BALLARD

BESPOKE EDUCATION

GUIDELINES FOR

THE PROVISION OF COUNSELLING FOR

PUPILS

BALLARD SCHOOL

September 2026

CONTENTS

		PAGE
1.	Introduction	3
2.	What do we mean by counselling?	4
3.	Model for pastoral support and counselling	4-5
4.	When might counselling help?	6
5.	Referrals, confidentiality and parental consent	6
	Limitations to confidentiality	7
	Breaching confidentiality	7
6.	Setting up a counselling service in Ballard School	7-8
7.	The appointments' process	8
8.	How can the School Counsellor evaluate and feedback?	8
9.	How are parents involved?	8
	When is parental consent needed	8-9
	Young person's agreement	9
	Referral process	9
10.	Appendices	9
	A Referral / Pre-Assessment Counselling Form – Sample	10-11
	B Pupil consent Form – Sample	12
	C Information for Parents & Carers – Sample	13
	D Information for Young People – Sample	14
	E Pre - Counselling Assessment Form – Sample	15
	F Pupil Evaluation Form – Sample	16
	G Counselling timetable – Sample	17

Introduction

This guidance will enable the School and the counsellor to provide an effective service which will be subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

It should be read alongside:

- "*Guidelines for Counselling in Schools*" – produced and distributed to all schools in September 2002 by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) together with The Gulbenkian Foundation.

- *Good Practice Guidance for Counselling in Schools* published by BACP – editor Janet Newton third edition 2001.

- BACP can be contacted on 0870 443 5252 or e-mail bacp@bacp.co.uk.

Definition of Counselling

Definition according to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy:

Counselling takes place when a Counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client as no one can properly be "sent" for counselling.

- Counselling and psychotherapy are often viewed as part of a continuum and the terms can be sometimes used synonymously.

- Children and young people may not initiate therapy; they may be referred or encouraged to attend counselling by teachers, carers or other adults. In the Education and Social Care system, children and young people may be referred for counselling to look at unmet emotional needs to distress that may be causing challenging behaviour as well as providing emotional support.

- Counselling is a way of helping young people through talking and listening. The child is encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts about their problem so they can understand themselves and their behaviour better and therefore improve ways of coping.

- "*Counselling involves a deliberately undertaken contract with clearly agreed boundaries and commitment to privacy and confidentiality. It requires explicit and informed consent*" (BACP Code of Ethics and Practice).

The counselling service works alongside the established pastoral procedures within school.

Counselling at Ballard School

- We will offer regular sessions for an agreed period (normally 6 - 8 weeks) - depending on the individual situation.
- The School Counsellor will be available for appointments on a Tuesday during term time.
- We will help young people explore their feelings and look at how they might want things to be different, by talking and using a range of activities.
- May be about developmental issues, resolving problems, improving relationships, making choices, coping with changes, gaining insight and understanding, growing as a person.
- Is carried out by a trained, fully qualified counsellor, who is checked by DBS and works within a code of ethics and practice of the professional organisation (BACP).

How does counselling fit with other pastoral support?
All pupils at Ballard School can access a range of pastoral support, characterised by good listening and problem-solving strategies. Currently we have two staff members who can offer ELSA.

Where pupils may need additional help, a targeted service, following identification of need by staff, parents, or the pupils themselves may be needed. The way counselling may fit with other types of intervention is outlined in Table A.

Model for pastoral support and counselling for pupils in Ballard School (Table A)

School-based counselling is perceived as a very specialist type of intervention and is distinct from the work of other agencies. However, it is anticipated that the school-based counsellor will contribute to the networks of support and participate in planning to meet pupils' needs.

Therefore, we need to be very clear whether what they are offering to pupils is as a support worker or a specialist counsellor and consider their terminology in service descriptions carefully.

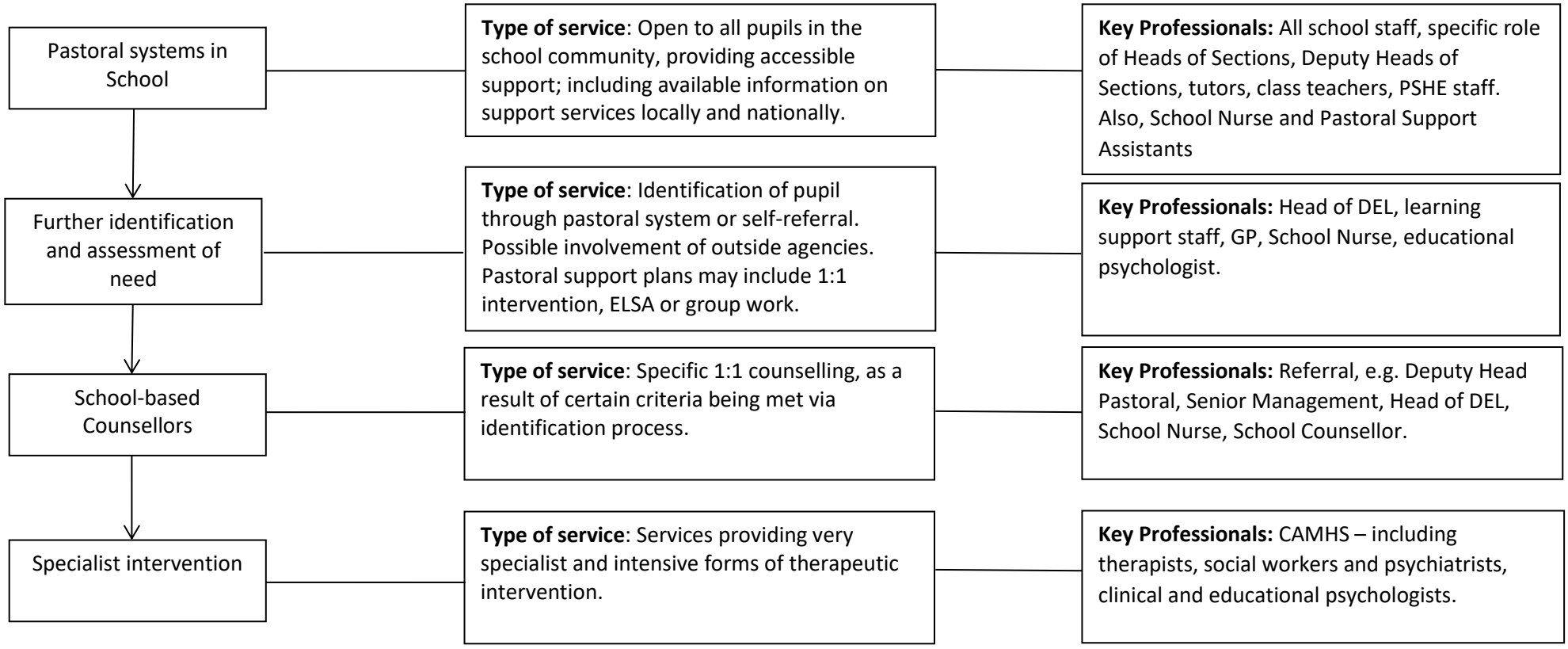
Our Counsellor will provide counselling services that require additional qualifications to undertake and that a teacher would not normally provide. Teachers listen to children's concerns including safeguarding/child protection concerns and then discuss with or refer to designated others (i.e., the first two levels in the model for pastoral support). Anything more than that requires specialist skills that the Counsellor can provide. Our Counsellor is suitably qualified and subject to a relevant professional code of ethics and professional supervision.

BALLARD

BESPOKE EDUCATION

Key adults involved in Model for Pastoral care and counselling at Ballard School

Parents will be included in all but exceptional circumstances where there may be safeguarding concerns



Based on model proposed in Hampshire Guidelines for Schools

When might counselling help?
Counselling can be an early intervention strategy to prevent deterioration in emotional wellbeing, mental health, behaviour and attitude. It can enhance the child's self-esteem and ability to cope more effectively in School.

Counselling may not be effective for everyone. The referrer will have an initial discussion with the Counsellor before referring to explore alternative support if necessary.

Issues relating to School may include:

- Bullying
- Social and behavioural difficulties
- Emotional difficulties
- School refusal/phobia
- Truancy
- Academic difficulties e.g. significant under-performance
- Difficult home circumstances

Referrals, Confidentiality and Parental Consent

Referrals
Referrals for counselling are likely to follow the identification process and assessment of need as outlined in Table A (page 7).

A sample referral form is included as Appendix A. Consent and confidentiality issues as outlined below are also a crucial part of the referral process.

Why is confidentiality important?
Confidentiality is essential to the formal counselling process:

- To enable the child to develop a trusting relationship with the Counsellor;
- To allow the child to be open and share feelings without fear of blame or reprisal;
- To allow the young person to speak freely about issues concerning them;
- To encourage others to come forward for counselling.

A young person's right to privacy and confidentiality is legally established in the Human Rights Act 1998 article 8.

Problems in maintaining confidentiality are unlikely to occur if there is mutual trust, goodwill and respect between Counsellor, School, staff and parents.

The young person is free to talk to anyone about their counselling sessions if they wish but should not be directly questioned by School staff.

The Counsellor will not pass on any detailed accounts of sessions but will communicate periodically with the School's pastoral staff about general progress, with the child's permission. The Counsellor will meet with the Deputy Head Pastoral formally once per half term for a review and future planning.

The School Counsellor will record issues raised by children and young people in general and keep written records to inform School as necessary. The Counsellor can refer to these notes at her half termly meeting with the Deputy Head Pastoral.

For the young person to feel supported between counselling sessions, they may wish a trusted member of staff to know they are receiving counselling.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to liaise with or refer the young person to another agency for further help; for example, when there are mental health concerns. This will be with the young person's express permission and in liaison with parents.

Similar principles apply in cases of child protection but the need to safeguard the child or young person's welfare and safety may override these principles.

What limitations are there to confidentiality?
The Headmaster has the right to make decisions about sharing information and confidentiality. This needs to be done in a reasonable way and in the best interest of the child. It is also subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the duty of confidentiality inherent in any counselling service.

"Any attempt to remove the principle of confidentiality in counselling will rapidly undermine the overall ethos of the school as a caring educational community". (Roger Casemore, Confidentiality & School Counselling, BACP 1995).

An individual's wish about confidentiality may be overridden by a paramount duty to protect a child's welfare. (*A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18,* Children Act 1989.)

The School Counsellor is employed and contracted by the School and has a duty to work within the safeguarding procedures of the School. These principles will apply to other services providing counselling support in School; (e.g., Youth Offending Team, other local authority services), in view of the Headteacher's over-riding responsibility for Child Protection and supervisory accountability for all pupils in School. At Ballard we do not allow phone messaging with our Counsellor or sharing of mobile numbers. School Counsellors need to have boundaries and so will be available on the day when working at Ballard. At other times pupils are directed to the Pastoral Team or to other support such as Childline.

Breaching confidentiality
At the outset, the Counsellor should make it clear to the young person that they may need to breach confidentiality; i.e., tell someone and seek help. This may happen when the young person or any other person (adult or child) is at risk of significant harm.

The Counsellor will discuss this with the young person again if the need arises, and, if the child is **"*Gillick-competent*", try to gain their consent to disclose concerns. Where possible, the Counsellor will keep them informed and involve them in this process. Appropriately qualified counsellors should be familiar with, and work within, School safeguarding/child protection procedures and know how to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead in School. Even without the child's consent, it may be necessary to disclose information they have revealed.

In the case of a young person threatening suicide or serious self-harm, there must be an acceptance of the need for intervention even when this involves breaking confidentiality.

More minor concerns will remain confidential unless the young person wants them shared to seek further help.

The Counsellor is **not** required to pass on information about a young person breaking a school rule or committing an offence, unless it could be deemed that by withholding information the Counsellor was aiding and abetting a crime, e.g., a young person dealing drugs in School.

** Young people who are considered "*Gillick-competent*" can have access to counselling without their parents' permission or against their parents' wishes (see section on parental consent).

Setting up a counselling service in Ballard School
Schools which have set up or are considering setting up a counselling service in school will need to consider the following questions:

- Length of time pupil will have counselling sessions - the counselling can continue for a period of 6 - 8 weeks, or as defined on an individual case by case basis.

- The School will promote the counselling service to pupils through PSHE sessions and communication to parents via bulletins, information evenings, etc.
- The Counsellor will have access to a quiet, comfortable room (currently an area above the green room or in an office in the Main House). There will be a lockable place to keep confidential records.

The Appointments' Process

- All appointments are made through the School.
- If a child requests to see the Counsellor, they should be referred to the School Nurse or Deputy Head Pastoral.
- The referral sheet must be completed before an appointment is made.
- Pupil will be made aware notes will be kept by Counsellor.
- The School Nurse is responsible for producing a daily programme of appointments for each Tuesday.
- Children cannot bring a friend or suggest to another child that they should visit the Counsellor. The only exception for this would be a "repair and restoration" session; the Counsellor will discuss with Deputy Head Pastoral before arranging such a session.
- The Pastoral group will have regular feedback after half termly meetings.

How can the School Counsellor evaluate and feedback?

Annual Report
Ballard School will require an annual report whereby the Counsellor will be asked to gather data and compile an annual report for the School. General feedback should be given on:

- Numbers, ages, gender and ethnicity of young people referred;
- The length and outcomes of counselling; and
- The sorts of problems that are helped by counselling.

All such feedback would be general, and no individual child would be identifiable.

Evaluation of impact
At the completion of counselling, young people and parents if appropriate, will be asked to complete and return an anonymous evaluation form. It is important to recognise that in the early stages, particularly as the child starts to talk about their feelings, there may be an adverse reaction with things appearing to get worse before they get better. Our Counsellor will review outcomes using the following resource.

https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/2355/bacp-cyp-prn-toolkit-for-collecting-routine-outcome-measures.pdf

How are parents involved?

Good practice involves working in partnership with parents. In most cases, children and young people are willing to agree for a parent (only one signature is required) to be asked for written consent for them to receive counselling that will take place in school time.

When is parental consent needed?
According to Lord Scarman in the case Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, a child under 16 may consent to treatment on their own behalf only if, and when, they achieve sufficient maturity and intelligence to understand fully what is proposed and the potential consequences.

Although it has not been tested by the Court, it is generally understood that children of Prep School age are unlikely to be "Gillick-competent" and consequently would not be able to give consent which is valid in law.

Based on this, the School must seek advance written permission from a parent for the child to receive School counselling. This would be a similar requirement to that for obtaining help from most education support services.

Further, Lord Justice Parker said in Gillick when quoting from guidance issued by the DfES, *"there is widespread concern about counselling and treatment for children under sixteen. Special care is needed not to undermine parental responsibility and family stability."*

Most pupils may be deemed "competent" under the Gillick ruling to give consent. However, young people should be offered one or two initial exploratory sessions with the counsellor to outline what is involved, to allow the counsellor and the link professional in School to assess their "competence" before they commit themselves and to encourage the young person to agree to their parents being approached for them to have ongoing counselling.

Schools are advised that where a parent withholds consent or the young person may be very distressed and unwilling for the School to approach the parents, counselling can go ahead if the counsellor assesses the young person as "Gillick-competent" to consent.

If a young person is unwilling to involve their parents and is assessed competent, the young person may give their own written consent for counselling. No specific age is stated in legal guidance - it depends on their capacity to understand the issues involved and to give an informed consent.

"As a general principle it is legal and acceptable for a young person to ask for confidential counselling without parental consent providing, they are of sufficient understanding and intelligence."

(Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985)

Young person's agreement
Assessment of competence based on the *Gillick* principle depends on:

- The maturity of the young person;
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable them to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling; and
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions.

The School Counsellor, with the Deputy Head Pastoral and School Nurse should make this assessment.

"…. In cases where the child is <u>not</u> Gillick-competent and parental consent is <u>not</u> forthcoming; schools should continue efforts to engage the parents (e.g. offering an opportunity to meet the Counsellor) and may wish to discuss the issue with a relevant member of the support services.

Referral Protocols
The School, through its Pastoral Team will decide when to refer a child to the School Counsellor. Any member of staff expressing concern about a pupil should do so to the Pastoral Team for discussion before referral.

N.B. The last page of this referral form gives an opportunity to confirm whether the child has been assessed as competent to agree to the counselling and confirmation that the appropriate information has been supplied to parents and young people.

Appendices – sample forms:

A - Reason for Referral and Background information
B - Pupil Consent slip
C - Information for parents and carers
D - Information for Young people
E – Pre-counselling assessment Form
F - Pupil Evaluation Form – School Counselling Service
G - School Counselling timetable

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

A - Reason for Referral and Background information - CONFIDENTIAL

Name: …….

Reason for the referral (please be specific)

Relevant background information (e.g. family background, hospitalisation, other agency involvement)

How are they functioning in School? (academically/socially/behaviourally)

How do you expect counselling to help this pupil?

Has the pupil been consulted? (as appropriate to their age)	Yes / No

Has the pupil been given a leaflet about counselling? Yes / No

What is their attitude towards the suggestion of counselling?

……

……

(If the pupil has been consulted and is assessed as *Gillick-competent*, has he/she agreed that his/her parents are consulted)

Has the parent/carer been given a leaflet? Yes / No

Parental consent is not needed because the child is assessed as competent to agree. Please state the grounds on which the child has been assessed as *Gillick-competent* Yes / No

……

……

……

……

Form completed by: …….

Name: …….

Role: …….

Date: …….

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

B – Pupil Consent Form

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

PUPIL CONSENT SLIP

I understand what counselling is and the explanation about confidentiality is clear to me.

I give consent to have counselling records kept and am aware of my right of access to them.

Name: ……

Pupil's signature: ……

Parent's signature: ……

Date: ……

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

C - Information for Parents and Carers

Introduction
All parents have the responsibility of helping their children to grow and develop. Children may need help with their problems and worries. Sometimes, no matter how well they get on with their parents, they may find it hard to talk to them. Children often get help and support by talking to someone they trust. Maybe a friend, a teacher, a relative or neighbour can help. Often having a problem or concern can affect a child's behaviour and schoolwork, and the School Counsellor may be able to help.

In this leaflet, 'child' means any child or young person of statutory school age.

How can School counsellors help?
School counsellors are carefully selected for their experience and counselling qualifications. Counsellors are good at relating to children and are trained to listen without judging. They can help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about what is worrying them. Counsellors usually provide short-term counselling, 6 - 8 sessions (agreed on a case-by-case basis) on School premises, and usually in School time. With younger children, the sessions may involve play materials. What is discussed during the sessions is confidential, but the child is told that the counsellor may get help from others if he or she thinks the child is at risk or in danger. The counsellor understands the School and works with teachers and other staff to help your child, while at the same time keeping confidentiality. Sometimes the Counsellor, with the child's knowledge and agreement, may refer the child to other agencies who can give more help.

How does my son or daughter get to see a School Counsellor?
Your child may ask a member of the Pastoral Team to see the counsellor, or you or a teacher may recommend it. Counselling needs to be a voluntary process. When counselling is offered to younger children, you will be asked to sign a form to say that you agree to your child having counselling. Older children who ask for counselling and are capable of fully understanding what is involved may have counselling, without permission from a parent.

What issues can School Counsellors help with?
There can be lots of pressures on young people growing up, for example friendships, teasing and bullying; exams and schoolwork; family relationships, separations and changes; as well as illness, loss or death of someone close. Young people also must cope with adolescence and the strong feelings and physical changes that go with it. Even quite young children can find that the time and space they get from counselling helps them feel better, and cope better at home and in School.

How can a parent or carer support the counselling?
It will help your child if you accept counselling as a normal and useful activity and show an interest if they want to talk to you about it, without pushing it if they prefer not to discuss it. Counselling is not a magic solution, and sometimes it takes a while to feel the benefit and indeed does not work for everyone.

Who is the Counsellor?
Our School Counsellor is trained for this special type of work and is professionally managed and supervised. She works closely with School staff. Our counsellor works within a recognised code of ethics and practice such as that of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP). Our Counsellor has provided references to show her suitability for the post and has appropriate DBS certificate. She has obtained her BACP Registration and accreditation.

How can parents and carers find out more?
Our School Nurses or Deputy Head Pastoral will give you more information.

The School Nurses can be contacted on - schoolnurse@ballardschool.co.uk
Deputy Head Pastoral is Mr Chris Jackson – chris.jackson@ballardschool.co.uk

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

D - Information for young people

Sometimes life can be tough, and people growing up can be under pressure. Having someone you can really talk to may be a help - perhaps a friend, a teacher, your parents, or someone in the family. At times, everyone feels worried or has problems that may be hard to talk about with the people close to you. You may worry about whether they will understand, whether you can trust them, whether they will blame you, or ignore your feelings. That is when you may think about talking to the Pastoral Team or the School Counsellor

How are counsellors different from other pastoral support?

- we don't blame or judge you;
- we don't tell you what to do;
- we are there for you - whatever the problem;
- we are good at listening carefully;
- we can see you in School time;
- we help you sort things out in a way which suits you;
- we understand how your School works, and can get you more help and information if you need it;
- we can give you the time and space you need;
- we have had plenty of training and practice to help us do our job well.

Will the counsellor tell anyone about what I say?
We don't ordinarily tell other people about you or your situation without your permission. But if we think that you or someone else may be at risk or in danger, there may be a need to get help from others to keep you safe. We will talk with you about this and together we will try to find the best thing to do for you.

What kind of things can I tell the counsellor about?
Whatever is on your mind, problems, decisions, worries, and changes. It could be lots of different things - making friends and relationships, parents separating, losing your temper and getting into trouble at home and at school, teasing and bullying, losing someone special, mixed-up feelings, health worries, exams and coursework. All these things can affect how you feel and how you behave. Talking with you about your worries and problems is the start of helping you sort them out.

How does it work?
Seeing a counsellor might be your idea, or your parents or a member of staff might suggest it. You don't have to decide straight away. You can meet the counsellor first, to ask questions and find out more. Counselling is voluntary - it's your choice, and whatever you decide is OK. You are likely to be offered appointments for regular sessions for several weeks at a room in School where you won't be disturbed. The School would like to contact your parents/carers to let them know you are seeing a counsellor but will not go into details. It may still be possible to come to counselling without your parents being told, and you can discuss this with either the School Nurse or Deputy Head Pastoral.

What have other pupils said about counselling?
"It was good to talk to someone I didn't already know."
"It's helped a lot ... discussing my problems instead of locking them away."
"I like the person I am now more than the one who first came to you."

How do I find out more or ask to see the counsellor?
Ask a teacher or speak to the School Nurse and/or Deputy Head Pastoral

BALLARD

BESPOKE EDUCATION

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

E - Pre-Counselling Assessment Form

Name: ……. Age: …… School Year: ……..

Date: ……

Explanation and expectations of counselling - contract

What is your main worry or concern at the moment?

How would you like to feel?

Do your parents know that you are seeing the School Counsellor?

Review date: ……..

BALLARD

BESPOKE EDUCATION

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

F - Pupil Evaluation Form – School Counselling Service

Did you feel counselling helped you?
Did you feel you were treated with respect and listened to?
How did you feel after the counselling?
Did your parents know you were seeing the Counsellor?
Would you recommend counselling to your friends if they were struggling/not coping?
What changes would have made the counselling better for you?

BALLARD

BESPOKE EDUCATION

BALLARD SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

G - Counselling Timetable

Date: …….

Session Time	Timetable period	Pupil	Attendance
10.00am – 10.40am	Period 2 / Break		
10.45am – 11.25am	Break / Period 3		
11.30am – 12.10pm	Period 3 / Period 4		
12.15pm – 12.55pm	Period 4 / Lunch		
1.00pm – 1.30pm	LUNCH BREAK	----------	----------
1.30pm – 2.10pm	Lunch / Period 5		
2.15pm – 2.55pm	Period 5 / Period 6		
3.00pm – 3.40pm	Period 6 / Form Time		