EAL support 9
Counselling and wellbeing support 10
Counselling Guidelines 10
Crisis Intervention 10
Behaviour support and restorative practice 11
Attendance and wellbeing concerns 11
Safeguarding and child protection 12
Family partnership 12
Accessible education, accommodations, and support plans 13
Crisis Response Procedures 13
Transition Support 14
Professional Conduct and Ethics 14
Documentation and record keeping 14
Professional conduct and communication 15
Frequently Asked Questions 15
Closing note 15
Student Support Services Forms and Handbooks 16
References 16

Welcome Message - Purpose and Scope

Welcome to the Student Support Services Handbook.

This handbook has been developed to provide clear guidance on the systems, structures, and practices that support students' academic, social, emotional, behavioural, and language development. Our goal is to ensure that every student feels safe, valued, included, and empowered to achieve success.

Student Support Services includes:

- Learning Support
- School Counselling, Including Student Well-being Support
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Support
- Dean of Students Behaviour Management, Restorative Practice
- EAL (English as an Additional Language)

We believe that every student has the right to equitable access to learning opportunities and support systems that meet their individual needs.

This handbook describes how student support is organized at ISE. It is a practical guide for staff and families. It explains how students are identified, how support is coordinated, how progress is reviewed, and how communication is managed across learning, wellbeing, language development, behaviour, and safeguarding.

The handbook is designed to strengthen consistency and clarity.

Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision

To create an accessible, supportive, and compassionate school environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and personally.

Mission

The Student Support Team collaborates with students, families, teachers, and leadership to identify and address barriers to learning and wellbeing through proactive, student-centred support.

Core Values

Belonging
We ensure all students feel respected and supported
Access
We provide fair access to learning opportunities and individualized support.
Collaboration
We work in partnership with students, staff, families, and external agencies.
Respect
We uphold confidentiality and empathy in all interactions.
Wellbeing
We prioritize student mental health, safety, resilience, and emotional growth.

Student support philosophy

ISE believes that every student should have equitable access to learning, wellbeing, safety, and participation in school life. Student support is strengths-based, preventative, collaborative, and responsive to student needs.

- Support is a system, not a label. A student may need different levels of support in different areas at different times.
- Tier 1 classroom teaching, including the application of Universal Design for Learning principles, remains the responsibility of the classroom teacher for every student.
- Additional support is added when the classroom response is not enough, and it is reduced or removed when the student no longer needs it.
- Support is coordinated through data, observation, professional judgment, family communication, and regular review.
- The goal is to support students in the least restrictive and most appropriate educational setting possible.

Overview of Student Support Services

The Student Support Services team coordinates support for students experiencing academic, language, behavioural, social, emotional, or safeguarding concerns. Support may include the following:

- Classroom consultation and guidance regarding differentiated support
- Learning support through push-in or pull-out provision, as appropriate
- EAL support through in-class, small-group, or targeted language support
- Counselling and wellbeing support
- Behaviour support and restorative follow-up
- Accommodation planning and student support plans (IAPs, ILPs and Student Profiles)
- Family consultation and progress meetings
- Referral to external specialists when needed
- Safeguarding and child protection support

Support is coordinated, documented, and reviewed so that the student, family, and school have a shared understanding of next steps.

The support aims to:

- Ensure equitable educational access
- Remove barriers and labels to learning
- Promote asset-based language
- Promote student wellbeing
- Supportive and accessible classroom practices

Principles that guide support

- Early identification matters. Concerns should be raised before patterns become entrenched.
- Support is responsive. Plans are adjusted when the student response changes.
- Communication should be respectful, clear, and timely.
- Confidentiality is essential, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis and always with safety in mind.
- Family partnership matters. The strongest support happens when school and home are working in the same direction.
- Student voice matters. Where appropriate, students should be included in conversations about their support.

Student Support Team Structure

The current team structure is intentionally lean. Responsibilities are shared, and some staff members hold more than one role

Role	Main Responsibilities
Learning Support Coordinator	Oversees learning support systems, referral review, academic interventions, and support plans.
School Psychologist/Counsellor	Provides counselling, wellbeing support, and consultation in more complex emotional or social cases.
Dean of Students	Coordinates safeguarding concerns, reporting, and follow-up in line with school safeguarding procedures.
Safeguarding Lead	Oversees child protection concerns
EAL Teacher	Supports English language acquisition and support

Identification and referral process

Students may be identified for support through teacher observation, parent concern, student self-referral, academic data, attendance patterns, behaviour concerns, social-emotional indicators, language data, or safeguarding concerns.

The referral process is intended to be straightforward. It should document the concern, the support already attempted, and the reason for seeking additional help.

Step 1: A concern is identified by a teacher, parent, staff member, or student.

Step 2: Relevant observations and evidence are documented.

Step 3: The teacher records the Tier 1 strategies already tried and the student response to those strategies.

Step 4: A formal referral is submitted to Student Support Services. Find a link here.

Step 5: The support team reviews the referral and determines the next step.

Step 6: A support plan is developed when needed, with clear actions and responsibilities.

Step 7: Progress is monitored and the plan is reviewed, adjusted, or ended as appropriate.

Referral does not mean a student has been placed in a fixed category. It means the school is taking a closer look at what the student needs right now.

Tiered support model - Student Support Procedures

ISE uses a three-tier model. The tiers describe the level and type of support, not the student. A student can receive different tiers of support in different areas at the same time.

Tier 1: Universal support

Tier 1 is the foundation for all students. It is provided through strong classroom teaching, established routines, clear expectations, and whole-school wellbeing practices.

- High-quality classroom instruction aligned to curriculum goals
- Differentiation and applying Universal Design for Learning to approaches to teaching and learning
- Visual supports, modelling, chunking, and scaffolding
- Positive classroom routines and behaviour expectations
- General language support for multilingual learners
- Social-emotional learning and wellbeing routines
- Classroom accommodations when needed
- Regular monitoring of student engagement and progress

At Tier 1, the classroom teacher remains the primary person responsible for learning, behaviour, and day-to-day instructional support.

Tier 2: Targeted support

Tier 2 is short-term, targeted support for students who need additional help beyond Tier 1. It is usually more focused and more frequent than classroom support alone.

- Small-group instruction or intervention
- Targeted language support
- Check-ins, check-outs, or brief coaching routines
- Targeted counselling or wellbeing support
- Behaviour check-ins and restorative follow-up
- Specific classroom strategies and accommodations
- Regular progress monitoring and review

Tier 2 support is planned with the classroom teacher and reviewed regularly. If the student is not responding as expected, the plan is revisited rather than simply continued unchanged.

Tier 3: Intensive support

Tier 3 is the most intensive level of support. It is individualized and used when a student has significant or persistent needs that are not being met through Tier 2 support.

- Individualized support planning
- More frequent or more sustained intervention
- Closer family communication and consultation
- Involvement of school leadership or the relevant support staff member

- Referral to external specialists when appropriate
- Crisis planning or safety planning when needed
- Formal review of whether the current support is effective

Tier 3 support may be academic, language-based, social-emotional, or behavioural. The aim is to respond to need with the most appropriate support, not to place the student in a permanent category.

Roles and Responsibilities

Classroom Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- Creating accessible learning environments
- Differentiating instruction and implementing Tier 1 support strategies
- Monitoring student progress
- Communicating concerns early
- Implementing agreed accommodations
- Collaborating with support staff and families

Student Support Staff

Support staff are responsible for:

- Serving as a resource to teachers and guiding the appropriate implementation of interventions.
- Planning and conducting more intensive interventions when necessary
- Supporting student wellbeing
- Maintaining documentation and the WIDA MODEL Online English Language Proficiency Assessment
- Providing consultation to teachers
- Coordinating support plans
- Monitoring intervention effectiveness

Parents and Guardians

Parents are responsible for:

- Participating in meetings
- Sharing relevant information
- Reinforcing support strategies at home
- Maintaining communication with the school

Students

Students are responsible for:

- Participating actively in support plans
- Communicating concerns appropriately
- Attending scheduled sessions
- Practicing self-advocacy and responsibility

Learning support

Learning support is coordinated by the Learning Support Coordinator. It is designed for students who need additional help to access the curriculum, build skills, or manage barriers to learning.

- Consultation with teachers about classroom strategies and access needs
- Push-in support, pull-out support, or a combination of both where appropriate
- Small-group intervention for targeted skill development
- Support plans with clear goals, timelines, responsibilities, review dates and exit criteria
- Collaboration with families so that school and home understand the same support plan
- Referral for external assessment or specialist input when needed

Learning support plans should identify the student strengths, the barriers to learning, the support being provided, the person responsible for each action, timelines, and exit criteria per goal.

Accommodations remove barriers to access. Modifications change the learning expectation. **These are not the same and should be named clearly in any plan.**

EAL support

EAL support is provided by the EAL Specialist. The purpose is to help multilingual learners access the curriculum, participate confidently, and develop academic language.

- Language background information and teacher observations
- English language assessment data where available - WIDA MODEL Online
- Classroom performance and student work samples
- Social communication and academic participation

EAL support may include in-class support, push-in support, pull-out language instruction, small-group work, co-planning with teachers, and targeted monitoring of progress.

Teachers should use clear instructions, visual support, modelling, scaffolding, and formative assessment to support multilingual learners in the classroom. The aim is to strengthen access to learning while valuing the student's home language and identity.

Detailed program criteria, including any language proficiency benchmarks and exit decisions, are aligned with the separate EAL program handbook.

More detailed program guidelines can be found in the IB PYP EAL Program Handbook here and the IB MYP EAL Program Handbook here.

Counselling and wellbeing support

The part-time School Psychologist / School Counselor supports students' emotional wellbeing, coping skills, relationships, and mental health needs within the scope of a school-based service.

- Individual counselling
- Small-group or targeted social-emotional support
- Crisis response and short-term stabilization
- Consultation with teachers and families
- Support for emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and coping strategies
- Referral to external professionals when the need goes beyond a school-based service

Students may access counselling through self-referral, parent referral, teacher referral, administrative referral, or a response to a wellbeing or safeguarding concern.

Counselling is confidential within clear safety limits. Information is shared only when there is a risk of harm, a safeguarding concern, a legal obligation, or a clear educational need to share limited information on a need-to-know basis.

If a teacher would like to refer a student to a school psychologist, the parents/guardians are asked to fill out the Counselling Consent Form to permit their child/children to participate in individual counselling session(s) at school with the school counsellor/psychologist, or they can give their acceptance in written form via email. Here is a link to the form.

In some cases, and when judged to be in the student's best interests, the counsellor may speak with a student without prior parent contact. That decision should always be made carefully and consistently with safeguarding responsibilities and school policy.

Counselling Guidelines

Voluntary Participation

Students are encouraged, but not forced, to participate unless safety concerns exist.

Crisis Intervention

The counsellor may provide immediate support in cases involving:

- Self-harm concerns

- Suicidal ideation
- Abuse or neglect
- Significant emotional distress
- Trauma or grief

In such cases, parents, leadership, and external services will be contacted as appropriate and aligned with the ISE Child Safeguarding Handbook.

Behaviour support and restorative practice

ISE uses restorative practice and behaviour support that focuses on teaching missing skills, repairing relationships, and helping students take responsibility for their actions.

- Clear behaviour expectations are taught and revisited.
- Teachers respond early when behaviour begins to interfere with learning.
- Behaviour concerns are documented using the school's incident and behaviour tracking systems.
- Restorative conversations are used where appropriate.
- Behaviour plans are co-created when repeated concerns require a more structured response.
- The Dean of Students leads or coordinates follow-up for behaviour concerns.

Here is a link to the restorative conversation guide.

The following 5 steps - linked here for the Behaviour Flow Chart - are taken by teachers, Principal-Coordinators, parents/guardians, and students to address the problem, depending on the incident.

The incident report form is used to record data. Here is a link.

The behaviour management plan is co-created with the Student Support Team, teachers, students and parents to manage the behaviour. This includes recording the behaviour using the behaviour data tracking sheets. Here is a link to the data collection sheets.

Behaviour should be understood in context. The focus is not only on what happened, but also on what the student was communicating and what support is needed to help the student do better next time.

Attendance and wellbeing concerns

Attendance concerns and school avoidance are treated as student support issues, not only as discipline issues. Patterns of lateness, absence, withdrawal, anxiety, or disengagement should be shared with the relevant support staff member early.

When attendance or wellbeing concerns emerge, the school may respond with family communication, check-ins, an attendance plan, or a wider support meeting depending on the level of concern. The support team may intervene when:

- Frequent absences occur
- Patterns of lateness emerge
- School avoidance is suspected

Safeguarding and child protection

The school is committed to student safety and follows child protection procedures at all times. Every staff member has a duty to act when there is concern about abuse, neglect, exploitation, self-harm, or any other risk of harm.

- Concerns must be reported immediately to a Care Team Member (Director, Principal-Coordinator, Coordinator, Dean of Students or Designated Safeguarding Lead). Here is a link to the ISE Child Safeguarding Form.
- Staff should not investigate on their own unless advised to do so.
- Information should be documented factually and shared only with the people who need to know.
- Professional boundaries must be maintained.
- Safeguarding training is expected for relevant staff.

If a concern is urgent, the school's immediate priority is student safety. Parents, leadership, and external services are contacted when appropriate and in line with ISE safeguarding procedures.

Types of Abuse

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Online exploitation
- Bullying and harassment

Family partnership

Families are essential partners in student support. The school aims to keep communication respectful, clear, and practical.

- Parent meetings and progress reviews when support is in place
- Clear communication about the concern, the plan, and the next review date

- Shared responsibility for strategies that continue at home and at school
- Opportunity for parents to share relevant background information
- Guidance about when external support may be appropriate

Parents are expected to communicate openly, attend meetings when possible, and help reinforce agreed strategies at home. The school will do the same on its side.

Accessible education, accommodations, and support plans

ISE is committed to accessible and supportive education for all. Students should be able to access learning through a range of teaching approaches, supports, and reasonable accommodations.

- Differentiated instruction
- Universal Design for Learning
- Accessible materials and instructions
- Flexible assessment formats when appropriate
- Preferential seating or other classroom adjustments
- Chunked tasks, visual support, and reduced language load
- Assistive technology when approved
- Extended time or other testing accommodations when documented

Students who need ongoing support may have one or more formal plans, such as an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), an Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP), a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP), or a counselling support plan. These plans should be simple, practical, and reviewed regularly.

A good plan should name the student's strengths, the specific need, the goal, the support strategies, the person responsible, the review date, and the specific exit criteria (for each goal).

Crisis Response Procedures

A crisis may include self-harm risk, suicidal thinking, serious emotional distress, medical emergencies, a safeguarding concern, a threat of violence, or a major bereavement or loss.

- Immediate safety comes first.
- The appropriate staff member is informed right away.
- Parents are contacted when appropriate and in line with safety needs.
- The situation is documented accurately and factually.
- Follow-up support is planned before the matter is considered closed.

The school should never wait to see whether a serious concern resolves on its own. The response should be calm, direct, and based on student safety.

Transition Support

Transitions can be difficult for students, especially new arrivals or students changing divisions, returning after an absence, or moving between schools.

- Orientation for new students and families
- Buddy support where appropriate
- Transition meetings between staff and family
- Gradual re-entry plans after a prolonged absence
- Additional emotional support during periods of change

Transition planning should begin early when possible so that the student feels known, prepared, and supported.

Professional Conduct and Ethics

All Student Support Services staff are expected to:

- Maintain professionalism
- Respect confidentiality
- Act in students' best interests
- Follow ethical guidelines
- Maintain accurate records
- Engage in reflective practice

Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times.

Documentation and record keeping

- Documentation is important for continuity, accountability, and follow-through. Records should be objective, concise, and stored securely.
- Referral forms
- Meeting notes
- Support plans
- Counselling or wellbeing summaries where appropriate
- Communication logs
- Progress monitoring notes
- Incident and safeguarding records

Access to records should be limited to authorized staff. Sensitive information should be handled carefully and professionally.

Professional conduct and communication

- Staff should communicate respectfully and professionally in all student support matters.
- Important conversations should be documented when they affect student safety, wellbeing, access, or follow-up.
- Language should be clear, factual, and non-judgmental.
- Staff should maintain boundaries and avoid informal sharing of sensitive student information.

Strong communication does not mean constant communication. It means the right people have the right information at the right time.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does a student access support?

Students may self-refer or support may begin through teacher observation, parent concern, student self-referral, or data that shows a need for further review.

Are counselling sessions confidential?

Yes, within the limits of safety, safeguarding, and legal obligation.

How are EAL students supported?

Students receive language support through various instructional models depending on their needs.

How are parents informed about support plans?

Parents are included in meetings, communication, and progress reviews.

Can students exit support services?

Yes. Support is reviewed regularly, and services may change based on student needs.

Can a student receive support in more than one area?

Yes. A student may need learning, language, counselling, or behaviour support at the same time.

Closing note

This handbook should be reviewed regularly so that it stays aligned with current school practice, division procedures, and the needs of the student body. Any future changes should be made only when they reflect actual practice and approved school procedures.

Student Support Services Forms and Handbooks

1. Student Support Services Referral Form
2. ISE Behaviour Flow Chart
3. ISE Incident Report Form
4. ISE Data Collection Forms
5. ISE Child Safeguarding Form
6. IB PYP EAL Handbook
7. IB MYP EAL Handbook
8. ISE Restorative Conversation Guide

References

1. WIDA MODEL Online https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/model
2. WIDA Can Do Descriptors https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors
3. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) https://udlguidelines.cast.org/