



St Joseph's School WONTHAGGI

Counselling Policy

1. Rationale

1.1. Counselling is available at St Joseph's School as part of our pastoral support to students to help promote well-being and enable a greater capacity for coping and enjoying life which ultimately impacts on the ability to learn successfully.

1.2. The school counsellor is accredited by the ACA and works within their guidelines and is bound by their ethical framework and professional conduct procedure.

2. The Counselling Service

2.1. In line with all appropriate and relevant professional standards, counsellors seek to adopt a restorative, student-centred and evidence-based practice. In responding to the needs of individual students, counsellors will draw upon a range of theoretical orientations and evidence-based practices, which may include, but are not limited to, cognitive behavioural therapy, narrative therapy and brief solution focussed approaches. The focus will be on improving student learning by supporting their wellbeing at school.

2.2. Counselling is a way of helping through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. The process enables the student to focus on their particular concerns, work through feelings of inner conflict and gain a greater understanding of themselves and their situation. It can relieve emotional tension and enable a greater capacity for coping and enjoying life.

2.3. Students are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life.

3. Referrals

3.1. Students are referred by a member of staff using our internal referral form with the full consent of the parent, who may have raised their initial concern with the school. Students from grades 3-6 may self-refer but consent may be sought from a parent or caregiver as well as contact being made between the counsellor and parent/caregiver before any sessions commence. Should the counselling service be oversubscribed, a waiting list will be created. Access to the service will then be determined by the Counsellor and Learning Adjustment Leader.

3.2. Should it be felt that any referrals need to be made to external agencies; this will be discussed with the parent and student.

3.3. Initial contact with the parents will be made by the counsellor, if appropriate.

4. Counselling Sessions

4.1. Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment. At the initial session, the counsellor will identify the needs of the student and decide on the best course of action. Sessions could vary from a one-off session or may lead to weekly sessions. After a maximum of eight sessions, the service will be reviewed by the counsellor and Learning Adjustment Leader to determine whether the sessions will be continued. The timing of the session will be scheduled to try to cause as little disruption to learning as possible.

4.2. Sessions with the counsellor usually last around 45 minutes and are one to one. However, sessions may be longer or shorter as appropriate.

5. Consent

5.1. Prior to providing services, the counsellor will inform the students about the nature, the purpose of the interaction, the limits to confidentiality and right of access to files.

In the case of primary aged children, informed consent is obtained from a parent or legal guardian. However, at a certain point, a young person can be judged to be able to independently seek counselling support and, therefore, provide informed consent in their own right.

It is the responsibility of the School Counsellor to determine whether a young person possesses the ability to give informed consent for counselling services.

An informed consent form is available and can be signed by the student/parent where applicable.

5.2. Minors and Consent

Before undertaking a counselling relationship, the counsellor should seek the consent of the young person, and with the consent of the young person, and, where appropriate, their parent or guardian. The counsellor will always endeavour to work collaboratively with parents and students. It should be noted that the Privacy Act (1988) and the Health Records Act (2001) acknowledge young people's rights to the privacy of their own health information and to making decisions regarding their privacy where they are competent to do so. Parents and guardians do not have automatic access to all health information relating to a child in their care. Within the limits of safety, therefore, the counsellor has a responsibility to determine, on an individual basis, the capacity to make informed decisions about who should have access to this information - including the student's parents.

Factors influencing a young person's capacity to consent include:

- The young person's age and level maturity
- Their understanding of the relevant circumstances including potential risks and benefits
- When counsellors are in doubt about a young person's capacity to consent they should consult with their peers or supervisor, and document any decision

As always, the principle of the best interests of the child is paramount.

5.3. Parents and Carers

The counsellor is not required to seek the consent of both parents either in families where parents are together or separated. Parents cannot access student information or sit in on counselling sessions.

6. Confidentiality

6.1. Definition

The counselling that students receive is confidential within the limits of the law and the ethics of the counselling profession. What is said during counselling, remains between the student and the counsellor. Confidential notes are recorded for legal purposes, and to aid progress. Whilst these notes are confidential, they could be subpoenaed by a court under certain circumstances.

There will be times where we may ask your permission to disclose certain information to a third party; this would always be because we believe it would be of benefit to the students and their situation.

6.2. Limits of confidentiality

There may be times when we need to share information learned from those individual sessions with the appropriate parties: this includes parents, The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Police and the School.

There are certain situations in which we are required by law and/or ethics to reveal information obtained during counselling to another person or agency without the students permission. These situations are:

- If you threaten bodily harm or death to another person, we are required by law to inform the intended victim and appropriate law enforcement agencies
- If you threaten bodily or death to yourself, or we are concerned that you are at risk of harming yourself, we will inform the appropriate law enforcement agencies and others who could help in prohibiting you from carrying out these threats
- If you reveal information related to the abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elderly person, we are required by law to report this to the appropriate authorities
- Disclosure of significant self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Disclosure of drug use on school premises
- Disclosure of significant harassment or bullying
- Disclosure of involvement or intended involvement in criminal activity
- Disclosure of significant health issues

7. Record Keeping

Confidentiality of records

7.1. In recognition of the requirements of the Privacy Act and the Health Records Act and the various Professional Codes of Practice, counsellors have a legal and ethical obligation to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the students personal information gathered during the course of the counselling sessions. This obligation requires provision to maintain confidentiality in the collection, recording, accessing, storage, dissemination and disposal of information.

7.2. Appropriate records must be maintained; including details of the student's name, the date of each session, those present at the session and a brief summary of the main issues discussed.

Similarly, records will be kept of meetings and/or telephone conversations regarding the student with parents, staff and external specialists.

All records written by the counsellor remain the property of the school.

8. Related Policies

DOSCEL Child Protection and Safety Policy
DOSCEL Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy and Procedure
DOSCEL Mandatory Reporting Policy
DOSCEL Pastoral Care Policy
St Joseph's School Student Welfare and General Safety Policy

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school review process.



Referral for Student Counselling Form

Name of student:		Year/Class:
DOB:	Address: Post code:	
Referred by:		Date of referral:
Consent for referral given by parent /carer (please tick box):	YES	NO
Outline of concern/issue:		
For Counsellor use only		
Referral approved (Please tick box)	YES	NO
Timescale for counselling session if not immediate		
Date of initial counselling session		
Contact made with parent/carers to discuss referral	YES	NO
Date contact made	Time	



Student Counselling Parent Feedback Form

Dear Parent/Guardian/Caregiver,

Your child has recently been seeing the counsellor at our school. It would be helpful to know how successful this support has been for your child to enable us to continue to improve this service. The information you provide is confidential to your child's file.

1. Is your child? ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other (Please tick)

2. What is their age?

3. Did the counselling help: ☐ a lot ☐ a little ☐ not really (please tick)

4. If the counselling was helpful what changes did you notice? (Please tick)

	A lot	A little	Not much	Not applicable
Improved behaviour at home				
More able to communicate				
More willing to attend school				
Happier				
Less worried/concerned				
More settled in school				
Improved relationship with peers				
Improved relationships with siblings				

5. What were your initial feelings about your child seeing our counsellor?

- Keen for your child to see the counsellor ☐ (please tick)
- Willing to go along with the idea ☐
- Not sure or reluctant ☐

6. What would you say about school counselling to other parents whose child was unhappy or experiencing difficulties?

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7. Do you think the school counselling service is a good idea?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

8. Any other comments?

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it in the envelope

provided.



Student Counselling – Student Feedback Form

Confidential

Please answer the following questions to help us understand how helpful your counselling sessions have been and to help us continue to improve our service to students.

1. Are you: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other (please tick)

2. What is your age?

(Please tick)

		Yes	No	Not Sure	Not applicable
1	I was happy about the way I was asked to see the counsellor				
2	I was happy with the room where I saw the counsellor				
3	I feel I have had enough sessions with the counsellor				
4	I felt relaxed and comfortable with the counsellor				
5	I was able to tell the counsellor what was on my mind or troubling me				
6	I was able to trust the counsellor				
7	Counselling has helped me be more positive				
8	I am happier now I have had counselling				

		Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
9	I am now able to concentrate on my work more				
10	I have a better relationship with my family				
11	My relationships are better with my friends now				
12	I know what to do now if I am concerned or worried				
13	I know which trusted adults I can go to for help if I need it in the future				

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire



Staff Feedback form following completion of student counselling (Confidential)

Student Name..... Year

group..... Referred

by..... Date of

referral.....

The above student has now completed their counselling sessions with the school counsellor. Please complete the feedback form and return this to the school counsellor as part of our school evaluation procedures.

In your professional opinion, has the behaviour of the student changed during or since the counselling sessions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please outline below any changes observed.

Name:

Signed:

Date:



Information leaflet for students

What is counselling about?

Sometimes we all have problems that are worrying. Think of a confusing jigsaw when all of the pieces are difficult to match together. Talking about a problem in counselling is like sorting out the pieces so that we can build a picture that makes more sense to us.

What happens in counselling?

Counselling gives you the opportunity to talk in private about anything, which is worrying you.

The counsellor will not take sides or tell you what to do or how to live your life, but they will help you to look at choices and encourage you to make your own decisions.

Who are counsellors?

A counsellor is a professionally qualified person who has experience of working with children and/or young people. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

Where will the counselling take place?

The counselling will take place in a private and safe room at school.

When is counselling available?

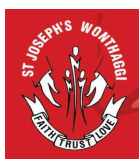
The counsellor in our school will arrange a time that will cause as little disruption to your child's learning. The counsellor in our school is Mrs Kathy Williams.

Is counselling confidential?

What you say in counselling is not repeated to others without your permission, unless there are serious concerns about your safety or another person's safety. This will be explained to you at the initial meeting with the counsellor.

Do my parents need to know?

Counselling works best when you are able to tell your parents and then they can support you. We usually ask, but not in all cases, the parents to sign a consent form before the first session.



Information leaflet for parent and carers

What is counseling?

Counselling provides an opportunity to talk in confidence to a qualified counsellor about any issues/concerns. The issues will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, anxiety, relationships, bereavement, traumatic events and family breakdown.

Who are counselors?

Our counsellor is a member of staff who has the appropriate qualifications in counselling to undertake this specialist role.

Why do we need a counselor in our school?

Few of us are able to work well or even function when we are stressed or unhappy. The impact of distressing or difficult situations can be felt even more acutely by young people than by adults. If pupils are able to receive emotional support from a suitably qualified person then they will have greater opportunity to reach their full potential.

Where and when will it take place?

We have a designated room for counselling.

How do you ensure confidentiality?

All notes and records are held in a secure place when not in use.

What if my child makes a disclosure to the counsellor?

If a disclosure is made that would appear to place the pupil at risk of harm or potential

harm to others then the child protection policy would be implemented.

What if my child refuses to have counseling?

The decision to take up counselling is entirely voluntary for young people just as it would be for an adult.

Can I support the counseling service?

Yes, and this is most welcomed. Experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent or carer can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity and to show an interest if their child wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they do not. Our counsellor acknowledges that this is not an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

It is hoped that talking with a counsellor will lead to greater openness, but you may need to allow a little time for this to occur.

If my child sees a counsellor, does this mean I am failing as a parent?

Absolutely not! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to speak to those who are closest to us about things, which may be bothering us. Often this can be because we do not want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone unbiased and removed. The counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find a way through whatever is troubling them.



School Counseling - Parental Consent Form

I give permission for (Student's
name)

Year group.....

To work with the school counsellor for a series of either up to eight counselling sessions
and/ or up to eight social support group sessions.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

School Counselling - Student Consent Form

I give consent to have counselling and have records kept of my sessions and I am aware of my
right of access to them.

I understand what counselling is and the explanation about confidentiality is clear to me.

Student name:

Student signature:

Date:



School Counselling - Parental Consent Form

I give permission for (Student's
name)

Year group.....

To work with the school counsellor for a series of either up to eight counselling sessions
and/ or up to eight social support group sessions.

Name:

Signature:

Date: