



JEDDAH PREP AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Counselling Policy

Introduction

Counselling is designed to complement the strengths of the school's pastoral system by offering additional personal support to pupils who may benefit from working with a professional counsellor. Counsellor will provide therapy in confidential process designed to help pupils address their concerns, come to a greater understanding of themselves, and learn effective personal and interpersonal coping strategies. It involves a relationship between them and the school therapist who has the desire and willingness to help accomplish individual goals. Therapy involves sharing sensitive, personal, and private information that may at times be distressing in order to:

- Develop emotional health and wellbeing
- Overcome barriers to learning and achieving their full potential
- Increase resilience so they are better able to manage personal difficulties
- Develop self-esteem and self-confidence

Pupils will receive formal counselling, which is the area of the professional counsellor, acting in their specialist role, and in accordance with strict code of ethics, which requires confidentiality, accountability, clinical supervision and continuing professional development.

The school will view counselling as a way of helping pupils to communicate and express their thoughts and feelings, primarily through the process of talking and listening. However, in many instances, the nature of individual pupil's difficulties will call for the school counsellor to incorporate other therapeutic activities and non-traditional interventions into their practice, in order to support pupil's communication and expression of themselves.

In line with agreed standards for school-based counselling, the school counsellor is a qualified counsellor and psychotherapist who holds the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). The school counsellor is therefore bound by the BACP's Ethical Framework for Good Practice.

The Framework can be viewed online at http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/.

See Appendix 1 for detailed summary of the ethical principles.

Therapy is a way of helping our pupils, teachers and parents through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. The pupil is provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Therapy can help a children and young people to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with concerns, and for our students this will result in increased capacity for learning.

When children are experiencing difficulties at home or in school their concentration level and behaviour can be adversely effected. Issues children and young people may be struggling with include:

- Bullying
- Academic pressure
- Peer pressure
- Relationships (family/friends)
- Anxiety and depression
- Confusion
- Loss and grief
- Self-harm
- Eating disorder
- Body image
- Self-esteem
- Self Confidence.

A school based service brings therapist to children and young people in a place that is familiar, safe and secure. By providing emotional support and enabling children to

'off load' feelings, thoughts in order to benefit more in class, feel better about themselves and build their self-confidence.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to the formal counselling process: To enable the young person to develop a trusting relationship with the counsellor, to allow the young person to open up and share feelings without fear, to allow the to speak freely about issues concerning them, to encourage others to come forward for counselling.

Difficulties in maintaining confidentiality are unlikely to occur if there is mutual trust, goodwill and respect between counsellor, school, staff and parents. The counsellor will not pass on any detailed accounts of sessions, but may communicate periodically with school pastoral staff about general progress, with the child's permission. It would be reasonable to expect the school counsellor to record issues raised by children and young people in general, in order to inform school development and policy. For the young person to feel supported between counselling sessions, they may wish a trusted member of staff to know they are receiving counselling.

Breaching confidentiality

There is a clear tension in young person's right to confidentiality within counselling and the increasing policy directives on sharing information amongst professionals to effectively safeguard young people.

At the outset, the counsellor will make it clear to the young person that they may need to breach confidentiality (i.e. tell someone and seek help). This may happen when the young person or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm. The counsellor will discuss this with the young person again if the need arises. Where possible, the counsellor will keep them informed and involve them in this process. Even without the child's consent, it may be necessary to disclose information they have revealed. In the case of a young person threatening suicide or

serious self-harm, there is a general acceptance of the need for intervention even when this involves breaking confidentiality. More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared to seek further help. The counsellor is not required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime (e.g. a young person selling substance in school). Good practice involves working in partnership with parents. In most cases, children and young people are willing to agree for a parent (only one signature is required) to be asked for written consent for them to receive counselling that will take place in school time.

Legislation and Guidance

The school counselling service is shaped by, and complies with, key pieces of legislation and guidance, which includes, but is not limited to:

- JPGS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Children in Education (2004)
- UK Data Protection Act (2018)
- Gillick/Fraser Guidelines (1985)
- Children Act (1989;2006)
- Educational Act (2002)
- Green Paper Every Child Matters (2003)
- BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (2018)
- BACP 4th Edition Counselling in Schools (2004)

Referral

Staff or parents may consider referring a pupil to, or advising to see, the counsellor if the young person is:

- Becoming very subdued, has marked mood swings, or is exhibiting behaviour that is 'out of character'
- Refusing to go school
- Found bullying other children
- Being bullied
- Having difficulties due to a family breakdown or parents separating
- Having peer group difficulties/relationships
- Finding it hard to cope following the death of a family member/close friend
- Self-harming e.g. cutting
- Experiencing low self-esteem
- Finding it hard to concentrate in school

This list is not exclusive and the counsellor will be able to offer advice about the suitability of all referrals.

Referral process:

- Pupils can make self-referral, can be referred by a member of school staff, or by parent/guardian.
- All referrals made by a member of staff will have to provide a referral form for the counsellor before an appointment is made
- All information discussed in sessions is confidential unless it's a safeguarding matter, then it will be breached and reported to the designated safeguarding lead.
- Intervention plan and recommendations will be shared with teachers and parents to help students do better at school and home.
- The referral form can be found on school disk and in the staff room

Once the referral has been made, subject to parental permission (where applicable), the counsellor will meet and assess the child.

Assessment and Contracting

Once the referral has been received, the school counsellor will invite the pupil to attend an introductory and assessment session. The session will be an opportunity for pupil and counsellor to explore what the difficulties may be and help the pupil to decide whether counselling is right for them.

Counselling will only begin, on a voluntary basis, with the pupils informed consent. The school counsellor will facilitate the informed decision making of pupils by using the pupil information pamphlet as support clarification on the nature of counselling, including boundaries of counselling.

Where a pupil indicates within their introductory session that they would like ongoing counselling, the school counsellor will make verbal agreement with pupil regarding the boundaries of counselling and work towards them signing the counselling written agreement, which includes an explanation of confidentiality.

Parental involvement

The school counsellor will make every effort to encourage pupils to inform their parent(s) that they are receiving counselling. In the usual course of events, the school counsellor will send the parent an introductory pack which includes: introductory letter, parents' consent and confidentiality agreement.

Where the pupil requests that their parents is not informed of their involvement in counselling, the school counsellor will work with the pupil to help them understand the potential benefits such as family therapy, and work towards obtaining their agreement, unless to do so would place them at risk of them.

Under the Gillick Competency Principle (See Appendix 2), young people age 16 and under have the right to access confidential counselling *without knowledge or consent*, provided they are of sufficient intelligence to understand what is being proposed. Often Pupils are willing to agree for a parent to be asked for consent and most parents are happy to give it, but there may be occasions where a parent withholds consent, or a pupil is distressed and unwilling to involve them. In these

circumstances, a decision will need to be made as to whether therapy should go ahead.

Parents can withhold consent for counselling, intentionally (explicit refusal) and unintentionally (non-return of consent forms). Non-return of parental consent forms can disadvantage pupils, as it may delay the start of counselling.

Sessions

The length and frequency of individual sessions can vary, depending on the individual's needs and the school timetabling structure. Sessions will be weekly and last between 30 minutes to 50 minutes/one hour (two sessions). The service offered will be flexible and open-ended, no limit on number of sessions pupils may have, provided that pupil is benefiting from support.

Many therapists contract with clients to review progress after a certain number of sessions. The school counsellor will review ongoing process and encourage pupils to reflect on the outcomes.

The counsellor shall endeavour to arrange sessions around pupil and rotate times and change days to help ensure that the same lesson is not repeatedly missed.

However, for some pupils, it will be important that the counsellor maintains the same schedule for the duration of their counselling.

Record Keeping and Data Protection

The school counsellor will keep written records about pupils in counselling. These records are kept to the absolute minimum necessary for the protection of pupils and are strictly confidential and exempt from disclosure to third parties, unless legally required to do so. Counselling records include material such as reasons for referral to counselling, number of sessions attended, and an account of the topic discussed in each session (a brief sentence to reveal the core issue). They may also include reports of safeguarding issues.

The school counsellor is responsible for ensuring that they record any child protection concerns which emerge during the course of a pupil's counselling. Records must clearly document all discussions with the pupil and third parties regarding the concerns, together with the key decisions reached during these conversations, actions to be taken and outcomes.

Counselling records are not held in the school central system but in a locked cabinet in the counselling room, which is only accessible to the counsellor. However, the counsellor shall ensure that a copy of any progress report and ending (summary) report is placed on the pupil's school file.

The school counsellor does not make/keep a detailed record of the contents of individual sessions. However, they may keep notes on sessions for the purposes of monitoring feelings generated by their work and for discussion during (external) supervision. These notes belong to the counsellor and are destroyed (within a secure and confidential process) to allow sufficient time for the counsellor to take her notes to her next supervision session.

Counselling records are retained for a period which is informed by current Data Protection Act legislation and good practice within the education sector.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The school counsellor will keep completed evaluation forms that are used to evaluate therapeutic change and monitor the outcomes of counselling, and which form the basis of a progress report to be prepared by the counsellor for pupils' School Annual Report. Within these reports, the counsellor must not reveal the content of what is discussed in sessions without the expressed permission of the pupil concerned. Counsellor may use information kept in individual pupils' files to influence counselling provision within the school. Data may be circulated across the staff cohort but will not be disseminated in any form that could identify individual pupils.

Monitoring of the counselling service provision will take place on an ongoing basis to evaluate performance, identify areas of concern and inform service development.

Data will be collated that includes:

- Numbers of young people attending.
- Number of sessions per young person.
- Numbers who did not keep counselling appointment.
- Range of Issues arising e.g. family conflict, self-harm, bullying
- Safeguarding Issues arising e.g. Domestic violence, sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect.
- Action resulting from safeguarding concerns.
- Disability, illness, special needs.
- Immediate impact of counselling for the young person.

Access to records

Pupils

Under the Data Protection Act (1998), pupils who access counselling have the right to see information recorded about them by the school counsellor. The only exception is if a disclosure of information would be likely to cause serious harm to the pupil.

Pupils cannot see information which is considered third party, or records concerning another person, unless that person has agreed.

Where pupils wish to see their file, they should ask the counsellor and the counsellor should be present to explain what the file contains and the reasons why.

Parents

According to guidance from the Information Commissioner, under data protection law, parents have an independent right of access to education records, despite objections by the child, and school counselling records could be classified as such.

This could potentially lead to a situation of a parent seeking access against the pupils' wishes and presumably, those of the counsellor. In this instance, Jeddah Prep and Grammar would use Schedule 2, Section 4(3) 6(1) of the DPA 1998, on the

grounds that any such processing or disclosure is “unwarranted in any particular case by reason of prejudice to the rights and freedom of legitimate interests of the data subject” (i.e. the pupil concerned). Where a parent requests to gain access to their child’s counselling records, they should make these in writing to the Head, briefly stating their reasons.

Appendix 1 : **Summary of Ethical Principles for Counsellors and Psychotherapists)**

Ethical Principle

Principles direct attention to important ethical responsibilities. Our core principles are:

Being trustworthy:

honouring the trust placed in the practitioner.

Autonomy:

respect for the client’s right to be self-governing.

Beneficence:

a commitment to promoting the client’s wellbeing.

Non-maleficence:

a commitment to avoiding harm to the client.

Justice:

the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services.

Self-respect:

fostering the practitioner’s self-knowledge, integrity and care for self

Source: BACP Ethical Framework for

Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy 2018

Factors to consider	Checklist for questions
Immediate issues:	
Child’s age:	How old is the child or young person?
Gillick test:	

Appendix 2: Assessing competence to consent by children and young people

The following guidance is based on the Fraser Guidelines and adapted for application to counselling.

<p>Short-term issues</p> <p>Nature of contact:</p> <p>Support systems:</p> <p>Nature of immediate issue or problem:</p> <p>Child protection responsibilities:</p> <p>Longer-term issues:</p> <p>Stage of cognitive and emotional development:</p>	<p>Does the child or young person understand the counselling? Are they refusing to allow their parents to be involved?</p> <p>Do their best interests require that the counselling be given without parental consent?</p> <p>Is the contact with the counsellor controlled entirely by the child or young person?</p> <p>What support does the child or young person have access to alongside or in the place of counselling or therapy, should contact be broken or withdrawn?</p> <p>What is the degree of risk, if any, posed by the child to him or herself or to others (e.g. drugs, abuse, suicide, arson?) Is the risk significant, immediate or longer term?</p> <p>Is the counsellor required by their conditions of employment, or agency policy, to report all suspected child abuse to social services?</p> <p>Does the child or young person understand the nature of the issue or problem? Their own needs and the needs of others? The risks and benefits of counselling or therapy? Does the child or young person have a sense of their own identity? A sense of time, past, present and future?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Source: Jenkins, 1997: 216-7 (abbreviated version).</p>
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