



September 2016

Dear Year 7 Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of the families of our new, Year 7 students; I am pleased that you have joined our Forest Hill School community! I am the counsellor here at Forest Hill, and every year I take the opportunity to introduce myself to the families of our Year 7 students.

The move from Primary to Secondary school is a time of big transition and change, both for yourselves and for your sons, and it is not always as smooth or straightforward as we hope it to be. There can be bumps along the way as the students adjust to the new building, new teachers, new students, new everything! However, it is also a time of possibility and excitement as there are many opportunities that come with starting Secondary school.

Forest Hill takes the emotional health and well-being of their students very seriously, evidenced by the many years the school has had a counselling service. It has been an important source of support for many students, who have at some point experienced difficulties or faced challenges during their time at school, and the service continues to be very busy and well-used.

The service is confidential, open to all students and can be accessed several ways at any time throughout the school year. The main ways for a student to access the service are:

1. Self-referral
2. Referral by a member of school staff
3. Referral by parents/carers

Many students self-refer, sometimes after a conversation with a member of staff. I always encourage the students who self-refer to let their parents/carers know but if a student is not yet ready to do this then I will respect their confidentiality. If a student and I agree to meet for more than the initial 6 sessions offered, and they are in Year 7, I will inform the parents/carers of this in writing. The content of the sessions, however, would remain confidential.

Dacres Road
Forest Hill
London SE23 2XN

T: 020 8699 9343
F: 020 8699 9198
E: info@foresthillschool.co.uk

www.foresthillschool.co.uk



Headteacher: Mike Sullivan BSc (Hons)



As parents and carers of students in Year 7, you can request that your child does *not* have counselling. This can be done by writing a letter to the school to my attention stating so. However, students who are **12 years and older** have the option to seek advice and support for themselves.

The school and I make every effort to keep families and students informed about the counselling service. Over the first Half Term I visit Year 7 PSHCE classes to introduce myself and talk about my role as the school counsellor. This is something that I do every year and students have found it helpful. There are counselling leaflets around the school that students can read for themselves if they want more information. There are also information sheets available through the school website that you might find helpful to read; they explain more about the counselling service and my role within the school, so you have an idea of what to expect. There are links to websites/organisations specifically for parents/carers around matters pertaining to young people and mental health that you might find useful as well.

I also run a Parent/Carer Consultation Service, offering parents/carers who have any concerns or worries about their son a chance to speak about them confidentially. I would be very happy for you to contact me to talk through any concerns you might have; we can then arrange a time to have a meeting at school or continue to talk over the phone.

I am looking forward to the start of this year and to continuing my work supporting students' emotional well-being within the school. I am grateful for your on-going support of this valuable service!

With best wishes,

Colette Rhodes



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