



Panaga School

TOGETHER, IMPROVING LEARNING

Panaga School Counselling Policy

Reviewed: August 2024

Purpose

In this world of rapid change, life can be very stressful for children and young people. The World Health Organisation estimates that one in ten children (0-19 years) people will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives with the number increasing to 1 in 7 during adolescent years (10-19). Therefore, it is realistic to expect that some of our students will experience emotional difficulties. If not addressed, these can impede their well being and academic progress. This policy aims to set out what counselling looks like at Panaga School and how to access support for our students.

Policy Coverage

Counselling at Panaga School is an integral aspect of our provision and is available for all students who require any social or emotional support. The counsellor works as a fully integrated member of the school providing a resource for the whole school community. There are many ways in which he may have contact with students, from PSHE lessons and assemblies, or simply through chatting to students at break and lunch. A student may attend a 'drop-in' session or a series of planned meetings.

“ Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change, or of reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action “ (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)

This policy includes information about:

1. What is school counselling and what does it look like at Panaga School?
2. Personal & Professional Boundaries for counsellors
3. Interventions with Students
4. Interventions with Staff Members
5. Self-Care & Professional Development
6. Working as Part of a Team
7. Referral pathways for staff and students
8. Appendix 1 - What is School Counselling?

1. Personal & Professional Boundaries

1. The Counsellor must not give out their personal telephone number(s) to students or their parents. If parents must be contacted by phone, the counsellor should use the office or another school phone; where this is not possible the counsellor should call parents using a third party application such as Skype or use some other way of preventing their telephone number from being seen.
2. The Counsellor must not “friend” current clients on social media.
3. The Counsellor must not “friend” any current Panaga students on social media unless they are directly related.
4. The Counsellor should take care to prevent any conflicts of interest, which would include counselling staff members who are friends, or the offspring of friends. If this is not possible, great care should be taken to ensure roles are kept separate.
5. Counselling is not an emergency service therefore counsellors should not answer emails from students outside of school hours except in exceptional circumstances. A mental help helpline (Hope Line 145), staffed by trained professionals should be made known to students in crisis.

3. Interventions with Students

1. All interventions with students should be conducted with the utmost care and with their best interests at heart. Students should be encouraged to make sense of and solve their own problems.
2. The Counsellors should be aware of their limitations and if they believe a student has a mental health need that is greater than this they should seek a referral to an appropriate specialist with the consent of the student & their parents.
3. Where a student is deemed at significant risk of harming themselves or others, the counsellor along with key pastoral staff, in exceptional circumstances, can make the decision to seek specialist treatment for the student without **initial** parental consent. Examples would include if a student has taken an overdose and needed medical attention, or parents are not easily contactable.
4. Where a student is under the care of a specialist community mental health practitioner, the counsellor should seek to cultivate a good working relationship with said professional where roles and interventions are properly defined and information shared as appropriate. Multidisciplinary meetings should be conducted where there are complex safeguarding needs.
5. Any incidences of self-injury should be reported to parents unless there are exceptional circumstances which would mean reporting to parents would increase the risk to the student.
6. Parents or guardians have ultimate responsibility for their children. If a student states they are suicidal counsellors should consult with the Deputy Principal or Principal and then inform parents so they can access appropriate help (e.g. GP, RIPAS) and supervise the student outside of school hours. If a student is in immediate danger medical intervention should be sought from the health centre then an ambulance should be called - parents should be informed as soon as possible.

7. If a student is accessing counselling, the relevant teacher should be made aware of this. The reasons for counselling should remain confidential unless express permission to share details is gained from the student or there is a safeguarding issue.
8. To prevent being seen as taking sides, counsellors should remain as impartial as possible when working with students especially as working with friendship groups may cause difficulty.
9. Counsellors should aim to contact students within one week of referral.
10. Preventative work should be undertaken with year groups as appropriate.
11. The Counsellors should take care to balance their workload and aim to see no more than 20 one-to-one sessions per week with students as per BACP Guidelines.

4. Interventions with Staff Members

1. The counsellor is able to see staff members on an occasional basis but where they need long term emotional or mental health support they should be referred onto alternative community provision. Referral pathway included at the end of this document.
2. The counsellor will signpost any staff members with grievance issues to a Deputy Principal or the Principal.

5. Self-Care & Professional Development

1. Counselling is an emotionally demanding job and in accordance with professional ethical guidelines counsellors must engage in a routine of self-care to protect their own emotional & mental wellbeing. If a counsellor does not feel mentally or emotionally well enough to see students they should reschedule appointments until they feel they are.
2. We live in a fast changing world and counsellors have a duty to stay up to date with issues which affect their students by constantly updating their skills, knowledge & training.
3. Counsellors should engage in appropriate external clinical supervision for a minimum of 2 hours per month to ensure their practice with students is current & appropriate and to work through any emotional or mental health issues that arise as part of the work.
4. Due to secondary trauma, counsellors are at particular risk of burn-out. Should a counsellor be displaying the signs of burn-out (emotional exhaustion, the senior management team therefore reserves the right to ask them to take a period of absence to recover.

6. Working as Part of a Team

1. Counsellors should treat all staff and each other with dignity and respect. They should aim to foster a counselling space which is welcoming and safe for all members of the Panaga community.

2. If a colleague needs to be challenged this should be tackled assertively and respectfully. It is not acceptable for colleagues to raise their voices at each other, or undertake any form of communication (verbal or written) which is aimed to harass, intimidate or belittle anyone else.
3. Counselling is part of a wider pastoral team and as such it is important that they have regular meetings with the Deputy Principals, the school medical team or the Principal.

7. Referral pathways for staff and students

Sometimes it is appropriate to signpost or to refer a student or staff member onto an external agency. Referrals should only be undertaken with the expressed permission of the student and their parent/s, or the staff member unless there are exceptional circumstances and parents are not easily contactable (for example for boarding house students).

General Practitioners with Speciality in Mental Health (can access and issue medication)

- Dr Roselina at Vitawell Clinic
- Dr Wahab at Riverview Clinic

Counsellors

- Clarity Brunei. Website: <http://www.claritybrunei.com/>

Clinical Psychologists

- Dr Julian Lim - Email: julian@claritybrunei.com
- Nasyhea Abdullah, Clinical Psychologist Email: nasyhea@claritybrunei.com
- Yusri Haji Kilifi, RIPAS - Email: clinicalpsychologyripas@gmail.com

Psychiatrist

- Dr Shaheen - Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist at RIPAS. Referral letter to be dropped off at clinic.
- On call psychiatrist available through RIPAS Accident & Emergency Department.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) Services offered by CAMHS

CAMHS team at Kiarong Psychiatric Service offers the following services:

- Psychiatric OPD
- Psychologist
- Social worker
- CAMHS nursing team
- Outreach services like home visit and school visit
- Inpatient Services if necessary

Referrals

Referrals to the Counselling Department may be made by the student, parents or school staff.

Staff Referral of Students

- ❖ When teachers feel that a student would benefit from School Counselling, they should discuss the case with the Phase Leader, to see if it is appropriate before contacting home to seek parental/guardian consent. The Phase Leader will discuss this with the relevant Deputy Principal for approval.
- ❖ Melilas form tutors 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 Rampayoh and Teraja School Students. If there is a concern around a Teraja School Student's safety, then a counsellor may speak to that individual without parental permission. Melilas students are able to self refer. The consent form can be found [here](#).

Parent Referral of Students

For Rampayoh and Teraja students, all parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate primarily through their class teacher. If you feel your child requires some social or emotional support and would like them to see a counsellor, please communicate this with the class teacher who can arrange this. If necessary, you can contact counselling directly, but communication will be shared with the class teacher.

In Melilas, parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate through form tutors if they are concerned about their child's wellbeing or would like their child to access counselling for social and emotional support.

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

Melilas 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.

Parents will be informed with the consent of the student, or if they are deemed to be "at risk".

Students in Crisis

The School Counsellor has an open-door policy so that any student in distress may approach the School Counsellor for support. School staff may refer students in crisis for immediate care. In such cases, parental consent may not be sought prior to School Counselling. Rampayoh and Teraja 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. Melilas cases may continue without parental consent if necessary.

Mandated Clients

If it is felt that a student needs to be mandated for mental health support, 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 Rampayoh or Teraja, 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.

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. The School Counsellor will 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 SLT.

- 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 Brunei 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.
- For Melilas Students, the School Counsellor will explain the following points in their first session with a student:
 - *The details of what we talk about are confidential between you and the counsellor.*
 - *Your tutor/teacher and Deputy Principal will know that you are attending counselling, but the details of how much they know will be guided by you.*
 - *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 Bruneian Law in some way. 'At Risk' may also mean that you are not functioning well enough to participate in daily activities.*

Accountability

The Counsellor will share regular reports with the Senior 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.

Appendix 1- **About School Counselling**

What happens in School Counselling?

School Counselling gives students the opportunity to talk in private about anything that is worrying them. The School Counsellor does not take sides or tell students what to do. They help students look at choices and help individuals make their own decisions. A School Counsellor is someone who is trained to listen in a careful way. In addition to talking, the counsellor will 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 and they can usually be linked to a social and/or emotional difficulty. 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. The School Counsellor can also act as a link between the student and school to get additional support and strategies implemented across the school i.e. homework support, reducing academic pressure etc.

➤ Where and when does School Counselling take place?

Panaga School has one School Counsellor. The Private School Counselling room is located between Year 3 and Year 4 on the Teraja campus and in an appropriate class on the Rampayoh campus. Counselling sessions take place during the school day on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and are offered during class times. In special circumstances, meetings outside of class times may occur.

➤ How long does it take?

One whole period (30-40 minutes for Teraja and Melilas students) is the normal time frame for a given session. On average, the School Counselling process entails weekly or fortnightly meetings spanning a period of four to six weeks. One-off consultations can also be arranged. Occasionally, a student may choose 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 is confidential between you and the counsellor. Your class teacher will know that you are meeting and the basic issue but not the details of the conversation (unless agreed otherwise). The School Counsellor works closely with the teachers at school to ensure that you receive the best possible support for your wellbeing.

If the 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 Brunei 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?

You can see the counsellor without seeking prior permission, however whilst our services are as discreet as possible, total anonymity cannot be guaranteed in a school setting. Therefore the counsellor is obliged to inform your class teacher that you are meeting with him. The content of the sessions is kept confidential between the child and the counsellor, except when there are concerns regarding the child's safety or well-being, in which case parents/guardians and appropriate authorities may be informed.

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 discreet at time of request. A student might be visible when entering or leaving the School Counselling office.

Does the School Counsellor keep notes of our sessions?

Confidential notes are kept by the School Counsellor and remain the property of the school. Basic anonymous data will be collected for tracking purposes. This data will be limited to specific demographics but exclude any personally identifiable information.

How do I arrange to meet with a School Counsellor?

You can email the School Counsellors (counsellor@panagaschool.net) drop by the School Counselling Room in person, or let a teacher 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.