



## Adamstown Community College

### Policy on One-to-One Counselling Procedure

#### **Aim:**

As a community we aim to nurture mutual respect amongst all members, helping each student achieve his/her full potential, academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially, in a happy secure environment that recognises and values the diversity of our student population. In this context the school is seen as having a central role in the continuous guidance of each individual student, which begins prior to the entry of the student to the school and concludes when the student has left the school. The school has adopted a working definition of Guidance as 'the student support systems and programmes in our school'. This definition moves guidance away from being the sole responsibility of the Guidance Counsellors to the whole school staff. Notwithstanding this the Guidance Counsellors do play a very important role in the delivery of one-to-one guidance and much of this policy refers specifically to guidance counsellors and their practice.

#### **Rationale:**

The DES Circular 009/2012 and 0010/2017 supports the provision of one-to-one guidance counselling for students experiencing difficulties. It recognises the need to support students who may benefit from counselling. The school counselling provision is a confidential service for pupils with social, emotional or behavioural concerns to help them move towards greater wellbeing and to enable them to make the most of the opportunities offered for their learning and social development

#### **The guidance counsellor:**

- Is a fully qualified guidance counsellor
- Is a full member of the teaching council and hence garda-vetted
- Is a full member of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and is made available to attend five sessions of supervision each academic year through the IGC
- One-to-one meetings with students take place, where possible, in the guidance counselling office

- Any concerns that the guidance counsellor has, regarding the safety of a student, is discussed with the principal who is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) as a matter of urgency. If the principal is unavailable, the issue will be discussed with the vice-principal (DDLDP)
- The guidance counsellor shall undertake professional development activities to satisfy eligibility for membership of the IGC and of other professional bodies to which they subscribe.

### **Referrals to the guidance department:**

Students may be referred to the guidance counsellor through the following avenues:

- Students may self-refer
- A student may be referred through the student support team
- A student may be referred through a class tutor/year head
- A student may be referred through the principal or vice principals
- A student may be referred by a parent / guardian
- Parental permission given to a student attending an event such as Cycle Against Suicide or other such Wellbeing type events implies that if one-to-one counselling is provided at that event that students have permission to speak to such a counsellor

### **Before counselling begins:**

In general, the counsellor should consider giving the following information, as appropriate, to students before the process of undertaking any counselling activity, mindful of student diversity, including gender, culture, age and ability:

- The counsellor's role
- Qualifications, areas of expertise and relevant limitations
- The nature of counselling activities involved and the reasons for undertaking them and the benefits to the student in the case of counselling
- Any referral options which may benefit the student, where any presenting issue is beyond the counsellors current level of competency
- Confidentiality in the counselling process and the limits of confidentiality
- Reference to the student's right to engage in and withdraw from involvement in the process at any stage.

### **Responsibilities of the Counsellor:**

In the sessions the counsellor should always be mindful of their role and explain the following procedures and boundaries within the counsellor/student relationship.

- The nature of counselling activities involved and the reasons for undertaking them and the benefits to the student in the case of counselling.
- Any referral options which may benefit the student where any presenting issue is beyond the counsellors current level of competency.
- Confidentiality in the counselling process and the limits of confidentiality.
- The students right to engage in and withdraw from involvement in the process at any stage.
- The seeking of consent in advance from parents/guardians for the student to attend.

- Statutory and data protection responsibility with regard to records applies to all media, whether written hardcopy, electronic or digitally recorded.

## **Confidentiality:**

The guarantee of confidentiality is vital in enabling young people to express their distress in the counselling session. It is an essential element of the process if the relationship of trust is to develop between the counsellor and the student.

Students should be informed of the limits of confidentiality where information about them may be shared.

Under the following circumstances the counsellor may disclose some essential facts regarding a case to the Principal/DLP, Deputy Principal/DDLP or TUSLA:

- Where there is self-harm and/or suicidal ideation the DLP/DDLP, parent/guardian will be informed and a referral made to attend their GP.
- When there is need for onward referral to HSE agencies or specialist services.
- In supervision of the counsellor.
- In cases involving legal difficulties.
- When there is a need to address safety and child protection issues

## **Record Keeping and Access to Records:**

All written records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the guidance counselling office / SEN cabinet. Digital records are password protected. When making or keeping records, care should be taken to include only such information as is required for the purpose of professional involvement with the client. Where a decision is made, the basis for the decision is noted. Records are retained in line with DDLETB's Record Retention Schedule and Records Management Policy.