

Three Schools' Counselling Policy - Pupils

INCLUDING EYFS

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Counselling Provision

Bedales Schools have had a school counselling service since 2004. It is an important component of the pastoral care of day and boarding pupils.

One way to consider mental health support is by tiers. Tier one is universal care, such as that provided by a GP, for a short-term difficulty. The needs of the large majority of pupils are met by tier one provision. Tier two is that provided by counsellors, such as the team at Bedales, for a wide range of issues including those relating to social, family matters and gender issues. Tier three care is that provided by a psychiatrist or a team of specialists, such as the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Tier four care is that provided by in-patient services.

At Bedales Schools, we offer weekly 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.

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

Private counselling outside school should be managed by the pupil's GP or psychiatrist.

As well as in-school counsellors, the school encourages the use of counsellors outside school and can 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 Bedales Schools:

Bedales

There are a number of referral routes to the school counsellor.

Students at Bedales 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 on Firefly and the student body is reminded about the service in numerous ways throughout the year. Should a student wish to explore the option of counselling, housestaff 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 housestaff or the Health Centre team before suggesting it to the child.

Consulting with the Health Centre or housestaff, means that concerns and issues can be explored and everyone can be confident that other avenues have been explored and that counselling, of the type offered at Bedales, may be appropriate, should a student wish to take up the offer.

If housestaff, or another member of staff, think that a student may benefit from counselling, they should discuss this with one of the counsellors or the Health Centre team before suggesting it to the student.

Whatever the route to seeing the counsellor is, other than student self-referrals, all appointments must be made via the Health Centre team. They will do an initial assessment and ensure that a school counsellor is likely to be appropriate support. They also triage referrals so that they are prioritised on the basis of assessed need.

Dunhurst

Referrals may be made through the Deputy Head Pastoral or pupils may self-refer. The Deputy Head Pastoral monitors counselling sessions and parents are informed if their son/daughter is seeing a counsellor.

Dunannie

If it is felt that a child needs counselling this has to be agreed by the class teacher, the Head and the child's parents. If more specialist support is required this is agreed in the same way and organised appropriately.

Referrals to External Counsellors and Mental Health Specialists

If a pupil 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 Dunhurst pupils, may recommend that a pupil sees a mental health specialist if it is felt necessary or beneficial.

Pupils 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 Bedales pupils, the Medical matron for Dunhurst pupils and the Head for Dunannie pupils), in the interests of the welfare of the pupil.

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 pupils would be if they requested that a conversation was needed with a parent or member of staff, such as housestaff.

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 information-sharing and information will always be shared if it is in the interests of the child.

Counsellors seek only to share the information that is necessary in order 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 safeguarding and child protection policy. Although there is a duty to report the information whether or not the pupil gives consent, such consent will always be sought before information is shared unless it is not possible to do so.

In the case of pupils 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 make brief notes. These are coded to avoid the direct identification of the individual. The notes can be linked to the individual by reference to a separate document.

Notes are stored in a locked room at school. When a pupil leaves Bedales Schools, the counsellor archives any notes and the means to identify the individual in a locked cabinet in the Health Centre. These would only be accessed in the event of an investigation by an agency with the powers to request such documents, such as the police or social care.

For further information about the storage of information at Bedales, 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 to enable free access to our counsellors as this will best enable our pupils to be helped through challenges that they may face. We therefore offer the first six counselling sessions in a year free of charge. Many situations can reach a satisfactory resolution within six sessions.

This arrangement means that, should a pupil require more than six sessions in a year, subsequent sessions to be recharged on fee bills. Where this is necessary, this will be discussed with the parents and agreement will need to be 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 more than six counselling sessions are required then discretion may be applied and further free sessions allowed. Full bursary pupils are not charged for counselling. Such decisions will be referred by the relevant counsellor to the Senior Deputy at Bedales, the Deputy Head Pastoral at Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie.

The counselling service is in demand and so if a Bedales pupil misses an appointment with less than 24 hours' notice the fee-payer will be charged. If a pupil misses two appointments with less than 24 hours' notice, they will be removed from the appointment list. At Dunhurst, any changes will be made in consultation with the Deputy Head Pastoral at Dunhurst

Contact Details and Relevant Arrangements (eg Timings) for Referring to School Counsellors

Bedales

Katy Wilson is based at Fairhaven on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons between 1200 – 1600 hrs. Appointments are booked in advance but sometimes there is availability on the day.

Susannah Monk is based at Fairhaven on Tuesday mornings. Appointments are booked in advance but sometimes there is availability on the day.

Students can contact Katy by email or via housestaff, the Health Centre Team, or other members of the teaching/pastoral community.

Dunhurst

Jenny Yeates is based at Dunhurst and works primarily with pupils at Dunhurst and Dunannie. She is in school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 0800 – 1600 hrs.

She can be contacted by email – jyeates@bedales.org.uk or by phone – 01730 711627 or 01730 711747. She also has a confidential letterbox outside her room. Reception hold a copy of her diary.

Link to Intranet Page for Pupils

<https://bedalesvle.bedales.org.uk/houses/where-to-go-for-help-at-school>

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

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