



# Information for Parents & Carers

## What is counselling?

We all have times when it feels hard to speak to those closest to us. Often this can be because we don't want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone else outside of the family. Counselling gives someone an opportunity to talk in confidence about things that are of concern.

## What does a Counsellor do?

Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people make sense of their thoughts and feelings. The Counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

## Who are the Counsellors?

Leigh Fenton and Mel Wilkinson are professionally qualified and experienced Counsellors. They receive regular and confidential supervision of their work to ensure the quality of their practice.

## Why have a Counsellor in school?

A school based service brings counselling to young people in a place that is familiar, safe and secure. If young people are able to receive emotional support from a qualified professional they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential.

## When, where and for how long?

Counselling may be for a few sessions, or longer term. It is reviewed regularly between the counsellor and student. We have a dedicated private room available and sessions last for 40-50 minutes (depending on the circumstances). Appointment times are varied so that time is not lost from any one subject.

## How are referrals made to the counselling service?

A student can self-refer by filling in a short form; they can also email or text the counselling service. Alternatively they can speak to their Head of Year, Tutor or any teacher who will pass the message on to the Counsellors.

## Is it confidential?

A key feature of our service is that information discussed in the counselling session is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time when it's ok to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the work with parents, unless the young person requests or gives consent for this. This can be hard for parents to accept at times, but ensuring the confidentiality of the work is crucial for establishing trust so that young people feel confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them.

If a student appears to be at risk of significant harm, the Counsellor would immediately speak to Mr Southon, the Child Protection Designated Teacher, who would then decide the appropriate course of action and contact the student's parents.

### **What if I don't want my child to receive counselling?**

If a young person requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. Parents and carers may not deny them this right. We would, however, prefer that we have your support for the work, and we are always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

### **What if s/he refuses counselling?**

The decision about whether or not to take up the offer of counselling is entirely voluntary for young people just as it would be for an adult.

### **Can I support the counselling work?**

Yes, and we welcome this. Our experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if their son/daughter wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they don't. We acknowledge that this isn't an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions. It is always our hope that talking with a Counsellor will lead to greater openness with parents and families.

### **Data protection procedures and evaluation**

All information about counselling work undertaken is kept securely by the Counselling Service in line with current data protection regulations. After the counselling has finished your child will be given an evaluation form that they can complete anonymously and return. This lets us know how well we are helping the young people that we see.

If there is any cause for complaint, you or your child is welcome to contact the Counsellors or their line manager, Hayden Southon, who will aim to resolve any issues of concern.

**If after reading this information, you have any more questions please feel free to contact the counselling service.**

Here are some comments made by students who have accessed the Student Counselling Service:

*"It gave me a chance to talk about anything and everything I needed to. I felt as though I could talk about anything and not be judged. Counselling made me feel safe and confident. It gave me back my life."*

*"The counselling improved my relationships with my family. I feel like a more confident person because the Counsellor helped explain my feelings."*

*"It's very helpful because I could talk about anything and know that the counsellor wouldn't tell anyone unless they thought I was in danger."*

**Leigh Fenton & Mel Wilkinson**  
**Student Counsellors**

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