



# LONGSTONE SCHOOL

## Counselling Policy

**UNCRC Article 3** – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

**REVIEWED: February 2024**



On a whole school level, effective teachers use counselling skills in their everyday classroom teaching, and in their pastoral relationships with their form class. Classroom Assistants also play an important role in the welfare of our pupils. **(Article 29 Respect)**.

However, sometimes we can become overwhelmed by some of our thoughts and feelings, finding it difficult to think clearly, and to help cope with this we provide a counselling service. Counselling is a way of helping young people through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. Young people are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Counselling can help young people to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with issues that cause them upset therefore increasing their capacity for learning. Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment. **(Article 12 Opinion)**.

Through the Independent Counselling services for Schools (ICSS) the school has a fully qualified independent professional counsellor, Orla (Barnardos), available for secondary pupils for one-to-one meetings, every Monday. Through the Extended Schools Programme, we also have a Junior School Familyworks Counsellor, Caroline, whose is in school every Tuesday. The pupil has an initial meeting with the counsellor to work out what help would suit them best, and they then agree between them how long they will work together. The counsellors also have access to relevant external support agencies.

Counselling takes place in the specified counselling room, which is a safe and neutral environment. **(Article 24 Safe Environment)**.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be preserved within the counselling relationship. The exception to this is in the case where the counsellor suspects neglect or abuse or the person is at risk of harm. In this case, confidentiality is subordinate to the need to protect the child, and the Designated Teacher (Mr Starrs) must be informed. **(Article 16 Privacy)**.

### **Referrals**

Counselling can only take place on a voluntary basis. After the first meeting, further counselling can only take place with the pupil's agreement.

Referrals to the counsellors may be made by:

- Using the Feeling Safe Box outside the School Office ( checked daily by DT)
- Through a member of staff (with the permission of the pupil)

### **Access to Counselling**

Referrals can be made in the following ways:

- Self referral
- From a parent (by contacting VP (Mr Starrs)
- From a member of staff ( via HOD to VP )
- Feeling Safe Box ( checked daily by VP ) – Records in confidential file

The Designated Teacher (Mr Starrs) holds separate weekly meetings with both Counsellors. Detailed records are kept which include:

- Key contact responsibilities
- Waiting lists
- Referral forms - Parent Consent, number of sessions etc
- Safeguarding and Child Protection referrals
- Pupils/ Parents/Carers/Staff Pre and Post Counselling Outcome Rating Scores (CORS) These are maintained by the counsellor who will update the DT when necessary.

The DDT (Mr Skarmoutsos) fulfils this role in the absence of the DT.

### **Counselling for staff**

Counselling for staff, both teaching and non-teaching, is available through the EA (South Eastern Region) Carecall Service, where staff have access to confidential counselling on phone number 0808 8000 002 or by contacting [support@carecallwellbeing.com](mailto:support@carecallwellbeing.com). This service is free, confidential and the school is not told who uses the service.

### **Support for staff in supporting students**

Our staff has access to courses such as bereavement, guidance, bullying, suicide intervention etc. Staff also have access to the counsellor for advice on pastoral matters.

### **Suicide Awareness**

Students who may be at risk of self-harm should be referred immediately to the DT or DDT who will contact Parents/Guardians and the GP (via the parents )

### **Critical Incidents**

The Department of Education has provision for counselling to be provided to schools where there has been a Critical Incident. This can be accessed by contacting the Education Authority (South Eastern Region) 02890566200