



Queen's College Preparatory School



COUNSELLING & MENTAL HEALTH

2019-20

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The emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health allows children to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

Having the opportunity to talk with someone outside the family or school setting can, in many cases, help a child to deal with a particularly difficult issue they are facing. In younger children this may be done through play.

If you feel that counselling may be of benefit to your daughter, please make an appointment with the Assistant Head (Pastoral), Miss Fran Buchanan (fbuchanan@qcps.org.uk), or your daughter's Form Teacher to discuss the service in further detail. Our counsellor, Lucy Astor, is also very happy to meet with parents.

With all good wishes,

Emma Webb
Headmistress

THE QCPS SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

The QCPS Counselling Service supports the School's extensive system of pastoral care. The service offers 1:1 therapy sessions for girls and support for parents. The counselling service can also make assessments and help with referrals to other organisations.

Our school counsellor, Lucy Astor, is an Integrative Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist offering 1:1 sessions for children and parents. Lucy is affiliated to The Therapeutic Consultants (TTC), a private practice whose team includes child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, systemic family psychotherapists, autism consultants and social workers. If a family prefers to receive support outside of school, or for more specialist help, referrals can be made to TTC or to other specialist services.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THERAPY IN SCHOOL?

One of the great opportunities of therapy at school is that it is somewhere for children to go that is separate from both school-life and home. Therapy offers a consistent, confidential relationship in which difficulties can be explored together. It might take time for a real feeling of trust to grow. But here is an environment where understanding a child's inner life, without judgement or agenda, is central. The child is encouraged to express herself, using her own vocabulary of play and creativity. So that gradually, together, the child and the counsellor can gain a real sense of her challenges, identity and unique potential.

When a child is overwhelmed with emotion, limited by fear or reacting angrily or compulsively, her academic and social abilities can be compromised. Beginning to understand a child's story can help us to unravel how she has got to where she is now. Working with parents can often help the therapist to gain a deeper, more effective understanding of a child. Parents can also benefit from therapeutic insight and support.

WHY MIGHT MY DAUGHTER BENEFIT FROM SEEING A COUNSELLOR?

There are many reasons why your daughter may benefit from meeting with the school counsellor. These may include one or more of the following:

- Children exhibiting high level of need (e.g. excessively anxious, depressed or frequently coming to the teacher's attention)
- Children who might feel overlooked (e.g. withdrawn, isolated, self-conscious, often 'invisible' in class)
- Significant life events (e.g. bereavement, illness of a family member, divorce, new step-family, difficulties at home)
- Unusual behaviour (e.g. bullying, lying, frequently confrontational)
- Difficulty engaging with school work because of internal state (e.g. preoccupied, worried, distracted)
- Signs of low self-esteem or poor self-image

CONFIDENTIALITY & INFORMATION SHARING

Lucy Astor is an independent practitioner offering counselling sessions to girls in school. Although taking place in the school setting, your daughter's contact with Lucy is a clinical encounter. This means that it is similar to a patient-doctor encounter and so is bound by terms of confidentiality and information sharing that may vary slightly to those which apply between your daughter and other school staff.

As with a meeting with a doctor or other clinician, information shared with Lucy by your daughter is confidential. This means that she will not share this information with school staff or with you without your daughter's consent. However, if Lucy assesses that your daughter or anyone else is at risk of any harm, she will discuss this with you and with school staff (usually the Assistant Head). On rare occasions, she may also need to discuss this with professionals outside of the school and you will be informed before this is done. Only in exceptional circumstances will this be done without your prior knowledge.

Lucy does not keep detailed notes on her contact with the girls, other than a brief record of the date when the session took place, presenting issues and main issues raised in each session. These records are confidential, are stored securely and cannot

be accessed by school staff. The same principles of confidentiality apply to any information that parents share with Lucy.

As a clinical practitioner, Lucy needs to know your daughter's home address, parent contact details and daughter's GP details. This information is already held by the school and will be made available to Lucy if she is seeing your daughter. Lucy will not routinely share information with your daughter's GP. However, if she feels that it is in your daughter's best interests for any information to be shared with the GP then she will do so. Any such correspondence to the GP will be copied to parents.

Parental consent is needed for GP correspondence to be copied to the school. Any correspondence sent to other professionals (for example a referral to a different therapist) will be copied to the GP and to the parents.

If safeguarding concerns arise Lucy is duty-bound to discuss these with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with the QCPS Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and statutory guidance.

If any of the above is at variance with parents' own understanding of their daughter's counselling or what they expect, it is important that they contact Lucy or Miss Buchanan before their daughter's first session.

WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNSELLING?

Lucy's 1-to-1 counselling sessions take place during the school day in the same way as instrumental lessons. The cost of each 50 minute session is £60 and parents are invoiced directly by Lucy.

USEFUL CONTACTS & CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE LINES

Free, confidential helpline for questions on any topic

www.childline.org.uk

Tel: 0800 1111

Children's mental health information

www.youngminds.org.uk

Parents' helpline: 0808 802 5544, weekdays 9.30am-4pm

Beating eating disorders for under-18s

www.b-eat.co.uk

Youthline: 0808 801 0711

Confidential drugs advice

www.talktofrank.com

Tel: 0300 123 6600

Children's bereavement

griefencounter.org.uk

Tel: 020 8371 8455

LGBTQ+ questions and support

www.youngstonewall.org.uk

Advice and information: 08000 50 20 20

Local branch: 020 7593 1850

e-safety

www.thinkuknow.co.org

Age-appropriate advice for parents and children on e-safety

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

QCPS Counselling Service can make referrals for CAMHS assessment and free-of-charge counselling for children whose emotional, behavioural or mental health needs require more support than school, home or the GP can offer.

Waiting list times vary for a CAMHS appointment. If we are aware that a referral has been made, QCPS Counselling Service can offer support in the interim.

City of Westminster CAMHS

7A Woodfield Road, London W9 2NW Tel: 020 3204 5500

In the event of a Child Protection emergency: 020 7641 4000

Emergency Duty Team (out of hours or weekends): 020 7641 2388