
Policy: Counselling

The term 'counselling' used in this policy refers to the professional counselling provided for students by the counsellor employed by the school. It is recognised that a huge amount of listening and supporting also happens between staff and students on a daily basis and in particular the school nurse provides a critical listening ear for many of our students.

The counsellor at West Buckland School is Sally Nordon; she is professionally trained and qualified, and very experienced in working with young people. She is NOT a member of the teaching staff. She is a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and follows its code of ethics and practice. The school counsellor is trained in an integrative approach, and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), and will adopt an approach best suited to supporting the individual.

1. Why do we have a counsellor?

Counselling is provided by the school as one of the means by which to safeguard our students; to provide them with an independent listener and someone who can help them find different strategies to cope with the challenges in their lives. This counselling service is only offered to students; to avoid a potential conflict of interests, this counselling service is not available to members of staff.

2. What sorts of problems can a counsellor help with?

Students can see the counsellor about anything that is worrying them, for example:

- friendship problems
- bullying
- something you're worried about at home
- worries about work or exams
- confusion about something
- drinking, smoking or drug issues
- worries/problems to do with your health
- relationship problems
- self-harm
- feeling angry, unhappy or lonely
- anxiety/depression
- low self-esteem
- bereavement
- eating issues
- sexuality

3. How is counselling arranged?

- 3.1. Counselling is organised by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) on a weekly basis. The Counsellor is employed to attend school as an independent professional for a period of five hours, one day per week (usually Tuesday).

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- 3.2. Counselling is available to all students who ask for such help from a member of staff (including the School Nurse) or who are referred through pastoral staff to the Deputy Head (Pastoral). Students may also refer themselves directly to the counsellor (in such a case the counsellor will inform the Deputy Head (Pastoral)). This may be with or without the knowledge of the student's parents. When the issues affecting the student's welfare concern his/her relationship with parents, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) may decide to allow counselling to start without the knowledge or agreement of the parents. It would be hoped that the issues raised through counselling might be raised with the parents eventually, either by the student or by staff. A student would normally receive a block of six sessions. Further sessions would normally incur a small charge for each session.
- 3.3. In line with Fraser Guidelines, if students are under 16, but are considered Gillick competent they may access counselling without parental consent. Where they are not, and this will apply to most primary age children as well as to some of secondary age, parents or carer's consent will need to be given before they access counselling.
- 3.4. If a student would like to organise an initial session with the counsellor they can:
- 3.4.1. Speak to their tutor/ Housemaster/ mistress to request an appointment
 - 3.4.2. Request an appointment through the school nurse or Deputy Head (Pastoral)
 - 3.4.3. Send an email to sn@westbuckland.com

4. Organisation and communication

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will organise appointments for the students. These normally last 35 minutes. This is done in such a way as to minimise the disruption regular counselling might have on their academic lessons, so appointments are rotated (much like music lessons) and lunchtimes are used to also minimise disruption. The student, their tutor and the class teacher of any lesson that might be missed are contacted by email, so that the student can access this service quite independently and the class teacher allows them to be absent from a lesson without asking awkward questions as they leave or return. This is done to keep the counselling confidential if possible, although some students don't seem to worry about others knowing they are going to see the counsellor.

5. Confidentiality

The matters discussed during counselling are confidential, between the student and the counsellor, unless there is a child protection disclosure or if the counsellor feels she must pass on the issues raised to the Designated Safeguarding Lead because she is concerned for the child's immediate welfare. In such circumstances the counsellor would tell the student she would have to share this information with others. Parents occasionally ask for feedback via the Deputy Head (Pastoral) which is not usually possible. Part of what the counselling is hoping to achieve is to give the student confidence to tell other people (such as parents and friends) what is troubling them and the counsellor will usually encourage the student to share their concerns with their parents at the earliest suitable opportunity.

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