



## RGS 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 his or her 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).

### Service Aims

- To provide a range of counsellors and CBT therapists, including staff who are undertaking a training course, to support the emotional and mental health and well-being of students 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:

- 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.
- Case Law.
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2015)

### 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. Supervision is on an individual weekly basis (see Appendix A). This ensures

safe practice by allowing space for reflection on the counsellor's work with an internal supervisor. All staff must fulfil the requirements of our Risk Assessment (Appendix A).

### **Referrals to the Service**

- Self-referral from students is normally via a member of staff but can be in person. Referrals also come from Form Tutors, Subject Staff, Heads of Year, the SENCo and 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.
- Parental permission is always requested before any therapy commences unless, in exceptionally rare circumstances, this would be detrimental to the student.
- 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**

- 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 timetable. Sessions are 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.
- Counselling will take place in the designated 'Counselling Room'.
- Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for keeping appointments, and where possible leave a message 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 client notes and records are covered by specific sections of the Data Protection Act 1998 and these are kept physically separate from individual educational records within the school and 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.

- Files are organised to maintain confidentiality and are labelled by code (with a corresponding list of names and numbers kept separately) 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 an official RGS safeguarding recording sheet, which is also kept separately 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.
- Good practice at the RGS dictates the use of a verbal contract which is explained clearly at the outset of counselling and periodically thereafter to students about the boundaries of confidentiality that a school counselling service can offer. 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 Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2015). The same will apply where the counsellor has concerns for the welfare of a third party.
- 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.

## Appendix A:

### Risk Assessment

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

- Evidence of Counselling or CBT Therapist qualification.
- Evidence of being on an accredited counselling or CBT Therapist college course at Level 4 or above.
- Proof of Professional Liability insurance.
- Weekly supervised work with RGS students. The BACP Professional Standards Code of Practice indicates that counsellors should receive 1 ½ hours supervision per month. The weekly supervision means that RGS staff are in excess of the supervision requirements.
- 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.