

Bedales School Counselling Policy - Students

INCLUDING EYFS

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Bedales School Counselling Policy - Students

Counselling provision

Bedales School has had a School Counselling Service since 2004. It is an important component of the pastoral care of Day and Boarding students.

At Bedales School, we offer one-to-one counselling sessions in a safe supportive environment by qualified counsellors. Counselling is delivered as a talking therapy, drawing on creative approaches where helpful and necessary. Please see below for information about costs.

In-school counselling is not generally suitable for students who are under the care of CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) unless this is authorised by CAMHS. In such cases CAMHS has the ultimate responsibility for the student and does not oversee the counsellors' work. In addition, in-school counselling is not suitable for students who are receiving counselling from another practitioner unless this is part of a coherent and agreed plan of support managed by the student's GP or psychiatrist and agreed with a school counsellor.

Private counselling outside the School should be managed by the student's GP or psychiatrist. To best support the student, the School should be informed of any outside support and it would be helpful for any advice or recommendations to be shared with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the student's Houseparent. The School can also provide details of specialists in numerous fields, such as bereavement, family and substance and alcohol misuse. Where there are difficulties with relationships within the home environment, family therapy is often an essential element of effective therapy.

Referral process

All counselling is voluntary. Counselling can be ineffective if someone does not go of their own volition.

Referrals to counsellors based at the Senior School :

Students at the Senior School may refer themselves directly to a School counsellor. Information about how a student can do this is available in Houses, in the Health Centre and the student body is reminded about the service in numerous ways throughout the year. Parents and Houseparents might not know that a student is meeting with the counsellor over the first six sessions which are not charged. Should a student wish to explore the option of counselling, Houseparents and the Health Centre will assist the student in making a first appointment if the student would welcome that.

If parents think that their child may benefit from counselling, they may wish to discuss this with Houseparents or the Health Centre team before suggesting it to the child.

Consulting with the Houseparents and Health Centre means that any concerns and issues can be explored and that all avenues of support have been considered ensuring that the most appropriate action is taken.

If a member of staff feels that counselling might be appropriate for a student, they should discuss this with the student's Houseparent.

If a Houseparent or member of the Health Centre feels that counselling would be helpful to a student, they should initially speak with the student. If the student is happy to go ahead with counselling, a referral form should be completed. The referral form is an MS Form and is sent round by the Senior

School Counsellor at the start of each term to Houseparents, the Health Centre, DSL and added to the intranet.

Ideally an appointment will be offered within the following week. However, when the counsellors are at capacity there may be a delay in offering an appointment. Every effort will be made to see the student as soon as possible. If a student is unable to access counselling within a week, the Health Centre can offer support and information by way of self-help leaflets and signposting to specialist websites or phone services. The Health Centre will check-in with the student on a regular basis and will contact the counsellors if there is any change in circumstances or risk.

Where there are concerns about a risk of significant harm to the student concerned, the student will be considered a priority and will have an initial appointment as soon as possible. However, it should be noted that the Bedales Counselling Service is not an emergency service and if there are immediate concerns about a student's safety they should be taken to A & E to be assessed by an NHS Mental Health Clinician.

Students who are waiting for counselling will be reviewed by the Counselling Team on a weekly basis. This meeting will review the level of risk and will monitor the length of time it is taking to offer appointments. Every effort will be made to keep waiting times to a minimum. If the counsellors are not able to see a student and their mental health is deteriorating, parents will be encouraged wherever possible, to find support outside the School.

Referrals to counsellors based at the Prep School

Referrals may be made by any member of staff through the Emotional Support Referral Form or students may self-refer. Referrals are then triaged by the Prep Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Mental Health Lead for the Prep School. The Prep Deputy Head (Pastoral) monitors counselling sessions and parents are informed if their child is seeing a counsellor.

The Prep School also offers emotional support through the Emotional Support Matron. This is triaged in the same way by using the ESRF. These sessions may be used to develop a child's social/emotional skills. These sessions are held at School and can be individual or group sessions, depending on the need of the child. The counsellors/therapists work with parents, the child and the tutor to help develop strategies, a consistent approach and language to support behavioural issues and, if required, action points from the child's Wellbeing Action Plan are shared with all staff. All recommendations for counselling are reviewed by Deputy Head Pastoral.

Referrals to counsellors based at the Pre-prep

If it is felt that a child needs counselling, this has to be agreed by the class teacher, the Head of Pre-prep and the child's parents. If more specialist support is required, this is agreed in the same way and organised appropriately. In addition, there is a play therapist who supports children at the Pre-prep.

Referrals to external counsellors and mental health specialists

If a student is seeing a mental health specialist outside School, they would only see a School counsellor if this was an agreed part of a health care plan.

For Boarders, the Health Centre, or GP in the case of a Pre-prep students, may recommend that a student sees a mental health specialist if it is felt necessary or beneficial.

Students and their parents may wish to make their own referrals directly to a mental health specialist. All information should be shared with the School: the Health Centre for Senior School students, the Prep Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Medical Matron for Prep students, and the Head of Pre-prep for students in that school, in the interests of the welfare of the student.

Safeguarding and information-sharing

Counselling establishes a safe, neutral space to explore one's thoughts and perceptions of the world and gives the individual choice over what they want to bring to their therapy sessions. The exception to this for students would be if they requested that a conversation was needed with a parent or member of staff, such as Houseparents or tutors.

In-school counsellors are employed by the School and so adhere to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is available on our website. Confidentiality laws are not a bar to sharing information where there are safeguarding concerns and information will always be shared if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Counsellors seek only to share the information that is necessary to prevent significant harm. In practice, this means that if a School counsellor believes that a child has been significantly harmed or is at risk of significant harm (either from themselves or others), they notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in the School on the same working day and the DSL also then follows the School's procedures detailed in the Bedales School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Although there is a duty to report the information whether or not the student gives consent, such consent will always be sought before information is shared unless it is not possible to do so.

In the case of students who are adults (those aged 18 and over), the counsellor will not share information without their consent unless they believe they are at imminent risk of significant harm.

Data storage

The counsellors take brief notes. These are to help them keep track of the sessions and will not be shared unless required for safeguarding purposes, or when this is ordered by a court. Each counsellor keeps their notes in a handwritten or digital format and the records are stored securely online in their School One Drive folder, or locked in a secure filing cabinet. Online records cannot be accessed by any other person and the IT department have verified the security of this method of record keeping.

When a student leaves the School, the notes will be anonymised and coded and the notes will be moved to a digital archive folder. For further information about the storage of information at Bedales School, please refer to our Data Retention Policy and the relevant Privacy Notices.

Costs of Counselling

We are fortunate to be supported by a highly qualified and expert team of professional counsellors. However, counselling is a significant cost to the School and it is important therefore that it works under a sustainable model.

We recognise that counselling can be very sensitive, and we want our students to be able to access our counsellors so they can be helped through challenges that they may face. We therefore offer the first six counselling sessions in an academic year free of charge.

This arrangement means that, should a student require more than six sessions in a year, subsequent sessions would be recharged on fee bills. Where this is necessary, this will be discussed with the parents and agreement sought in advance. The current fee for a counselling session can be found in our fees list.

Where there is a need for counselling, this will often be with the consent of parents, but there may be occasions when the reason for counselling or that it is happening at all, cannot be released to parents.

Should there be a need to protect information and exceptionally more than six counselling sessions are required, then discretion may be applied and further free sessions allowed. Such decisions will be referred by the relevant counsellor to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) at the Senior School, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) at the Prep School or the Head of the Pre-prep.

The counselling service is in demand and so ideally Bedales students should give at least 24 hours' notice, or the fee-payer may be charged. At the Prep School, any charges will be made in consultation with the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

NB: All School Policies are available to staff and can be found here:

<https://bedalesschools.sharepoint.com/sites/bdd-wholeschoolpolicies>