



Parents Leaflet – Secondary

What is counselling?

Counselling provides the opportunity to explore and talk about things that are of concern, to a student, in confidence, with a qualified counsellor. What is spoken about will depend on the needs of the individual, but common themes are stress, relationships, change, loss and distressing, traumatic events.

What does a Counsellor do?

Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help students sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

Who are the Counsellors?

The school counsellors are Ms. Aine and Mr. Omar. Both are qualified and have extensive experience working and counselling with children and young people.

Why have a Counsellor in school?

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

If my child wants to see a Counsellor does that mean I am failing as a parent?

Absolutely not! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to explain to those closest to us about things which are bothering us. Often this can be because we don't want to show those we love best or because we want help thinking things through with someone else outside of the family. The counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find their way through whatever is troubling them.

How long will counselling last?

Counselling may be for a few sessions, or longer term. Sessions generally last up to 50 minutes for secondary age children and appointment times can be varied so that time is not lost from any one part of the curriculum.

Where and when does it take place?

Counselling will take place in the counsellor's office or in another private room within the school.

Is it confidential?

A key feature of the counselling service is that information discussed in the counselling session is treated confidentially. Counselling is a time when it is OK to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. This includes not discussing the work with anyone unless the young person requests or gives consent for this. This can be hard for parents to accept at times but ensuring 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.

However if a student appears to be at risk of significant harm it may be appropriate to seek help to keep them safe. The counsellor would aim to discuss this first with the child concerned and will seek to involve all appropriate parties. The counsellor receives supervision of their work from external practitioners to guarantee the quality of the service provided.

What if I don't want my son/daughter to receive counselling?

If a young person requests counselling and can understand what is involved in the process, then they have a right to access counselling. As a parent it is preferable that you support the idea of counselling and the school counsellors are always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

Can I support the Counselling work?

Yes, and this is welcomed. 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. However, parents should not press them if they don't want to talk. This can be a difficult task and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be said in the sessions. We hope that talking with the counsellor will lead to greater openness with parents and families.

How are appointments made to the Counselling Service?

Young people can make their own appointments directly with the counsellors. If you as a parent are worried about your son /daughter and would like to speak to the counsellor, you can make an appointment to meet with the school counsellor. You can either do this by phoning or emailing the counsellors. The services of the counsellors are included in the school fees, and if your son or daughter needs ongoing support, the counsellors will suggest external agencies.

If you feel it would be helpful for your son/daughter to see the counsellor, you should discuss this with them and encourage and support them in making an appointment. The counsellors can support you with this. Research suggests counselling is more successful when young people feel they have a choice in attending.

How I know if counselling has worked?

Counselling is not a magic solution, and sometimes it takes a while to feel the benefit. After the counselling has finished, your child will be given a feedback form that they can complete anonymously and return. This lets the school know how well the counselling service is helping the children and young people it sees. If there is any cause for complaint, you or your child is welcome to contact the counsellor or the Senior Leadership Team who will aim to resolve any issues of concern.

Data Protection Procedures and Evaluation

All information about counselling work undertaken by the counsellor is kept securely by the school.