

Counselling Policy



The Cottesloe School

Policy Type:	Non-Statutory
Reviewed by:	Safeguarding Governor (Mrs C Stirk) and Assistant Headteacher - Safeguarding & Wellbeing (Mrs C Hankin)
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Next review:	21 May 2028 (earlier any legislative change)

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims

Our school commits our staff to recognise every student's individual needs. It also expresses the belief that learning is enhanced by a happy, friendly and secure environment. We recognise that there are times when the support of parents, school staff and peers is not sufficient to address the complex issues facing young people today. In such cases, we believe that the provision of an organised period of counselling not only provides support for the student's personal development, but can also strengthen their ability to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered at school.

1.2 Our School

The Cottesloe School recognises that some students are at risk of experiencing some form of mental health disorder whilst at school. We recognise that there are a multitude of reasons why young people may need someone to talk to during their time at school.

1.3 Emotional Literacy

Emotional literacy is defined as 'The ability to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions.'¹ If schools enable their students to become emotionally literate, it is argued that they will start to see:

- Students who recognise and understand their feelings and so become more adept at handling and expressing them appropriately.
- Students and teachers who are less unduly stressed, and are able to manage competing demands more effectively.
- Students who have become better listeners, and who are more likely to see the other person's point of view.
- Students with an increased attention span.
- Students who have greater prowess at forming and maintaining relationships.
- Students will have learned problem-solving methods that lead to enhanced interpersonal skills as adults.
- Students who have learned to manage conflicts and are therefore less likely to be involved in crime, particularly those crimes involving violence.
- Students who have learned skills that enhance their future parenting skills.²

The school sees its counselling service as one of the ways to help the most vulnerable students achieve emotional literacy, which we hope will enable them to implement this within the school community. The Cottesloe School has emotional literacy trained members of staff that help to deliver additional support to our students.

2. The Policy and Related Procedures

2.1 Advertising the Service

All parents/carers and students will be informed via the school website, publication of this policy and occasional reminders in the School newsletter that the school provides a counselling service, and that this service is confidential. TEAM Hub, Head of Year and members of the Safeguarding Team are able to provide information if parents/carers have any further questions about the service.

2.2 The Referral System

Students experiencing emotional difficulties may come to the attention of the Form Tutor, Head of Year, TEAM Hub or a member of the Safeguarding Team as a result of:

- A subject teacher or form tutor alerting the Head of Year to a perceived problem.

¹ as defined by SELIG (The Southampton Emotional Literacy Interest Group)

² 'Nurturing Emotional Literacy': Peter Sharp
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- A student approaching a member of staff.
- A student's friend(s) approaching a member of staff-
- A student's parents or carer approaching or contacting a member of staff.

The Head of Year will make a referral to TEAM Hub for a consultation to take place with the student. TEAM Hub will exercise their professional judgement in deciding whether counselling is the most appropriate form of support that can be offered or whether to refer them to other agencies (e.g. CAMHS, the school nurse or the school's SENDCO). There are many different reasons why counselling may be a useful support intervention, these include, but are not limited to, bereavement, family breakup, relationship issues and self-harm. If, after speaking to the Head of Year, TEAM Hub or a member of the school's Safeguarding Team, the student still has concerns, they could approach the Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding and Wellbeing), or the Deputy Headteacher, or the Head of School or the Headteacher.

The counselling appointment system is managed by the TEAM Hub Manager who works with the counsellors to arrange appointments. All teachers will receive an email on the morning of the appointment and form tutors should inform the student of their appointment time. Subject teachers have access to this email so are also able to remind students to attend/allow them to leave their lesson. The attendance team are also notified so that appointments can be added to Go4Schools for safeguarding reasons.

It is never acceptable for students to be referred to the counsellor against their will and students will always be asked if this is something that they want.

2.3 Confidentiality

2.3.1 Informing Parents

- Head of Year, TEAM Hub or the Safeguarding Team will, in Years 7 to 11, seek the permission of parents/carers before counselling begins. This will be via a telephone call or in a face to face meeting where possible, if not, via email.
- In Years 12 and 13, there is no requirement for the Head of Year or TEAM Hub to inform parents/carers. However, where possible, the school will encourage students to communicate with home.

2.3.2 Confidentiality between the counsellor and Student

At the start of the series of counselling sessions, the counsellor will explain the extent to which the student can expect confidentiality. The counsellor will abide by the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy in cases where the student discloses information which suggests that they are at risk of significant harm by themselves or others. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure that she/he has a working knowledge of this policy, and is clear about the procedures to be followed in the event of such a disclosure.

For any new student receiving counselling, an initial 6 week block of appointments will be offered. This will be reviewed in week 6 with the counsellor, TEAM Hub manager and the student.

2.3.3 After the Counselling Session

The counsellor will allow any student who needs time to compose themselves to spend time in TEAM Hub before returning to class.

2.3.4 Record Keeping

TEAM Hub will keep a weekly record of the names of those students who attend counselling and all records will be kept in a discrete and secure place. This information is confidential and is exempt from disclosure to third parties under the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The counsellor is not required to keep any records of their meetings with students; any notes that are made, act only as an aide memoire for the counsellor solely for their own use and will be stored securely and destroyed three years after the student ceases to attend counselling sessions. Under the Data Protection Act students have the right to see records that are kept about themselves unless the counsellor believes that there is an exceptional circumstance, either that it would be seriously harmful

to the student to share this information with them, or where information has been supplied confidentially by a third party (consent must be obtained from that person first of all). Please see the school's Data Protection Policy for further information. If a parent/carer requests information about their child from the counsellor, this will only take place with the prior consent of the student.

2.3.5 Accountability

The counsellor is ultimately accountable to the student concerned, but also has accountability to the school. Where the complex nature of this accountability may lead to a conflict of interest (for example, in cases which would call for the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to be followed), the counsellor must declare this to the student.

The counsellors will be line-managed by the TEAM Hub Manager.

2.3.6 Supervision of the counsellor

All counsellors are required to arrange regular meetings with a counselling supervisor. These meetings are referred to by the term 'supervision'. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure that she/he is abiding by the guidance of the British Association for Counselling Psychotherapy (BACP) in arranging for sufficient supervisory contact. This will be funded by the school.

2.3.7 Qualification and Training

All counsellors in school will either be fully qualified with the Diploma in Counselling or undertaking training towards this. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to attend any training which is necessary for her/him to maintain her/his accreditation with her/his professional body. The school undertakes to fund any training which is necessary to ensure that the counsellor remains up to date with any safeguarding & child protection legislation, or which is agreed to support an additional service the counsellor has agreed to provide to groups of students. This training should be agreed beforehand with the Headteacher.

We may at times have trainee counsellors on placement, working with us as part of their course. Trainee counsellors will be managed by the TEAM Hub Manager and Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding and Wellbeing).

3. How the Policy will be Monitored and Evaluated

The policy will be monitored by the Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding and Wellbeing). Monitoring and evaluation will take the form of ~~yearly~~ anonymous questionnaires for students who have attended counselling sessions, and inclusion of pertinent questions on parental surveys as part of school self-evaluation procedures. This work will be completed by TEAM Hub staff.

4. How this Policy relates to other School Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's policies on:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Confidentiality
- Data Protection
- Freedom of Information

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that:

- The school has considered implications of the need for counsellor/client confidentiality, and has put in place adequate policy and procedures for referrals and the involvement of parents.
- The work of the counsellor is adequately monitored and evaluated.

5.2 The Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding and Wellbeing) is responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of the Counselling Policy.
- Ensuring that the service is advertised to parents/carers ~~on a regular basis~~ via the School's website, prospectus, newsletters and leaflets.
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the counsellor on a regular basis.
- Ensuring that the policy is applied consistently by school staff.
- Ensuring that the counsellor's qualifications are current and correct.

5.3 Heads of Year, TEAM Hub or the Safeguarding Team are responsible for:

- Applying the policy consistently when making referrals.
- Liaising with the counsellor on a regular basis in order to discuss trends and concerns with any particular group of students.

5.4 All staff are expected to:

- Be alert to signs that a student may be experiencing emotional or social difficulties, and discuss these with the student and/or Head of Year, TEAM Hub or the Safeguarding Team.
- Be discreet when students request permission to leave lessons, or when, as a teacher, giving the student an appointment time.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed every four years (earlier if any legislative change).

May 2024