

School Counselling Service – Parent Guide

A safe, professional space for students to talk

Our school offers a confidential counselling service delivered by a HCPC registered Drama therapist. This means sessions are guided by the Health and Care Professional Council's [standards of proficiency for arts therapists](#) including safeguarding, consent and confidentiality. Our counsellor offers talk therapy alongside creative approaches, which allow 1 to 1 session to be tailored to individual needs.

Counselling provides a safe, nonjudgemental space for students to explore feelings, build coping strategies and seek support with challenges at school, at home, or in friendships.

Our commitment to best practice and safeguarding

We follow national statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding and information sharing, and we work closely with our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Where there is a **risk of harm** to a child or others, we may need to share relevant information in line with UK law and guidance (for example *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*). We will always aim to do this **openly and proportionately**, explaining what will be shared, why, and with whom, wherever it is safe to do so. [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#), [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#), [\[gov.uk\]](#)

Informing parents and carers

We recognise the vital role parents and carers play in supporting their child's wellbeing. **Where appropriate**, and with the student's agreement, we will encourage and facilitate parent/carer involvement and aim to keep families informed about the counselling support their child is receiving. This approach reflects good practice across health and education: promote family communication **while** respecting the young person's right to confidentiality. [\[bacp.co.uk\]](#), [\[cambridge.org\]](#)

There are situations, however, where a student may **request** that their parents are **not informed**. In these cases, the counsellor and school will consider the student's maturity and understanding under the **Gillick competence** framework. If a child under 16 is assessed as Gillick competent (i.e., they have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what counselling involves), they can **consent to counselling without parental knowledge or consent**, unless there are safeguarding concerns that require information sharing. [\[learning.n...pcc.org.uk\]](#), [\[nhs.uk\]](#), [\[cathchild.org.uk\]](#)

What is Gillick competence?

Gillick competence is a widely used UK test of whether a child under 16 can make their own informed decisions about treatment or services. It originated in case law and is now applied broadly beyond healthcare, including school based support. Fraser guidelines (from the same case) relate specifically to sexual health/contraception; Gillick competence applies more widely. [\[learning.n...pcc.org.uk\]](#)

Young people aged 16–17 are generally presumed to have capacity to consent to their own treatment/services, including counselling, unless there is significant evidence to suggest otherwise. [\[nhs.uk\]](#)

Confidentiality: how it works

- **What a student shares in counselling is private.** We aim to keep information confidential to build trust and encourage help seeking. [\[redkitetherapy.com\]](#), [\[cambridge.org\]](#)
 - **Limits to confidentiality:** if the counsellor believes a student (or someone else) is at risk of **serious harm**, or if there are disclosures of **abuse/neglect**, or a **court** requires information, we must share relevant information with safeguarding partners. We will involve the student in this process wherever safe and possible. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#), [\[gov.uk\]](#)
 - **Information sharing is lawful and necessary for safeguarding** and does not always require consent where there is risk; however, we aim to seek the student's views and share the minimum necessary information. [\[gov.uk\]](#)
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When might a student ask not to inform parents?

Students may have a range of reasons for requesting privacy. Below are **illustrative examples** that counsellors commonly encounter; in each case we explore the student's reasoning, assess competence/capacity, and consider safeguarding:

1. **Wishing to discuss low mood, anxiety, exam stress or friendship issues** without worrying parents or causing conflict at home. [\[cambridge.org\]](#)
2. **Exploring identity questions** (e.g., cultural, personal or gender/sexual identity) and wanting time to reflect before sharing with family. [\[cambridge.org\]](#)
3. **Family relationship difficulties** (e.g., separation, parental mental health, caring responsibilities) where the student fears repercussions or feels discussion might escalate tensions. [\[bacp.co.uk\]](#)

4. **Past experiences they are not ready to disclose to parents**, while seeking coping strategies in a safe space. [[cambridge.org](https://www.cambridge.org)]
5. **Sexual health or relationship concerns**: while Fraser guidelines apply specifically to contraception/sexual health decisions, the broader counselling context uses Gillick competence to assess maturity and understanding. Where exploitation or abuse is suspected, confidentiality **cannot** be absolute and safeguarding procedures apply. [[learning.nhs.uk/pcc](https://www.learning.nhs.uk/pcc)], [[bradfordvts.co.uk](https://www.bradfordvts.co.uk)], [[nhs.uk/dorset](https://www.nhs.uk/dorset)]

In all scenarios, the counsellor encourages and supports students to **consider** involving parents or carers, and explores **safe ways** to do so—while respecting the student’s right to confidentiality where Gillick competence (or 16–17 capacity) is established and no safeguarding risks are present. [[learning.nhs.uk/pcc](https://www.learning.nhs.uk/pcc)], [[nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)]

How to access the service

- **Self referral**: students can request counselling directly via our pastoral team
 - **Staff/parent referral**: teachers, support staff or parents/carers can refer a student (we will then discuss consent and confidentiality with the student). Parents should look to contact Mr Konsal who organises support for students.
 - **What to expect**: following referral, students are offered an initial appointment to agree goals, understand confidentiality, and decide on next steps. Sessions are typically one to one during school hours. [[bacp.co.uk](https://www.bacp.co.uk)]
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Questions or concerns?

If you have questions about confidentiality, consent or safeguarding in relation to counselling, please contact the school’s **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Ms Jewson**. We are committed to transparent, child centred practice and to working **with families** wherever possible—while meeting our legal and ethical duties to protect children and uphold their rights. [[gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)], [assets.publishing.service.gov.uk]

Key references (for parents who want to read more)

- **HCPC** - *The standards of proficiency for arts therapists*
- **BACP** – *Schoolbased counselling: essential guide*; Ethical and legal resources on confidentiality and safeguarding. [[bacp.co.uk](https://www.bacp.co.uk)], [[cathchild.org.uk](https://www.cathchild.org.uk)], [[redkitetherapy.com](https://www.redkitetherapy.com)]

- **NSPCC Learning** – *Gillick competence and Fraser guidelines; Safeguarding legislation for schools and colleges.* [[learning.n...pcc.org.uk](#)], [[learning.n...pcc.org.uk](#)]
 - **NHS** – *Consent to treatment: children and young people (capacity at 16–17 and Gillick competence under 16).* [[nhs.uk](#)]
 - **DfE** – *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025).* [[gov.uk](#)], [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)], [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)]
 - **CQC Brief Guide** – *capacity and competence to consent in under-18s (CAMHS context).* [[cqc.org.uk](#)]
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