



Beths Counselling Policy

1. Definition

For the purposes of this policy, counselling takes place when the school counsellor sees a student in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the student is having, distress they may be experiencing, dissatisfaction with their life, or a loss of a sense of direction and/or purpose. By listening attentively and patiently, the counsellor can begin to perceive the difficulties from the student's point of view and can help them to see things more clearly or possibly from a different perspective. Counselling is a way of enabling choice, change or reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a pupil to take a particular course of action. [1]

2. Counselling at Beths

The counselling service aims to build upon the school's pastoral care by providing specific therapeutic interventions to students who are identified as needing additional support in order to achieve their potential, both socially and academically. The service is available to all the 11 to 18 year olds registered as students at Beths Grammar School.

The school counsellor is an accredited member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and as such works within their guidelines and is bound by the Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. For more information please see www.bacp.co.uk.

Upon receipt of a referral, the counsellor will make contact with the student concerned and set up an assessment session. This allows the counsellor to explain how counselling works, determine what the student would like to focus on and agree a plan of action. It is usual practice to offer a weekly appointment. Appointment times will be varied to ensure the same lesson is not missed each week. Sessions are usually delivered in blocks of 6 and progress/therapeutic goals are regularly reviewed.

Every effort will be made to ensure that a student's counselling sessions remain as private as possible.

3. Referral Systems

Students may be referred to the counselling service by a member of staff, parent or themselves. Students can self-refer by either talking to any member of staff or making an appointment directly with the school counsellor. Times during which students can see the counsellor to make an appointment are well publicised around the school. Staff can refer by using an internally recognised referral form. Parents/carers can refer by either calling or emailing the school.

On occasion, the school counsellor may determine that a pupil requires greater emotional support than the school's counselling service is able to provide. If this is the case, the school counsellor after consultation with Designated Safeguarding Officer and/or her Deputies will organise, usually following discussion with the student and their parents/carers, referral to an outside agency (e.g. GPs, CAMHS, Children's Services).

4. **Confidentiality**

The principle of confidentiality is the cornerstone of any counselling relationship as it allows students to share their feelings and concerns without fear of reprisal, blame or shame.

However, no confidential guarantee can be absolute as students' safety is always of paramount importance. Accordingly, whilst the counsellor provides a confidential counselling service she also practices in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework, current UK law and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (see separate policy).

5. **Parental Consent**

Ordinarily parental consent will be sought before a student accesses the counselling service at Beths. However, on occasion, a student may wish to use the service without their parents/carers' knowledge. In these circumstances, whilst every effort will be made to encourage and support the student to share this information with their parents/carers, we will provide counselling to the student as long as they are deemed capable of providing informed consent (in accordance with UK case law). The school counsellor will therefore carefully assess the student to determine if he/she has 'sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision' [2]. This is known as being 'Gillick and Frazer competent' [3].

Please note however, in line with both the BACP Ethical Framework and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, if there are any concerns the student may be at risk of serious harm then parents/carers (or any other relevant agency) will immediately be informed.

6. **Record Keeping**

The school counsellor will collect, store and process data in line with the GDPR Act 2018. As such minimal notes together with the date and number of counselling sessions will be kept in a locked cabinet accessible only by the counsellor. Any notes will be coded to ensure they remain anonymous.

7. **Supervision**

All professional counsellors are required to have clinical supervision at least monthly. This supports the counsellors' work and ensures the best possible service to the students accessing counselling at Beths.

8. Service Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to evaluate the counselling service at Beths each student will be asked to complete various questionnaires at different stages of the counselling process. The anonymous data collected from these instruments will be collated, analysed and disseminated to key members of staff once every term.

9. Complaints

Any complaints regarding the counselling service at Beths should be directed to the Headmaster in the first instance. In the unlikely event that the complaint is not satisfactorily dealt with please contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (www.bacp.co.uk), whose professional code of conduct the counsellor abides by.

10. Covid Measures

Between counselling sessions, the counsellors will clean all surfaces, doors handles and any objects handled such as pens etc. with antibacterial wipes. The room will also be fully ventilated between sessions and all students will be offered hand sanitizer as they arrive and leave their session.

Masks will not be used during counselling sessions unless specifically requested by the student.

11. Review Date

This policy will reviewed by the school counsellor and her Line Manager and/or the Deputy Head responsible for Wellbeing.

Reviewed : Autumn 2021

Next Scheduled Review date : Autumn 2022

References

[1] British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools 4th Edition

[2] Gillick v West Norfolk, 1984

[3] This was established by the House of Lords in 1985