

# Malmesbury School

## FAQs for Parents and Guardians

These are the questions most frequently asked by parents, which we hope you will find helpful.

### **My child has been referred to the school counselling service. What does this mean?**

Your child has either referred themselves to the counselling service by completing a referral form or a member of staff has referred them on their behalf, with their agreement. The referral will initiate a meeting between your child and one of the school counsellors.

Our counsellors are fully qualified members of national professional organisations, experienced in working with young people and passionate about providing this early intervention for change.

### **What can my child expect if they meet with a counsellor?**

The counsellors provide professional therapeutic counselling support in school time for young people. Sessions normally take place once a week or once a fortnight, each lasting for up to 50 minutes. Their purpose is to enable young people to express how they feel, become clearer in their thinking, and then use both to discover what behaviours work best for them, whether at school, home or with friends.

During the first session the counsellor discusses the working agreement and the counsellor assesses whether the young person is Gillick competent. Most students have a block of approx. 6 sessions before deciding whether counselling will continue. A child can choose to stop counselling at any point.

### **What is meant by Gillick competent?**

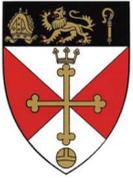
We think that every child in the school should be able to access the counselling service and we don't automatically seek parental consent. A judgment is made by the counsellor during the initial meeting to determine whether the child is Gillick competent.

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
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions.

No specific age is stated in legal guidance – it depends on the capacity of a young person to understand the issues involved and to give an informed consent. If the young person is deemed Gillick competent they can give their own consent. If a young person is deemed to be not Gillick competent then the counsellor will seek parental consent before arranging further appointments.





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## **Why can't my child talk to me? What if he/she says private things about the family?**

Having a safe space to talk to a trained and caring adult outside the family is often easier because there is no need to protect anyone's feelings. Supporting your child to express him/herself honestly, whether about school, friends or family, will enable him/her to get the most out of the sessions. The aim of counselling is to support your child to be happier, safer and more able to make the most of their opportunities, relationships and future lives.

## **Is it OK to ask my child about the sessions?**

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of the trust needed for counselling to be effective. People are often surprised to know that by the UN Convention Rights of the Child (1989), it is also your child's right. Some young people want to talk about the sessions at home, while others need more thinking time alone. Both are quite normal and may also vary from week to week so it's best to take your lead from them. Sometimes your child may also seem more emotional when feelings emerge in sessions, but this is often necessary before real change can happen, so try not to worry and be sensitive to what they most need from you.

Confidentiality is only broken if a young person shares information that would suggest they or others are at risk of significant harm. It is our duty of care to pass this information on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school and they will make decisions about how to share this information with you. If a counsellor has a safeguarding concern, they will do their utmost to discuss this with your child prior to involving the necessary wider support.

## **Can I be in touch about how the sessions are going if I am worried about my child?**

If you feel concerned about your child or have information of importance concerning his/her well-being, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the counsellor through the Student Support team at school.

Clark Harrell  
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