



## SCHOOL COUNSELLING AT GES

### INTRODUCTION

Geneva English School attaches considerable importance to ensuring pupils' wellbeing, developing their self-confidence and resilience, and supporting pupils with problems.

Counselling can help children and young people to explore, understand and overcome issues in their lives which may be causing them difficulty, distress or confusion. A counselling relationship has identified boundaries and a clear contract agreed between the young person, counsellor and, where appropriate, parent or carer.

The aims of counselling are to assist the child or young person to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship to their world, to create a greater awareness and utilisation of their personal resources, to build their resilience, and to support their ability to address problems and pursue meaningful goals.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our policy on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health, which is published on the school website and on the Parent Message Centre.

### GES COUNSELLING SERVICE

#### School Counsellor

Sandra Cameron is our professional School Counsellor. She may be contacted at [scameron@geschool.ch](mailto:scameron@geschool.ch)

As with all trained, professional counsellors, Sandra is externally supervised. She also works in our Learning Support Department.

Sandra will be available to:

- see individual pupils in regards to problems that become apparent within the school setting;
- work with groups or classes when needed, for example following a crisis or traumatic event;
- provide advice to parents and support them in finding appropriate help;
- provide advice and training for members of staff.

At present, and while the school counselling service is in its infancy, Sandra's time is limited. She will aim to make herself available as much as possible but if demand increases or there are cases that require a longer period of intervention or other professional expertise, Sandra will provide advice to pupils and parents and support them in finding external help.

## **Referrals and making appointments**

In GES Early Years and Primary, parents will always be consulted, involved in discussions and asked to give their consent before a pupil meets with Sandra for counselling.

Members of staff who have a safeguarding concern about a child must always bring it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Nicky Fortune) or to one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (Emily Brown or Catherine Peart).

Other concerns about children should be brought to the class teachers (GES Primary), Emily Brown (Lower School), Sue Power (Upper School), tutors (GES Secondary) or Cath Peart (GES Secondary). Members of staff may also wish to consult directly with the counsellor. In GES Secondary, they may also choose to suggest to a child make an appointment with the counsellor. If in doubt about whether or not to share information, members of staff should always seek advice from the DSL.

In GES Secondary, we believe it is important to provide the option for children to self-refer for sessions with the counsellor at available times. This will be done via a confidential e-mail booking system.

For children of all ages, parents are welcome to refer to the counselling service if they believe their child could benefit from a session or if they have concerns. They may contact the counsellor by email/phone and set up a private and confidential meeting to explore counselling options for their child. Otherwise, they may choose to speak first to their child's class teacher or tutor, or to the appropriate member of the senior leadership team.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is essential to a successful school counselling process. It is important in order to help the pupil to develop a trusting relationship with the counsellor, to open up and share their feelings without fear of blame or reprisal, and to allow them to talk freely about issues of concern to them. It is equally important to encourage other pupils to seek help from the counsellor.

Confidentiality and its limitations must be clearly explained to the pupil in the first session.

Pupils may discuss and talk with anyone about their own counselling sessions but should not be directly questioned by members of staff.

The counsellor will not pass on any detailed accounts of sessions but may communicate periodically with appropriate members of staff about general progress, with the child's permission.

It may be necessary to liaise with or refer the pupil to another agency for further help, for example, when there are mental health concerns. This will be with the pupil's express permission and/or parental consent.

Confidentiality may only be breached when required by law, meaning in cases where it is suspected that the child might be victim to any sort of abuse or at a risk of harming themselves or others. The pupil must be informed of this break in confidentiality beforehand.

Parents will always be informed when pupils are at immediate risk of harm (and in doing so the school does not increase the risk of further harm). Older pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the pupil should be given an appropriate and mutually agreed period of time to share this information before the School contacts parents. The School should always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

The counsellor may share confidential information when the pupil has either asked the counsellor to do so or, when the counsellor has received informed consent from the pupil in order to help resolve any complex problems that may need resolving.

Authors: Tim Meunier, Head and Sandra Cameron, School Counsellor

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