



NORWICH SCHOOL

Counselling Policy

This policy is reviewed by Council of Management annually. This policy was last reviewed and agreed in Trinity 2023. It is due for review in Trinity Term 2024.

Confirmed by:

Tracy Yates	Governor	Trinity 2023
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Version Control

The version control table should be updated each time:

- a **change** is made to an **agreed version** of a document; or
- a previously agreed document version is **reviewed with no changes** (i.e. at annual review no changes are required and the document continues to be live for the following year).

Use the following convention: version 1.0 (first version), version 2.0 (major change to version 1.0 and issued as a new version), version 2.1 (second version with minor change)

Version number	Date issued	Author / key contact	Change(s) summary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minor changes can be authorised by a senior staff member and do not need formal approval.• Major revisions require approval through the confirming authority (typically a Committee)
1.0	Trinity 2022	Nicky Fairweather	New Policy
2.0	Trinity 2023	Nicky Fairweather	Updates to the Lower School point of contact, assessment and session allocation.

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Definition of Counselling

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (British Association of Counselling Professionals) definition of 'school-based counselling' is "a professional activity, delivered by qualified practitioners in schools.

Counsellors offer troubled and / or distressed children and young people an opportunity to explore and understand their difficulties within a relationship of agreed confidentiality."

The Role of the School Counsellor

Pastoral Context

Norwich School places high value on supporting pupil welfare and wellbeing. School counsellors sit within the context of a robust pastoral system throughout the Lower and Senior schools, which encourages teachers, tutors, Heads of House and Heads of Section to monitor and support pupils in their care.

School counselling, therefore, is seen as a unique opportunity to offer professional mental health care to pupils who have been identified as potentially benefiting from targeted support which will enable them to build their self-awareness, to enhance their resilience and give them personal resources to manage future challenges.

The school counsellors, who are employed by the school, are available to any pupil in any phase of Norwich School where counselling is deemed appropriate for the individual. There will be a waiting list system for referrals.

Supervision

All counsellors need to engage in regular clinical supervision to maintain and monitor standards and to comply with their ethical code. School counsellors will undertake counselling supervision with a supervisor who has experience and understanding of children and young people and of the school setting, and will protect the confidentiality of Norwich School pupils, staff and families. School counsellors are responsible for making their own arrangements for supervision, in accordance with their governing body's minimum requirements.

Other Professionals

In order to reduce any potential conflicts of psychotherapeutic effort, the school counsellors will not provide counselling to pupils who are currently in receipt of other psychotherapeutic support from another agency such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs), or professional individuals.

Statement of Good Practice and Confidentiality

Counsellors must be a member of a professional governing body, e.g., British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and be familiar with and work to the guidelines of the ethical framework. Any breaches will be dealt with through the complaints procedures of the members' governing body. School counsellors must notify Norwich School if they are the subject of a complaint to their professional body.

If a counsellor identifies that there is a risk to self or others, confidentiality may be broken and the named Designated Safeguarding Lead / DDSL informed.

It is possible that Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS), or the Police will be contacted directly by the School counsellor, for example if serious abuse or serious criminal acts against a child are disclosed.

This will be made clear to the young person at commencement of counselling.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

School counsellors will be familiar with the latest iteration of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), especially understanding the reporting duties and thresholds of professionals working in educational settings with regards to CADS and the Police.

Referral Process

Counselling is one of a range of interventions available and it will not always be the most appropriate. Where troubled or distressed pupils would benefit from an opportunity to explore their challenges, a referral for a counselling assessment can be made.

Referrals can be made by pupils for themselves, members of school staff, carers and clinicians by email to the Head of Welfare (Senior School) or the Health and Welfare Officer (Lower School).

Referrals are placed on the waiting list, which is managed by the Head of Welfare and the school counsellors. New referrals are discussed at fortnightly meetings and the waiting list reviewed (more pressing cases can be discussed between meetings). The priority for each pupil awaiting counselling is re-assessed and, if there is any new relevant information about a pupil, who is engaged in counselling or on the waiting list, this is shared.

Consent

Lower School

For pupils in the Lower School, consent for counselling must be provided by the parent / carer. A consent letter will be emailed to the parent / carer upon the Head of Welfare's decision to refer for school counselling. Once this has been returned, an initial assessment appointment will be made between the school counsellor and the pupil, ideally with a parent / carer present.

Senior School

For a pupil to be eligible to receive counselling, they must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid verbal counselling contract, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality and the need for this to be overridden where the pupil is identified to be at risk of harm to themselves or others.

Consent may be given by the pupil without the parent / carers' involvement, if the child is deemed '*Gillick Competent*'¹.

As guidance for Gillick competency, the counselling service at Norwich School will take the following into consideration:

- The pupil has explicitly requested that their parent / carers have no knowledge about them receiving counselling.
- The counsellor has done everything they can to persuade the pupil to involve their parent / carers.
- The pupil understands the advice / information they have been given and have sufficient maturity to understand what is involved and what the implications are. They can comprehend and process information relating to counselling.
- The pupil is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person.
- The counselling service must be confident in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupil.
- Without the counselling service, the pupil's physical or emotional health would be likely to suffer.

If the answer to these questions is 'yes', this will enable the counselling service to believe the pupil is competent to make their own decisions about consenting to and taking part in the counselling process.

¹ Children under the age of 16 can consent to their own treatment if they're believed to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what's involved in their treatment. This is known as being Gillick competent.

Assessment

Lower School

The Health and Welfare Officer (Lower School) will complete an assessment with pupils who have been identified as potentially benefitting from school counselling using a diagnostic measuring tool (e.g.: SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)).

The results of the questionnaire will be discussed with the Head of Welfare and if it is deemed that the individual could benefit from counselling, a consent letter will then be emailed to the pupil's parent / carer to request their consent to an initial counselling assessment for their child. Upon receipt of a signed consent form, the school counsellor will then liaise with a parent / carer about undertaking an in-school initial assessment.

If counselling is not deemed appropriate, an alternative pastoral care plan will be actioned.

Senior School

Upon receipt of referral, the Head of Welfare will complete an assessment of the pupil using a diagnostic measuring tool (e.g.: YP-CORE). At this stage there is no expectation on pupils to give details about why they would like counselling.

Depending on the outcome of this assessment, the pupil may be referred for assessment by a school counsellor. If it is determined the pupil would benefit from counselling, an agreement is then verbally agreed between the pupil and the school counsellor, who will arrange an appointment to see the pupil at a mutually agreeable time in school hours.

If counselling is not deemed appropriate, an alternative pastoral care plan will be actioned.

Session Allocation

A pupil will be offered an initial block of up to six counselling sessions, with follow up work at the discretion of the School counsellor and through dialogue with the Head of Welfare (SS) or Health and Welfare Officer (LS). Each session will last for 50 minutes. Appointments will be made to try to suit the timetable of the young person, so as not have a negative impact on their learning.

If a pupil fails to attend a session (through reasons other than absence from school), the missed session will be subtracted from the total number of sessions provided. If a pupil is absent from school, the carer / pupil must ensure that the school counsellor is informed of their absence at the start of the day or risk losing the session. If a pupil misses two sessions in a row, they will be removed from the timetable and advised to restart the referral process.

The team work on an understanding that there are limits to a school-based counselling service due to demand from within the pupil body, and lengthy breaks caused by school holidays. On occasion a pupil may need to work with a counsellor for longer than most within the school service.

Should a more prolonged period of work be required for a pupil, it is likely to be most appropriate for this to happen externally rather than in school. In such cases handover work to external support must be planned with care and given the time required.

Whenever possible, the handover will include the following steps:

- Informing the pupil – The counsellor will inform the pupil of the upcoming change at least three weeks in advance of the termination of therapy so as to allow ample time for collaborative handover.
- Assessing impact – In the final therapy sessions, counsellor and pupil will discuss the emotions and thoughts that accompany the upcoming transfer of care.
- Reviewing therapy - The counsellor and pupil will discuss what has and hasn't felt beneficial in their work together so as to inform the handover process.
- Collaborating a triad handover – The pupil will be invited to collaborate with the counsellor to produce a document which can be given to the external individual or agency so as to inform regarding relevant details and expectations.

Confidentiality

Respecting a pupil's privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the pupil's autonomy. The professional management of confidentiality concerns the protection of personally identifiable and sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure. Disclosure may be authorised by the pupil giving consent, or as a matter of law. Any disclosures of a pupil's confidences should be undertaken in ways that best protect the pupil's trust and respect their autonomy.

Pupil consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality, but exceptional circumstances may prevent the counsellor from seeking consent to a breach of confidence, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation, for example, preventing the pupil causing serious harm to themselves or others. In such circumstances the counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balance the pupil's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others.

Counsellors should expect to be ethically and professionally accountable for any breach of confidentiality.

Confidential information about pupils may be shared with relevant professionals:

- Where the pupil has consented or knowingly accepted a service on this basis.
- The disclosure enhances the quality of service available to pupils or improves service delivery.

Confidential records are kept separate from other information held by school on the young people. They will be saved electronically on the shared drives provided.

Safeguarding

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Head of Welfare (DDSL) are the counsellors' main points of contact within the school for the purposes of child protection. School counsellors will adhere to Norwich School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in all their work with pupils.

Counsellor Continuity

The presence of the same counsellor every week ensures continuity of the counselling intervention for pupils and the development of a relationship of trust and confidence based on a shared understanding of the counselling process with the DSL, pupils and staff.

Administration

Access to Records

The pupil has a general right of access to educational records, as a 'data subject' set out by the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018, and this includes confidential counselling material.

A parent / carer however does not have this right, and in accordance with Section 86 6(2) of the DPA 2018, any disclosure or processing of such material 'is unwarranted in any particular case because of prejudice to the rights and freedoms or legitimate interests of the data subject' (i.e., the child concerned). The counselling service would consider any disclosure against the pupil's wishes, to be undermining the pupil's own right to privacy and confidentiality.

Counselling records, including process notes, may be requested by the courts during hearings about the welfare of children. If a school counsellor is made the subject of a court order to appear in court or produce their process notes, they may obtain legal advice so that they can make representations to the court in the appropriate manner, to limit disclosure of non-relevant sensitive pupil information.

Record Keeping

Session Notes

The school adopts a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the DPA 2018, and it is updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management. Notes from sessions and pupil's records are filed electronically on the school system by counsellors and kept confidential. Session notes function as an aide memoir and a record of safeguarding and wellbeing concerns by the school counsellor.

Report to Governors

A termly report which highlights the number of sessions provided, key issues arising and identifies any recurring themes will be made available to the Governors. No pupil's name will be identified.

Information Sharing

The Counselling Service will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school staff, other agencies and specialised services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. Counsellors may find it necessary to liaise with, share information or refer the pupil to another agency for further help. This will usually only happen with the pupil's consent.

Complaints Procedure

All complaints should be raised following Norwich School's complaints procedure, which can be found on the school's website. Complaints alleging a breach of professional standards will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined by the BACP or other relevant professional body.

Document control

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