

# Student Support Services

## Aims

Consistent with our Promise: “To stimulate intellectual curiosity and accomplishment; to instill compassion and respect; and to always honour the daring dreams and hidden talents of the individual,” Somersfield Academy provides and celebrates a diverse and inclusive learning environment, where teachers work with our students’ unique abilities, to help them achieve their maximum potentials.

The school provides student support services in all divisions that address the personal, social, and academic needs of students so that they feel supported, as they work toward meeting their academic and behavioral potential. Respect for diversity is central to Somersfield Academy’s philosophy, as is the practice of supporting students with learning exceptionalities. The goal of the school’s learning support services is to provide students with meaningful and equitable access to the curriculum, within the limits of our resources.

## Admissions Policy

In order to be accepted into Somersfield Academy, students must be able to demonstrate that they can learn and progress academically, emotionally and socially within the classroom setting. Somersfield is only able, however, to support students with mild learning and/or socio-emotional difficulties and learning differences.

## Learning difficulty and learning difference defined

A **learning difficulty** is when a student is having difficulty in one or more areas of learning. A difficulty is usually temporary but can take several years to improve. However, the difficulty will eventually go away over time, with appropriate and intensive classroom support. Learning difficulties can be caused by physical, pedagogical and educational, developmental readiness, emotional, or environmental factors.

A **learning difference** is defined as an unconditional definition based on a diagnosis by a psychologist. This means a student is having difficulties within the classroom caused by a difference, which is lifelong and persistent, and does not respond easily to intensive educational intervention. Learning differences of an intermediate to severe nature often become apparent in the earlier years, while mild differences begin to ‘appear’ or are readily seen during the later years. As the curriculum becomes more abstract, making learning less concrete, it can become more difficult for the student who has a learning difference.

N.B. While Somersfield teachers may observe a learning difference, they are not qualified to diagnose a learning difference. External specialists (psychologists) must conduct testing and make a diagnosis.

## Students with a diagnosed difference

Although Somersfield Academy is able to provide support for students with many learning difficulties, we provide limited support to students with a number of diagnosed learning differences.

### When a student is diagnosed with a learning difference.

When a student is diagnosed with a learning difference, the school must determine whether it is able to provide the learning support necessary to meet the student's needs. Should the school continue to be appropriate to the student's needs, Somersfield will provide the respective support and expertise to assist the student with the diagnosed learning difference. If, however, the level of guidance the student requires is beyond the scope of services that the school can deliver, the school will make a referral to a learning environment that can better address the student's learning needs.

Students with diagnosed differences, who remain in the school, may be referred to private learning specialists for developmental support so that they may access the curriculum more effectively.

For students entering the school with existing diagnosed differences, it may be necessary for the students to have further testing, once they begin at Somersfield. To ensure that we have the full learning perspective and prospects, parents are required to provide full details of the student's learning difference, and historical interventions. These details can be in the form of psychological education testing and/or historical interventions or strategies.

When reports or assessments indicate learning or behavioral difficulties, the Director of Admissions, in consultation with the Division Head and Learning Resource Coordinator, bases the decision to admit a student on the following factors:

- School reports
- Teacher/administrator recommendations
- Existing IEPs
- Entrance testing
- Parent / Student Interviews
- Day visitation

The Learning Support Coordinator reviews the information gathered, further assesses as needed, and then advises the Admissions Office and the Division Head whether the school can adequately support the student's needs. The final decision on admissions is taken by the Division Head and the Principal.

In some cases, an offer of a place at the school may be conditional upon the terms of an addendum or probationary period, or upon parents agreeing to enhance and support their child's education with outside personnel, school aide or other resources. As full and honest disclosure is essential in all admissions, the school reserves the right to withdraw a placement if school records appear to have been incomplete or inaccurate.

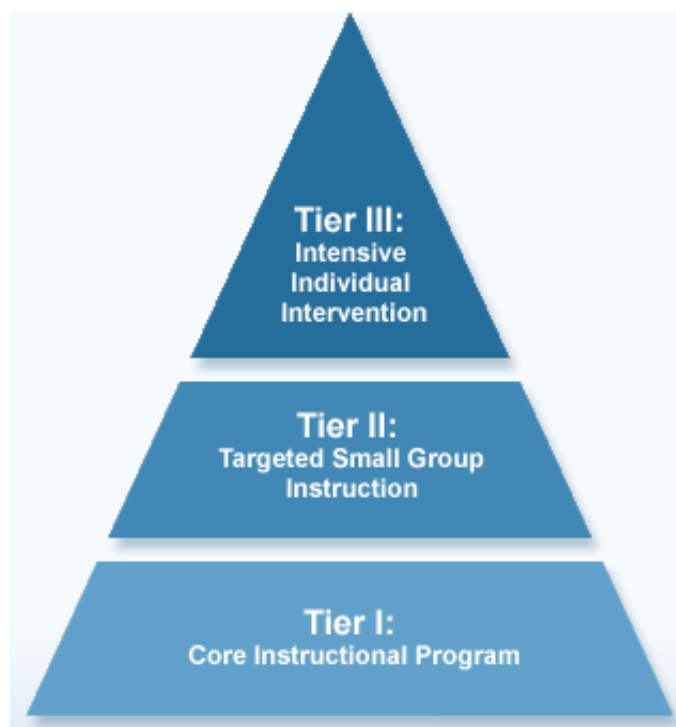
## Student Support Team

A Student Support Team meets regularly in each division to identify student needs and determine appropriate services and interventions. Student Support Plans are developed and student progress is tracked and monitored regularly. The Student Support Team includes the Division Head, the Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator, the Learning Support Coordinator, the IB-MYP Coordinator (Secondary) and other staff members, parents, and external specialists as needed.

The following in-school support services are considered by the Student Support Team when designing Student Support Plans.

### 1. Learning Support Resources

The Learning Support Department at Somersfield Academy organizes students needing support on a three tier system: tier one students require minimal support or monitoring; tier two level students require some level of direct contact support; and tier three level students require direct intervention and an IEP in order to monitor more significant support. Once a student is considered a Tier III, the child will be closely monitored to determine whether they may be effectively supported, as well as the sustainability of them remaining in the program and accessing the curriculum. The majority of students who require support from the Learning Resource department fall within the tier one or tier two levels.



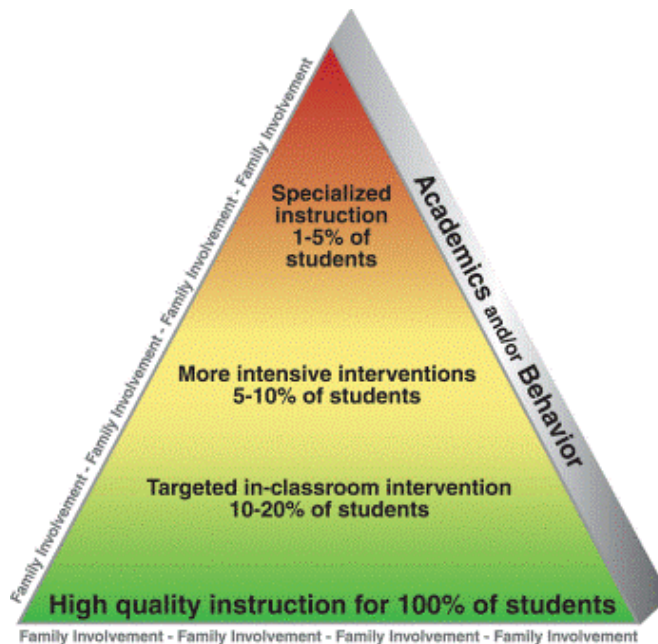
If it is confirmed that the school cannot appropriately support the student and/or the provided assistance is no longer effective, the school considers it unethical for the student to remain at the school.

In this situation, the school reserves the right to advise that a student be educated in (or moved to) a more appropriate educational setting that is targeted and dedicated to the student's difference. This recommendation by the Student Support Team is made in consultation with the Division Head and Head of School, and will be communicated to parents in an appropriate time frame.

If a new school is recommended, the Learning Support Coordinator and Counselor will support parents through the process of finding a more appropriate learning environment. However, parents have the freedom of choice for placement and the final decisions on which alternative school their child will attend.

### Identifying Students in Need of Support

The process for identifying students with a need for support is a systematic one. Teachers inform the Learning Support Teacher via email of any students identified as having mild academic or socio-emotional challenges. After consultation, teachers are required to monitor the child, implementing recommended strategies developed by the Learning Support Teacher.



If the teacher is unable to resolve the learning issues, the Learning Support Teacher, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, will develop a Support Plan that will address the student's learning needs and place the student on the tiered support system.

## **2. Small Group Support - Strengthening personal and relationship skills**

Small group support in the Primary and Secondary divisions provides a healthy atmosphere for sharing experiences, learning from others and offering support. The Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator meets with two or more students to work on shared tasks and develop supportive relationships. The group discussion may be problem centered, where attention is given to a particular concern; or growth oriented, where topics are related to personal and academic development. Group support is coordinated on a needs basis and may be short or long term.

## **3. Classroom Guidance**

The Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator plans classroom learning experiences to assist teachers with meaningful activities targeting the social, behavioral and academic development of Upper Primary and Secondary students. These presentations may focus on areas such as goal setting, career exploration, or interpersonal skills development.

M1 students have weekly class sessions coordinated and facilitated by the Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator that focus on health and skills for living. This programme is proactive and develops essential life skills in areas such as social skills development, decision making, conflict resolution, cross-cultural effectiveness, and personal safety.

## **4. Consultation**

Consultation is an effective approach for meeting the needs of our students, as it provides for the mutual sharing and analysis of information and ideas to assist in planning and implementing strategies to help students. As a Student Support Team member, the Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator consults with parents, teachers, administrators and other educational professionals on issues pertaining to the social and academic development as required.

## **5. Coordination**

The Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator manages various aspects of indirect services to help facilitate successful student development by assisting parents in obtaining services for their child through a referral and follow-up process; by liaising with teachers, parents, school personnel, and other community resources; and by assisting in the orientation of new students; and coordinating leadership programs.

The Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator provides the following support:

- Facilitates social skills development (i.e. lunch groups, class presentations etc.)
- Coordinates programmes for students (such as Advisory Program, Life Skills Training, Secondary Assemblies, Peer Mediation, Job Shadowing, Youth Parliament, and Anti-Bullying Initiatives)

- Facilitates Leadership Development (Secondary Student Leadership Council [SLC], Peer Mentoring Programs, and M5 Prefects)

## 6. Secondary Division Advisory Support

The primary goal of the Secondary Advisory Program is to create a home-base where students feel a sense of belonging to the Somersfield community. Advisors oversee the overall experience and progress of their advisees and serve as the primary means of support for students.

### **Advisor Responsibilities:**

#### **IB Requirements**

- Explore monthly 'Profile of a Somersfield Learner' themes and coordinate an assembly presentation
- Approaches to Learning Tasks such as Goal Setting and Reflection
- Service and Action tasks

#### **Organizational Support**

- Weekly review of Assessment Calendar (Managebac)
- Agenda monitoring
- Locker inspection
- Uniform check

#### **Promoting a Positive School Culture**

- Inform students of school-wide events/opportunities and encourage participation
- Assist students in preparing for House Events
- Assist students with Job Shadowing Requirements
- Facilitate discussion on issues of importance to students
- Practicing understanding and respecting differences

## Promotion and Retention Policy

Student placement is determined by an assessment of academic performance and social and emotional maturity. Retention is determined by the combined professional judgment of the Division Heads, teachers, Counsellor/Student Services Coordinator and/or Learning Resource Coordinator. Prior notification and explanation to each student's parents or guardians regarding his/her retention shall be given by the Division Heads by February 1st.

## Gifted and Talented

The term "gifted and talented" when used in respect to students, means students who give evidence of exceptionally high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily

provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities. Teaching strategies, such as appropriately differentiated instruction to extend the regular curriculum, provide learning opportunities that challenge the highly able student. If it is confirmed that the school cannot appropriately support the student and/or the provided assistance is no longer effective, the school will support parents through the process of finding a more appropriate learning environment.

Essentially, Somersfield Academy is committed to facilitating or recommending the most effective learning environment for each of our students to achieve his or her optimum potential.