



Milverton Primary School

Counselling Policy

Agreed by: Performance and Standards Committee

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Updated Issue 1:

Definition

For the purpose of this policy the school will define counselling for young people, as referred to in the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) 'Good practice guidance for counselling in schools (4th edition)', as:

"... a process which assists a client to focus on his or her particular concerns and developmental issues, while addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices, coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others. Counselling enables young people to gain an understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope with change."

(www.bacp.co.uk/education/whatiscounselling.html)

The concept of counselling has been interpreted in a range of ways. The BACP have emphasised the volitional nature of counselling, outlining that:

'Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client as no one can properly be 'sent' for counselling'.

Further information about what Counselling is can be found on the following website:
www.bacp.co.uk/education/whatiscounselling.html

Rationale behind school-based counselling

School-based Counselling is an intervention that children or young people can voluntarily enter into if they want to explore, understand and overcome issues in their lives which may be causing them difficulty, distress and/or confusion. A counselling relationship has *'identified boundaries and an explicit contract agreed between the young person, counsellor and, where appropriate, parent or carer.'* (Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future. DfE February 2016).

A broad definition was adopted by the Welsh Government, for the purpose of their Schools Counselling Strategy (2008):

'A range of activities, which includes listening and other support for children and young people by a qualified counsellor. ...We make a clear distinction between formal counselling and using counselling skills: Formal Counselling is undertaken by a professional, appropriately qualified counsellor acting in his or her specialist role and in accordance with a recognised code of ethics that requires confidentiality, accountability, supervision and continuing professional development.

Counselling skills are used by many people who work with children and young people in a specific role such as teachers, school nurses, youth workers and social workers. These skills

include listening in a non-judgemental way, being empathic and helping people to feel valued and understood. The role and responsibilities of the individual professional will determine the boundaries of their working practice'. (Welsh Government Counselling Strategy, 2008, p.8)

Children and young people experience a range of issues which affect their wellbeing. These can affect relationships with peers and families, and their engagement with education. In some cases, problems can escalate into conditions which require more intensive intervention. The types of problems which most commonly affect children and young people include family-related matters, bullying, behavioural and emotional problems, depression, self-harm and suicide, and mental health issues. It is for these issues that they tend to be referred for counselling. If not addressed, these issues can lead to negative experiences in class/underperformance, reduced motivation to attend school, reduced attendance/truanting, and impeded academic attainment. Unresolved issues can continue to develop and affect the young person into their adult life.

The Education Act 1996 and the Special Needs Code of Practice (2001) states that counselling should be considered as a useful intervention in helping children and young people who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

Personnel

Milverton Primary School ensures that their Primary School's PSHE programme promotes good emotional health and provides purposeful lessons and provision for all the children where each pupil is supported to achieve their potential and have a clear sense of self-worth. To further complement the whole school approach to the wellbeing of each pupil, the School provides its own children's Counsellor.

This member of staff will be suitably qualified as per the DfE's 'Counselling in Schools' document and will see an appropriately senior Supervisor for no less than 1.5 hours per month.

Our Aims

To provide counselling to pupils within the legal parameters of the relevant school policies as well as within the legal requirements of the counselling body BACP. We also aim to work towards a climate where children self-refer, giving them total autonomy. Therefore:

The counsellor:

- Will listen in a non-judgemental and patient way
- Will view problems from the client's perspective
- Will assist the client in seeing issues more clearly and perhaps from alternative viewpoints
- Will minimise confusion, and
- Will help the client to make choices and changes.

The school:

- Will inform all members of the school community of the procedures involved in the counselling process.
- Will make counselling accessible to the pupils for whom it is appropriate.
- Will review the counselling provision and the counselling policy as required.
- Will ensure that the counselling provision is in line with the National Counselling Society Ethical framework.

To raise children's awareness of the service through:

- Assemblies where the counselling service is explained and/or KS2 Form classes spoken to separately about the service.

- Pupil information leaflets distributed to KS2 children.
- Information on notice boards in the school.
- Information posted on the website.
- Staff discussing the counselling service with individual pupils as appropriate.

To raise awareness with staff through:

- The introduction of the counselling service to staff.
- Discussion of the counselling service at staff meetings including appointment allocations, referral procedures and any updates relating to the service.
- Regular staff memos and emails.

To raise awareness with parents/carers through:

- Information about Counselling at Milverton Primary School distributed to parents annually, including information on parental consent procedures.
- Information posted on the school's website.
- Counsellor can be available to speak with parents directly if they have questions about the service in a bookable appointment.

Roles and responsibilities

To provide this service, there are defined roles and responsibilities that must be adhered to. Parental involvement is detailed as a separate section.

Roles and responsibilities of the Child

The child and their needs are the most important thing in the counselling process.

- Pupils will never feel pressured into attending a counselling session; it will always be their choice to engage in the process.
- There will be a referral box situated in both KS1 and KS2 where children can refer themselves for counselling, by filling in the relevant referral form, or by putting their name and class on a piece of paper.
- They can also ask their teacher to refer them on their behalf.
- Pupils should try to inform the counsellor if they are unable to attend the scheduled appointment.
- Pupils should try to ensure that the counselling appointment does not clash with any known tests being carried out in class.
- Pupils need to understand the limits of confidentiality and the counsellor will explain this at the outset of the counselling process.
- Pupils will undertake an initial assessment and enter into a contract with the counsellor at the outset of the counselling relationship if it is thought to be necessary.
- Pupils may be invited to undertake various assessments to ascertain their state of well-being throughout the counselling process, as required.
- Pupils can choose to end the counselling relationship at any stage of the process.
- Pupils may be asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of the counselling process.

Roles and responsibilities of the School

- The Board of Governors is to be aware of the counselling system in school and how it operates.
- To review the counselling service and policy as required.
- The Senior Management Team will help promote and encourage the appropriate use of counselling available in school.
- To provide a room designated for counselling sessions with appropriate resources, including access to a telephone and a secure lockable cabinet for pupil notes.
- To provide a post box for self-referrals.
- To analyse statistics and identify current trends with the counsellor.
- To review the counselling service and policy regularly.

- To provide adequate insurance for the safety of the pupil and staff delivering the service.

Roles and responsibilities of the Key Staff Contact:

- Key Contact staff are: Headteacher and SENDCo
- To be the main link between the counsellor and the school community.
- To promote the counselling service in school with pupils, parents and staff.
- To ensure urgent referrals* are directed towards CAMHS or appropriate alternative pathways. **Urgent referrals involve pupils who are at risk of harm from themselves or someone else, or at risk of harming someone else.*
- To provide the counsellor with updated copies of all relevant school policies and details of staffing responsibilities within the school.
- To deal with disclosures of a child protection nature and/or where a pupil is 'at risk'.
- To report to the Senior Management Team and Board of Governors on current counselling provision, uptake and issues being presented as required, but keep client confidentiality at all times.

Roles and responsibilities of Staff:

- School staff are to keep all knowledge of counselling appointments strictly confidential, bearing in mind that (in some rare cases) the pupil's family and friends may be unaware of their attendance at counselling appointments.
- To give the Counsellor sufficient notice of important tests and assessments so that counselling appointments can be scheduled around these.
- To discretely pass on appointment slips or paperwork to pupils when necessary.
- To inform the Counsellor of any concerns about a pupil in relation to the counselling process.
- To fill out the appropriate referral form to refer a child and to deliver this in a sealed envelope via the office to the Counsellor.
- To keep all records anonymous regarding children undertaking counselling.
- To anonymise any communication with the Counsellor.

Roles and responsibilities of the Counsellor

- To liaise with the Key Contact at an agreed time to discuss pertinent issues.
- To promote the Counselling service in school with pupils, parents and staff.
- To adhere to the practices set out in the BACP's Ethical Framework.
- To work within the school's policies, especially in relation to child protection.
- To check the post-box for referral forms every week.
- To schedule appointments according to the school's timetable unless there are extenuating circumstances, in which case the Key Contact may be consulted.
- To try to ensure that pupils do not attend counselling sessions during the same subject each week.
- To inform the Key Contact of any 'at risk' or child protection concerns.
- To draw up an agreed contract with the client at the initial meeting, emphasising the issues around confidentiality, review processes, record keeping and/or the recording of sessions and the process for ending the counselling relationship.
- To process and retain an accurate record/or recording of each counselling session with a pupil.
- To keep any notes, records/recording relating to a client in the client's file which should be in a securely locked cabinet. (Key holder will be the Counsellor only.)
- To liaise with the Key Contact if it is felt that the client needs to be referred to another agency.
- To engage in continued professional development through appropriate training.
- To attend clinical counselling supervision appropriately; usually once per month.

Role and responsibility of the Clinical Supervisor

- To be available to discuss any issue or concerns in relation to the counselling service provided in the school or the counsellor's competency to practice.
- To meet with the Counsellor at least once per month.

Parental Involvement

Parents / Carers supporting the Counselling work

Experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent or carer can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if their child wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they do not. Counsellors acknowledge that this is not an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

It is hoped that talking with a Counsellor will lead to greater openness from the child, but they may need to allow a little time for this to happen.

Referral

- A parent or guardian can refer their child for counselling by filling in a referral form and handing into the school office in a sealed envelope. The office staff will then pass this onto the Counsellor.
- The child must be in agreement with this referral before the counselling process can begin.

Consent

- Parents will also be required to fill in a consent form if *they* refer their child to counselling.
- We require one signature from a person with legal responsibility for the young person, in order to gain consent for therapy to take place.
- **Please however be aware that the young person might discuss this with the other parent if parents are separated. The school will not be able to become involved in disputes regarding whether the young person should be in therapy.**
- In the case of parents who live at separate addresses, the request for parental consent will be sent to the first contact on the most recent data collection form submitted at the start of each academic year.
- It is recommended and encouraged that pupils tell their parents about any involvement they have in the counselling process.

Confidentiality

- The contents of each counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and the pupil unless the pupil's welfare or safety, or that of another, is considered to be at risk of significant harm.
- In this instance the necessary information is shared with the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) in school who will make a decision as to next steps. The Counsellor will endeavour to make the child aware of what is happening, if it is appropriate to do so.
- On any further action to be taken, the DSP will share this information with the pupil's parents unless doing so is considered to be putting the pupil at risk.
- Session details may also be discussed with a Clinical Supervisor.

Capacity

- On receipt of a referral form, the school counsellor will endeavour to see the young person as soon as possible to assess need.
- At times, sessions may take place outdoors, at the child's request. If this occurs, then confidentiality cannot be guaranteed although all necessary steps will be taken to keep the session as private as possible.
- The service provided is largely to support the young person to achieve their academic potential. It is not a substitute for more suitable or specialist mental health support or family therapy.
- If there is low capacity at the time of referral, then the counsellor may direct the referrer to other services, including to their GP.

Complaints

Any complaints about the counselling service delivered should be directed to the Key Contact. If the complaint is in relation to the Key Contact, it should be directed to the Chair of Governors. Any complaints about the School's counselling provision will be dealt with according to the School's Parental Complaints Procedure Policy.

Referral Procedures

Important note:

As pupils will best benefit from counselling if they engage in the process, it is essential that a pupil is never told that they **must** go to counselling – we will endeavour for it to be their decision to start the counselling process.

Our intention is to have a self-referral process at Milverton, where young people access counselling when they feel that they need it.

If it is felt that a child needs immediate referral by self-referral or via a member of staff the counsellor will be engaged for an initial conversation with the child to determine their level of need, while the school attempts to gain consent from a parent for the sessions to continue.

If the parent/carer withdraws permission at this stage, counselling will not take place, but this withdrawal of permission may be recorded for safeguarding purposes.

School Office

- Referrals can be made by Staff or parents by completing a referral form and handing it into the school office in a sealed envelope. (See Appendix One)
- This will be passed to the Counsellor.
- Part of this form requires a response about whether the child has been consulted about the referral.
- The child will be seen in the next available assessment appointment, if they agree.

Self-referral

A pupil can refer themselves for counselling in any of the following ways:

- Ask a teacher to organise an appointment with the counsellor.
- Put their name and class on a slip of paper and put it into the post-box.
- Ask a parent to make the referral to the Counsellor.

Staff

- If a member of staff is making a referral, then they must complete the 'referral form.'
- All referrals should be passed onto the Counsellor in a sealed envelope.
- Staff should check the parental permission list held centrally in the office before speaking to the child about accessing Counselling.
- If permission is granted, then the adult should ask a pupil if they would like to receive counselling. The pupil should agree to the referral before the form is passed on.
- If no parental permission is granted, but the staff member feels as if the child would benefit, then the staff member should contact the Counsellor for next steps.
- It is helpful if there is no 'label' attached to the reason for counselling, e.g. 'anger issues' etc.
- Urgent needs for Counselling should be directed elsewhere, e.g. CAMHS, NHS and appropriate Child Protection pathways undertaken if necessary.

Parent

- If there is urgent need for Counselling, then the Parents must not wait to see the School Counsellor, but visit their GP or relevant NHS helplines for immediate assistance.
- A parent can contact the school and ask for a counselling appointment to be made for their child.
- They will be asked to fill out a 'Referral Form.'
- It is essential that their child has decided that they want to see the counsellor and have not been told to attend or that they must attend.
- An initial appointment with the counsellor will be made on this understanding.
- Parents may wish to talk to the counsellor before their child starts to receive counselling, this may be useful and can be arranged but on the understanding that the parents will not play a part in the counselling process unless invited to do so by the child.

Data Protection Procedures

All information about counselling work undertaken must be kept securely by the Counsellor and in a secure locked location in line with the requirements set by the Data Protection Act 1988 and GDPR guidelines. This includes any written assessments, evaluations and any written or recorded Counselling sessions.

Counselling Procedures

Assessment, allocations and signposting.

- After a referral has been received, an assessment appointment will be made for the pupil in as timely a manner as possible.
- This appointment time will be given to the child's teacher to ensure that the time is suitable.
- The child will undergo an assessment to determine the level and areas of need that they have.
- This will be scored and compared against other children waiting. They will be placed on the waiting list at an appropriate level.
- There may also be assessments throughout the course of the counselling process to check on progress. These will be used by the counsellor to plan the counselling sessions.
- If there is an urgent need for counselling that cannot be fulfilled in school, then contact will be made with parent/carer and appropriate signposting information given, where it is available.
- If the young person cannot be catered for within the school service due to a need for specialist assistance, then they will be signposted back to parents/carers with appropriate signposting information, where it is available.

- If it is appropriate that the child is seen by the school counsellor, then an approximate waiting time will be given. This is always subject to change, due to the nature of need within the school community.
- There may be instances when it is quicker and more effective that the child is seen in a group therapy setting, e.g. transition concerns, anxiety etc. This will be taken into consideration when allocating therapeutic time to a young person. It is expected that a parent/carer also gives permission for this when they refer their child to the service as noted in the home:school agreement.
- If a child is being seen by another therapist, then they will not be given a space in our counselling service as this is not considered to be good practice. Similarly, once therapy commences within e.g. CAMHS, then the relationship with the school counsellor will be terminated.
- When it has been decided that the counselling process has come to an end, an evaluation may be carried out to inform future planning of the service and to evaluate the young person's progress with school counselling.
- As is good practice, we cannot work with siblings simultaneously. Siblings will be assessed and a decision made as to who warrants counselling first. Other family members will be signposted to other services in the meantime.

Counselling Sessions

- The Counselling sessions can take from between 15 and 30 minutes and on occasions may be longer depending on whether the session includes contracting and/or evaluations.
- The number of sessions attended by an individual child are not fixed in order to allow the counselling process to take place and for the child's issues to be worked on and addressed, but will usually be around 6 sessions to allow other children to be seen.
- Regular assessing will ensure that any child requiring more than 6 sessions can be signposted or referred to a different external agency for further appropriate support.
- After the child has finished their course of therapy, should another need arise, they will need to be re-referred to the service, in accordance with the stated referral procedures. There is no capacity to accept 'one-off' appointments.

The Counselling process

- The approach will be integrative so will involve using a combination of theories and practical approaches when working with the children.
- It will be a goal orientated intervention if possible.
- However, the child is at the centre of the process and will have a major role in directing the work done.
- Much of the work done in the session is then worked out in between sessions when the child has time to absorb and change or to put into practise new ways of addressing and dealing with the difficulty they had been experiencing in their life.
- Practical approaches can include the use of 'sand-tray' therapy, stories, puppets, drawing and painting, modelling and construction and well as small world play, music and role play. Some work sheets can be used where appropriate.

Confidentiality

- The contents of each counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and the pupil unless the pupil's welfare or safety, or that of another, is considered to be at risk of significant harm.
- Confidentiality is essential to the counselling process as it: enables the pupil to develop a trusting relationship with the counsellor, enables the pupil to speak freely about their feelings without fear of blame or reprisal, enables the pupil to express any distress they are feeling and encourages pupils to approach the counsellor.
- Therefore, any contact with the Counsellor with reference to the child maybe shared with the child to maintain this relationship.

Counselling Contract

- During the initial counselling session, the counsellor will explain the counselling process and explain the issues surrounding confidentiality.
- Cases where confidentiality must be broken will be clearly explained and the steps that may follow will be discussed.
- At this meeting the counsellor will make and agree a contract between the pupil and the counsellor. This will outline the boundaries of the counselling relationship and ensure active participation by both parties involved.
- This contract will be discussed with the parents of the child where the development of the child dictates that they may not fully understand the obligations of the contract.

Standards of Practice

All counsellors must adhere to the practise set out in the BACP's ethical framework. In the school context, the BACP's 'Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools' and the DfE 'Counselling in Schools Blueprint' should also be consulted.

Duty of Care

- The school has a duty of care to its pupils, being in loco parentis, which requires staff to take 'reasonable care' of pupils.
- It is therefore essential that counsellors share information with the school that would permit them from carrying out this duty.
- If a pupil discloses information which is sensitive, not generally known, and which the pupil asks not to be passed on, the request should be honoured unless this is unavoidable in order for teachers to fulfil their professional responsibilities in relation to:
 - Child Protection
 - Cooperating with a police investigation
 - Referral to external agencies"

Child protection and behaviour policies available on school website

Confidentiality and sharing information

- If the pupil's welfare or safety, or that of another, is considered to be at risk of significant harm, the counsellor is obliged to break confidentiality.
- In this instance the counsellor will discuss with the pupil the information that needs to be shared with the Key Contact.

- A written account of the information to be shared is drawn up by the counsellor in the form of a 'Green form' sheet.
- This is shared with the Key Contact who will make a decision on any further action to be taken.
- The Key Contact may share this information with the pupil's parents, unless doing so is considered to be putting the pupil at risk. It may be necessary that this information needs to be shared with other agencies.
- The school will endeavour to inform the pupil of any further action that will be taken and they will be involved in the process as much as possible.
- It is always the aim of the counsellor to get consent from the pupil to share necessary information and any follow-up action. However, if the pupil refuses to give consent to sharing a disclosure, it may be assumed that the need to safeguard children will always take precedence over the child's right to autonomy.
- While the decision to refer a pupil to an outside agency ultimately rests with the school, the counsellor has a professional responsibility to refer a pupil directly to an outside agency if they still have concerns.
- Factual information regarding a session can be put onto the child's safeguarding record if asked by a senior member of staff, or if it is in the best interests of safeguarding the young person.

Individual pupil files.

Each client will have their own file of notes which will be kept securely in a locked cabinet. Names will be anonymised.

These files may contain the following:

- A record of the sessions attended and any missed sessions, along with any reason provided for none attendance.
- Parental Consent form (if not held centrally)
- Factual notes/recordings about what has been discussed in the counselling sessions, any change in the pupil's circumstances between sessions, any telephone calls made on behalf of the pupil or any action that has been taken.
- Safeguarding notes – detailed notes of disclosures, information that has been shared and with whom, along with any other action that has been taken must be recorded. This will also be recorded on CPOMS.

Quality Assurance

The BACP's 'Good practice guidance for counselling in schools' states:

'Counselling in school is a specialist activity and a rapidly growing phenomenon. As such all involved need to be aware of the need to ensure that services operate to high standards and are accountable. School services ought to be appropriately developed, monitored and evaluated in order that the young people they serve have the best possible experience of counselling.'

In order to ensure counselling provision of the highest quality, frequent assessment and evaluation of procedures will be undertaken. Feedback from all involved in the counselling process will be used to inform future planning. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Addendum due to Covid-19.

1. A client's identity will need to be disclosed to the NHS as part of the Track and Trace service, if a case of Covid-19 is confirmed and the young person has been in contact with the infected individual as part of the counselling process.
2. Due to increased need for ventilation, windows and doors to the therapy room may be propped open. Whilst all efforts will be taken to ensure the client's identity and the session confidentiality, this cannot be 100% guaranteed due to this. On occasion, sessions may take place outside.
3. In the event of another lockdown, Milverton Primary School will do their utmost to provide a level of service to the young person in question. In the event of serious concern about a young person, the adult with parental responsibility retains responsibility for the welfare of the young person and access emergency mental health support via the NHS, e.g. by calling their GP, 111 or 999.
 - No home to home online therapy will be delivered, due to our inability to offer a confidential setting.
 - If the young person is in school then online access to support will be arranged if possible. Where this is not a possibility, then telephone contact will be attempted.
 - If the young person is at home then a welfare call will be made to 'check in' on the young person.

Appendix 1

Milverton Primary School

Counselling Referral Form - **Strictly Private and Confidential**

If anyone is at risk of harm, then contact the Police (or the Designated Senior Person if in school.)

If you are **severely** concerned about the child's emotional well-being, then please dial 111/999 for **immediate** assistance.

If staff referral, check Parental consent has been obtained before continuing this form / speaking to child
 Please tick the box to show that you have checked parental permission.

Child's Name:	Class:	Date of referral:
Person referring the child:	Relationship to the child:	Contact details (email / mobile)
Please tick any areas of concern:		
Attitude towards school	Home / Family issues	Homework
Classroom behaviour	Playground behaviour	Obsessions or compulsions
Study skills	Peer relations	Staff relations
Specific behavioural concerns	Other:	

Please give a description of your concerns. (Move onto a separate piece of paper if necessary.)

What did the child say when you discussed the idea of them having Counselling?

Are there any other professionals involved with the child? If so, please give details, e.g. Paediatrician. Formal diagnoses?

Signed by Referrer _____ Date _____

Please place in a sealed envelope and return to school office addressed to Emily Burns.

Counsellor use only:
Referral made:
Date seen for assessment:
Parental consent given?
Outcome:

Appendix 2

What is your name?	
Which class are you in?	
<p style="text-align: center;">Don't forget that this box is only opened on a Tuesday. If you are very unhappy or worried, then please tell another adult if you can. I will come and collect you to see how you are as soon as I can. This will be on a Tuesday. From Emily (School Counsellor)</p>	