



The Charter School North Dulwich Counselling Service



Understanding the work of the school Counsellors within your school

For Parents / Carers



A big warm welcome to all the families of our students in The Charter school and families of our new students who will be joining us.

The Charter School takes the emotional health and wellbeing of their students very seriously which is evident by the many years the school has had a counselling service which consists of two full time counsellors. This has been a valuable support for many students who have at some point experienced difficulties or faced challenges during their time at the school , and the service continues to be very busy and well-used.

In this handout, will contain information about how the counselling service operates in the school and how your child can access this support.

“Having an easily accessible counsellor has made this academic year much easier to deal with and has given me the skills and confidence to manage my mental health issues” Student , 2018



What is Counselling?

Counselling offers children and young people a regular and private space to talk about worries or problems they are experiencing. Talking things through in a private setting, with regular appointments over a period of time, can often help young people look at things differently. This can lead to changes in how they feel about themselves, their relationships with others, their thinking and their behaviour – both in and out of school.

If my child wants to see a counsellor does that mean I am failing as a parent/carers?

Not at all! Sometimes it's difficult to speak to those we're closest to about the things that are troubling us. This can be for various reasons, such as not wanting to cause worry to those we love or not wanting to hurt their feelings. The counsellor/therapist will not be judging you or the young person, but will be someone neutral who can help the young person find their own way through whatever is troubling them.

How can the counselling service help my child?

The counsellor/therapist is a qualified and experienced professional who is trained to listen without judging. What young people talk about varies and may include issues such as:

- Relationships (Friends , Family, Peers)
- Bullying
- School work
- Low self-esteem
- Bereavement
- Anxiety and stress
- Dealing with anger
- Coping with physical changes
- Self-harm
- Substance misuse
- Divorce and separation
- Exam stress
- SEN and Disabilities



The role of the counsellor does not include giving advice or telling young people what to do – instead they help young people to make their own choices to support personal growth and self-awareness. With younger children the sessions may involve using play materials to help them by providing an environment which is a safe space to express themselves verbally, physically or creatively.

Confidential service

In order for our students to feel safe ,what is discussed in the session remains private. This enables the student to feel able to open up more about difficult feelings and behaviours such as sadness, anxiety, fear, shame or anger.

However, on some occasions the school counsellor may need to discuss certain problems with certain members of staff, such as Mr Williams (Child protection officer) and Miss Spence (Safeguarding officer). This is usually done with the student 's knowledge. The school counsellor must share information with another professional if they are concerned that a student is at serious risk of harm or someone else or any child safeguarding issues which is referenced in the document *"Keeping children safe in Education"* Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (Department of Education) . The student and school counsellor will sign a contract at the beginning which explains the above so that your child is aware from the start that not everything is kept in confidence.

The school counsellors will encourage students who self refer to let their parents / carers know about their attendance but if a student is not ready to do this then we have to respect their confidentiality. This also means that the school counsellors cannot disclose to you what is discussed in the session unless the child has given permission as it is their right to confidentiality.

Every Child Matters



How can my child access this service?

There are 3 main pathways to our counselling service.

1. Self referral
2. Parent /Carer Referral
3. Staff Referral

Once the referrals are received by the counselling service, your child will be put on the waiting list and be contacted to arrange an assessment. It is up to the child at this stage to make the decision whether to attend counselling or not. ***The Self referral / Parent referral form can be accessed via school website.***

What if I don't want my child to receive counselling?

If a child or young person requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. Parents and carers may not deny them this right.

We would, however, prefer that we have your support for the work, and we are always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

****Gillick competence is a term originating in England and is used in medical law to decide whether a child (16 years or younger) is able to consent to his or her own medical treatment, without the need for parental permission or knowledge***

Where will the counselling sessions be held?

The counselling sessions will take place at school during school time in a place that is safe and familiar which is in the school counsellors office. The number of sessions may vary according to what the student wants to explore.

For further information about this service please contact the lead counsellor , Miss Leanne Chapman LChapman@charternorthdulwich.org.uk

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