

**OUR LADY'S ABINGDON (OLA)****SCHOOL COUNSELLING POLICY**

This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the school website and, upon request, a copy may be obtained from the School Office (this can be made available in large print, or another accessible format if required).

Document Details

Information Sharing Category	Public Domain
Version	2
Date Published	September 2022
Authorised by (if required)	Governing Board
Responsible Area	Leadership Team and Governing Board

Availability: All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours, including activities away from school. All new employees and volunteers are required to state that they have read, understood, and will abide by this policy and its procedural documents and confirm this by signing the Policies Register.

Monitoring and Review: This document will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Head. This document was reviewed and agreed by the Board of Governors in September 2022. If significant systemic and procedural changes occur; or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines demand, the policy will be reviewed accordingly prior to September 2023.

Reviewed: September 2022

Next Review: September 2023

Scope: This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies such as the Safeguarding Policy, the Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy and Pupil Care Plans in cases where a pupil's mental health is connected to a medical issue, and with regard to the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need or disability. This policy constitutes guidance for all staff, including non-teaching staff, the governors and the school advisors.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the school's Mental Health and Emotional Well-being policy. This policy has been informed by the School and community-based counselling operating toolkit (BACP, revised 2020).

1. Definition of school counselling/therapy (www.youngminds.org.uk)

- 1.1 Both counselling and therapy are types of talking therapy and involve talking about feelings, thoughts and experiences. This process can help to make sense of what is going on in life in a safe space and find ways of coping when things are difficult.
- 1.2 Counselling typically involves a short-term focussed piece of work aimed at finding solutions for a specific problem (for example, coping with parent separation).
- 1.3 Therapy is usually a medium or long-term piece of work and focusses on exploring thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The school counsellor will listen to a student's problems and work with them to help them understand what is causing these problems and look for solutions to overcome them.

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1.4 The school counsellor may offer either types of support depending on the individual situation.

1.5 For the purposes of this policy when the term 'counselling' is used this encompasses both counselling and therapy.

2. Role of school counsellor

2.1 The school counsellor will have a Post-graduate qualification in Counselling or Psychotherapy and be an accredited member of the BACP, UKCP, NBPC or equivalent organisation.

2.2 The school counsellor must engage in regular clinical supervision to maintain and monitor standards and comply with their ethical code. Counselling at OLA is available as part of the pastoral care available to students and the school counsellor is line managed by the Mental Health Lead. The counselling is offered within school and term time hours onsite. Should students be working from home (for example, due to COVID-19), remote appointments will be offered.

2.3 Work priorities will be established via regular meetings with the Assistant Head (Safeguarding) and the Assistant Head (Operations and Mental Health Lead) and meetings with the Heads of Sections.

2.4 Up to ten sessions will be offered initially and then progress will be reviewed.

2.5 Should therapy be offered (for example, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) it may be necessary to leave the school site for behavioural experiments. For example, visiting a local shop. In these circumstances the school counsellor will complete a risk assessment and adhere to this.

3. Referral process

3.1 Referral forms are available electronically (on the school website) and in paper format (from the Pastoral Team office). There is a form for teachers/parents to fill on behalf of a student and a form for students to self-refer. See Appendix 1.

3.2 Referrals can be made by students, parents/guardians and school staff. If a referral is not made by the student themselves the referrer must inform the student that they are making the referral and discuss this with them.

3.3 Once a referral has been received the referral will be reviewed by the school counsellor or another member of the Pastoral team within 7 days. An initial appointment will be arranged to consider the referral with the student and assess any immediate concerns/risk (this may be with the school counsellor or another member of the Pastoral team). Each member of the team will consider specific issues in this meeting (including confidentiality, risk and Gillick Competence). Following this appointment, the student will be placed on the waiting list or signposted to more appropriate services. Should a student be placed on the waiting list they will have weekly check-in meetings with their Head of Section or School Nurse.

3.4 Following the initial triage appointment an Individual Mental Health Plan (Appendix 2) will be created for the student to summarise the support required. Wherever, possible, parents will be involved in the creation of this plan.

3.5 The school counsellor will hold a waiting list in conjunction with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

4. Choice (taken from Toolkit for Schools, BACP, 2020)

4.1 For a child/young person to receive counselling, they must understand the nature of counselling and be able to make a valid verbal counselling contract, including the ability to understand the principle of confidentiality and the need for this to be overridden where the young person is alleged to be at risk of harm from self or other.

4.2 When a child/young person requests counselling under the age of 16 years old, a judgement needs to be made as to whether they are 'Gillick competent', considering:

- the child's age, maturity and mental capacity
- their understanding of the issue and what it involves - including advantages, disadvantages and potential long-term impact
- their understanding of the risks, implications and consequences that may arise from their decision
- how well they understand any advice or information they have been given their understanding of any alternative options, if available
- their ability to explain a rationale around their reasoning and decision making.

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- 4.3 If the child/young person is considered Gillick competent, then they can access counselling without their parents'/carers' knowledge or consent, and even against their parents'/carers' wishes. However, good practice involves a partnership with parents/carers and it would be important to explore how the child/young person could be supported by informing parents/carers, if this is appropriate, and in line with the child/young person's wishes. The details of the decision regarding Gillick competence must be recorded on Class charts.
- 4.4 Gillick competency applies to young people under 16 years old. Students over 16 years old do not need to be assessed for Gillick competence, however, in line with good practice, where appropriate, the student will be encouraged to consent to parents being informed that they are accessing counselling.
- 4.5 Students will be asked to sign the confidentiality and information sharing statement (see Appendix 3) at the initial assessment.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1 Students are entitled to a confidential counselling service. Where possible and with consent, parents will be informed of the counselling (see 4.3). Should therapy be offered, parental involvement is often beneficial to the overall outcome and this will be considered on an individual basis.
- 5.2 Counselling must not be seen as 'stand-alone' and should form part of a tiered approach to meeting the needs of the student. If counselling has been tried but has not sufficiently met the child's or young person's needs, there should be effective and timely referral pathways in place so that support can be escalated or de-escalated as necessary. This is the whole system approach, where agencies and providers work together with a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. Please see the Mental and Emotional Health policy.
- 5.3 Confidentiality will be discussed during the initial appointment. The school counsellor will outline that the sessions are confidential whilst explaining that they are part of the pastoral team. As such, the details of the sessions will not be regularly shared with the team, however, the counsellor will provide the team with a broad update of progress. It is important that one single member of staff is not solely responsible for the student. The counsellor will explain that there are certain circumstances in which confidentiality may need to be broken, specifically when issues of risk are identified to self, from others or to others. Should this situation arise, where possible the counsellor will talk to the student about this before breaking confidentiality. The School counsellor will discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and adhere to the Safeguarding Policies and procedures.
- 5.4 It may be necessary to share information with external agencies at various stages of the counselling process. For example, if safeguarding concerns arise or further support is considered necessary (for example, a referral to the Child and Mental Health Adolescent Service, CAMHS). Advice may also be sought from the Local and Community Support Service (LCSS). Counselling is not a crisis or emergency service. Students will be informed if this is deemed necessary unless specific safeguarding concerns are identified where this is not considered safe (please refer to the safeguarding policy).
- 5.5 Students will be informed that typed records of the session will be kept on a confidential section of Class Charts which is only visible to members of the confidential safeguarding team. Any correspondence or communication with other professionals and parents will also be recorded on Class Charts.
- 5.6 The school counsellor may request consent to audio-record sessions in line with the requirements of their accrediting body. These recordings will be used during the supervision process. Should this be the case, both parents and the student will be asked and if in agreement sign a consent form (Appendix 4). Any recordings will be stored on an encrypted device, only shared with the clinical supervisor and deleted once supervision has taken place.

Appendix 1

Referral Form for school counsellor (parent/teacher)

Thank you for filling in this form. Please ensure the student is aware of this referral. Please either email this form to Jenny Long or hand a hard copy into the Pastoral Team Office. Any questions please email directly (JLong@olab.org.uk). Many Thanks.

Name of referrer:

Name of pupil being referred:

Year:

Head of Section:

Main reasons for requesting support (please include any issues relating to the pupil's safety):

Is the pupil currently receiving support from any other professional or have they in the past?

Referral Form for school counsellor (Pupil)

Thank you for filling in this form. I have a certain number of slots available a week and there is currently a waiting list in place. Please either email this form to Jenny Long or hand a hard copy into the Pastoral Team Office. Any questions please email directly (JLong@olab.org.uk). I look forward to meeting you. Many Thanks.

Name:

Year:

Head of Section:

Main reasons for requesting support (please include any issues about your safety (for example, whether self-harm is currently an issue):

Are you currently receiving any support from any other professionals? Have you received support in the past?

Appendix 2

Mental Health Care Plan

Name:	DOB:	Form:
Mental health concerns:		
Details of concerns:		
What to look out for:		
Support strategies:		
Procedures to Follow:		
Medication:		
Emergency Contact:		
Involvement from outside agencies:		
Completed By		
Name	Signed	Date
Updated By		
Name	Signed	Date

Appendix 3

Confidentiality and Information Sharing Agreement

The counselling sessions are a confidential and non-judgemental space for students to talk about their difficulties. The school counsellor is part of the Pastoral team and will provide regular broad updates on students' progress. Typed notes of sessions will be stored on a confidential section of Class charts only available to the Pastoral team.

If the school counsellor becomes aware that you are at risk from yourself (self-harm), from others or to others then parents/guardians will need to be contacted. Wherever possible the school counsellor will talk to you about this and think together about how to communicate this.

Sometimes the Pastoral team looking after you may include people from other organisations such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or Children's Services. Although this is routine, we will tell you if this is the case.

As part of your care we may also have to contact external agencies who are not part of OLA. We will agree this with you beforehand, on each occasion that any of your information needs to be shared. If you don't agree, we will discuss with you the possible effect this may have on your care and the alternatives available. In any case, we will record what has been shared, and for what reasons, in the appropriate place in your record.

In the exceptional circumstances, there may be occasions where it is necessary to share information without your consent. This will be in accordance with safeguarding policy and the Data Protection Act, as appropriate. For example, it may be disclosed where justified in the public interest to protect you or someone else from harm. In these circumstances the information shared will always be kept to the minimum necessary.

Student Name:

Date:

It is good practice to inform parents/guardians that a student is accessing counselling. I give my consent for the school counsellor to inform my parents.

Student Name:

Date:

Appendix 4

Consent for audio-recordings

Please read the following information carefully.

As an accredited member of the BABCP (British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies) I am required to access regular clinical supervision. To ensure high standards of practice your counsellor (Jenny Long) will be receiving regular clinical supervision. Part of this supervision requires direct observation in order to provide accurate and informed feedback. This will involve obtaining regular audio-recordings. These recordings will be kept on an encrypted device, stored securely and kept confidential. The recording will be erased once the specified purposes have been fulfilled (once the supervisor has heard the clip of the recording).

I consent to my sessions being audio-recorded to be shared with the school counsellor's clinical supervisor. All recordings will be stored in accordance within the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018) and data protection law. I give my consent on the understanding that my recording will be kept confidential and stored securely. I am aware that the recording will be deleted once the specified purpose will be fulfilled. However, I may withdraw my consent at any time and have the recording deleted.

Student name:

Date:

Student signature:

Parent name:

Date:

Parent signature:

School Counsellor name:

Date:

School Counsellor: