

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>Counselling Policy</b>
<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>SG13</b>

<b>Staff member responsible</b>	<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Bronwyn Kidd (Deputy Head)	September 2022	Jonathan Slot	September 2022	Annual update
Bronwyn Kidd (Deputy Head)	August 2023	Jonathan Slot	September 2023	Annual update
Michele Blockley	January 2024	Bronwyn Kidd	January 2024	Change to qualifications
Bronwyn Kidd (Deputy Head)	August 2024	Jonathan Slot	September 2024	Annual update

*This policy is applicable to the whole school including Early Years*

## School and Policy Aims

### **Shaping Brighter Futures**

*We provide an inspiring and joyful education that will be remembered for a lifetime and which empowers our children with the confidence, knowledge, skills and character to thrive. We are shaping brighter futures.*

#### **School Aims:**

*At St Neot's education is full of fun and good humour. We want every child to enjoy their time at school, to feel part of a community that holds family values at the core. We are determined that our children not only learn outdoors but learn about the outdoors. We want to create well-rounded, independent thinkers that are not only confident in their academic ability but hold the soft skills necessary for Senior School and the world ahead.*

#### **The St Neot's Way is:**

- *Where we promote a true sense of community, family values, a love of the outdoors and a commitment to having fun.*
- *Where every child comes into school feeling safe, valued and with a broad smile on their face; and who returns home with uplifting stories to tell.*
- *Where a first class, personalised, rigorous academic journey is matched by an enriching, broad and challenging co-curricular programme.*
- *Where the children's character, contribution and service is as valued as their academic success.*
- *Where the children's physical wellbeing is surpassed by their mental wellbeing.*
- *Where highly skilled, passionate and dedicated teachers, working in first class facilities, are full of ambition for themselves and the children in their care.*

#### **St Neot's Values**

*Happiness Kindness Self-Belief Honesty Respect*

The aim of offering a school counselling service is to help pupils deal with and overcome issues that are causing emotional pain or distress.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy states that:

*"Counselling is a skilled way of helping young people with personal and developmental issues and difficulties. Counselling gives individuals an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways to live in a more satisfying and resourceful way...The counsellor can enable the young person to focus on their concerns, giving them a vehicle to explore specific problems, make choices, cope with crises, work through feelings of conflict and improve relationships with others."*

The School Counselling Service is a professional service available to pupils to assist them with their progression through school. It works on a referral and appointment system. For pupils who need or want to talk to someone, perhaps just once or twice, but for whom counselling is either inappropriate or not necessary, there are various members of staff available including Form Tutors, Heads of Year, the School Nurse, Mental Health First Aiders and the Deputy Head. All pupils have access to a range of pastoral support facilities, characterised by good listening and problem-solving strategies.

The School Counsellor has a Diploma in Counselling, is a Registered Member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and is bound by its Ethical Framework. The School Counsellor has relevant experience in various fields, specifically with children and young people. She has a BACP recognised

qualification for working with young people which has enabled her to gain knowledge and competence in working with this age group in an ethical and effective way. She is a member of the BACP Children, Young People and Families division.

Counselling offers pupils space and time to talk or think about any worries or difficulties they may be experiencing by encouraging them to express thoughts and feelings. Its aim is to aid pupils to:

- address emotional and behavioural difficulties
- develop their understanding of themselves
- make informed choices
- cope with crisis
- work through feelings of inner conflict
- improve relationships with others
- develop coping strategies

Counselling can be an early intervention strategy to prevent deterioration in emotional wellbeing, behaviour and attitude. In all circumstances, counselling will only begin on a voluntary basis.

Issues relating to school that are brought by pupils to the Counsellor might include:

- social and behavioural difficulties
- emotional problems
- school refusal
- academic difficulties
- examination stress and anxiety
- anxieties relating to starting a new school
- difficulties in adapting to a changed home environment due to divorce/separation

Other issues may include:

- relationship issues
- bereavement
- self-defeating behaviours
- eating disorders
- depression
- stress and anxiety
- low self-esteem and/or lack of confidence
- problems in managing emotional reactions, such as anger
- Issues around sexuality and gender identification
- Living with negative experiences and feelings from the COVID-19 pandemic

### **Transparency with regard to the Counselling Service**

Whilst parental wishes will be taken into account, the welfare of the pupils is paramount and each case will be considered individually. This is to avoid undermining the relationship of trust between the Counsellor and the pupil. The Counsellor will endeavour to keep the child informed, if it is in their best interest to do so, if there is contact with the parents.

### **Referrals and the Counselling Process**

Pupils, parents, governors and staff are asked to be aware that the School Counselling Service is available to all pupils.

- Parents are made aware that pupils can be referred by the Deputy Head (following a conversation with the parents), or parents themselves can ask for a referral to be made to the service on the pupil's behalf, through discussion with the Deputy Head, who is also the Designated Safeguarding

Lead, or the Head. Pupils may also make a direct request, via the Deputy Head, to be referred to the School Counsellor. In all instances, parental permission will be sought.

- Referrals are discussed with the Deputy Head (and at times the wider pastoral team, including the School Nurse) to ensure counselling is thought to be the most appropriate action. Referral forms are available from the Deputy Head.
- Counselling is undertaken in accordance with the pupil's own wishes. Pupils have the right to refuse counselling or discontinue counselling at any time. It is the responsibility of the Counsellor to respect the pupil's autonomy.
- Counselling will usually not be offered in school if a pupil is receiving counselling elsewhere. Parents are requested to inform the Deputy Head if their child is receiving counseling with any external agency.
- The School reserves the right not to offer counselling either immediately or in the longer term if it is deemed by key staff not to be appropriate.
- Counselling can take place as a plan of care for certain pupils with specific issues. This plan of care will be managed by the SENCo and School Nurse.
- Counselling will not be offered in school if the presenting issues warrant a greater degree of expertise/specific treatment. This decision will be communicated as appropriate and alternative suggestions offered where possible.
- When counselling is deemed appropriate for a pupil it will take place in order of priority and availability. A waiting list will be held by the Deputy Head.
- The names of any pupil who may require counselling will be passed on to the Deputy Head by the School Nurse, the Head of Year, SENCo or the Head. The Deputy Head will then make direct referrals to the School Counsellor.
- Pupils will be seen on an individual basis.
- The first meeting will be between the counsellor and the parents and consist of a detailed assessment and evaluation of the situation as presented by the pupil. The School Counsellor will explain the nature of counselling and what the pupil might expect as well as agree a contract with the parents. Boundaries, goals and objectives will be established. Appointments will then be booked for up to a further ten sessions. A review meeting will be arranged with the parents after five sessions.
- The counselling environment will be a confidential space. The Counsellor and pupil will agree how they will work together, set boundaries and look at objectives during their first session. This will be conducted in an age appropriate way but essentially a contract will be made between them.
- The pupil will complete questionnaires during the process which will be used to help evaluate progress and for statistically reported reasons. These will remain anonymous.
- Counselling will occur on a weekly basis for an initial period of up to ten weeks. On occasion there may be more than a week in between appointments, depending on the School Counsellor's availability and the School timetable. As agreed with the parents, counselling may continue through the school holiday period at the Counsellor's Private Practice. Details will be given as appropriate.
- Each counselling session will last up to 45 minutes. A review will take place at or around the fifth session. If deemed appropriate by the School, pupils may be offered further sessions if available.
- The Counsellor will inform the parents with the agreed appointment time, place and date. The Deputy Head will also be involved and will hold an overview timetable. Appropriate staff will be informed regarding the missing of lessons.
- The Health Hub (School Nurse) will be aware of the list of pupils being seen by the Counsellor each day, and will be in a position to confirm a pupil's attendance to an appointment.
- If a pupil is unable to attend a session their parent must let the School Counsellor know as soon as possible so that their appointment can be reallocated as needed. This can be done directly, or via the Deputy Head if the Counsellor is not contactable.
- The Counsellor has a responsibility to report to the Deputy Head if a pupil discontinues or refuses counselling.

### **Confidentiality and Safeguarding**

Counselling will only take place with the full knowledge and acceptance/ agreement of the pupil and parents, and on the advice of the Deputy Head, through the pastoral team.

The interests of the pupil will be paramount.

Confidentiality is essential to the counselling process and contributes to building trust in the counselling relationship, offering the pupil the opportunity to open up and share feelings in a safe and accepting environment. Therefore, as far as is possible, the contents of the discussion between the pupil and School Counsellor will be confidential.

However, it is never possible to offer 100% confidentiality to a pupil within the School setting. Certain situations require the Counsellor to speak with the relevant personnel in school:

- if child abuse is suspected or disclosed
- if there is a risk of significant harm to the pupil or a risk to other people
- if there are suspected or disclosed criminal acts defined by law as requiring escalation
- if the Counsellor becomes unwell with a notifiable illness this would be reported for appropriate action to be taken, which may result in the pupil's personal details being disclosed

In relation to any of the above situations, the School Counsellor is obliged to report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance. Where possible, and appropriate, the School Counsellor will let the pupil know of this communication in advance.

### **Records**

- A written record of each session will be kept in a locked cabinet.
- A pupil attending counselling (who is deemed Gillick competent - usually Year 7 upwards) has a right to see their own records at any time.
- A pupil may not read the records of another pupil.
- The Counsellor will respond to any request made within the terms of her Privacy Statement and Consent form

### **Concerns**

- If a pupil or parents is not happy with the counselling, or issues surrounding the counselling, then they have the right to raise a concern.
- If a pupil or parent wishes to raise a concern, they should speak to the Deputy Head.
- The complaints procedure may also be invoked if necessary.

### **Charges for sessions with our Counsellor: (paid directly)**

- £65 Parental assessment session
- £65 Client session
- £35 Review session with parents
- £75 Saturday morning client session
- £90 Family session (70 minutes)

**CONFIDENTIAL: Extra Help Referral Form**

Name of Referrer:	Date of Referral:
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Support Requested From: (please tick)							
Head of Year		SLT		School Nurse		SENCo	

Pupil Details:			
Pupil name		Class	
Has the pupil agreed to this referral?		Are the parents/guardians aware of this referral?	

Are parents/guardians aware of the costs of the sessions and process? (Yes/No)
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Please provide a brief summary of reasons for referral and what outcome you would like for the pupil:
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Please provide details of any intervention(s) the school has already made:
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Does the student have any additional needs or professional agencies already engaged? Is there any relevant information about the student's background or significant life events? How is the student functioning in school (academically/socially/behaviourally)?
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Preferred meeting times: (please also indicate if any lessons NOT to be missed)

Annex 2: Counselling Contract with Parents

**Michele Blockley Dip Counselling, MBACP (Accred) Counselling and Psychotherapy**

**20, Titchener Way, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9GB**

**Tel:07488 296950 Email:micheleblockley@yahoo.co.uk**

**www.micheleblockleycounselling.com**



## **Counselling Contract with parent/carer**

### **What is a Counselling Contract?**

Counselling involves an agreed contract and a commitment to confidentiality. It can be useful to have this in written form as a reminder and to make sure the arrangements are clear from the start.

### **Sessions**

A session is forty five minutes long and will take place in a confidential, comfortable setting. The timing of the session will be agreed with the school to minimise lesson disruption. Late arrival may reduce your child's available counselling time. If, for any reason, a session cannot take place you will be informed. This will not affect the number of agreed sessions.

Sessions may continue through the holiday periods. These will take place at the above address. A mutually convenient day and time will be agreed.

We will agree to have a review meeting and possibly an ending meeting, together.

### **Confidentiality and privacy**

In order for counselling to be effective, your child will need to be able to talk openly and confidentially with me. I understand that this may be uncomfortable for you not to be kept fully informed as to what your child is saying. However, you will be kept aware of the overall process. If information emerges which you, as a parent, has a right to know, I will talk to your child about the necessity to share this with you. On occasion, this may result in a phone call or an email from myself.

I am also obliged to disclose some information by law. If your child lets me know that they are at risk of significant harm to him/herself, or if another person could be in danger or at risk of harm, then I will break confidentiality. Additionally, confidentiality will be broken for reasons of public interest in the area of public health, an example of this could be if I was unwell with a notifiable illness. The person I would talk with is the Deputy Head who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

As part of my practise as a Counsellor, I have regular meetings with a Supervisor when I talk about my clients. This is always done without fully identifying your child.

I keep session bullet point notes to help my memory. I will store these securely to maintain your child's

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privacy. I will not share these with a third party unless required to do so by a subpoena. In the event of my contact with the school ending, they will be archived in line with the school's policy.

**Please see the additional privacy and consent form for more information. This has been produced to support the work in my private practice and is relevant in terms of how I personally hold information on your family.**

**Equipment**

During our time together we may do some creative work. The school or myself, will provide resources as needed and I will agree with your child that they are to be treated respectfully. Any work will be stored in a therapeutic box which I will provide. This may include photographs of your child with their work/activity. Any identifying photographs will be deleted from my device after printing. I agree to keep the work safe and have it available at every session. I will discuss with your child what will happen to the box and any work, at the end of our time together. As their parent/carer you agree that your child has a choice whether or not to share their therapeutic box and its contents with you. Nothing is to be taken out of the room without discussion first. Your child should also endeavour not to bring personal items into the room.

**Contact**

Outside of our session times, you agree to limit any contact to essential information only about your child or if there is a change which you feel I should be aware of. Your child should be made aware of the contact and content of any email/message to ensure transparency and honesty between us, as an intrinsic part of the therapeutic relationship.

**Social Media**

If I receive a connection from you or your child via social media, I will not connect, or request friendship.

**Fees**

Assessment session: £65 (up to one hour)

Child session: £65 (50 minutes)

Review/ending meeting (30 minutes) £35

Family session £90 (70 minutes)

Payment is via BACS: **Lloyds Bank, Account Name: Michele Blockley Counselling and Psychotherapy**

**Sort Code: 30-90-09, Account Number: 42863160**

Payment is requested on a weekly basis. Please use your child's name as the reference.

**Cancellation:**

I am not advised by the school of any absence, so please contact me directly if your child is unwell or to request a change of session time. Full fee is due if cancelled within 48 hours of the allocated appointment. I will give you four weeks' notice of any holiday to be taken and ask that you do the same. If more than 2 consecutive sessions are missed a retention payment of half the session fee will be owed for all subsequent missed appointment times.

**Counselling consent, agreement and signatures**

I have parental responsibility and consent to my child ..... receiving one to one counselling sessions with Mrs Michele Blockley, MBACP (Accred). I confirm that I have understood and agree with the contract outlined above.

Parent/Carer (print) ..... Signature..... Date .....



Counsellor (print) ..... Signature ..... Date .....

Annex 3: Privacy Statement and Consent

**Michele Blockley Dip Counselling, MBACP (Accred) Counselling and Psychotherapy**

**20, Titchener Way, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9GB**

**Tel:07488 296950 Email:micheleblockley@yahoo.co.uk**

[www.micheleblockleycounselling.com](http://www.micheleblockleycounselling.com)

**Privacy Statement and Consent Form**

In order for me to be able to fulfil my responsibilities as a Counsellor I will need to record personal information about you. This information includes your name, address, phone number, email address, contact person with phone number and GP Practice. I will also take assessment information which will include relevant medical information and aspects of your education, personal and family history that you choose to share with me. This information is retained in a locked filing cabinet. Your contact details will be used to contact you. Other personal information such as your name, address and date of birth may be used to verify your identity if there is a need to contact your GP or a request for access to personal data from yourself, or your representative or legitimate legal instrument such as a court order.

This personal information will be held for a period of 7 years after the cessation of our counselling relationship, except where there is a mutually agreed decision to retain it for longer. If I am working with a child, under the age of 18, the information will be held until they are 25 years of age. If the work continues beyond the age of 18 the information is held for 7 years, which may go beyond their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In the event of my incapacitation or death your contact details will be available to my Supervisor who will use them to advise you of the situation.

I record notes of the therapy session using a reference number. These are brief, factual notes of the session. These will include a record of any cancelled session. The notes are held in a locked filing cabinet and kept separate from your contact details.

These notes may be shared with my Supervisor or counselling professional body but only your first name is used to protect your identity. This is for the purpose of maintaining professional standards and aiding my professional development.

In exceptional circumstances, I may need to contact my insurance company and provide client information. Consequently, full client information and details may need to be provided if the situation warrants it, for example if there is a possibility of a claim or a complaint. My Supervisor will then have access to this information as well.

Confidentiality will be broken, if necessary, for reasons of public interest in the area of public health.

These notes will be held for a period of 7 years after the cessation of our counselling relationship, except where there is a mutually agreed decision to retain it for longer. If I am working with a child under the age of 18, the information will be held until they are 25 years of age. If the work continues beyond the age of 18 the information is held for 7 years, which may go beyond their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

I may make information from your notes available to legitimate third parties under the following conditions:

- Receipt of a request from you or your representative, and where the release of the notes is not judged by me to as likely to cause you significant harm or harm to another person
- Where there is a legal requirement to do so. For example if I am given a court order to supply information
- If a disclosure is made by you with regard to knowledge of, or participation in, acts of terrorism, drug money laundering or failure to report a road traffic accident
- Where there is an ethical duty for me to do so, for example to avoid serious harm to yourself or another person, including the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults.

**Records of contact between us**

I will hold your name and contact details on my phone until our counselling relationship ends and will delete it from my contact list after one year. However, the phone will retain summary records of calls/texts made to or from your number and any recorded messages for the period of its data storage life.

If we agree to communicate by text or email, these records may be kept for the same duration as your counselling notes. My mobile phone is a smart phone and may therefore have your texts, emails and email address on it. The phone is password protected. Emails are stored in 'the cloud' so they can be restored if the phone is lost or stolen. If the phone is lost or stolen the information held on you will be restored via the back-up system of 'the cloud'.

Your name, contact details and email address may also be used for invoicing purposes.

If we meet via the online platform 'Zoom' no recording of the session will take place by either party.

When you arrive/leave for/from your appointment your image will be recorded by a ring doorbell video. This will be deleted via the default setting after 30 days.

**Your rights**

You have the right to see any information about you. Please ask me directly or submit a request in writing. You also have the right to ask for information that you believe to be incorrect to be rectified. I will endeavour to provide you with the information within 4 weeks of the request.

If I become aware of a situation where your information may have accidentally or maliciously been obtained by a third party, I will notify you within three days.

If you are concerned about the way that your information is being stored please discuss it with me.

If you are still unhappy you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioners Office where I am registered.

**Agreement**

Please sign this page to indicate that we have discussed and agreed how your personal information will be held for the purposes of counselling. Without your agreement to my holding your personal information it will not be possible to proceed with counselling.

Date .....

Name .....

Signature .....