



THE ALICE SMITH SCHOOL Counselling Policy (Whole School)

Rationale

The Alice Smith School is committed to promoting the health and welfare of all students and staff. We recognise that at times students need differing levels of support and guidance and this is delivered through the Pastoral system. An extension and integral part of this system is the Counselling Service which is offered at both campuses. The school accepts that the pastoral care offered by tutors may not be enough to deal with some issues suffered by the people in our community and has employed qualified counsellors to provide services to those with these issues. The Counselling Service accepts the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (<http://www.bacp.co.uk/>) as a model of best practice and uses the guidelines contained therein.

Aims and Objectives

The Counselling Service aims to provide a robust therapeutic provision in addition to the pastoral care already delivered through the tutors, pastoral leaders and other staff members within school. The service endeavours to provide a high quality, professional and confidential service to all students and staff. The training and expertise of the Counsellors and their Code of Practice (Appendix B) gives them a unique position from which to assist their clients. By the very nature of the work they are required to do, client confidentiality is of utmost importance as is the trust built up between the Counsellor and the clients. This is clear in the Statement of Confidentiality found in Appendix A. The 'client' refers to any persons engaged with the counselling service at the Secondary Campus and to any persons involved with the counselling service at the Primary Campus.

The ways in which the Counsellor works on each Campus is dealt with in Appendix C, where the procedures are laid out. There are distinct differences between the Campuses, based on the BACP guidelines. Essentially the key difference is that in order to work with Primary Campus children, beyond an initial assessment, permission from parents is required. In the Secondary Campus this permission is not required and will not be sought. Recommendations, suggestions and interventions may be discussed with Primary School parents in face to face meetings with the Counsellor, whereas case notes for clients at the Secondary Campus are not, unless there is a child protection issue. The disclosure of any information is limited by the confidentiality statement (Appendix A).

Referrals to the Counsellor can come from any source and do not require the students to have "a problem". It is often suggested to students who are struggling in any element of school society that the Counsellor may be able to offer



strategies for coping with difficult times. Appointments and meetings can be arranged in a variety of ways, but a wellbeing referral is the most common (Appendix C). The ways in which the appointments are then made differ on both Campuses. Both involve an initial assessment (not a formal session) before any sessions take place.

The Counsellor is also on hand to advise the Pastoral Team, and staff in general, in regards to emotional issues or instances involving Mental Health . In the first instance the counselling service is available to staff members. Where ongoing long term support is required staff may be referred or encouraged to seek outside professional support.

The Counsellors ensure the quality of their practice with regular professional supervision as recommended by the BACP, and this is part of their on-going continued professional development. They also meet regularly to discuss processes and practices but do not discuss cases unless a child protection issue arises. The Counsellors are members of the BACP or other equivalent professional bodies, and will keep up to date with current best practice.

Roles and Responsibilities

A designated Vice Principal on each campus will line manage the Counsellors on their respective sites.



Appendix A - Statement of Confidentiality

This statement of confidentiality sets a framework in which students' and staffs' rights to a confidential service are upheld at all times. It provides a professional framework in which the **Counsellor and all other members of staff who are privy to confidential information work within.** Staff working for the Alice Smith Counselling Service are bound at all times by the BACP Ethical Framework and other governing legislation with regard to confidentiality.

1. Confidentiality is central to building trust between the client and the Counselling Service and trust between the client and the school in a wider sense.
2. The client must be made aware if their attendance at counselling may be shared with any relevant party. As far as possible this knowledge has to be contained in an appropriate and sensitive manner.
3. Where information about the uptake of the service is required for statistical monitoring only anonymous data will be provided.
4. Unless it is a legal or ethical requirement, members of the Counselling Service will not undertake to provide information to external parties such as solicitors.

Where any written information between the client and/or parent is requested by those persons it will be dealt with in accordance with the BACP and other professional guidelines.

Where the client is under external professional provision the school may seek information from the practitioner. In this case the school will first seek consent from the client and/or parent. See appendix form D.

5. At times, there may be occasions where sharing certain information is in the clients best interests. The client's consent to sharing this information will always be sought in the first instance. In the exception of a safeguarding concern, the counsellor is not bound to seek the client's consent before sharing this information with relevant parties. It is important that the client understands what will be disclosed, to whom it will be disclosed, and what the impact of the disclosure may be for the client.



6. The Counsellor will respect the wishes of any client who objects to particular information being shared with others except where this could put others or the client at risk of death, abuse or serious harm or where a disclosure may assist in the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime.
7. In cases where the client is deemed to be incapable of giving consent to disclosure because of immaturity, illness or mental/psychological incapacity the Counsellor will discuss with the client in order for them to make an informed decision about the involvement of an appropriate third party/authority. In the rare event of the client being unable to make an informed decision, the counsellor in consultation with a counselling team member and their line manager, will act in the best interest of the client. However, the Counsellor must ensure clear documentation of the steps taken, and reasons for deciding to disclose information, is kept.
8. If a client, who is below the age of 18, is the victim of neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse, the Counsellor must pass on the information to the nominated Child Protection Officer (or Child Protection Team member) who will take the necessary action. (See Child Protection Policy)
9. Anyone who is the recipient of any personal information must understand that it is given to them in confidence and must handle the information in a professional manner. This is to be clearly confirmed at the time of divulging the information.

The overall purpose of providing a confidential service is to protect all users of the service.





Appendix B – Code of Practice

Code of Practice Relating to Confidentiality

The Counselling Service adheres to the Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy established by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. www.bcap.co.uk

Our practice is as follows:

1. All clients should be informed about our statement of confidentiality at the outset.
2. The Counselling Service offers the highest level of confidentiality and normally no information will leave the service without prior notice/permission and discussions with the client. In rare occasions where this prior notice/permission is unable to obtain the counsellor will explain to the client why it was paramount for the information to be disclosed in such a manner, explaining how and why it was done to protect the client's interest.
3. Rarely, there may be exceptional circumstances when the Counsellor feels it necessary or is required by law to act without the permission of the client. At such a time, the importance of preserving client trust and autonomy will be weighed against the importance of reducing the risk of serious harm to the client or to other people.
4. a) The decision to break confidentiality without client's permission will normally only be done in discussion with the client and after consultation with a supervisor or another experienced Counsellor. (The principles underlying such ethical decision making are detailed in the framework document referred to above). **[EP only]**

b) The decision to break confidentiality without client's permission (parent and child) will normally only be done in situations where it would be necessary for the welfare of the child. **[JB only]**
5. If requests for information about a client are made by their family, friends, members of the School or other parties, the Counsellor will suggest that the requester asks the client for the relevant information. The counsellor may not discuss details of sessions with external parties without the clients consent. Any information that is shared is done so in accordance with the BACP guidelines.
6. Therapy notes held at the Counselling Service about clients is at present restricted to cryptic and anonymous records. This is kept securely for a period of 3 years post therapy in line with BACP Ethical Code of Practice



(http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework). This is irrespective of whether the client is still a member of ASSA, or not. After the period has lapsed all therapy records are destroyed. On no occasion will any information regarding counselling be released to any parties other than when legally required to do so, risk of harm to self or others and in cases of abuse or neglect.

7. Any communication and liaison with colleagues is always undertaken in collaboration with clients. Clients are given copies of any letters written by Counsellors on their behalf.
8. In discussion with the School on matters of policy and practice, no information is given which can identify an individual.



Appendix C – Procedures

Secondary Campus

Transition between campus

Most clients at JB will work towards closure or transition in Term 3, year 6, prior to attending EP. Where a child is in ongoing counselling at JB, the counsellor will work with the counselling team at EP to ensure they are supported sensitively with this transition. In most cases this will result in the transfer of client provision to EP counsellors.

Students who have attended counselling in year 6 will be supported by the school during their transition to the EP campus. Students on the counselling list at JB will be made known to the counsellors at EP. These students will be monitored by the EP counsellors and a welcome invitation will be issued to them in Term 1. Case files and relevant information may be shared, and on request, will be transferred to the team. This is subject to the confidentiality agreement outlined in Appendix A. Currently, any records to be transferred from JB to EP must be handed in person from counsellor to counsellor and are not shared with anyone else.

Self-Referral

Every break time and lunch time there is an open door and a drop-in session where students can drop by to make an appointment directly with the Counsellor.

The Counsellor will book the student according to the availability of slots. The student is then given a signed appointment slip which is to be handed to the subject teacher before leaving the class for the appointment. The Counsellor also fills another appointment slip for the student which is emailed to the subject teacher informing them of the impending appointment and allowing time to reschedule if the teacher, for some reason or other, does not want the student to miss that lesson. If this is the case the student is then directed to meet the Counsellor to reschedule their appointment.

In cases where the student has study periods then counselling appointments are made for these times.

Students are only seen immediately in emergency cases, which are rare.

A waiting period is recommended before an appointment time, in order to give the subject teacher time to respond to the Counsellor should a reschedule be required.

In the first counselling session, the Counsellor usually does an assessment. Further appointments are scheduled if the assessment shows that the student will benefit from several sessions.



Teacher Referral

If the School, Year Leader or Tutors have concerns about a student they will have an initial discussion about the student with the Counsellor. When it is deemed that the student would benefit from some sessions the Teacher can then either make an appointment on behalf of the student or bring the student to be introduced to the Counsellor and to make an appointment directly. Even though a Teacher may make an appointment for a student it is up to the student to take the offer up or not. Only in very rare and exceptional cases is a student's choice in attending counselling limited.

Parent's Referral

If parents have concerns about their child they can make contact directly with the Counsellor. In situations where a parent has already established contact with a teacher or a tutor, it is quite likely they may request a meeting with the Counsellor through this member of staff. It is recommended that in this situation the teacher or tutor puts the parent in direct contact with the Counsellor via email or by just informing the Counsellor to make contact with the parent. It is important that the staff demonstrate to the parent the framework of confidentiality that the Counselling service functions within.

Often when there is a case of a child struggling in school, the suggestion from the Pastoral Team to the parents could be to involve the Counsellor. Again, direct contact is advised, along with the framework of confidentiality.

Primary Campus

Self- Referral

Students in the Primary Campus generally do not self-refer. However there are exceptions, for example, serious illness in the family/ at school or tragedies reported in the news, where a child may want to talk to someone. If necessary, the Counsellor may offer an open door drop in service for years 3-6, with assumed parental consent. Any concerns the Counsellor may have about a student who has attended these sessions will immediately be raised with the Pastoral Team, and if needed, the parents of the pupil, in line with safeguarding procedures.

Teacher Referral

If a member of staff has concerns about a student, they should, in the first instance, raise this on a wellbeing referral form which goes to the Pastoral Team. If after meeting with members of the Pastoral Team and the Counsellor, it is felt that the child would benefit from counselling, the class teacher will be asked to raise this with the parents of the student. If the parents agree to a referral to counselling, then the Counsellor will contact them to arrange an initial meeting. At that point, parents will be required to give written consent before any



counselling can begin. Unless it is an urgent case, the child's name may be placed on a waiting list.

Parent Referral

If parents have concerns about their child, they can arrange a meeting with the Counsellor through the Assistant Principal Pastoral or by emailing the Counsellor directly. The Counsellor will then arrange an initial meeting with the parent/guardian of that child and, if appropriate, will inform the Vice Principal Students and the class teacher. Should the Counsellor deem that counselling is necessary, they will obtain written consent from the parents before sessions begin. Unless it is an urgent case, the child's name may be placed on a waiting list.

When appropriate, parents may meet with the counsellor to discuss parenting strategies prior to their child having counselling. Such strategies may be the focus of the therapy and at times may involve the counsellor not meeting with the child.



Appendix D – Information Release

AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE/EXCHANGE CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

I, _____ parent/guardian
of _____, do hereby authorize
_____ (contact number _____) to disclose
the following information to The Alice Smith School (Primary/Secondary).

Address: 3 Jalan Equine, Taman Equine, 43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor, Malaysia.

Phone: Phone: +603 9543 3688

- treatment summary
- history/intake
- diagnosis
- psychological assessments results
- psychiatric evaluation/medication history
- dates of treatment attendance
- other (specify) _____

For the purpose of

- evaluation/assessment and/or coordinating treatment efforts
- coordinating support in school

This consent will automatically expire one (1) year after the date of my signature as it appears below.

I understand that I have the right to revoke this authorization, in writing at any time (except to the extent that the information has already been released).

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date



Primary Campus Counselling Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent,

It is the policy of The Alice Smith School to obtain parent / guardian permission for students to receive counselling at the primary campus. Please complete this form and return it to the school office for the attention of the Counsellor or Vice Principal: Students.

I give permission for (child's name) of class

to work with the school counsellor for a series of counselling sessions.

- I have received and read the information leaflet about the counselling service.

- I understand the counselling service's confidentiality guidelines and exceptions.

Name:

Parent Signature:

Date: