Counselling Policy

Date Agreed by the Governing Body	November 2026
Date to be reviewed	November 2029
Date of last review	November 2023
Governors Committee accountable for review	Education
Senior Leadership Team member accountable for review	DPD

Counselling Policy

“Young people and children experience developmental changes that are unique to each individual. Counselling is a process, which assists a client to focus on their particular concerns and developmental issues, while simultaneously addressing and exploring specific problems, making choices, coping with crises, working through feelings of inner conflict and improving relationships with others. Counselling enables children and young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope.” (BACP 2006).

Introduction

- The School Counselling Service is designed to complement the strengths of the Royal Grammar School’s Student Development support system by offering additional personal support to students who may benefit from working with a counsellor.

- The Service recognises that students have the right to confidentiality in counselling, and that this is essential for maintaining trust with the counsellor, but accepts that confidentiality is not absolute and safeguarding all students must always be at the forefront of its work.

Service Aims

- To provide a diverse, mixed gender team of qualified counsellors (including those undertaking professional training), offering students a choice of counsellor gender where appropriate, to support their mental health and emotional wellbeing at RGS.
- To provide a safe, confidential space that allows individuals to explore issues that they may be having. To work through those issues by developing positive coping strategies, empowering them to find a voice and enabling them to build stronger relationships both inside and outside the school environment.
- To keep the individual at the centre of the service and work that we deliver.

Relevant Legislation

This Policy is drawn up with regard to the following:

- The Royal Grammar School Child Protection Policy
- Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998, which affords young people the right to privacy
- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989.
- The Children Act 1989; 2006
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (2026) and BACP Counselling in Schools guidelines

Features of the Service

All staff must be qualified to Postgraduate Level and/or engaged in study on a Level 4 Diploma in counselling or a degree or masters in a counselling modality. All are DBS checked. They are all contracted to maintain annual membership of a national professional psychotherapy body, such as the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy

(BACP) or British Psychological Society (BPsS) and work according to the Ethical Framework of these bodies. All counsellors must meet the minimum standards of Clinical Supervision of their work with a suitably qualified supervisor and have their own professional indemnity insurance. All staff must fulfil the requirements of our Risk Assessment (Appendix A).

Referrals to the Service

- Students are made aware of the counselling provision through student notices and a leaflet "Welcome to School Counselling", which is available in the Student Development Hub, in Matron's office and in various locations around the school.
- Students can access the counselling service through direct self-referral by contacting the counselling coordinator or by speaking to a member of staff. In addition, referrals may be made by Form Tutors, Subject Staff, Heads of Year, the Senior Leadership Team, the SENCo, or parents.
- Parents are not able to commission the service to provide therapy for their child unless their child wants them to do so. Counselling can only take place and be successful if a student is a willing participant in the process.
- Parents are written to at the start of the academic year with the option to opt out of the service for their child. If a parent has not opted out, a student can request counselling if they are deemed Gillick competent / meeting Fraser guidelines.
- It is important to note that, whilst the process of the work can be discussed with parents, the content remains confidential and will not be shared with a parent without the student's permission.

Working within the School Setting

- An initial assessment session is conducted to establish Gillick competence/ Fraser guidelines compliance, clarify the purpose and scope of counselling, and outline the limits of confidentiality regarding safeguarding concerns that must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Additionally, the session evaluates whether the student's presenting issues can be appropriately supported through our school counselling service or if signposting to specialist external services is necessary.
- The duration of the counselling sessions will be the length of lessons (35 – 40 minutes) with some flexibility to take into account individual student needs. Sessions are not offered outside of the school day. Sessions are generally held during normal lesson time. However, it is important that for the duration of the counselling, those sessions are rotated so the student is not missing the same lesson each week.
- Ad hoc lunchtime drop-in sessions are available daily (5 days a week) across break and lunch periods.
- The School Counselling Service does not have sufficient capacity to support long term problems. Counselling is initially for twelve sessions, with an option to extend up to twelve sessions if required upon review. In exceptional circumstances counselling can exceed twelve weeks but this is rare.
- Consistent with the principles of the person centered approach, regular reviews encourage students to reflect on whether counselling is meeting the desired outcomes, as well as when they end. Students have the right to withdraw from counselling at any time.
- Counselling will take place in designated, private Counselling rooms
- Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for keeping appointments, and where possible email the Counselling Co-ordinator if they are unable to attend an appointment.
- The Student Development Team will contact the student to inform them that they

have been added to the waiting list when a referral is received and no appointments are currently available. The student will be contacted when a place becomes available.
- The school counsellors do not work on a private basis with any RGS student or member of staff.

Counselling Records and Confidentiality

- Written anonymised client notes and records are covered by specific sections of the Data Protection Act 2018 and these are kept separate from individual educational records within the school and are not accessible to non-counselling staff.
- Our counsellors keep separate personal process notes for monitoring their work and for discussion in professional supervision. These notes are kept separately by individual counsellors and are intended to be a professional aide memoire. They are anonymised and kept no longer than necessary before being shredded.
- Client notes are logged on Provision Mapping as a confidential document and are kept to a minimum level of detail about the general themes of each session.
- An exception to this are notes regarding safeguarding issues. This information is recorded on the school's electronic safeguarding system CPOMS, separate to the individual's educational record. Counsellors are aware that courts may also require any notes around Child Protection issues at a later date and give consideration to this in making appropriate case notes.
- Confidentiality is vital in enabling people to express their concerns and/or distress in the counselling session. It is an essential element of the process in establishing a relationship of trust, but it is acknowledged that it cannot be absolute.
- As part of good practice, counsellors discuss a 'counselling agreement' with clients at the outset of counselling, explaining the boundaries of confidentiality in the context of school counselling. Clients are assured that the best decisions regarding confidentiality will be made in the interest of safeguarding and promoting their welfare, preferably with their knowledge and consent.
- A client's wishes about confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare.
- A school counsellor has a duty to follow procedures laid out in the school's Child Protection Policy and will refer a concern about a client to a Designated Safeguarding Lead where there are strong grounds for thinking that an individual might be at risk of significant harm from themselves or others. Adhering to KCSIE 2026 & Working Together to Safeguard Children. The same will apply where the counsellor has concerns for the welfare of a third party. The school counsellor will make every reasonable attempt to communicate first to the student, their intention to break confidentiality and to discuss the information that needs to be shared. If such conversations cannot take place, the matter should be discussed with the student at the earliest opportunity following the referral to a DSL.
- The counsellor will also pass on information as required by law in the event of a disclosure about acts of terrorism or serious crime, or if required to do so by a court order.
- More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared in order to seek further help/support.
- Information about service data is collected and statistically analysed. This anonymised service data is used to provide a general breakdown of current service use and to respond to any patterns or needs as required to plan future service development effectively.

Appendix A:

Risk Assessment

The following Risk Assessment applies to all counsellors and trainees working with RGS students. Evidence of documentation is checked, copied and retained by the Assistant Head for Student Development:

- Evidence of Counselling qualification.
- Evidence of being on an accredited counselling college course at Level 4 or above.
- Proof of Professional Liability insurance.
- The BACP Professional Standards Code of Practice indicates that counsellors should receive 1 ½ hours supervision per month. Counsellors at RGS must meet this minimum requirement and provide the name and contact details of their supervisor. The School will cover or contribute to supervision costs for contracted and employed counsellors as agreed in their contract.
- DBS checked and RGS safeguarding training.
- Interview including a role-play.
- References.
- Signed certificate that staff have read and agree to comply with our Counselling Policy and other key RGS policies.