

BGS Counselling Service

Protocols to ensure the transparency of the services provided by the Counsellor:

1. The counsellor's office is located between the Finance Section and Bursar's and Pay Officer's offices on the top level of the Administration/Computer building. This position ensures some privacy for students because it is not situated near classrooms or a major thoroughfare. It is however, in a position which is frequented by both teaching and administration staff. The office has timber venetians on the french doors which are always in the horizontal position thus allowing anyone who walks past the room to clearly observe the people in the room. The door is not locked when someone is in the room. The student's identity can be protected because they are often seated with their back to the door. The Bursar and Pay Officer regularly walk past the door throughout the day, as do other staff visiting these offices.
2. Students are not seen before 8.45am or after 4.30pm and are not seen on weekends.
3. Students are almost always seen in this office. On rare occasions the counsellor may accompany a student to another part of the school e.g. sickbay where the nurse is present or to a student's locker (in a case where a student with attention deficit disorder whose need for an organised locker was part of a behaviour management programme) or the counsellor may meet a student in another part of the school if there is a designated place where a student goes when he is distressed (eg. the pastoral care room which is situated between two Head of Year offices and opens on to the quadrangle) or completing a task (eg. the Professional Development Library or Library). There have been a few occasions when the counsellor has met with a student and the student's psychiatrist at a hospital.
4. The counsellor records all appointments with students, teachers and parents in her diary which is available at all times for perusal by the Deputy Headmaster (Students) and the Headmaster. In all cases the Head of Year and where appropriate the Head of Boarding know which students in his year group/the boarding house are seeing the counsellor.

Initial appointments are made in one of two ways: a student may contact the counsellor directly via an appointment system located on the outside of the counsellor's office or through their Head of Year or Head of Boarding. If a student initiates an appointment, the counsellor lets the Head of Year and where appropriate the Head of Boarding know before the appointment. The student is made aware that the minimum requirement is that the counsellor lets the Head of Year/Head of Boarding know that they have attended an appointment so that their absence from class or the boarding house can be explained. Parent's permission is gained before any psychometric assessment is performed but parents are not necessarily contacted if a student attends an appointment arranged by the Head of Year/Head of Boarding or self initiated.

5. Students are advised at the beginning of their first appointment that the contents of the session are confidential unless the student reveals information which indicates to the counsellor that either the student or someone else is at risk of being harmed.
6. If the counsellor was told by a student that any member of staff had either physically or sexually abused them or threatened to, then the counsellor would contact the Headmaster or one of the three Deputy Headmasters immediately and a management plan ensuring the student's safety would be put into place. If a student told the counsellor that he was being abused or threatened by someone who wasn't a member of staff, then an intervention plan would be developed with the student and where appropriate the relevant government authorities would be notified. Steps would be taken to ensure the student's safety.
7. Currently case notes are stored in the counsellor's office and are confidential. If the counsellor were to leave BGS these would be placed in archives in case they are required in the future. Comprehensive notes are not made for all students because of time constraints; however a brief note is currently made on a database on the counsellor's computer outlining the presenting problem, relevant background information and any follow up.
8. The current counsellor is a registered psychologist and a member of the Australian Psychological Society and is bound by their Code of Ethics. The current counsellor has also been a clinical supervisor of Clinical Masters students at the University of Queensland and Master (Counselling) students at QUT and is therefore considered by these institutions to have a reputation for having good ethical standards.

Kerryn Hurd
Counsellor
Brisbane Grammar School

25th August 2000