

Counselling Policy

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1. Rationale for Service

School Counselling helps students through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. The student is provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. School Counselling can help a student to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with issues that cause them upset, therefore increasing their capacity for learning and general wellbeing. The School Counselling Department is part of the pastoral care systems operating in our school.

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Head of School Counselling	ESC – Nov 2016; May 2019	Sep 2018; May 2019	Head of School Counselling/ DOL	May 2021

2. Role of The Counsellor

The primary goal of the School Counsellors is to support students in their social and emotional wellbeing from Nursery to Year 13 by providing intervention as well as prevention services. School Counsellors also help the school respond to crisis and trauma within the Tanglin community, providing individual and group support as needed. School Counsellors give support to parents on parenting issues and meet with staff members who request initial consultation. Personal and long-term counselling needs for both staff and parents will be referred to outside agencies.

The role of the School Counsellor involves helping students identify and express their feelings, encouraging growth, increasing self-awareness and self-management, identifying support networks and forming goals now and in the future. School Counselling is typically concerned with developmental issues, addressing and resolving specific problems, decision-making, coping with crisis, developing personal insight, working through conflict and improving relationships with others, whether at school or at home.

School Counsellors make referrals to other health-care professionals when they feel that a student's emotional needs require additional support or attention. It is the responsibility of the parents to follow-up and pay for external referrals.

School Counsellors deliver a service within the ethical framework for good practice of their professional body.

Services should be seen as non-stigmatising by the school community and a normal part of school provision, which is integrated into the community. User-friendly information will be communicated to students, parents and staff as agreed to inform the school community of the service (see Appendix B - About School Counselling).

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BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy) in their document ‘Counselling in Schools’ (2006) state that:

“Individual sessions can vary depending on the style and orientation of the counsellor, the needs of the child or young person and the school's timetabling structure. A session is usually about 40-50 minutes or the length of a normal class period.”

This emphasises the need for any School Counselling intervention to be centred on the student and their identified issues. It also highlights that the timetabling within each school must also be taken into consideration. This assists in School Counselling being accepted as an integrated part of school life and can help normalise the concept of School Counselling services.

3. Main Working Relationships

School Counsellors’ main responsibility is toward the students they counsel. The safety and wellbeing of the student is paramount, and decisions are based on the best interest of the student.

While the School Counsellor is ultimately accountable to the student, the nature of their work means that the School Counsellor will be accountable to the organisation which employs them, and to the school system in which they work. It is imperative to have in place operating arrangements, which are based on the welfare of the student being paramount.

School Counsellors will link with relevant staff as appropriate. In order to maintain the School Counsellor’s trusting relationship with students, School Counsellors share limited and necessary information, as needed, based on the best interest of the child. Our School Counselling model differs from an external therapeutic clinical practice in the sense that we are embedded into the system of the school. This has implications for the limits of counselling confidentiality (see Appendix C – School Counselling Confidentiality) and anonymity (see *Others* section at the end of this policy document).

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Discussions with staff may occur as a follow up to an outside referral when recommendations from outside specialists have direct relevance to improving a student’s life at school.

In all three schools, School Counsellors will liaise with pastoral staff, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), nurses, learning support staff and the Educational Psychologist by attending regular meetings to identify and monitor students who are considered to be ‘Vulnerable’.

In the Junior and Senior schools, where possible, School Counsellors will attend the relevant pastoral meetings between the Head of Key Stage/Deputy Head of School and Heads of Year, to discuss students who are on the ‘Monitor’ level of the Pastoral Concerns Database (See appendix C).

Counsellors will work closely with the DSLs for each school with any relevant safeguarding issues.

4. Referrals

Referrals may be made by the student, parents^[1] or school staff.

Staff Referral of Students

When teachers in the Infant and Junior Schools feel that a student would benefit from School Counselling, they should speak to the relevant Head of Year before contacting home to seek parental /guardian consent (see below).

Senior School teachers will speak with the student prior to referral to the relevant point of contact in the School Counselling team. This approach values the student and respects their right to be informed and involved in decisions concerning themselves.

Parental Consent

For School Counselling intervention to occur parental permission needs to be sought for Infant and Junior School Students (for exceptions, see *Student’s in Crisis section*, below). One parent’s consent is sufficient to permit a counselling intervention (for exceptions, see *Separation and Divorce Cases*

^[1] Please note that appointed *guardians* carry the same status as *parents*.

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section.) Parental consent is not necessary but is desirable for counselling intervention with Senior Students (see *Student Self-Referral* section below.)

Parent Referral of Students

When parents/guardians have concerns regarding their child, they are strongly encouraged to make initial contact with the class teacher, tutor or Head of Year. If deemed appropriate, staff may refer the parent to one of the School Counsellors. School Counselling is part of the Pastoral system; therefore, any contact with the School Counselling department from parents is communicated to relevant staff. This is to ensure a fair and transparent referral process. If parents are uncomfortable with this an external referral will be recommended. When a parent wishes to refer a child for School Counselling, they must discuss this with the child first to gain his/her consent prior to the first appointment.

Student Self - Referrals

Senior students may self-refer. School Counsellors will encourage students to inform at least one of their parents about the School Counselling process from the outset. However, if a student requests School Counselling, then the school and the School Counsellor, together, can assess if he or she is “Gillick Competent”. If this is deemed to be so, then they may access counselling without their parent's knowledge or consent. Key factors to be considered in the assessment of Fraser/Gillick Competency are:

- o Maturity of the student.
- o Sufficient intelligence and understanding to enable him or her to understand what is being proposed, i.e. counselling.
- o Sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions.
- o What would happen if they didn’t get help regarding a possible deterioration in their mental health?

(See Appendix A – Is A Student Fraser/Gillick Competent?)

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The frame of reference for the School Counselling Department in the Senior School is available on the TTS Portal and is highlighted at the beginning of each academic year, through information evenings and newsletters.

Students in Crisis

School Counsellors have an open-door policy so that any student in distress may approach the School Counsellor for support. Nursing or teaching staff may refer students in crisis for immediate care. In such cases, parental consent may not be sought prior to School Counselling. Infant and Junior School students requiring subsequent sessions, will need parental consent to continue. The teacher or the School Counsellor may approach the parent to discuss the matter. Senior School cases may continue without parental consent if necessary (see Student *Self-Referrals* section above).

Mandated Clients

If it is felt that a student needs to be mandated for counselling, either internally or externally, for their own well-being or the well-being of others, the school has the right to state that it is a necessary step, in the best interests of the child.

Separation and Divorce Cases

For separation and divorce cases within the Junior and the Infant Schools, both parents’ permission must be sought for School Counselling intervention to occur. The School Counsellor may offer sessions to the child but not offer family counselling, this will be referred out of school. For separation and divorce cases within the Senior School, School Counsellors’ discretion about seeking permission from one or both parents will be used. All decisions will be made with the best interest of the student in mind. If the School Counsellor feels that the case is too acrimonious to become involved in or continue with then this will be referred to external professionals.

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5. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Confidentiality is an important part of the School Counselling process, serving to establish a trusting relationship between School Counsellor and student. School Counsellors operate under an ethical imperative of confidentiality, keeping details of their conversations private. However, as we are in a school setting names of students and the general issue/s will be shared with key members of the pastoral team, through the Pastoral Concerns Register (see Appendix C).

Information may be shared within the confidentiality of Vulnerable Students meetings if the School Counsellor considers the student 'At Risk'.

Being 'At Risk' is defined as being in danger of being harmed by someone else, hurting self or someone else emotionally or physically or breaking Singapore Law in some way. At Risk may also mean that the young person is not functioning well enough to participate in routine daily activities.

Any disclosure of information will be made in the student's best interest (see Appendix C – School Counselling Confidentiality).

For Senior School Students, School Counsellors will share this statement in their first session with a student:

“The details of what we talk about remain between you and me. Your Head of Year will know that we are meeting and the basic issue but not the details of our conversation. We work closely with the pastoral team in this way so that you receive the best possible 360-degree holistic support for your wellbeing. If I think that you are ‘At Risk’ more details may be shared with your parents and/or specific members of the school's pastoral support team.

Being ‘At Risk’ means that you are in danger of being harmed by someone else, hurting yourself or someone else emotionally or physically or breaking Singapore Law in some way. ‘At Risk’ may also mean that you are not functioning well enough to participate in daily activities.”

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All parents of Infant and Junior students, and the students themselves in the Senior School (along with the parents if appropriate) will be sent a copy of 'About School Counselling' (see Appendix B) prior to meeting with a School Counsellor when possible or after the first session, via email.

Each School Counselling room is equipped with CCTV, this is video footage not audio. The footage is held with TTS Security department for 28 days; it is running live; it is password protected and only the Security Manager and Executive have access. It is not designed as record of who visits the School Counsellors and is only accessed if required. Each School Counselling room is installed with a 'panic button' which alerts TTS Security immediately if the School Counsellors need security assistance. School Counsellors will keep written, confidential records of their sessions. These documents will be kept securely, under the security of double locks (or password equivalent) and will remain the property of Tanglin Trust School. School Counsellors will also maintain a logbook that details appropriate information.

6. Accountability

The Head of School Counselling will share regular reports with the Leadership Team, through line management meetings, where key data such as number of students receiving counselling, common issues and outcomes will be discussed. This information will be used to inform the department's development plan.

Professional supervision of all School Counsellors is arranged as below.

Our School Counselling Policy is shared on the school website, here:

<https://www.tts.edu.sg/welcome/policies>

7. Professional Development & Supervision

Our School Counsellors are professionally qualified counsellors with a recognised graduate/post graduate degree in Counselling (or equivalent). They are all registered with an official body (e.g. Singapore Association for Counselling; British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)).

School Counsellors must show commitment to their continued professional education and training. SAC requires a minimum 50 CPE hours in a two-year period. Likewise, School Counsellors must have access to regular professional supervision, including peer supervision and appropriate external clinical

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supervision. BACP currently recommends a minimum of one and a half hours of supervision per month. The amount of clinical supervision required is relative to a School Counsellor's experience, caseload and the challenging nature of the issues that students bring to School Counselling.

8. Other

School Counselling rooms are discreetly located, offering a safe and secure setting within the school for students, staff and parents to meet privately with the School Counsellors in a way that respects privacy. Whilst our services are as discrete as possible, total anonymity cannot be guaranteed in a school setting; a student might be visible when entering or leaving the School Counselling office. Permission is requested from teachers if a student wants to leave class for a School Counselling session although no details are shared, or reason given. Teachers are requested to be discrete at the time of the request.

The School Counselling offices are resourced with age-appropriate materials.

If any person should have a complaint about any aspect of the School Counselling process they are to follow the whole school [complaints procedure](#).

Staffing provision within the School Counselling team will be reviewed annually.

Current Tanglin staff members who are completing a counselling degree and wish to complete their practicum hours at Tanglin will be considered carefully on a case by case basis.

Appendices:

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Appendix A

Is a student Fraser/Gillick Competent?

School Counsellors work collaboratively whenever this is in the best interests of the student seeking support and will always attempt to work towards including parents where possible. However, the following guidelines should be used as guidance for School Counsellors in determining and recording their decision as to whether a student is able to participate in the School Counselling process without the involvement and support of their parent(s):

Consider:

1. Has the student explicitly requested that you do not tell their parent about the School Counselling support that they are receiving?
2. Have you done everything you can to persuade the student to involve their parent(s)?
3. Have you documented clearly why the student does not want you to inform their parent(s)?
4. Can the student understand the advice/information they have been given and have sufficient maturity to understand what is involved?
5. Can they communicate their decision and reasons for it?
6. Is this a rational decision based on their own religious belief or value system?
7. Is the student making the decision based on a realistic perception of their situation?
5. Are you confident that the student is making the decision for themselves and not being coerced or influenced by another person?
6. Are you confident that you are safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the student?
7. Without School Counselling, would the student's physical or emotional health be likely to suffer?

You should be able to answer YES to these questions to enable you to determine that you believe the student is competent to make their own decisions about receiving School Counselling Support without their parent's consent. You should record the details of your decision making.

Adapted from: Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board, which can be accessed via https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/Images/Fraser_Competency_Checklist_%285%2937-91600.pdf.

Appendix B

About School Counselling

What happens in School Counselling?

School Counselling gives you the opportunity to talk in private about anything that is worrying you. School Counsellors do not take sides or tell you what to do. They help you look at choices and make your own decisions. A School Counsellor is someone who is trained to listen in a careful way. In addition to talking, we often engage students in self-reflective activities through sand tray, art, story and games.

What sort of issues does School Counselling help with?

There are many reasons a student may seek School Counselling support. Students may meet with a School Counsellor to discuss friendship or family issues, exam anxiety, low mood, indecision, bullying, anger or stress, insomnia, time-management, some troubling past experience, grief and loss or any number of life changes and coping with transition.

Where and when does School Counselling take place?

Tanglin Trust has three full-time School Counsellors and one part-time. Private School Counselling rooms are discreetly located on Level 3 of the Sixth Form Centre (on the English Department floor). Counselling sessions take place during the school day, including lunchtimes and after school.

How long does it take?

40-50 minutes is the normal time frame for a given session. On average, the School Counselling process entails weekly meetings spanning a period of four to six weeks. One-off consultations can also be arranged. Occasionally, a student chooses to liaise with the School Counsellor over a term or longer.

Is School Counselling confidential?

The details of what you talk about in your counselling sessions will remain between you and your School Counsellor. Your Head of Year will know that you are meeting and the basic issue but not the details of the conversation. School Counsellors work closely with the pastoral team in this way to ensure that you receive the best possible 360-degree holistic support for your wellbeing.

If your School Counsellor thinks that you are 'At Risk' more details may be shared with your parents and/or specific members of the school's pastoral support team. Being 'At Risk' means that you are in danger of being harmed by someone else, hurting yourself or someone else emotionally or physically or breaking Singapore Law in some way. At Risk may also mean that you are not functioning well enough to participate adequately in daily activities. Your School Counsellor will need to disclose to the school nursing team, if you haven't already done so, any medication that you are taking. This is for your own safety in school and on school field trips.

Can I see a School Counsellor without anyone knowing?

Whilst our services are as discrete as possible, total anonymity cannot be guaranteed in a school setting. Your Head of Year will know that we are meeting. Permission is requested from teachers if a student wants to leave class for a School Counselling session although no details are shared, or reasons given. Teachers are requested to be discrete at time of request. A student might be visible when entering or leaving the School Counselling office. We do have a limited number of appointments available during lunchtimes and after school.

Is it true that there is CCTV in the School Counselling offices at Tanglin?

As with many areas around the school, the School Counselling offices are equipped with CCTV. This has no audio recording and is simply in place for safety reasons. The footage is held with TTS Security department for 28 days, it is running live, it is password protected and only the Security Manager and Executive have access. It is not designed as record of who visits the School Counsellors and is only accessed if required.

Does the School Counsellor keep notes of our sessions?

Confidential notes are kept by the School Counsellors and remain the property of the school. Basic anonymous data will be collected for tracking purposes. This data will be limited to year group, gender, presenting issue, number of sessions and will not include names.

How do I arrange to meet with a School Counsellor?

You can call or e-mail one of the School Counsellors, drop by the School Counselling Department in person, or let your Tutor or Head of Year know that you would like to have an appointment. Parents and teachers are also welcome to contact the School Counsellors to discuss a possible student referral.

Our contact details:*

Simon Parkin

Tel: 67703562

E-mail: simon.parkin@tts.edu.sg

**Please check your tutor room notice boards, ask your tutor or the relevant school secretary to find out which counsellor is Point of Contact for your year group.*

Paula Huggins

Tel: 67703563

E-mail: paula.huggins@tts.edu.sg

Claire Holmes

Tel: 67703564

E-mail: claire.holmes@tts.edu.sg

Pippa Gresham

Tel: 67703560

E-mail: pippa.gresham@tts.edu.sg



**Counselling
Department**

**Sixth Form Centre,
Level 3**



Appendix C

School Counselling Confidentiality

A School Counselling relationship is built on trust and is directly related to the sometimes intimate and deeply personal information that is shared by the student with their School Counsellor.

The School Counsellor will seek to build a collaborative relationship that involves all parties, which respects and includes the student in the decisions about what is shared and how it is shared in an age-appropriate manner.

As School Counsellors, the issue of confidentiality needs careful consideration due to the nature of the setting. Mental well-being and social-emotional issues have a direct impact on academic achievement. It is important to strike the correct balance between sharing information that will be of benefit to the student in the school setting with key personnel, whilst still honouring a student's wish for confidentiality.

All sessions with students are opened with an explanation of the limitations of confidentiality and anonymity of counselling conversations within the school setting. Levels of confidentiality vary depending on the age of the client, the situation and whether they are defined as being "At Risk".

The School Counselling Department collects basic anonymous data for administration and monitoring purposes with informed consent.

Definition of Being "At Risk"

Being 'At Risk' is defined as being in danger of being harmed by someone else, hurting self or someone else emotionally or physically or breaking Singapore Law in some way. 'At Risk' may also mean that the young person is not functioning well enough to participate in routine daily activities.

PROCEDURE FOR THE SENIOR SCHOOL

Confidentiality

Senior School Students will be informed of the limitations of confidentiality within counselling conversations at their first meeting with a School Counsellor as outlined in the Counselling Policy Document and will be emailed a copy of the “About Counselling” document (Appendix B).

Confidentiality is an important part of the School Counselling process, serving to establish a trusting relationship between School Counsellor and student. School Counsellors operate under an ethical imperative of confidentiality, keeping details of their conversations private. However, as we are in a school setting, names of students and the issue will be shared with the student’s respective Head of Year. Students who are at ‘monitor’ level on the Pastoral Concerns Database will be monitored and reviewed by the School Counsellor, HOY and the respective Head of Key Stage during their weekly meetings.

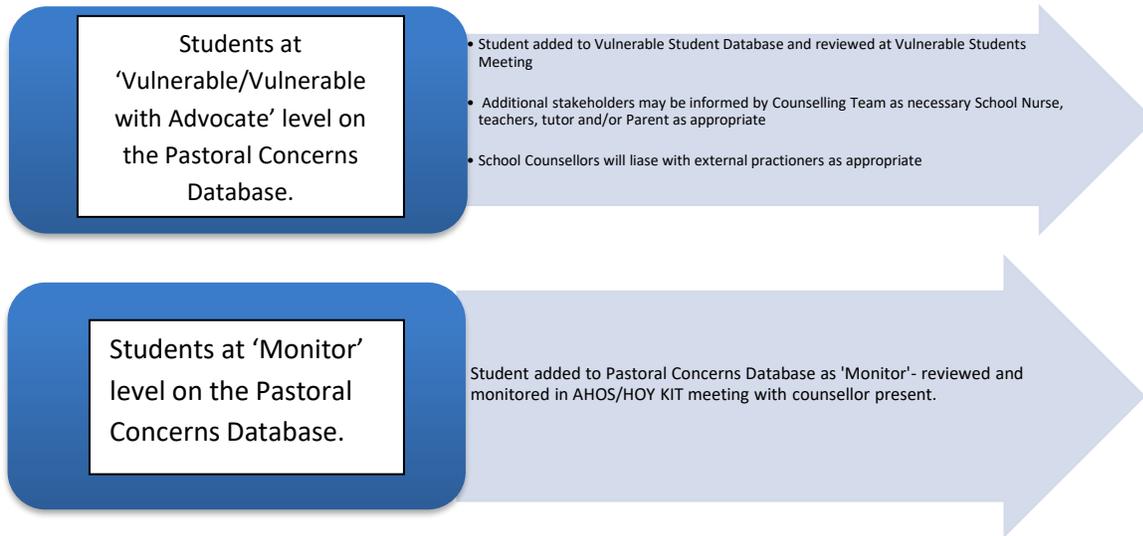
In situations where safety of the student may be ‘At Risk’ (See below for definition of ‘At Risk’) more information may be shared, this would be done at the weekly Vulnerable Students meeting. Any disclosure of information will be made in the student’s best interest (see Appendix C – School Counselling Confidentiality). For ‘At Risk’ cases whenever possible the School Counsellor will seek the agreement and cooperation of the student for the need to disclose more detailed information.

However, disclosure will remain at the discretion of the School Counsellor, with the student’s well-being and need for on-going support in mind, based on the School Counsellor’s assessment of the student’s ‘At Risk’ status.

School Counsellors will update the Pastoral Concerns Database with pertinent information about their involvement with the student.

The following charts map out flow of information and the circumstances under which confidentiality might be employed in the Senior School setting.

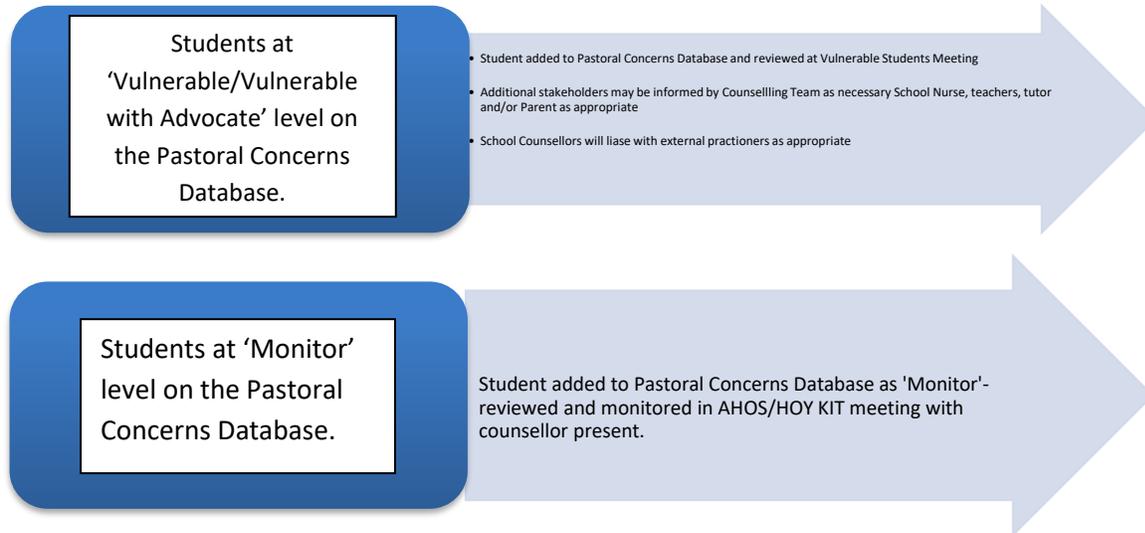
PROCEDURES FOR SENIOR SCHOOL



Parents are not automatically informed that a student has sought School Counselling Support. School Counsellors work collaboratively whenever this is in the best interests of the student seeking support and will always attempt to work towards including parents where possible.

If a student has been referred by their Head of Year, Form Tutor or other member of school staff, the School Counsellor would confirm that appointments have been made and would update the Pastoral Concerns Database accordingly.

PROCEDURE FOR JUNIOR SCHOOL

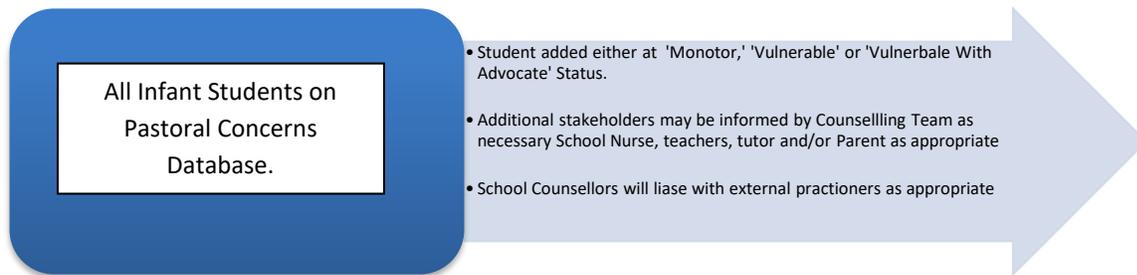


Parental permission is necessary for a School Counselling intervention in the Junior School (with the exception of students in crisis). All referrals from the Junior School are made through the Head of Year or School Administration. If a class teacher has concerns about a child, they will consult with the HOY and/or AHOS before a referral to School Counselling is made. If parental permission has not yet been obtained, the class teacher may be asked to seek it. If a parent directly contacts the School Counsellor, they will be redirected to the class teacher who will then consult the HOY.

The School Counsellor will seek to build a collaborative relationship that involves all parties, which respects and includes the student in the decisions about what is shared and how it is shared in an age-appropriate manner.

The School Counsellor will update the Pastoral Concerns Database accordingly, attend Vulnerable Students meetings to discuss students at 'Vulnerable/Vulnerable with Advocate' and weekly meetings that occur between the HOY and AHOS to discuss students at 'Monitor' level students.

PROCEDURE FOR INFANT SCHOOL



The fortnightly Infant School Pastoral Concerns meeting reviews both students at a 'Vulnerable/Vulnerable With Advocate' and 'Monitor' level on the Pastoral Concerns Database. School Counsellors attend these meetings and update the database accordingly.

Parental permission is necessary for a School Counselling intervention in the Infant School (with the exception of students in crisis). All referrals from Infant School are made through the Class Teacher, Head of Year or School Administration; the class teacher is the main point of contact. If a class teacher has concerns about a child, they will consult with the HOY and/or AHOS before a referral to School Counselling is made. If parental permission has not yet been obtained, the class teacher may be asked to seek it. If a parent directly contacts the School Counsellor they will be redirected to the class teacher who will then consult the HOY.

The School Counsellor will seek to build a collaborative relationship that involves all parties, which respects and includes the student in the decisions about what is shared and how it is shared in an age-appropriate manner.