



STOVER

Counselling Policy

Independent Day and Boarding School for Girls and Boys ages 3 – 18 Years

Stover School

September 2022

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Introduction

The aim of this document is to:

1. Provide all staff, pupils and parents/carers/guardians with a comprehensive guide to the counselling service.
2. Help people to understand how counselling works and what the benefits are.
3. Support people through the referral process.
4. Support people to understand the confidentiality policy and why it exists.
5. Ensure that all pupils receive the same equal opportunity to access counselling at Stover.
6. Support staff to understand what their responsibilities are when a pupil wants to attend or may benefit from counselling.

This is a living document and it is the responsibility of the school counsellor, in conjunction with the school, to ensure that this document is kept up-to-date and reflects changes in policy, guidance and legislation.

This document is to be used in conjunction with professional guidelines and protocols set out by regulatory bodies.

Counsellor Roles and Responsibilities

Reporting to: the Assistant Head (Pastoral)

1. To provide professional counselling sessions to pupils at Stover School.
2. To provide any additional sessions which may be required and to be at a mutually convenient time for the client, counsellor and school.
3. Additional sessions are to be carried out following the consultation of the counsellor and the Assistant Head (Pastoral).
4. To be accountable for any time it may take, within reason, to complete duties outside of counselling sessions. These may include: meetings, administrative tasks, training, supervision and other tasks which help with the efficiency and quality of the counselling service.

Main Areas of Responsibility

1. To be an integral part of the school team, and to link with other members, offering support as necessary and appropriate, to facilitate an efficient and professional service.

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2. Maintain effective and professional relationships with all persons associated with the school.
3. To be responsible for the information available to pupils, parents, carers, guardians and teachers/staff in relation to the counselling service. Information should be relevant, up-to-date, informative and easy to access.
4. To attend meetings and discussions held within the school which may be beneficial to the running of the service, e.g. pastoral meetings and 1-1 meetings with staff.
5. To be responsible for all administrative tasks related to the role, e.g. the production of information leaflets & notices, messages to pupils, parents, carers, guardians and staff, and the use of educational and informative literature for the benefit of all.
6. To liaise with other professionals in the best interest of pupils, the school and the counselling service.
7. To abide by the terms and conditions of the Counselling Agreement/Contract.
8. To attend and participate in regular supervision in accordance with professional guidelines, Codes of Ethics and professional codes and standards of practice.
9. To continue personal and professional training relevant to the needs of the pupils/school and in accordance with professional codes.
10. To properly maintain individual client records in accordance with GDPR.
11. To maintain own wellbeing, assess and monitor own fitness to practice, and undertake professional counselling relating to own issues as and when appropriate.
12. To respect client confidentiality, particularly if discussing issues relating to current case load within ongoing training or outside supervision.
13. To consult with the Assistant Head (Pastoral) at the earliest opportunity if they feel that there is a need to consult with others including but not exclusive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
14. To consult with the Assistant Head (Pastoral) at the earliest opportunity if they feels that there is a need to consult with other agencies in relation to the contracted Confidentiality Policy relating to Child Protection Safeguarding issues.
15. To remain as independent and impartial as possible, always maintaining that the counsellor's role is primarily to be working in the best interest of Stover's pupils.
16. To adhere to the guidance set out in this policy.

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The roles and responsibilities are intended to give a general indication of the standard required by all counsellors, relating to their role within the school. Any changes will be carried out in consultation with the counsellor and the Assistant Head (Pastoral).

The school counsellor is	Joanna Galloway
Qualifications and Training	Diploma in Theory and Practice of Counselling; BSc Psychology
Professional Membership	Registered Member of BACP (Accred).

About Counselling

Professional counselling should only ever be provided by someone who:

1. Holds a recognised counselling qualification at Diploma Level or above.
2. Is insured.
3. Is in receipt of regular professional supervision.
4. Is a member of a governing body such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Unless someone meets these criteria they are not in a position to provide appropriate, professional counselling. It is important that people are trained and regulated because counselling is a therapeutic approach which supports people with their well-being and mental health. Counsellors are trained to identify the needs of people and decide if a referral to a service other than counselling is appropriate. Counsellors will never work with a person if their skills are not adequate to meet the needs of the client and another service such as mental health is required for example.

Counsellors should have sound knowledge of their methods of practice and they should be used with the best interest of the pupil in mind.

Why Counselling is Important:

Counselling is a therapeutic approach which can provide people with the opportunity to be listened to and supported as they work through difficulties in their lives. These difficulties may already be known or they may be disclosed for the first time during the counselling process. Working with a qualified, professional counsellor means that a person can be supported through what may be some very painful or difficult situations.

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Therapy offers you a safe, confidential place to talk about your life and anything that may be confusing, painful or uncomfortable. It allows you to talk with someone who is trained to listen attentively and to help you improve things (BACP, 2010). Counselling can help to give you the tools to move forward in your life by being listened to and supported as you try and make sense of your situation.

The DfE recognise the positive role that counselling can play in supporting and building good mental and emotional wellbeing, which is an integral part of children and young people's holistic development.

Some of the issues people may bring to counselling:

- Relationship difficulties
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Poor self-image
- Behavioral difficulties
- Divorce
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Bullying
- Self-injury/harm
- Suicide ideation
- Eating disorders

This list is non-exhaustive and there are many other reasons that you may wish to spend time with the school counsellor.

A counsellor will not judge you. They will offer a safe, confidential place where you can talk about things in your life which may be painful, difficult and causing you to feel unhappy or low.

Your counsellor will work with you to help you make positive changes that you would like to see in your life. It is about learning and developing with the support of a counsellor, not being judged or told what to do.

Counselling can help to give you the tools needed to move forward. The counsellor will work with you to help you make the positive changes you would like to see in your life.

Counselling is not a quick fix; it is a professional therapeutic approach which can only be provided by someone who is qualified and experienced. All sessions are voluntary and it has to be the person's choice if they want to attend. You will never be made to attend if you do not want to.

Everyone is different and no two people will have the same experience. Some people attend for a matter of weeks, some for months or years.

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Referrals:

For a child or young person to receive counselling the following must first apply:

1. They must agree to attend. No person will be seen if they do not want to attend.
2. The sessions must be deemed by the counsellor to be in **the best interest of the child or young person.**

A child or young person will never be forced to attend counselling.

Referral Process:

Pupils are welcome to make contact with the counsellor themselves. Parents, carers and guardians can also contact the counsellor directly.

Staff members would usually approach the Senior Teacher Pastoral or a member of the Well-being Team if they think that a pupils at Stover would benefit from counselling. The request is discussed with the Well-being Team who meet weekly. Other options might be considered within the Pastoral Team to the support the pupil if it is felt that Counselling is not the best option.

The pupil will be invited to an initial 'get-to-know you' session where they can find out more about the therapeutic process and they and the counsellor can decide if counselling is the best option for the pupil. The pupil may decide to decline the counselling.

Making a referral to the counsellor does not mean that a pupil's welfare is no longer your responsibility. If you are concerned about a pupil you must follow the school safeguarding guidelines and inform an appropriate member of staff, however serious you consider your concern to be.

The First Steps:

1. Once it is decided that a senior pupil will see the counsellor an arrangement is made with their tutor or directly with the pupil inviting them to attend a 'get-to-know you' session. This initial session gives both parties the chance to meet and for the counsellor to explain how counselling works. At this point the counsellor will determine if the pupil is Gillick competent and will agree if the pupil would like the counsellor to liaise with the child's parents/carers/guardians.
2. For pupils in the prep school, the counsellor usually liaises with the child's parents/carers/guardians and teacher to support the pupil to identify a suitable session time.
3. If the pupil is happy to continue long term they are invited back, usually the next week. The recommended initial number of sessions is 6 (1 a week). After this there is a review and

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sessions either end or continue for another contracted amount of time, but there is no fixed time allocated whereby sessions must end.

4. Sessions last for up to an hour and are arranged between the pupil and counsellor.
5. The confidentiality policy is always explained in full.
6. The boundaries and 'contract' are put in to place. For senior pupils it is explained that it is preferable for the pupil to contact the counsellor directly.

In the prep school parents, carers or guardians are consulted before their children are seen, unless this would place the child at risk.

Parents, carers or guardians are sent information about the counselling service, including the confidentiality policy. They are asked to sign and return a consent form to the counsellor.

Where a pupil is assessed as being Gillick competent they can sign their own consent form. Counselling will commence upon receipt of consent.

Confidentiality:

All children and young people have the right to confidentiality. Gillick competent under 16s and young people aged 16 or 17 are entitled to make decisions about the use and disclosure of information they provided in confidence in the same way as adults, e.g. They may be receiving treatment or counselling about which they do not want their parents to know. Under GDPR no information can or should be shared without consent.

What confidentiality means:

1. Confidentiality between the counsellor and the pupil is paramount.
2. This level of confidentiality helps to develop trust between the pupil and the counsellor and is essential for the process to be successful.
3. Anything that is discussed during a counselling session remains between the pupil and the counsellor.
4. Unless the counsellor has the pupil's permission or it is in their best interest to do so the counsellor will not discuss the content of sessions with anyone, including parents, carers or guardians.

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5. Conversations between parents, carers or guardians and the counsellor will remain private though the counsellor will always inform pupils that they have spoken to them because transparency is very important.
6. Confidentiality will only be broken to safeguard a young person. When this is the case the young person will be informed and can be involved in that process if they wish. The Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputies will be informed as soon as is practicable by phone or in person.

Sharing of Data:

The counsellor will uphold GDPR legislation.

What this means to counselling at Stover School:

1. Records about people that are seen by the school counsellor have to be kept to maintain good, professional practice. Records help to support clients so that an honest, realistic and professional account of their time with a counsellor can be kept. This may be particularly relevant in cases involving safeguarding and/ or mental health.
2. Records have to have meaning and purpose, are not to be excessive and are to be written in adherence with Ethical Codes and guidance set out by professional bodies.
3. Records are strictly confidential and are only to be shared with the counsellor (author) and the person whom they are written about. Records may also be required for legal cases when requested by a court of law or the police.
4. Records are not to be kept for any longer than necessary and must be kept securely.
5. People have the right to access their records. This must be applied for in written form.
6. The school counsellor discourages the use of names of identifying information in written correspondence – digital or otherwise and includes text messages, emails, written notes.

For further information please refer to the BACP guidance on record keeping.

Insurance and Supervision:

The school counsellor is required to hold professional insurance with an appropriate regulatory body.

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To help maintain and professional and safe practice it is important that counsellors receive regular supervision. Supervisors need to hold a recognised qualification, be insured and be a member of a governing body.

Supervision exists for two reasons:

1. To protect clients, and
2. To improve the ability of counsellors to provide value to their clients.

Supervision protects clients by involving an impartial third party in the work of a counsellor and client, helping to reduce the risk of serious oversight and helping the counsellor concerned to reflect on their own feelings, thoughts, behavior and general approach with the client (Counselling Resource, 2012).

Complaints Procedure:

If you or a pupil is not happy with the counsellor's conduct or practice or has any other complaint they are encouraged to discuss this with the counsellor direct and the counsellor will aim to do what is best to rectify the situation. If still dissatisfied then this should be referred to the Senior Teacher Pastoral and if still dissatisfied then the school's complaints procedure should be followed

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