

Counselling Policy



BREDA ACADEMY



Breda Academy

COUNSELLING POLICY

RATIONALE

Breda Academy is committed to ensuring physical, emotional, spiritual and moral well-being of all its students. To support this commitment, a well-defined and easily available pastoral support and guidance service is provided for all students between Years 8 and 14. Counselling within the school aims to provide a service whereby students, who are unhappy or distressed have the opportunity to tackle his/her difficulties and with the help of individual counsellors, be empowered to adapt strategies to enable them to cope and deal with them. At Breda Academy our motto, chosen by the students is: **Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow**

This encapsulates our vision that school is about preparing our students to access the broadest range of possible futures and fulfil a positive role in society. At Breda Academy we want our students to **Be Happy Be Safe Be Heard** and be part of our school community **#this is community**.

AIMS

The general aim of Guidance is to ensure that all students know that they are valued, that the school has a concern for them as individuals and will address many of the emotional and behavioural difficulties which they face. To this end the school through curricular programmes, and more specifically, guidance activities will help students to develop:

- skills, attitudes and abilities which will enable them to be effective in a variety of adult roles.
- knowledge and understanding of themselves and others as individuals - their strengths and limitations, abilities, skills, personal qualities, potential, needs, attitudes and values.
- independence of mind and take responsibility for his/her own life.
- self-reliance, self-discipline and self-respect and
- a respect for ways of life, opinions and ideas different from his/her own, provided these are based on consideration of others.

Within this framework a more focused and specialist aspect of guidance and support is a counselling service for students.

“There is a strong body of evidence citing the beneficial impact of students having access to counselling support when necessary and the significant role schools can play in helping to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of students. Students experiencing emotional problems may find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their potential. Where school staff can recognise and respond appropriately to their needs and reduce the barriers to learning, the

educational outcome is maximised.” (Independent Counselling Services for School (ICSS) Handbook September 2019)

The counselling service aims to support and complement existing pastoral care provision. The School Counsellor is concerned with the emotional development of the child and the development of positive mental health. When children face problems (e.g. anxiety, bullying, relationship difficulties, loss, bereavement) they do not always have the emotional maturity or expertise to deal effectively with them. There may be a marked deterioration in their attitude and behaviour at school and also at home. Counselling provision, often at short notice, offers the child dedicated time to share concerns and work towards coping strategies in order to find a way forward.

What Is Counselling and How May It Help?

- It can help us to understand our relationships better and improve them
- It can help us to increase our level of self-awareness
- It can help us to explore our feelings and emotions, and understand and manage them better
- It can help us to recognise unhelpful thought patterns and adopt new ones
- It can help us recognise the past and current behaviours which we do not take into the future
- It can help us to improve our communication skills
- It offers a place to reflect upon oneself and our relationship with the world
- It can help us develop problem-solving skills and strategies to deal with difficult situations
- It can help us develop our self-confidence and lead to self-acceptance
- It can help us find to find our own answers to our difficulties

Young people clearly face many challenges whilst growing up and may find at times that they need someone to talk to external to either home or school. Counselling is a process which offers support and guidance when things feel particularly difficult. The counsellor will provide a safe and confidential place for a young person to explore thoughts and feelings which perhaps are overwhelming and upsetting, in a drive to enable change.

Issues Young People may be struggling with include:

- Bullying
- Academic and exam pressure
- Parental divorce or separation
- Peer pressure
- Drugs and/or alcohol issues
- Health
- Family issues
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Bereavement
- Confusion
- Anxiety about the future
- Self-harm
- Sexual orientation
- Low self-confidence
- Stress

- Low self-esteem and self-worth
- Trauma
- Anger
- Depression
- School work and concentration
- Behavioural issues
- Poor body image
- Friendship issues

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

Guidance should enable students to

- make informed choices / decisions
- cope with crisis
- work through feelings of inner conflict
- improve relationships with others
- gain better self-understanding
- develop coping strategies
- develop resilience

REFERRALS AND ASSESSMENTS

Referrals may come in a variety of ways:

Self-Referral by the Student

- The easiest way for a student to arrange to see a counsellor is by using the self-referral box situated along the main corridor
- Students can also book an appointment to see a counsellor by speaking with any member of staff who can make a referral on their behalf - no other member of staff or students will be informed that such an arrangement has been made.

Referral by Pastoral Leaders

- The Head of Year or Head of Key Stage may refer students for counselling by liaising with the Senior Teacher for Inclusion and Safeguarding, a member of the Safeguarding Team or by encouraging the student to self-refer. All referrals made by a member of staff will have to provide a referral form for the counsellor before an appointment is made. These can be accessed from either the school computer system or alternatively paper copies are available in the staffroom (appendix 1).

Referral by Parents/Guardians

- Parents/guardians may contact the Senior Teacher for Inclusion and Safeguarding, a member of the Safeguarding Team, the Head of Year or Form Tutor or other members of the Pastoral Team, requesting that their child should have counselling. The preference is that parents/guardians should encourage their children to self-refer, rather than making arrangements on their behalf.

- Counselling can form part of a support package, discussed and agreed with a student and parents/guardians as an aid through difficult times (for example, a situation involving behavioural or attitudinal problems).

Referral to other services

- The referral acts as a primary link to understanding the issues that the young person is facing. The young person may have needs that are not appropriate for counselling and require alternative intervention. These may be more complex needs such as long term school absences, or SEN needs, all of which may require signposting to other agencies, either within or outside of school.

Once the referral has been made the Counsellor will meet and assess the student. This process is important to identify the needs of the young person, and ensure that they have agreed to come along. **Counselling must be voluntary.** Students can be encouraged to attend, or a recommendation can be made, but ultimately young people have the choice. The assessment also provides an opportunity for both student and counsellor to meet to decide on the best course of action.

Students are offered initially 4 to 6 sessions which may be extended up to a maximum of 9, after discussion with the Counsellor. Drop-in sessions are also available each week. These may be a one-off session in order to off-load or may lead to weekly sessions.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All young people are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the BACP Code of Ethics. This means that the information they bring to the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the counsellor. **Information will not be shared** unless the young person has agreed to it. The counsellor will however state that they may need to break confidentiality should they deem the young person at **significant risk** to themselves or others. At this point information may need to be shared with another party, either within school, or with an appropriate referral to an outside agency. Counsellors are aware of Child Protection procedures and adhere to those as appropriate. The Designated Teachers are Mrs G Scott and Deputy Designated Teachers are Ms J McMullan and Mrs S McWilliams.

GILLICK COMPETENCE

“As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence.” (Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)

Since this ruling all young people are entitled to confidential counselling. The *Gillick competence* will be assessed by the School Counsellor in the primary meeting with the young person and if deemed competent the young person will be able to give consent to counselling. Assessment of competence based on the Gillick principle depends on:

- The maturity of the young person
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions
- The young person having sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable them to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling.

INFORMING PARENTS

All parents are informed of the arrangements for counselling when their child enters the School. As a rule, most secondary-level students are deemed mature and intelligent enough to understand the counselling process, but there are occasionally those who are not. It is critical at this point that parental consent is obtained. Every effort is made to engage parents and where appropriate, young people are encouraged to inform their parents that they are receiving counselling.

RECORD KEEPING

- Counsellors will keep a formal record of students seen, which may include brief mention of types of problems discussed.
- Students are legally entitled to see records relating to themselves and although there might be circumstances in which it might be desirable for members of the counselling team to have access to records relating to a particular student, such records will normally be treated as discreet and confidential.
- Such formal records are in addition to any private case notes which the Counsellors may make confidentially for *aide-memoire* purposes.

LIAISON BETWEEN COUNSELLORS AND OTHER STAFF

- The ethos of trust that has characterised the arrangements for counselling has greatly helped both the counselling process itself, and the degree to which counselling has played a successful role within pastoral care at the School.
- This has involved and will continue to involve recognition that counsellors should not be required or expected to disclose confidential information to senior staff or Heads of Year/Head of Key Stage, departing from the rules of confidentiality set out above.
- However, this does not preclude Counsellors from being consulted or involved in discussions about the most appropriate forms of support and response to students' pastoral or behavioural difficulties. Counsellors may be able to contribute valuably to these processes without disclosing confidential information.

INTRODUCTION OF COUNSELLING ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS

- The counselling arrangements are explained to students in whole-School and Year Group assemblies every new academic year in September.
- Form Tutors, Heads of Year, and the School Counsellor can also explain the arrangements to students as needed.

STAFFING AND RESOURCES

All teachers within the school have responsibility for the welfare of children in their care. This is further supported by our school counsellor from 'Family Works', a professional counselling service provided by DENI. In addition, services from specialist agencies including Protect Life Start 360 for self-harm, the Daisy Project

for drug and alcohol issues, Dreamscheme and the YMCA for individual mentoring and Outer South & East Family Support Hub for family support may be accessed by referral when required.



Breda Academy - Referral for Counselling

Name of Student: _____
Form Group: _____
Date of birth: _____
Referred by: _____
Date of referral: _____
Reason(s) for referral: _____

Another other issues e.g. _____
SEN/Health: _____

Parental Contact

Parent/ Guardian informed Yes / No *
* Reason _____
Name of Parent/Carer: _____
Contact number: _____
Address: _____
Date Parent/Carer
consent given: _____

The policy will be reviewed again before May 2023

Signature – Principal

Signature – Chairperson of the Board of Governors

Date: 19th May 2020