



**ACORNS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

**INSPIRING AND EMPOWERING**

# LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Reviewed: April 2022

AIS believes the education of all young people is a human right. This is not limited to high achievers with good assessment scores. AIS accepts students with varied needs and levels of education. Learner Support Services is a team of teachers and professionals dedicated to working with parents and teachers to enable all students to reach their greatest potential.

**Reviewed by:**

**Rachelle Hale**

Head of Learner Support Services Department  
& PYP Curriculum Coordinator

# Learner Support Services Policy

Acorns International School (AIS) is a school that believes in the education of all young people. This is not limited to high achievers with good assessment scores. AIS accepts students with varied needs and levels of education. Learner Support Services (LSS) is a team of teachers and professionals dedicated to working with parents and teachers to enable all students to reach their greatest potential.

As a team, the LSS Department:

- Provides Language Support Classes for students performing low in the English Language.
- Creates plans and supports students with Special Needs.
- Implements and monitors behaviour plans school-wide and for individual students.
- Provides counselling to students and families.

## **Language and Numeracy Support Classes**

To help students who are falling behind in Language and Numeracy, LSS provides Support Classes.

Students in the Primary and Secondary Departments qualify to participate in the Support Classes by their MAP Assessment scores and teacher feedback.

Parents, with students who qualify, will receive a letter stating their child can take part in the lessons after MAP Assessments. Parents can decide to not have their child participate and can simply communicate that to the LSS HOD.

For Primary students, the classes take place three times a week during the class Language lessons. For two of these lessons, the small group of students qualifying for Support Classes is taken into another classroom by an LSS teacher. The LSS teacher will conduct a lesson for those students, that has the same content as what the rest of the class is learning, but they will teach it in a way that is more broken down and simplified for the learners. One lesson a week, the LSS teacher will be in the homeroom class to work with the students.

For Secondary students, those who qualify for Support Classes, the classes will be worked into their timetable per their learning needs

Students will no longer participate in these lessons when their MAP/Assessment scores and teacher feedback suggests they can be successful in the classroom without significant help.

Families of students who qualify for Support Classes should also note our Retention and Attendance Policy. It is likely that students who qualify for Support may also be recommended for Retention at the end of the year.

## **Students with Special Needs and Individual Education Plans**

A child may be considered to have Special Needs if they have various challenges in their physical, emotional, and behavioural development or have a learning disability or impairment that causes them to need support in the school environment to be successful.

Learner Support Services takes on these cases on an individual basis; what one child needs may not be what the other needs. Therefore, when a child is identified as having a Special Need, the LSS team works with the student's parents, teachers, and other stakeholders, to create an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP contains information on the student's

strengths, areas of growth, and any pertinent background information. The IEP also contains targets in the 5 areas of development.

Areas of Development:

- *Cognitive* development refers to thinking skills, such as learning, understanding, problem-solving, reasoning, memorizing, and attending. Children develop cognitive skills by learning about causes and effects in everyday activities and similarities and differences in things around them. Thinking skills help make all experiences more meaningful to children.
- *Communication* development refers to both receptive and expressive language. Receptive language is the understanding of spoken language. Expressive language is the ability to use spoken language – to talk. Communication can be verbal and/or nonverbal expression as well depending on how a child relays information to others.
- *Physical* development refers to both Fine Motor and Large Motor skills. Fine Motor development involves using the body's small muscles to do things such as writing, cutting, or manipulating small objects. Fine Motor skills help children develop small muscle control when they use their hands in coordination with their eyes. Large Motor development involves using the body's large muscle to do things such as keeping balanced, running, jumping, catching and throwing a ball, etc
- *Social-Emotional* development refers to the ability to form relationships with others. Emotions involve the expression of feelings. We look at a child's ability to engage in meaningful social interactions with both adults and peers in their environment. This may include responding to, and initiation of, social contact with others, the establishment of friendships, cooperation, and effective participation in group activities. Developing self-awareness, self-concept, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and coping skills are also part of a child's social-emotional development.
- *Adaptive or Self-help* development refers to the skills needed for independence in daily activities. Self-help skills such as dressing, toileting, washing, eating, and personal responsibility are among the most important things a child can learn. Children develop a sense of independence as they learn to do things for themselves.

These targets are the main focus of the IEP. In the IEP, the targets are defined for each child and a plan is set for how the child will be helped to accomplish their targets both at school and at home.

The IEP is also to include plans for Assessment Access Arrangements, both internal and external.

Parents are always a critical part of a child's education, but this is especially true for students with Special Needs. For this reason, meetings to review IEPs will be set every term to track progress and set new targets. Included in the meeting are LSS members, classroom teachers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders. It is always the goal to have a parent, or both parents, in the IEP meeting, so LSS HOD will work with parents to set a meeting time that they can attend. However, if a parent is unreachable, won't set a meeting time, or has failed to show up for set meetings without cause, the rest of the IEP members may meet without the parents and then send the IEP document to the parents.

### **Learning Support Assistant**

AIS practices inclusion; this means students with Special Needs are involved in the mainstream classroom, as much as possible. For some students, this is easily managed with

support from the teachers and LSS members. However, there are cases in which a child would benefit from, or be required to have, a Learning Support Assistant.

A Learning Support Assistant (LSA) is a teacher who works one-on-one with a student who has a Special Need. A child would be required to have an LSA if the child is unable to be successfully independent throughout the day for various reasons. The two biggest factors in this decision are safety and academic level:

- Safety: If a child routinely behaves in a way that is dangerous to themselves or others, an LSA will be required. For example, running away from the class and teacher or causing harm to themselves or others.
- Academic Level: Learning cannot be differentiated sufficiently within the mainstream class and they require different content to study. For example, when the class is writing paragraphs and a child is working on recognizing letter sounds. This is something that would have to be planned for and taught separately by the LSA, as it is at a considerably different level than the rest of the class.

Other factors may include, but are not limited to:

- The child needs assistance to take care of themselves (toileting, feeding, dressing, etc.)
- The child needs to communicate in a different form, other than verbal communication in English
- For the needs of the child to be met, it demands significant attention from the classroom teachers, creating an environment that causes other children's needs to go unmet
- Due to the child's needs, the child would benefit from a varied schedule.

In many cases, it is a combination of these factors that warrant the requirement of an LSA. AIS does hold the right to require an LSA for a child before enrolment is allowed or in allowing them to continue onto future terms.

The LSA works very closely with the Learner Support Services and homeroom teachers to develop and carry out the Individual Education Plan (IEP) created specifically for the student they work with.

An LSA's role may include, but is not limited to:

- Building a bond with the student they are working with
- Supporting the growth of friendships in the class
- Assisting the child in daily routines (toilet training, feeding, changing clothes, moving from class to class)
- Planning and implementing tasks specifically designed to accomplish targets set in the child's IEP
- Tracking and monitoring progress on the targets set in the IEP
- Filling the child's day with activities that are meaningful to them at their level
- Attending stand-alone classes (Music, PE, Art, etc) with the child
- Ensuring the child's safety
- Working with LSS to support the progress of the child

If a student requires an LSA, there are a few avenues that can be taken to obtaining one:

- A parent may already have a teacher who has been working with their child and would like that teacher to be the LSA at AIS. In this case, AIS would interview that

person to ensure that they are going to be a cooperative working partner with the school staff.

- Alternatively, Learner Support Services can conduct preliminary interviews for the LSA position and then have parents take part in final interviews to ensure they are comfortable with who their child will work with.

The LSA is only hired to work with the individual child; the parents of the child are responsible for the monthly salary of the LSA.

Payments to the LSA must be made at the end of every month. If the LSA's payment has not been made, the LSA has the right to not come back to work until payment is made. If an LSA was a requirement for the child's enrolment, and the LSA's payment is not made, the child can NOT attend school.

Depending on the specifics of how the LSA was hired, the payment amount and method can vary. Specific plans and an agreement will be created as per each situation.

Working with LSAs falls under the Learner Support Services department. LSS members will be in charge of overseeing LSAs, collaborating with them, and monitoring the work with their students. LSS members will ensure that LSAs;

- Come to work on time and manage the schedule created for them
- Are planning lessons that cover IEP targets
- Have quality interactions with the child
- Treat the child in a manner that is appropriate at all times and adheres to the AIS Child Protection Policy

If a member of the LSS team believes any of these standards are not met, parents will be notified.

### **Behaviour**

AIS understands it is a natural part of development for students to make mistakes; this is how they learn. However, we also believe it is our job to teach students that both positive and negative actions have positive and negative consequences.

The LSS department works closely with the Early Childhood, Primary, and Secondary Departments to support the behaviour plans that are in place. In most cases, students respond well to these methods and can participate in daily activities with behaviour that is consistent and appropriate for the age.

Per the Behaviour Policies, students who do not respond well to typical classroom management strategies may be referred to LSS by teachers or parents. This may result in the LSS team making recommendations to teachers or parents or putting in place a formal and individualized behaviour plan for the students.

### **Personal, Social and Physical Education/Counselling Services**

On the LSS team is a qualified counsellor. The counsellor interacts with Primary and Secondary students weekly, while teaching PSPE lessons.

### **Personal, Social and Physical Education (PSPE)**



The counsellor is responsible for teaching PSPE lessons in Primary and Secondary, as scheduled on timetables. While there is a curriculum to follow, teachers may feel that their class needs to work on something specific and may ask the counsellor to engage the students on the topic.

These PSPE lessons will also be used to teach students about topics that can be sensitive. For example; stranger danger, good touch, and bad touch, puberty, grief, etc. AIS understands that families may handle these topics differently. Therefore, if a sensitive matter is to be discussed, a letter will be sent out to parents ahead of time with an outline of what will be talked about with the class and a notice of consent. If a family feels that they do not want their child to participate, that child will not attend the lesson.

### **Counselling Services**

The counsellor is available to work with:

- Groups of students: It is normal for pairs, or groups, of students to have conflict from time to time. However, when this takes place during school, it can be a distraction to lessons and students may need a safe space with a mediator to work things out. If this is the case, teachers can send these students to the counselling office where the counsellor can mediate a conversation among the students. This does not mean the students are ‘in trouble’ or being ‘punished’; it simply means that they are being provided a safe space away from the classroom to solve a problem. The counsellor and teachers will also monitor if there are students, or groups of students, being referred to the counsellor frequently as this may be a sign of a larger issue that needs a different approach.
- Individual students: Our young people notice and experience a lot of change as they grow. Not only do they experience ‘normal’ change that can be difficult for some to understand, but they also may experience family separation, divorce, death, sibling rivalry, abuse, depression, etc. When students experience something, they are unable to deal with, it commonly presents in school and/or home through a change in behaviour. If parents or teachers notice a student that could benefit from seeing the counsellor, they should refer them to the counsellor. Students may also recognise they need help with something and ask to see the counsellor. Individual students can see the counsellor through set meetings or visits as needed. Families of students who are receiving this service will be notified for consent. While it is not advisable, families can decide they do not want their child to see the counsellor for sessions. However, a student that decides to come on their own, they will not be turned away.
- Parents: Parents may also set up a meeting to see the counsellor for advice on their child’s development. It is also possible that the counsellor requests parents and children to have a meeting together. As the counsellor is a school counsellor, it is not appropriate to have meetings with parents that are not student-focused. For example, the counsellor is not expected to conduct marriage counselling or grief counselling for parents alone. However, if parents need contacts or references for other counsellors that can provide this, the school counsellor is a good resource.

Confidentiality will be maintained for all students and parents that seek out the counsellor, unless there are concerns about the safety of the student. At the EC/Primary level, students who see the counsellor casually will receive a note to give to the parent/guardian. If routine sessions are to be arranged, then consent from the parent/guardian will be confirmed, unless in the case of abuse/neglect. At the Secondary Level, students can choose to see the

counsellor casually or routinely without parent/guardian knowledge or consent. However, the parent/guardian will be notified if there are concerns about the safety of the student.

The counsellor reports to the Head of Learner Support Services; typically just to report a general and simple update of who is seen and why, without personal information. If the counsellor feels there is cause for concern about the child's safety, she can report more detail to the LSS HOD to create a plan forward.

**Reviewed by:**

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