



Counselling Policy

School Philosophy and Mission Statement

St Kieran's College, as Ireland's oldest all-boys Catholic Secondary School, continues its founding aim of the pursuit of real excellence in education and formation, in the light of the Gospel, so as to allow all our students to realise the fullness of their potential.

Academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally our students are encouraged to strive for all that is possible in the relentless pursuit of perfecting their individual gifts and talents.

In so doing they bring to life the joy intended by our motto, "Hiems Transiit", for themselves, those they love and the community where they will live, serve and lead.

Rationale

Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools [4th Edition], BACP (The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy)

The DES Circular 009/2012 and 0010/2017 supports the provision of one to one guidance counselling for students experiencing difficulties. It recognises the need to support students who may benefit from counselling. The school counselling provision is a confidential service for pupils with social, emotional or behavioural concerns to help them move towards greater wellbeing and to enable them to make the most of the opportunities offered for their learning and social development.

What is Counselling?

Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a student in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the student is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose.

By listening attentively and patiently the counsellor can begin to perceive the difficulties from the student's point of view and can help them to see things more clearly. Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. It does not involve directing a client to take a particular course of action with the exception of safety, child protection and/or legal issues.

Counsellors do not judge or exploit their clients in any way.

In the counselling sessions the student can explore various aspects of their life and feelings, talking about them freely and openly. Bottled up feelings such as anger, anxiety, grief and embarrassment can become very intense and counselling offers an opportunity to explore them, with the possibility of making them easier to understand. The counsellor will encourage the expression of feelings and as a result of their training will be able to accept and reflect the client's problems without becoming burdened by them.

Acceptance and respect for the client are essentials for a counsellor and, as the relationship develops, so too does trust between the counsellor and client, enabling the client to look at many aspects of their life, their relationships and themselves which they may not have considered or been able to face before. The counsellor may help the client to examine in detail the behaviour or situations which are proving troublesome and to find an area where it would be possible to initiate some change as a start. The counsellor may help the client to look at the options open to them and help them to decide the best for them.

Counselling for Young People

Young people experience developmental changes that are unique to each individual. Counselling is a process which assists a student 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 relationship with others.

Counselling enables young people to gain a better understanding of themselves and the situations facing them and to develop strategies to cope with change.

(Good Practice Guidance For Counselling in School [4th Edition])

Aims of the school counselling service

- to encourage students to be positive in their outlook on life and to make a positive contribution to their school and society.
- to foster the confidence in our students and teachers to develop their talents and abilities.
- to complement our pastoral care systems.
- to support teachers' care of students and their management of those with emotional and behavioural difficulties
- to offer some training to staff
- to provide consultation, training, support and supervision of strategies to counteract problems such as bullying and truancy
- to support effective child protection procedures
- to provide for students to be referred to outside agencies where appropriate

The Role of School Counsellors

This is a key role in the school at a very important time in a students' development. The counsellors are fully qualified and are accredited members of the IACP. They work to their ethical guidelines and are subject to accreditation renewal. The counsellors at St Kieran's College have significant experience working with teenagers and understand issues relating to them. They are experienced at managing a case load, respecting confidentiality and are able to articulate advice to relevant staff without disclosing confidential information. They understand child protection procedures (Children First, 2017) and the legalities of working with children in a school setting. They contribute to providing mental health support and consultation to the school, participating in the school Care team and pastoral care meetings. They manage reviews, reports and are involved with referrals to children services and other outside agencies where appropriate. They work closely with the Care team to maintain and develop a person-centred ethos in keeping with the school's pastoral care policy.

External Supervision

IACP accredited counsellors receive monthly clinical supervision outside of school. The clinical supervisor oversees the 'client work', its function being to both protect the client and support the counsellor. The main objective of supervision is to ensure that the counsellor maintains ethical competence and confidence in their counselling work with children and young people. The supervision process enables counsellors to think creatively so that they can give the best possible service to the client. Appropriate confidentiality for the client is maintained.

Internal Supervision

The counsellors meet to discuss the management of counselling cases. Periodically they meet with the Principal and/or Deputy Principals who though not involved in details of each case, are able to make informed decisions about managing provisions and care for individual students. The level of disclosure will be decided upon on a case by case basis to fulfil the guiding principles of confidentiality and duty of care.

School Counselling at St Kieran's College offers time limited counselling for students. It is part of the pastoral care available to our students and involves three counsellors who see the student in a private and confidential setting to explore difficulties or distress they may be experiencing.

Counselling is a process which can assist students to focus on their 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. Counsellors may offer one-to-one sessions and will also facilitate therapeutic support-group work, e.g. bereavement, young carers, self-esteem, etc. (See Whole School Guidance Policy).

The Role of the Teacher/Tutor/Year Head

- monitors student behaviour, especially at-risk students
- makes a referral to the guidance counsellors where appropriate
- follows up where appropriate

Procedures for Accessing the Counselling Service

- Staff or parents can contact the Counsellor to refer a student/son.
- Young people themselves can come directly to the Counsellor for an appointment.

- Students are always encouraged to communicate with their parent/carers wherever possible.
- Students who are offered counselling in school will be timetabled for up to six initial counselling sessions (usually one-to-one on a weekly basis).
- The counsellor and student will agree to a counselling contract. The contract will stipulate the need to be on time.

Missing Classes

The counselling service is in high demand therefore appointments are allocated throughout the school day. This may mean that a student will miss a particular class. Students are expected to catch up on missed work and complete the homework set during the missed lesson.

Speaking with the Counsellor

It is at the counsellor's discretion whether it is appropriate for parents/carers to meet or speak on the phone with the counsellor. This is to preserve the confidentiality and professional effectiveness of the service. If a parent/carer wishes to speak to the counsellors he/she can contact them directly through the school office.

Confidentiality

The guarantee of confidentiality is vital in enabling young people to express their distress in the counselling session. It is an essential element of the process if the relationship of trust is to develop between the counsellor and the client. Confidentiality guidelines are prominently displayed in the Guidance and Chaplaincy rooms.

While it is increasingly acknowledged that confidentiality is crucial to clients, whatever their age, it cannot be absolute in any counselling relationship. The counselling service uses a counselling contract to explain to students the boundaries of confidentiality the St Kieran's College counselling service can offer. Decisions regarding any necessary breaching of confidentiality, resulting from a child protection disclosure, will be made with the student's prior knowledge and where possible, their consent.

Under the following circumstances the Counsellor may disclose some essential facts regarding a case to the Principal/DLP, Deputy Principal/DDLP or TULSA:

- where there is self-harm and/or suicidal ideation the DLP/DDLP, parent/carer and Principal will be informed
- when there is need for onward referral to HSE agencies or specialist services
- in supervision of the counsellor
- in cases involving legal difficulties
- when there is a need to address safety and child protection issues with the Child

Protection Officer, senior pastoral staff and Principal

Role of Parent/Carer

It is the practice of the school to allow a student to seek counselling without the parents' permission. We believe that the student has the right to seek help from an adult in the school including teachers and counsellors. Students are always encouraged to tell their parents/carers that they are in the receipt of counselling. However, in some cases students may receive counselling without parental consent under the 'Gillick' Competency Principle (Law Reform Commission 2011) which allows that a child under 16 can be judged as an individual to be mature and competent enough to seek counselling without the consent of the parents/carers.

However, confidentiality around issues of self-harm/suicidal ideation cases require that this information is shared with parents whereas information revealing the identity of pupils attending counselling only applies to attendance at counselling sessions, and not to the actual content of the counselling session.