

DRAFT COUNSELLING POLICY Sept 2013
ST.PETER'S COLLEGE
DUNBOYNE.

St. Peters College is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to the mental wellbeing of our students. The Counselling Policy has been drawn up and accepted by (Principal, Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Board of Management and Students). The implementation and success of the policy depends on the commitment of all involved.

Rationale:

1. The school is committed to the health and safety of its community and will take action to safeguard their well-being.
2. The school acknowledges the importance of its pastoral role in the welfare of young people, and through the general ethos of the school, will seek to persuade pupils in need or support to come forward.

This Counselling Policy applies to the entire school community including teachers, students, parents/guardians.

Relationship to School's Mission/Vision/Aims

"Schools carry an increasing responsibility to address the needs of children and young people in distress as a result of emotional concerns, behavioural problems, social and peer pressure, family tensions, bereavement and normal developmental issues. Where school counselling is available, surveys have shown that the services are well used by young clients and that early intervention can assist future wellbeing and emotional and psychological health."

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

The school's counselling service is designed to complement the strengths of the pastoral system by offering additional personal support to students who may benefit from counselling. The school counselling provision is a confidential service for pupils with social, emotional or behavioural concerns to help them move towards greater well-being and to enable them to make the most of the opportunities offered for their learning and social development.

What is Counselling?

Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client as no one can properly be 'sent' for counselling.

By listening attentively and patiently the counsellor can begin to perceive the difficulties from the client's point of view and can help them to see things more clearly, possibly from a different perspective. Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. It does not involve directing a client to take a particular course of action with the exception of safety, child protection and/or legal issues. Counsellors do not judge or exploit their clients in any way.

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In the counselling sessions the client can explore various aspects of their life and feelings, talking about them freely and openly in a way that is rarely possible with friends or family. Bottled up feelings such as anger, anxiety, grief and embarrassment can become very intense and counselling offers an opportunity to explore them, with the possibility of making them easier to understand. The counsellor will encourage the expression of feelings and as a result of their training will be able to accept and reflect the client's problems without becoming burdened by them.

Acceptance and respect for the client are essentials for a counsellor and, as the relationship develops, so too does trust between the counsellor and client, enabling the client to look at many aspects of their life, their relationships and themselves which they may not have considered or been able to face before. The counsellor may help the client to examine in detail the behaviour or situations which are proving troublesome and to find an area where it would be possible to initiate some change as a start. The counsellor may help the client to look at the options open to them and help them to decide the best for them.

Counselling for Young People

Young people experience developmental changes that are unique to each individual. Counselling is a process which assists a client to focus on his or her particular concerns and developmental issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices, coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationship with others. Counselling enables young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope with change.
Good Practice Guidance For Counselling in School [4th Edition]

The aims of school counselling are:

- To encourage students to be positive in their outlook on life and to make a positive contribution to their school and society.
- To foster the confidence in our students and teachers to develop their talents and abilities.

How the St Peter's College Counselling Service Serves the Whole School

The availability of counselling can affect the school as an institution and not just individual pupils. A good school is judged not by its lack of problems but by its ability to deal effectively with those problems that arise. The counselling service in the school

- complements pastoral care systems
- supports teachers' care of students and their management of those with emotional and behavioural difficulties
- offers some training to staff
- provides consultation, training, support and supervision of strategies to counteract problems such as bullying and truancy
- supports effective child protection procedures
- provides for students to be referred to outside agencies where appropriate

School counselling at St Peter's College contributes to the "community service" offered by the school to the local community

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The Role of School Counsellors at St Peter's College

This is a key role in the school at a very important time in its development. The counsellors are fully qualified and are accredited member of the IACP. They work to their ethical guidelines and are subject to accreditation renewal. The counsellors at St Peter's College have significant experience working with teenagers and understand issues relating to them. They are experienced at managing a case load, keeping confidentiality and are able to articulate advice to relevant staff without disclosing confidential information. They understand child protection and the legalities of working with children and in a school setting. They contribute to providing mental health support and consultation to the school, participating in the school Careteam and pastoral care meetings. They manage reviews, reports and are involved with referrals to children services and other outside agencies where appropriate. They work closely with the Careteam to develop a person-centred ethos in the school's pastoral care.

Supervision of the St Peter's College Counsellor

IACP accredited counsellors receive monthly clinical supervision outside of school. The clinical supervisor oversees the 'client work', its function being to both protect the client and support the counsellor. The main objective of supervision is to ensure that the counsellor maintains ethical competence and confidence in their counselling work with children and young people. The supervision process enables counsellors to think creatively so that they can give the best possible service to the client. Appropriate confidentiality for the client is maintained.

Internal Supervision

The counsellors meet to discuss the management of counselling cases. Periodically they meet with the Principal who though not involved in details of each case, is able make informed decisions about managing provisions and care for individual student. The level of disclosure will be decided upon on a case by case basis to fulfil the guiding principles of confidentiality and duty of care.

Goals/Objectives:

Counselling at St Peter's College

School Counselling at St Peter's College offers time limited counselling for students. It is part of the pastoral care available to our students in St Peter's College and involves two counsellors who see the student in a private and confidential setting to explore difficulties or distress they may be experiencing. Counselling is a process which can assist students to focus on their particular concerns and developmental issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices, coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others. Counsellors may offer one-to-one sessions and will also facilitate therapeutic support-group work, e.g. bereavement, young carers, self- esteem, etc.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Board of Management

- ensures that the policy is developed and evaluated over time.

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- approves the policy at a meeting of the Board.
- considers reports from the Principal and relevant Post Holders on the implementation of the policy

The Principal or his/her nominee is responsible for

- the establishment of structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
- monitoring the implementation of the policy.
- ensuring that the policy is reviewed after an appropriate length of time.

The Role of the Teacher/Tutor

- monitors student behaviour, especially at-risk students
- makes a referral to the counselling service where appropriate
- follows up where appropriate

Procedures for Accessing the Counselling Service:

- Staff or parents can contact the Counsellor to refer a student/son/daughter.
- Young people themselves can come directly to the Counsellor for an appointment.
- Students are always encouraged to communicate with their parent/carers wherever possible.
- Students who are offered counselling in school will be timetabled for up to six initial counselling sessions (usually one-to-one on a weekly basis)
- The counsellor and student will agree to a counselling contract. The contract will stipulate the need to be on time

Missing Classes

The counselling service is in high demand therefore appointments are allocated throughout the school day. This may mean that a student will miss a particular class. Students are expected to catch up missed work and complete the homework set during the missed lesson.

Counselling Contracts

The counselling sessions are reviewed at the 5th week of the 6 week contract. The review is carried out by the counsellor and the student. The initial "six week contract" is a standard practice in most time-limited counselling services. If a student requires long-term, systemic (family) or any other kind of therapeutic support not offered by the school counselling service then the school will support a referral to another more appropriate service.

Speaking with the Counsellor

It is at the counsellor's discretion whether it is appropriate for parents/carers to meet or speak on the phone with the counsellor. This is to preserve the confidentiality and professional effectiveness of the service. If a parent/carer wishes to speak to the counsellors he/she can contact them directly in school.

Confidentiality:

The guarantee of confidentiality is vital in enabling young people to express their distress in the counselling session. It is an essential element of the process if the relationship of trust is to develop between the counsellor and the client.

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While it is increasingly acknowledged that confidentiality is crucial to clients, whatever their age, it cannot be absolute in any counselling relationship. The counselling service uses a counselling contract to explain to students the boundaries of confidentiality the St Peter's College counselling service can offer. Decisions regarding any necessary breaching of confidentiality, resulting from a child protection disclosure, will be made with the student's prior knowledge and where possible, their consent.

Under the following circumstances the Counsellor may disclose some essential facts regarding a case to the Principal or outside therapeutic agencies:

- where there is self-harm and/or suicidal ideation the parent/carer and Principal will be informed
- when there is need for onward referral to HSE agencies or specialist services
- in supervision of the counsellor
- in cases involving legal difficulties
- when there is a need to address safety and child protection issues with the Child Protection Officer, senior pastoral staff and Principal

Parent/Carer Rights

It is the practice of the school to allow a student to seek counselling without the parents' permission. We believe that the student has the right to seek help from an adult in the school including teachers and counsellors. Students are always encouraged to tell their parents/carers that they are in the receipt of counselling. However, in some cases students may receive counselling without parental consent under the 'Gillick' Competency Principle (Law Reform Commission 2011) which allows that a child under 16 can be judged as an individual to be mature and competent enough to seek counselling without the consent of the parents/carers. Where a student has sought counselling and a parent refuses permission, the School Counselling Service will follow the recommendations of the 2011 Law reform Commission Report.

However, confidentiality around issues of self-harm/suicidal ideation cases require that this information is shared with parents whereas information revealing the identity of pupils attending counselling only applies to attendance at counselling sessions, and not to the actual content of the counselling session.

Date: _____

Review Date: _____