

WORRIES AND CONCERNS – A GUIDE FOR PUPILS

This guide explains what you should do if you feel worried about something and what you should do if you wish to complain about how you are, or have been, treated. Much of what follows may seem obvious to you, but it is important for you to realise that the School will want to help you if you have a problem that is making you unhappy.

Problems and worries could be caused by:

- Work difficulties
- Relationships with your friends
- Being bullied
- Feeling homesick
- Feeling discriminated against for racist or other reasons
- Feeling that a member of staff has treated you unfairly

You may just wish to talk to someone or you may wish to make a complaint. Either way this advice will assist you to decide what to do.

What do I do if I just want to talk to someone?

Remember you have close friends who may be able to help, or perhaps an older pupil to whom you feel you can turn. Your Tutor, Head of Year or Houseparent, the Pastoral Lead or Deputy Head Pastoral are always ready to help, or any other members of staff (including domestic staff) you know and to whom you feel you can comfortably talk. Here are some other people you could talk to:

- A Senior Prefect
- A Peer Mentor
- If you are a boarder your Assistant Houseparent or Houseparent
- Your Tutor or Head of Year
- The Pastoral Lead
- Senior Nurse
- Teachers nominated to deal with 'Worries and Concerns'
- The Deputy Head, Deputy Head Pastoral or Head
- A DDSL (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Mrs Karen Megahey, School Counsellor
- Social Services or Childline - the telephone numbers are posted near the telephones and around the School, and on this sheet.

Who can you talk to about something really serious?

Mr. McManus is the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead. You can see him at any time if something bad is happening to you or if something bad is happening to someone that you know. You should speak to him even if something is taking place outside School. Mrs Lilly, Nurse Cole, Mrs Simkins Smith and Mr Ryan-East are the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, so you can speak to them if Mr. McManus is not available.

Mr McManus, Robyn (Mrs Hintze) and Sister Cole are our staff who are in charge of 'Worries and concerns' – you can always speak to them.

Some people may prefer to speak to another member of staff. The important thing is that you talk to someone whom you trust, who will listen to you.

The School Counsellor is available from Monday – Wednesday. Appointments can be made via your Head of Year, Mr. McManus or the Health Centre. (See Appendix 1)

There may be times when you feel you cannot talk with a member of staff. Here are some numbers and websites to help you.

Want to talk to someone outside? Whether you are a day pupil or a boarder there are plenty of people to help:

- Safeguarding office – North Dorset – 01258 472 652
- ChildLine is a free confidential helpline for children and young people. You can call any time on 0800 11 11, or look at their website at www.childline.org.uk
- **In an emergency, call the Police on Telephone 999**
- The NSPCC have a contact line on 0808 800 5000 for children and young people. Their web site is www.nspcc.org.uk/kidszone.
- Kidscape has helpful advice on www.kidscape.org.uk
- The Samaritans can be called at any time on 08457 909090
- Victim Supportline – 0845 3030900
- NHS direct – 0845 4647
- Office of the Children's Commissioner: Freephone: 0800 5280731 or web-site: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

What happens next?

Whoever you talk to in School will take you seriously, but won't ask too many questions. We have to be careful to get the right people, who are experienced in keeping children safe to come and help you. We have to ask experts to advise you. We will work to keep you safe; but you may also need professional support from a Specialist.

We promise to do all we can to ensure that the other parts of your life are not disrupted more than is necessary.

Please remember no teacher is allowed to keep this type of information to themselves. They have to pass it on, so that help can be obtained. However, only those who need to know will be told. We will explain this at the time and tell you who has to be told and the reason.

REMEMBER - nobody has the right to hurt, abuse or make children unhappy. It is very important that you tell someone.

Appendix 1 - Counselling Provision

The counselling service aims to build on the School's pastoral provision by offering additional personal support to students who may benefit from the opportunity to work with a professional counsellor. This confidential service helps promote the psychological well-being of students, enabling them to make the most of the opportunities offered for their personal and academic development. The counselling support provided conforms to the current best practice and professional standards for school-based counselling, specifically in respect of counsellor qualifications, continual professional development, supervision policy and safer working practices.

The school's counsellors are members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), works within their guidelines and is bound by their Ethical Framework and Professional Conduct Procedure. Further information can be found at www.bacp.co.uk

Students can access the service during term time from Monday - Wednesday. The service is initially free. Every student is entitled to 6 sessions of school funded counselling. Further counselling may be available through a private arrangement with the counsellor and the student's parents at a cost.

What is counselling?

Counselling is a way of helping through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. The process enables clients to focus on their particular concerns, work through feelings of inner conflict and gain a greater understanding of themselves and their situation. Counselling can lead to improved self-esteem and confidence, can help develop a greater sense of worthiness and can help improve personal relationships, work issues, and sporting performance. Students are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Bereavement, loss, family and peer relationship difficulties, anxiety, and bullying are major issues which without support may lead to deterioration of behaviour, attitude and mental health issues.

Referrals and Assessments

If, as a School, we feel that a pupil would benefit from a short series of longer sessions (50 minutes each), they can be referred through the pastoral system and the Deputy Head. Parents will not necessarily be informed that their son/daughter is seeing the counsellor, and the content of the sessions would remain confidential unless there is a matter of safeguarding or child protection (see below for 'Fraser Guidelines').

Counselling sessions operate on a rota so that pupils do not miss the same lessons each week. When absent from a lesson, pupils will be marked as being looked after in the Wellbeing Hub (as they would be for any medical scenario), and will need to 'check in' with one of the School nurses before the start of each counselling session. The counsellor will provide the pupils she sees with an appointment card to ensure the next appointment is kept.

Once a referral has been made the counsellor and student will meet for an initial assessment session. This is important to identify the needs of the student. Successful counselling is based on

trust, self-motivation and commitment. The assessment session also provides an opportunity for the student and the counsellor to decide on the best course of action. Students can be seen for an initial short-term period of six sessions, but this may be extended if the need is present.

When a situation arises where information needs to be shared, the counsellor will make every effort to ensure the pupil is informed first. Sometimes it may be simply useful to share sensitive information with other pastoral staff, and the counsellor would talk this through with the pupil. Appointments are one-to-one and last around 45 - 50 minutes.

Confidentiality

All young people are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the BACP Code of Ethics. This is vital in enabling young people to express their distress in counselling. Whilst acknowledging that confidentiality is crucial, it cannot be absolute in any counselling relationship. Limits to confidentiality will be explained to clients at the beginning of the counselling relationship and periodically thereafter as required.

The need to protect pupils is sensitively weighed against their right to privacy and confidentiality. In the case of a potential child protection concern, events may develop that could lead to the counsellor considering that a breach of confidentiality is necessary in the interest of the young person's safety. This relates to situations when the counsellor has strong grounds for thinking that an individual (either the client or another young person) may be at risk of significant harm from others or themselves. The counsellor will endeavour to seek the young person's views and consent in advance of any disclosure of information and explain the possible consequences of involvement with other agencies. Where a young person is at risk of significant harm the counsellor is required to adhere to the School's safeguarding policy.

Whilst every effort is made it is not always possible to protect the identity of students who attend counselling. Because of the nature of the environment in which they are being seen, privacy regarding attendance may be difficult. This is explained to students at the beginning of the counselling relationship and it is the student's decision whether to continue with further sessions. Staff members will therefore not openly discuss a pupil's attendance at a counselling session.

Fraser Guidelines

"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. 'Gillick competence', under the Fraser Guidelines, will be assessed by the counsellor in the primary meeting with the student and, if deemed competent, the young person will be able to give consent to counselling. Assessment of competence based on the Fraser Guidelines depends on the maturity of the young person, their understanding of the consequences of his or her actions, and the young person having sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable them to understand what is being proposed i.e. counselling. As a rule, most secondary students are deemed sufficiently competent enough to understand the counselling process. Where this is not the case, parental consent is obtained.



Further Help

There are many helpful resources on the internet for strong mental health and wellbeing. Below you will find some suggestions:

<http://www.youngminds.org.uk> – UK charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

<http://www.familylives.org.uk> – UK charity offering family support.

<http://www.wheresyourheadat.co.uk> – Dorset-based website offering support to young people and children.