

PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING COUNSELLING AT ST LOUIS

The emotional health and mental well-being of the pupils in our school community is of paramount importance and a key factor in their future attainment. It is important therefore that counselling services are appropriately developed, monitored and evaluated in school.

Our Pastoral Team is made up of: Mrs O'Neill (Designated Child Protection Teacher), Heads of Year and Form Teachers. Indeed, all staff provide counselling, support and advice to the pupils in their care on a daily basis. To support the pupils further we have one other service in place: Family Works Counselling (Mrs N Wymes).

Family Works Counselling

Family Works Counselling is an independent service and provides support to pupils on a more formal basis. Family Works Counselling is available each Wednesday.

Referral Procedure

There are several ways that pupils who are willing to engage in counselling can be referred for counselling:

- Parent/carer request
- Social Services request
- Pupil request with parental permission
- Self-referral with no parental permission (Referral box available)

In all cases except the last, Mrs O'Neill/Mrs Toner would make the initial referral to the Family Works Counsellor.

When working with pupils aged 11-18, Mrs O'Neill will in most cases liaise closely with parents and seek parental permission for counselling; however, it is not always essential to have parental consent. The Head of Sixth Form, Mrs McGreevy will liaise with parents in the case of sixth form students.

In all cases the welfare of the young person remains our paramount concern. Therefore, parents are made aware that counselling is available in St Louis. Parents or carers are welcome to let the school know if they do not wish their daughter to have counselling. Pupils are also made aware of the support and services they can avail of. At the beginning of each academic year, Year Heads highlight to pupils the importance of emotional/mental health and well-being. This is done at assembly. In addition, our Family Works Counsellor, Mrs Wymes speaks to all pupils at this time and explains her role in school.

Confidentiality Policy

Good practice dictates that at the beginning of a counselling relationship the pupil and the counsellor will enter into a contract. This clearly sets out what boundaries exist in the

context of school-based counselling. The young person will not be offered levels of confidentiality that cannot be kept. Pupils who receive counselling in school are provided with a clear explanation of the issues around information sharing and confidentiality. Confidentiality should be respected at all times, however there are specific circumstances under which counsellors will need to break confidentiality and share information without consent. Therefore, if there are concerns about safe guarding the pupil who is undergoing counselling, the disclosures should be passed immediately by the counsellor to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mrs O'Neill. In her absence, information will be passed to Mrs Toner, the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

The Principal and Designated Teacher will be advised by the appropriate Education Authorities and will cooperate with other statutory agencies i.e. Social Services and the Police. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk the school is obliged to make a referral to Social Services. Written records will be maintained at all stages of the referral process and will be made available to the above agencies.

Any information given to a counsellor will be treated sensitively. Where there are concerns about the possibility of abuse the case will be referred to the appropriate authorities. The Board of Governors will be informed of any referral to such Authorities.