



## ***Counselling Policy***

**Recommended by:**

**Resources & People Committee**

**Date: 12 May 2016**

**Adopted at Full Governing Body Meeting**

**Date: 28 June 2016**

**Signed by R J Collis DL, Chair of Governors:**

**Review date: Summer Term 2020 (earlier if any legislative change)**



## **COUNSELLING POLICY – MAY 2016**

### **1. Introduction**

#### 1.1 *Aims*

Our school statement commits our staff to recognising 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. In enlisting the support of a qualified counsellor, the school also hopes to spread more widely the advice and expertise they can offer and, as a result, enable us to refine and develop existing PSHCE programmes to meet the ever-changing needs of the students

#### 1.2 *Our School*

The Cottesloe School recognises that some students are at a relatively high risk of anxiety, depression, eating problems and obsessive compulsive disorders. The breakdown of family structure and the pressure of achieving good results often causes young people to need someone to talk to.

#### 1.3 *Emotional Literacy*

Emotional literacy is a relatively new concept in education which is defined as 'The ability to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions.'<sup>1</sup> If schools enable their students to become emotionally literate, it is argued that they will start to see:

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

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<sup>1</sup> as defined by SELIG (The Southampton Emotional Literacy Interest Group)

<sup>2</sup> 'Nurturing Emotional Literacy': Peter Sharp

The school sees its counselling service as one of the ways to help the most vulnerable students achieve emotional literacy and intends to use the expertise of the counsellor in developing wider strategies which will help us to become a more emotionally literate school.

## **2. The Policy and Related Procedures**

### *2.1 Advertising the Service*

All parents 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. The LINC Manager is able to provide information if you 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, LINC Manager or member of the Safeguarding Team as a result of:

- A subject teacher or form tutor alerting the Head of Year to a perceived problem.
- A student approaching a member of staff.
- A student's friend(s) approaching a member of staff or Head of Year.
- A student's parents approaching or contacting a member of staff or Head of Year.

The Head of Year will make a referral to the LINC Manager for a consultation to take place with the student. The LINC Manager will exercise their professional judgement in deciding whether or not the student is a suitable candidate for counselling, or whether to refer them to other agencies (e.g. the Senior First Aider or SENDCO). A list of the types of problems for referral to counselling services can be found in the Appendices of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's (BACP) publication 'Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools' and these include, but are not limited to, bereavement, family breakup, relationship issues and self-harm. If, after speaking to the Head of Year, LINC Manager or Safeguarding Officer the student still has concerns, they could approach the Deputy Headteacher or the Headteacher.

The counselling appointment system is managed by the LINC Manager and the student will be provided with a discreet appointment slip which they can present to their subject teacher when asking to be excused from the lesson.

It is never acceptable for students to be referred to the counsellor against their will.

### *2.3 Confidentiality*

#### *2.3.1 Informing Parents*

Advice from County explains that once the service has been advertised to parents, there is no legal requirement for the student's parents to be informed that they have an appointment with the school counsellor. The BACP's guidelines, however, suggest that before the age of 13, it is 'unlikely' that children will be 'Fraser competent' (of 'sufficient understanding and intelligence') and therefore advises that parents should be informed in most cases.

In unpicking this grey area of law, and seeking to provide a balance between assessing the needs of the student and the concerns of the parents, we have agreed the following guidelines to be used by Year Heads, LINC Manager and Safeguarding Officer:

- Head of Year, LINC Manager or Safeguarding Officer will, in Years 7 to 11, seek the student's permission to inform parents before counselling begins. Where this permission is freely given, a telephone call will be made to the parent/carer.
- Where a student is unwilling to allow their parents to be informed, the LINC Manager should allow the student to attend the first counselling session, but alert the counsellor to the student's decision. In such cases, the counsellor will need to reassure themselves that the student is 'Fraser competent' before commencing the counselling session(s).
- If this case arises in Years 7 to 9, the Head of Year or LINC Manager should also consult with the Deputy Headteacher, who will take overall responsibility for this potentially difficult decision.
- In Years 12 and 13, there is no requirement for the Head of Year or LINC Manager to inform parents/carers.

### *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 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.

### *2.3.3 After the Counselling Session*

The Counsellor will allow any student who needs time to compose themselves to spend time in the LINC before returning to class.

### *2.3.4 Record Keeping*

The LINC Manager will keep a weekly record of the names of those students who attend counselling and all records will be kept in a discreet and secure place. This information is confidential and is exempt from disclosure to third parties under the Data Protection Act 1998 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 as an aide memoire for the counsellor solely for their own use and will be stored securely and destroyed three years after the student ceased attending 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.

The counsellor will provide the school with an anonymised report on the nature and number of referrals on a yearly basis. She/he will also be asked to contribute when appropriate to the planning of the PSHE curriculum. Heads of Year will include an anonymised breakdown of the number of students in their Year Group accessing counselling in their termly reports to the Headteacher.

#### *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 Child Protection Policy to be followed), the counsellor must declare this to the student.

Where the counsellor has undertaken to provide additional services, such as delivering 'circle time' activities with a particular group, or providing training for staff, he/she will be accountable to the Leadership team member arranging the additional session.

The counsellor will be line-managed by the Deputy Headteacher.

#### *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 BACP in arranging for sufficient supervisory contact.

#### *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 child protection legislation, or which is agreed supports an additional service the counsellor has agreed to provide to groups of students. This training should be agreed beforehand with the Headteacher.

### **3. How the Policy will be Monitored and Evaluated**

The policy will be monitored by the Deputy Headteacher. 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.

#### **4. How this Policy relates to other School Policies**

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

- 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 Deputy Headteacher 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, the LINC Manager and the Safeguarding Officer 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, LINC Manager or Safeguarding Officer.
- Be discreet when students request permission to leave lessons, or when, as a teacher, giving the student an appointment slip.

#### **6. Review**

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

May 2016

