



Newton British Academy Barwa City

PRIMARY SCHOOL School Counselling Policy

Review Date: June 2023
Next Review Date: June 2023

Introduction:

Counselling is one of the most common psychological interventions delivered in schools where children can explore, understand and aim to overcome issues in their lives causing them difficulty and/or distress. This policy outlines the procedures and approaches in place to bring about effective change and enhance students' well-being. Our approach used within Newton British Academy's primary school involves: play therapy, art therapy, use of storytelling and psychoeducational approaches which help children and families understand their distress and how to deal with it in the best way.

Our policy as set out in this document reflects The British Association of Counselling (BACP) and Psychotherapy's definition of counselling and psychotherapy: It offers children the opportunity to express and explore how they feel and what they are thinking with someone who is professionally trained, in order to bring about effective change and enhance their wellbeing.

At NBA, the school counselling service helps students, parents and teachers achieve a consistent and positive learning experience. Students are encouraged to meet academic goals, and importantly, to improve self-esteem and develop social and life skills. Assisting children to achieve their full potential is important to all staff members and we follow a team approach in working to accomplish this.

Aims:

- Identification of students who are in distress, facing difficulty and/or challenges and putting the required support plan in place (Independent Behaviour Plan and/or Emotional Social Welfare Plan)
- Support children with personal, social and emotional issues that are affecting their wellbeing by regular meeting in group sessions and/or 1:1 basis with the school counsellor
- Ensure that a variety of methods are used to promote and encourage the importance of school attendance, making sure that students are adapting to and also enjoying the learning environment that they are in
- Provide opportunities and skills to meet and exceed academic achievements and build positive relationships with parents, teachers and their peers
- Develops skills to strengthen their resilience and deal with their problems and challenges, while developing and improving self-esteem and social and life skills
- Use a non-stigmatising strategy to help bring about improvements in mental health and wellbeing
- Effectively implement and continuously improve a counselling service that meets NBA's vision to create opportunities for the students to strive for excellence and celebrate success
- Promotion of effective partnerships and involvement of outside agencies when appropriate to provide statements and other support

Referral Process and Procedures

Referrals and Initial Assessment

Referrals to access the counselling service can be made at any time by:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students who self-refer (upper KS2)
- Any member of staff

There is a designated form to be filled by the Class Teacher (School Counselling Referral Form Primary and Early Years). If referred by parents the form will be from the entire responsibility of the school counsellor. The School Counsellor can be approached via email

The following procedure is followed after receiving the referral form:

- Meeting with the Class Teacher is held,
- Initial session with the child
- Classroom observation
- Initial meeting with parents

Once the main areas of concern are identified as the prioritization of the needs, the targets and the method of support are defined in case we conclude the need of it.

Support plan Implementation and Duration

The support plans:

- Emotional Social Welfare Plan (ESWP) which is designed to be implemented directly with the child (individual or small group). The ESWP will include when necessary classroom strategies to be implemented by teachers.
- Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) which is an indirect support from the counselling services.

The implementation of each support plan requires the agreement of parents, its implementation will only start after a meeting with parents where the targets and strategies are presented.

- **Each Support Plan is designed for 6 to 8 weeks** of implementation followed by a Review Meeting with Class Teachers and/or Parents to track progress and revise counselling goals.
- Sessions will generally be weekly or fortnightly, depending on the need, for a maximum of 12 weeks.
- Any extension to this will be considered on a case by case basis depending on the needs of the individual student.

Session Allocation

- School counselling sessions are generally for 30 minutes.
- Appointments are to be timetabled in class time.
- Communication regarding appointment times will be made via the student's parents/class teachers.

Referral Process and Procedures by notes:

- Appointments are made subject to availability and to urgency.
- Students have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time, and it is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure that the student's rights to autonomy are respected. It is important to recognise that students can only benefit if they want to be involved in the counselling process.
- It is our protocol at NBA to work in partnership with parents wherever possible and to seek parental consent for children to attend counselling, except in circumstances involving Child Protection concerns.
- The School Counselling Service will have an Annual Action Plan approved by the SMT at the start of the academic year with the provision of the activities to be implemented in the school community (Mental Health World Day celebration, Anti-bullying week, Kindness celebration, online safety week, extra-curricular activities, workshops for parents, PD for staff, etc.)

Outline of School Counsellor responsibilities:

The School Counsellor will support the developmental, emotional, social and academic needs of the student body to promote wellbeing and success.

- The role of the counsellor is to:
- Implement effective student and staff support and guidance. This includes understanding self and others, coping strategies, peer relationships and social skills, communication, problem solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and study skills
- Provide individual and small group counselling to deal with issues such as self-image and self-esteem, personal adjustment, family issues, loss and grief, interpersonal concerns, academic development, and behaviour
- Assist parents and the school community with information regarding mental health issues and challenges
- Work proactively with the school community to promote and foster student wellbeing
- Work collaboratively with the Additional Educational Special Needs (AESN) Department

School counselling can assume different methods:

- **Individual counselling** where educational, social, and personal needs are addressed on a 1-1 basis. More serious concerns are referred to outside agencies
- **Small group counselling sessions** discuss topics such as self-esteem, anger management, friendship, conflict resolution, bullying, peer pressure et
- **Classroom guidance** when necessary to cover topics such as friendship, peer pressure, peer helpers, emotional management, etc. Classroom observation can also take place as a form of assessment or follow up of students
- **Student appraisals** meetings with counsellor, teachers, administrators, parents and occasionally outside specialists, to gather information about student abilities, behaviour and needs, in order that appropriate decisions can be made to enhance educational placement and student welfare.
- **Transitioning support** to help new students into the school
- **External Referrals** ensure students and their families receive assistance from programmes and services in the school and from outside agencies. Parents are encouraged to contact the counselling office at any time during the school year if they have any questions and/or concerns about their child's welfare

Ethical Principles

In accordance with BACP, NBA school counselling assumes the core ethical principles of this guiding body:

- Being trustworthy: honouring the trust placed in the practitioner
- Autonomy: respect for the client's right to be self-governing
- Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the client's wellbeing
- Non-maleficence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the client
- Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services
- Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge, integrity and care for self

Ethical decisions that are strongly supported by one or more of these principles without any contradiction with the others may be regarded as well-founded. However, practitioners may encounter circumstances in which it is impossible to reconcile all the applicable principles. This may require choosing which principles to prioritise. A decision or course of action does not necessarily become unethical merely because it is controversial or because other practitioners would have reached different conclusions in similar circumstances. A practitioner's obligation is to consider all the relevant circumstances with as much care as possible and to be appropriately accountable for decisions made.

At NBA the School counselling service adopts and aims for the core competences designated by BACP to work with children and young people (4-18).

- Knowledge of development in children and young people and of family development and transitions
- Knowledge and understanding of mental health problems in children, young people and adults

- Knowledge of legal frameworks relating to working with children and young people
- Knowledge of and ability to operate within, professional and ethical guidelines
- Knowledge of and ability to work with issues of confidentiality, consent and capacity
- Ability to work within and across agencies
- Ability to recognise and respond to concerns about child protection
- Ability to work in a 'culturally competent' manner
- Ability to engage and work with children/young people, parents and carers
- Ability to communicate with children and young people of differing ages, developmental level and background
- Knowledge of psychopharmacology in work with children and young people

Professional Standards

- Apply developmental, learning, counselling and education theories.
- Apply legal and ethical principles of the school counselling profession.
- Demonstrate understanding of the impact of cultural, social and environmental influences on student success and opportunities.
- Demonstrate understanding and a proactive approach to Child Protection and safeguarding awareness and procedures.
- Provide short-term counselling in small-group and individual settings
- Make referrals to appropriate school and community support services
- Liaise with external agencies/working with the community.
- Collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders for student achievement and success.
- Create school counselling program aligned with vision and mission of the school
- Establish agreement with the SMT about the school counselling program

Privacy and Confidentiality

Respecting the children's privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting the child's autonomy. The professional management of confidentiality concerns the protection of personally identifiable and sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure. Any disclosures of a child's confidences should be undertaken in ways that best protect the child's trust and respect their autonomy.

At the initial session, the Counsellor will make it clear to the student that they may need to breach confidentiality in terms of telling others and seeking help. This may happen when the young person, or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm.

Client consent is the ethically preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality, but exceptional circumstances may prevent the Counsellor from seeking the child's consent to a breach of confidentiality, due to the urgency and seriousness of the situation, for example, preventing the

client causing serious harm to self or others. In such circumstances the Counsellor has an ethical responsibility to act in ways which balance the client's right to confidentiality against the need to communicate with others.

Confidential information about clients may be shared within teams, where the information can be adequately protected from unauthorised further disclosures and the disclosure enhances the quality of service available to clients or improves service delivery.

Sharing Information

The Counselling Service will work in a multi-disciplinary way and communicate with school staff, other agencies and specialised services, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality. Counsellors may find it necessary to liaise with, share information or refer the child to another agency for further help. This should only happen with the parent's permission. An exception to this practice occurs when the school has information that indicates that a student may be at risk of harm, in these circumstances the school then takes instruction from the Child Protection Policy on how to proceed.

To contact external agencies, providing or to provide extra support, a *Sharing Information Consent letter* will be requested to be signed by parents.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

The School Counsellor is part of the Primary Safeguarding Team. Child Protection concerns are reported directly to the Safeguarding Team. The School Counsellor will work with Primary SMT to address concerns with students, parents and teachers.

Record Keeping

Counselling records, including process notes, do not form part of the Student School Record, and remain the property of the Counselling Service.

Supporting Policies and Documentation

- Child Protection Policy
- Primary School Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force
- School Counsellor Job Description

