



Counselling Policy

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Aim of the Counselling Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide a safe, supportive, and confidential counselling service that promotes the emotional wellbeing, resilience, and personal growth of all students. The service ensures early identification of need, timely intervention, and appropriate safeguarding when harm is evidence.

Purposes of Counselling

The purpose of the Counselling Policy at RGSR is to provide clear guidance on how the school supports the emotional, social, and mental wellbeing of its students. It aims to ensure that counselling is accessible, consistent, and responsive to the diverse needs of our school community. By outlining the roles, procedures, and boundaries of the counselling service, the policy helps create a safe and supportive environment where students can thrive both academically and personally.

I. Process and Guidelines

I.1 Referral route

Students may access counselling through the following pathways.

- Self-Referral - A child may email the school counsellors directly to make an appointment, or they can ask any member of staff or a parent to make an appointment on their behalf.
- Parental or Carer Referral - A referral can be made by parents or carers requesting counselling for their child through the pastoral care hub and or the DSL.
- Staff Referral - Although any member of staff can refer a child to engage with counselling where possible all staff should channel this via a member of the safeguarding or pastoral care.

I.2 Referral Process

- Referrals should be made through the Student Counsellor Referral Form 2023-2024.
- Referrals should include specific information about the student's situation and the concerns that need to be addressed.
- Criteria of referral should be closely met, as stated in the document.

How to Initiate the Referral Process

The first step of referring students to the counsellor is to complete the MS Form titled Student Counsellor Referral Form. This form can be accessed through a QR code or alternatively the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/PLqZdm7RkG>.

I.3 Process

- Identification: Teachers, parents, or other school staff members identify a student who is in need of counselling services. This could be due to academic, social, emotional, or behavioural concerns.
- Referral form: Once a student has been identified, the reporting individual should complete the MS Form titled Student Counsellor Referral Form, detailing the reasons for the referral and the specific concerns they have about the student's well-being.
- Initial Consultation: The person identifying the student will then have an initial consultation with the school counsellor to discuss their concerns and determine if a referral is necessary.
- Gathering Information: The school counsellor will gather more information about the student's situation by talking to teachers, parents, or other relevant individuals. They may also review academic records or behavioural reports to gain a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs.
- Evaluation: Along with all the evidence shared, the counsellor will evaluate the referral form and determine the appropriate course of action. This will include an initial face to face assessment with the student. However, it may also be deemed that counselling is not required, based on the information provided in the referral form completed by the person reporting the student. (See point 7).

- **Intake Session:** After evaluating the initial assessment, depending on the outcome the counsellor will schedule an intake session with the student. This session aims to build rapport, assess the student's concerns, and develop a plan.
- **Alternative Pathways of Support:** If the counsellor determines that counselling is not the most appropriate form of support for the child, alternative strategies or interventions will be recommended. These will be communicated to the form room teacher and/or Head of Year to ensure the child still receives the necessary support.
- **Counselling Sessions:** The student will attend regular counselling sessions as determined by their plan.
- **Progress Monitoring:** The counsellor will regularly monitor the student's progress and adjust the plan as necessary. This may involve collaborating with teachers, parents, or others
- **Follow-up:** Once the student has demonstrated significant progress or met their counselling goals, the counsellor may conclude the counselling process. However, they may offer follow-up sessions or provide resources for continued support if needed.

2. Criteria

There are various criteria for referring students to a counsellor. These criteria can vary depending on the specific needs of the student. However, some common criteria for referring students to a counsellor may include:

Emotional or mental health concerns	Students who are experiencing emotional or mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, mood disorders, or suicidal thoughts may be referred to a counsellor.
Behavioural issues	Students displaying persistent behavioural problems, aggression, anger management issues, vulgar, or disruptive behaviour in class may be referred to a counsellor.
Relationship difficulties	Students experiencing challenges in their relationships with peers, teachers, or family members may be referred to a counsellor for support and guidance.
Traumatic experiences	Students who have experienced traumatic events such as abuse, violence, or loss may benefit from counselling to help cope with the emotional consequences.
Grief and loss	Students who have experienced the death of a loved one or are struggling with significant grief may be referred to a counsellor for support
Transitions and adjustments	Students who are having difficulty adjusting to a new school, moving to a new country, or experiencing major life changes may benefit from counselling
Self-esteem and self-confidence issues	Students who have low self-esteem, lack self-confidence, or struggle with body image issues may be referred to a counsellor to work on building a positive self-concept.

It is essential for teachers, parents, and school administrators, to observe the student's behaviour, communicate with the student, and recognize potential signs that indicate the need for counselling support. It is imperative to begin recording any concerning behaviour from the start.

It is important for staff to use their judgment when determining whether a situation warrants the involvement of the school counsellor. Staff are in a unique position to observe and interact with students on a daily basis, which gives valuable insight into their social, emotional, and academic well-being.

When using your judgment, consider the following factors:

- **Severity of the situation:** Assess the seriousness of the matter. Is it a minor issue that can be resolved with some guidance and support, or does it require professional intervention?
- **Impact on the student's well-being:** Evaluate how the situation is affecting the student's emotional, mental, or physical health. If you notice significant changes, persistent distress, or signs of self-harm, it may be crucial to involve a counsellor.

- **Recurrence or escalation:** Determine if the issue is an isolated incident or if it has been happening repeatedly or intensifying over time. Chronic or escalating problems often require professional assistance.
- **Resources and support available:** Consider the level of support you can provide to the student within your capacity as a teacher. If the situation surpasses your expertise or the resources available within the school, involving a counsellor can be beneficial. However if you are able to deescalate the situation and the student is content with the outcome, there is no need for a referral.
- **Consultation with colleagues:** Seek advice from other teachers, administrators, or staff members who may have encountered similar situations. Their input and collective experience can help you make an informed judgment.

3. Identifying student at risk

- **Monitor the student's behaviour and academic performance:** Teachers should observe any changes in a student's behaviour, such as increased withdrawal, excessive anxiety, frequent disruptions, or a sudden drop in academic performance.
- **Be attentive to emotional states:** Teachers should pay attention to signs of distress, such as frequent crying, extreme mood swings, or noticeable changes in the student's temperament.
- **Check for social isolation:** Teachers should be aware if a student is consistently avoiding social interactions, experiencing difficulties in making friends, or displaying signs of detachment from their peers.
- **Note physical symptoms:** Teachers should take notice if a student often complains of physical ailments, such as headaches, stomach-aches, or fatigue, which may be stress-related.
- **Observe changes in appearance or hygiene:** If a student suddenly appears dishevelled, neglects personal grooming, or experiences significant changes in weight, it might indicate underlying emotional distress.
- **Listen to verbal cues:** Students might directly express feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, sadness, or frustration during classroom discussions, assignments, or conversations. Teachers should pay attention to these verbal cues.
- **Monitor attendance and punctuality:** Frequent absences, tardiness, or an increase in leaving class early could be an indicator that a student is struggling and in need of support.
- **Keep an open line of communication:** Teachers should maintain regular conversations with students, fostering a trusting and caring relationship. This enables them to detect signs of distress and help guide students towards appropriate support.
- **Collaborate with other staff members:** Teachers can discuss their concerns with other staff members, including school counsellors, administrators, who may have additional insights and resources to support the student.
- **Consult with parents or guardians:** If a teacher notices consistent signs of distress or behavioural changes, they should communicate their observations to the student's parents or guardians. Together, they can determine if additional support from the school counsellor is necessary.

Remember, each student is unique, and it is essential to differentiate between temporary struggles and persistent issues that may require professional intervention. The role of a teacher is to be vigilant, supportive, and proactive in assisting students in need.

4. Impact of counselling service

The line manager of the counsellor will distribute a survey to students who are receiving regular counselling in order to assess the effectiveness and impact of the support provided. This survey will be conducted on a termly basis.

The counsellor will also keep a log of the issues raised by children. This information will be shared with pastoral care and senior leadership team to support them to continue to develop the pastoral care policies and procedures at the school, taking into account contextual issues and wellbeing concerns.

5. Counselling Sessions

Counselling sessions are held in a private and confidential setting within the school environment. The counsellor employs a variety of evidence-based techniques to address students' concerns and achieve desired outcomes. Progress is periodically reviewed, and adjustments are made if necessary. The counsellor will conduct an assessment of each referred student to determine the appropriate intervention. The counsellor will use evidence-based therapeutic techniques and interventions to address the identified concerns. Progress will be monitored and reviewed periodically to ensure the effectiveness of the counselling process.

6. Documentation and Reporting

The counsellor will maintain accurate and confidential records of all counselling interactions with students. Incident reports will be filed when there is a risk of harm to the student or others. The counsellor will create termly reports for each child receiving counselling, providing parents with an overview of progress. These reports will not include detailed session content but will offer a summary of general progress and support provided.

7. Safeguarding and the Role of the DSL

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will only become directly involved when there is clear evidence or disclosure of harm. In such cases, the DSL will take appropriate steps in line with safeguarding procedures.

8. Follow-up and Feedback

The counsellor will follow up with students after counselling sessions to assess their progress and well-being. Feedback from students, parents, and teachers will be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of counselling interventions. Any adjustments in the counselling approach will be made based on the feedback received.

9. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is maintained unless there is an immediate risk of harm to the student or others, a legal mandate for disclosure, or with the student's or parents' consent. Counsellors must inform students about the limits of confidentiality during the initial session, ensuring their understanding of when information may need to be shared. A child's confidentiality wishes may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare. The school counsellor has a duty to adhere to the child protection and safeguarding procedures of the school.

Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that there is a mutual trust and respect between counsellors, school staff and parents. Where and when appropriate the school staff and counsellor will encourage a child to discuss their counselling with their parents. Children are at liberty to speak with anyone regarding their counselling sessions, but will never be directly questioned by staff.

On occasions and with the expressed permission of children the counsellors may share information with the pastoral care team to ensure they are aware of the ongoing support the child is receiving, the counsellor will not communicate the details of what is being discussed unless this amounts to a safeguarding or child protection concern.

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