

**Fairfield Primary School**

**Counselling Policy**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 Counselling is available at Fairfield School as part of our pastoral support to pupils to help promote well-being, relieve any tensions and enable a greater capacity for coping and enjoying life which ultimately impacts on the ability to learn successfully.

1.2 The school's counsellor is Mrs L Fisher who has a diploma in counselling which is accredited by The Open College and the Sherwood Foundation Therapist Register (SFTR) - National UK Therapist Register. Mrs Fisher, works within their guidelines and is bound by their ethical framework and professional conduct procedure. Mrs Fisher is also employed as a Senior Teaching Assistant in the school. The school also has access to other counselling services through Cockermonth School, which may be utilised where appropriate.

1.3 Pupils can access the services of the school counsellor via an internal school referral by the parent. The service is free.

1.4 Parents wishing to make a referral should contact the Headteacher, Mrs A Pattinson, or Mrs L Fisher on 01900 821133 or email [head@fairfieldprimary.co.uk](mailto:head@fairfieldprimary.co.uk) Alternatively a referral form may be downloaded from the school website and posted to the above members of school staff marked "Private and Confidential".

**2. What is counselling?**

2.1 Counselling is a way of helping through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. The process enables the pupil to focus on their particular concerns, work through feelings of inner conflict and gain a greater understanding of themselves and their situation. It can relieve emotional tension and enable a greater capacity for coping and enjoying life.

2.2 Pupils are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. The school has a designated counselling room, which is a homely and comfortable venue in the key stage 2 building.

2.3 Pupils may have issues relating to bereavement, loss, family breakdown, family or peer relationship difficulties, anxiety etc. Without support these issues could lead to a deterioration in behaviour, attitude and mental health and impact negatively on the ability to learn and make good progress.

### **3. Referral and Assessments**

3.1 Pupils are referred by a member of staff using our internal referral form with the full consent of the parent, who may have raised their initial concern with the school. Pupils may self-refer but consent will be sought from parents with a meeting taking place between the counsellor and parents before any sessions commence.

3.2 In some cases referral for counselling may be part of a support package or may be part of a pupil premium allocation, where applicable.

3.3 Initial contact for appointments is usually made directly by the counsellor who will meet with the parent or make telephone contact to discuss their concern or perspective before a meeting takes place with the pupil.

3.4 Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment. At the initial session the counsellor will undertake an initial assessment to identify the needs of the pupil and decide on the best course of action. Pupils can come to sessions for as long as is required. This could vary from a one-off session or may lead to weekly sessions. The timing of the session is arranged to try and cause as little disruption to learning as possible.

3.5 Should it be felt that any referrals need to be made to external agencies then this will be discussed with the pupil, and with consent, the parent.

3.6 Sessions with the counsellor usually last around 45 minutes and are one to one. However sessions may be longer or shorter as appropriate.

3.7 The school promotes the counselling service through the school website and prospectus.

### **4. Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

4.1 All pupils are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the SFTR code of ethics. This is vital in enabling pupils to express their distress in counselling sessions. Whilst acknowledging that confidentiality is crucial, it cannot be absolute in any counselling relationship. Limits to confidentiality will be explained to pupils at the beginning of the counselling relationship and periodically thereafter as required.

4.2 The requirement to protect pupils is sensitively weighted against their right to privacy and confidentiality. In the cases of a potential child protection concern, events may develop that could lead to the counsellor considering that a breach of confidentiality is necessary to safeguard the wellbeing of the pupil. Where there is risk of a pupil being at risk of harm from others or themselves the counsellor will seek the views of the pupil and their consent in advance of any disclosure of information being made and the possible consequences of involvement of other agencies.

4.3 Any sharing of information involving a breach of confidentiality will be kept to a minimum and will be concerned only with the issues at hand and not extend to other areas of the pupil's present or past life. Consideration will be given as to whether historical abuse has implications for the safety of the pupil concerned and or any other child or young person.

4.4 Where a pupil is at risk of significant harm the counsellor will initiate the school's child protection policy and procedures. One of the designated child protection officers in the school will be contacted immediately to do so: Mrs A Pattinson, Mrs J Sutton, Mrs P Bezusko, Miss S Simcox or Mr G Johnston.

## **5. Record Keeping**

5.1 The counsellor will keep a formal record of sessions with pupils, which may include a mention of the types of problems discussed.

5.2 The referral form and parent consent will be held with the pupil record.

5.3 All records are kept in a secure locked cabinet. Records are retained by the school until the pupil transfers to another school.

## **6. Monitoring**

6.1 The counsellor will brief the Headteacher termly on the number of referrals and number of pupils undertaking counselling sessions; this will form part of the termly Headteacher report to governors. No names of pupils are revealed.

6.2 When monitoring our counselling service the school will consider the following for pupils attending counselling sessions:

- Number of pupils
- Gender of pupils
- Numbers who discontinued or did not attend
- Nature of presenting issues (family breakdown, domestic violence, bereavement, self-harm, safeguarding issues, etc.)
- Nature of any Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)

6.3 In addition to the factual information provided to the Headteacher, an annual report will be produced by the counsellor to measure the impact of our counselling service on pupils and the broader impact on the school.

**7. Complaints**

7.1 Complaints regarding our service will be investigated through the school’s complaints policy and procedures. This is available on the school website or in hard copy from the school on request.

7.2 Where a complaint is judged to be an allegation of abuse then the procedures within the school’s Child Protection Policy will be followed as opposed to a complaints route.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Child Protection
- Safe School
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- Personal, Social, & Health Education

This policy was ratified by the governing body on.....

Signed.....

(Chair of governors)

Reviewed....., .....

....., .....

## Appendix 1.

Dear Parent

Young people today are faced with many pressures and challenges as they begin to develop their coping skills and preparation for the adult world ahead. Pupils experiencing stress or emotional problems often find it difficult to engage with the education process and to reach their potential.

Here at Fairfield Primary School we are committed to providing your child with every opportunity to reach their potential during their time with us. While the support given through our pastoral care is of the highest standard possible we acknowledge that sometimes pupils benefit from having the opportunity to speak to someone who may not directly involved with them and can give them designated quality time to focus solely on an issue. Our school counselling service provides this opportunity.

A list of frequently asked questions relating to school based counselling is attached to this letter.

If you feel that your child would benefit from this service or you would like further information then please contact a member of staff.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Pattinson

Headteacher

Appendix 2.

## **Information leaflet for parent and carers**

### **What is counselling?**

*Counselling provides an opportunity to talk in confidence to a qualified counsellor about any issues/concerns. The issues will depend on the individual, but common themes are stress, anxiety, relationships, bereavement, traumatic events and family breakdown.*

### **Who are counsellors?**

*Our counsellor is a member of staff who has the appropriate qualifications in counselling to undertake this specialist role. She has experience in working with children in our school both as a counsellor and as a Senior Teaching Assistant.*

### **Why do we need a counsellor in our school?**

*Few of us are able to work well or even function when we are stressed or unhappy. The impact of distressing or difficult situations can be felt even more acutely by young people than by adults. If pupils are able to receive emotional support from a suitably qualified person then they will have greater opportunity to reach their full potential.*

### **Where and when will it take place?**

*We have a small designated room for counselling. It is comfortable and homely and is intended to be a calm and relaxing venue. We can provide soothing music, self-help and advice stories and a venue that offers confidentiality.*

### **How do you ensure confidentiality?**

*All notes and records are held in a secure place when not in use. The venue is in a quiet area of the school, thus enabling pupils to feel confident that they will not be overheard and can speak openly and freely with the counsellor.*

### **What if my child makes a disclosure to the counsellor?**

*If a disclosure is made that would appear to place the pupil at risk of harm or potential harm to others then the child protection policy would be implemented.*

**What if my child refuses to have counselling?**

The decision to take up counselling is entirely voluntary for young people just as it would be for an adult.

**Can I support the counselling service?**

*Yes, and this is most welcomed. 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. Our counsellor acknowledges 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, but you may need to allow a little time for this to occur.*

**If my child sees a counsellor does this mean I am failing as a parent?**

*Absolutely not! We all experience occasions when it feels hard to speak to those who are closest to us about things which may be bothering us. Often this can be because we do not want to worry those we love best, or because we want help thinking things through with someone unbiased and removed. The counsellor will not be judging you or your child, but looking to help them find a way through whatever is troubling them.*

Appendix 3.

### **Information leaflet for pupils**

#### **What's counselling about?**

*Sometimes we all have problems that are worrying. Think of a confusing jigsaw when all of the pieces are difficult to match together. Talking about a problem in counselling is like sorting out the pieces so that we can build a picture that makes more sense to us.*

#### **What happens in counselling?**

*Counselling gives you the opportunity to talk in private about anything which is worrying you. The counsellor will not take sides or tell you what to do or how to live your life, but they will help you to look at choices and encourage you to make your own decisions.*

#### **Who are counsellors?**

*A counsellor is a professionally qualified person who has experience of working with children and/or young people. Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.*

#### **Where will the counselling take place?**

*The counselling will take place in our Counselling and Medical Room which is situated behind the library in the Key Stage 2 building. The room is in a quiet area of the school and has been designed to be a homely and comfortable place to make you feel at ease.*

#### **When is counselling available?**

*The counsellor in our school will arrange a time with you that suitable for you both. The counsellor in our school is Mrs L Fisher.*

#### **Is counselling confidential?**

*What you say in counselling is not repeated to others without your permission, unless there are serious concerns about your safety or another person's safety. This will be explained to you at the initial meeting with the counsellor.*

#### **Do my parents need to know?**

*Counselling works best when you are able to tell your parents and then they can support you. We usually ask parents to sign a consent form before the first session. For older pupils such as those in secondary schools pupils can ask for counselling without the consent of parents if they are thought to be "Gillick competent" (aged under 16 and able to give consent without parental permission or knowledge).*

Appendix 4



Fairfield Primary School

Referral for Pupil Counselling Form

Name of pupil		Year/Class
DOB	Address:	
	Post code:	
Referred by:		Date of referral:
Consent for referral given by parent /carer (please tick box)	YES	NO
Outline of concern/issue		
For Counsellor use only		
Referral approved (Please tick box)	YES	NO
Timescale for counselling session if not immediate		
Date of initial counselling session		
Contact made with parent/carers to discuss referral	YES	NO
Date contact made	Time	

Appendix 5.

**Pupil Counselling – Parent’s Feedback Form**



Dear Parent

Your child has recently been seeing the counsellor at our school. It would be helpful to us to know how successful this activity has proven to your child and enable us to continue to improve this service for others. The information you provide is confidential to your child’s file.

1. Is your child? male..... female..... (please tick)
2. What is their age? .....
3. Did the counselling help: a lot..... a little..... not really.....
4. If the counselling was helpful what changes did you notice (please tick)

	<b>a lot</b>	<b>a little</b>	<b>not much</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Improved behaviour at home	.....	.....	.....	.....
More able to communicate	.....	.....	.....	.....
More willing to attend school	.....	.....	.....	.....
Happier	.....	.....	.....	.....
Less worried/anxious	.....	.....	.....	.....
More settled in school	.....	.....	.....	.....
Less separation anxiety	.....	.....	.....	.....
Improved relationships with				
Siblings	.....	.....	.....	.....



Appendix 6.



**Pupil Counselling – Pupil Feedback Form**

**Confidential**

Please answer the following questions to help us understand how helpful your counselling sessions have been and to help us continue to improve our service to pupils.

1. Are you:    male .....                      Female ..... (please tick)

2. What is your age? .....

Yes    No    partly    not sure    n/a

1.	I was happy about the way I was asked to see the counsellor					
2.	I was happy with the room where I saw the counsellor					
3.	I feel I have had enough sessions with the counsellor					
4.	I felt relaxed and comfortable with the counsellor					
5.	I was able to tell the counsellor what was on my mind or troubling me					
6.	I was able to trust the counsellor					
7.	Counselling has helped me be more positive					
8.	I am happier now I have had counselling					

9.	I am now able to concentrate on my work more					
10.	My relationships with my family are better now					
11.	My relationships are better with my friends now					
12.	I know what to do now if I get anxious or worried					
13.	I know which trusted adults I can go to for help if I need it in the future					

Are there any other comments you would like to make to help us continue to improve our service for other pupils?

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***Thank you for completing this questionnaire***



Signed..... Name..... Date.....

Appendix 8.



**School Counselling - Parental Consent Form**

I give permission for ..... (Child's name)

Class..... Year group.....

To work with the school counsellor for a series of counselling sessions. I have spoken to the school counsellor and have been provided with information about the counselling service. I am aware of the school policy and procedures for pupil counselling available to me on the school website.

Name.....

Signature .....

Date.....



**School Counselling - Pupil Consent Form**

I give consent to have counselling and have records kept of my sessions and I am aware of my right of access to them.

**I understand what counselling is and the explanation about confidentiality is clear to me.**

Pupil name.....

Pupil signature .....

Date.....