



# Counselling Policy

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For review by: PDW /FGB



“Young people and children experience developmental changes that are unique to each individual. Counselling is a process, which assists a client to focus on his or her particular concerns and developmental issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices; coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others. Counselling enables children and young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope.” (BACP 2006)

## **Service Aims**

- To support the emotional and mental health and well-being of students and staff at SWBGS.
- To provide a safe, confidential space that allows individuals to explore issues that they may be having. To work through those issues by developing positive coping strategies, empowering them to find a voice and enabling them to build stronger relationships both inside and outside the school environment.
- To keep the individual at the centre of the service and work that we deliver.

## **Relevant Legislation**

This Policy is drawn up with regard to the following:

- Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998, which affords young people the right to privacy.
- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989.
- The Children Act 1989.
- The General Data Protection Act 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2015)

## **Features of the Service**

- All counselling staff must be qualified to Postgraduate Level and/or engaged in study on a Level 4 Diploma in counselling or a degree or masters in a counselling modality.
- All counselling staff are DBS checked.
- All counselling staff are contracted to maintain annual membership of a national professional psychotherapy body, such as the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or British Psychological Society (BPS) and work according to the Ethical Framework of these bodies.



- All counsellors and therapists must meet the minimum standards of clinical supervision with a suitably qualified supervisor.
- All counselling staff must fulfil the requirements of our Risk Assessment (Appendix A).

## Referrals to the Service

- Referrals can come internally to the pastoral team from tutors, subject staff, students
- Referrals are channelled through the pastoral meetings which the DSL oversees. There is then a triage system where the needs of the children are taken into account to provide the most appropriate level of support.
- Students are aware of the counselling provision through assemblies, student website and posters.
- Counselling can only take place and be successful if a student is a willing participant in the process.

## Information for parents

- Parents/carers of incoming students are informed at the beginning of each school year that the service exists at the school at the parent information evening and information about counselling and other mental health support is also available on our school website.
- Working with parents to support students' mental health is a priority and parents will be informed that their child is accessing the counselling service in school. In exceptional circumstances, parents/carers will not be informed where doing so is deemed not be in the best interest of the child. This decision will be made by the DSL and safeguarding team with knowledge of the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
- The young person has a right to access counselling without their parents/carers consent or against their parents/carers wishes if they are considered to be “Gillick Competent”.
- We follow the [BACP guidance for school's](#) which states; *Children are able to consent to counselling without parental consent, if Gillick competent. In England and Wales, the Gillick principle, established in case law in 1986, enables those aged under 16 the right to consent to confidential medical treatment, without a need for parental knowledge or consent. Accessing this right requires the child to demonstrate ‘sufficient understanding’ to the relevant health practitioner, including a counsellor.*

## Working within the School Setting

- The duration of the counselling sessions will be within lessons or after school with some flexibility to take into account individual student needs, but within the wider school day timings. However, it is important that for the duration of the counselling, those sessions are rotated so the student is not missing the same lesson each week.
- The school counselling service does not have sufficient capacity to support long-term complex needs.



- Sessions are 45 mins - 1 hour in length depending on the needs of the child.
- Counselling will take place in a designated room as far as possible to ensure consistency
- If a counselling session is online it will be via google meet and the student must be available to receive the google meet from the counsellor at the appointment time - the student will also require a private place in which to conduct the meeting on their device.
- Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for keeping appointments, and leave a message with the relevant key stage office or the counsellor if they are unable to attend an appointment.
- The safeguarding and pastoral team will contact the student to inform them that they have been added to the waiting list when a referral is received and no appointments are currently available.
- The student will be contacted when a place becomes available.
- The school counsellors do not work on a private basis with any SWBGS student or member of staff.
- School counsellors will confirm, in writing, attendance of students at counselling sessions
- School counsellors will provide reports, on a half-termly basis on client numbers, start dates, end dates, reason for referral, length of counselling time, efficacy of counselling for students
- School counsellors will liaise with the DSL or Head of Year with regard to feedback about students / suggested strategies to support in school / parental contact so the DSL can liaise with the relevant Key Stage and / or members of staff.
- Student counselling will be reviewed every six weeks with the expectation that students will have up to approximately 10 sessions of counselling.
- The counselling support provided at Sir William Borlase is intended to offer short term support working with parents to identify further external support if needed.
- School counsellors will be asked to provide suitable pre and post measures to help the school monitor the effectiveness of school counselling.
- Where possible counsellors will encourage students to share positive strategies they have learnt in counselling with their pastoral staff to ensure a continuity of care for the students.

## **Counselling Records and Confidentiality**



- Written client notes and records are covered by specific sections of the Data Protection Act 2018 and these are kept physically separate from individual educational records within the school and not accessible to non-counselling staff.
- SWBGS counsellors keep separate personal process notes for monitoring their work and for discussion in professional supervision. These notes are kept separately by individual counsellors and are intended to be a professional aide memoire. They are anonymised and kept no longer than necessary before being shredded.
- Files are organised to maintain confidentiality and are labelled by code (with a corresponding list of names and numbers kept separately) and are kept to a minimum level of detail about the general themes of each session.
- An exception to this are notes regarding safeguarding issues. This information is recorded on SWBGS CPOMs, which is also kept separately to the individual's educational record. Counsellors are aware that courts may also require any notes around Child Protection issues at a later date and give consideration to this in making appropriate case notes.
- Confidentiality is vital in enabling people to express their concerns and/or distress in the counselling session. It is an essential element of the process in establishing a relationship of trust, but it is acknowledged that it cannot be absolute.
- Good practice at the SWBGS requires the use of a verbal or written contract which is explained clearly at the outset of counselling and periodically thereafter to students about the boundaries of confidentiality that a school counselling service can offer. Clients are assured that the best decisions regarding confidentiality will be made in the interest of safeguarding and promoting their welfare, preferably with their knowledge and consent.
- A client's wishes about confidentiality can be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare.
- A school counsellor has a duty to follow procedures laid out in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and must refer a concern about a student to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) where there are strong grounds for thinking that an individual might be at risk of significant harm from themselves or others or to themselves or others. Adhering to Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2018). The same will apply where the counsellor has concerns for the welfare of a third party.
- The school counsellor will make every reasonable attempt to communicate first to the student, their intention to break confidentiality and to discuss the information that needs to be shared. If such conversations cannot take place, the matter should be discussed with the students at the earliest opportunity following the referral to a DSL.
- The counsellor will also pass on information as required by law in the event of a disclosure about acts of terrorism or serious crime, or if required to do so by a court order.
- More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared in order to seek further help/support



## **Appendix A:**

### **Risk Assessment**

The following Risk Assessment applies to all counsellors and trainees working with SWBGS students. Evidence of documentation is checked, copied and retained by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Evidence of Counselling qualification.
- Evidence of being on an accredited counselling course at Level 4 or above.
- Proof of Professional Liability insurance.
- DBS checked and SWBGS safeguarding training.
- Interview including a role-play.
- References in line with SWBGS safer recruitment policy
- Signed certificate that staff have read and agree to comply with the Counselling Policy and other key SWBGS policies.

## **Appendix B**

### **Related policies**

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff behaviour / Code of Conduct
- Mental Health Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints procedure
- Anti bullying
- Whistleblowing
- SEND
- Safer Recruitment
- Communication policy
- Mobile phone policy
- Confidentiality