Balerno High School Counselling Service

Including Dean Park Primary School and Ratho Primary School.

Who are we?
The Counselling Service is part of the Scottish Government's initiatives to provide access to counselling in schools for every pupil in Scotland from P6/7 to S6. Counselling is one of a range of services that helps to support the health, emotional and social needs of young people and is part of a whole school approach to supporting wellbeing.

Counselling is for children and young people who may be experiencing a range of difficulties which stem from the wider environment, including school, home and the community. Examples of distress to explore in counselling include friendship difficulties, depression, anxiety, self-harming behaviour, suicidal thoughts, separation and loss, bereavement, gender orientation, low self-esteem, bullying and trauma.

The child or young person will be offered an initial session where they meet with a counsellor in their school to talk about what can be offered and what feels right for them. If it is agreed to continue with counselling, the child or young person will be offered 6 sessions initially and further sessions if needed. An evaluation tool is used at the beginning and end of all our work to help inform our service.

What does counselling involve?
The Counsellor aims to provide a safe and confidential space where children and young people can feel listened to and understood. This will take place in school. Sharing experiences and feelings with someone outside their own immediate situation can provide an opportunity for children and young people to make more sense of what is happening to them. The child or young person is also encouraged to talk about things according to the pace they feel comfortable with.

Counselling does not involve advice giving: the role of the counsellor is to build a trusting relationship with a young person. This serves as a base through which the young person can develop relational skills and feel understood, accepted and cared for.

Some children and young people may wish to talk to their parents or carers about their sessions, while others, especially teenagers, may wish to keep the content of the sessions to themselves. It is important to be guided by your child and to respect these individual differences. There may be times when your child seems more upset following a counselling session, and this may be because they have been talking about painful feelings. Showing sensitivity, while also respecting their right to privacy, is a difficult but important response for parents and carers to offer.

Can I ask my child's counsellor how the sessions are going?
It is natural that you will want to know how your child is getting on. It is important to remember the counsellor will have agreed to a confidential relationship and will be working within The City of Edinburgh Council's Child Protection Procedures. The counsellor also works within an ethical code of practice as part of their professional membership as a counsellor and would only ever breach confidentiality if they considered your child to be at serious risk of harm, or if there was a risk to others.

How do I make a request for Counselling?
For all Secondary school pupils contact one of the School Guidance Team at Balerno High School. For Primary School Pupils P6/7 please contact their Head Teacher. It is expected all requests for service will include the views of the pupil. We operate an open access policy, and every effort should be made to inform the child or young person of the request and its contents where appropriate.

What happens to a request for Counselling?
All requests are discussed with the Guidance Team at Balerno High School or with the Head Teacher in Primary School. Where it is considered that counselling is an appropriate service, the child or young person will be placed on the counselling waiting list. The child or young person will then be contacted as soon as a place for counselling becomes available.

Counsellor:

Nicola McDonald (Ratho Primary School)

Based at Balerno High School

7, Bridge Road, Balerno,EH14 7AQ

Email: Nicola.McDonald@broughton.edin.sch.uk

Parental permission for counselling form

Please complete the following form and return to the school office.

I **give** my permission for my child:……
to take part in counselling sessions at school.

I **do not give** my permission for my child:……
to take part in counselling sessions at school.

Name:……..

Signed:……

Date:……..