

**Forest Hill School Counselling Service  
Statistics report 2015 – 2016**

**Number of students seen:** **110** (97; 81)  
**Number of non-students seen (staff or parents):** **13** (11; 16)

*From here on all figures refer to the students seen for individual counselling*

**CLIENTS BY YEAR GROUP:**

Year 7	36
Year 8	18
Year 9	15
Year 10	18
Year 11	14
Year 12+	9

**CLIENTS BY HOUSE:**

Drake	32
Harvey	18
Reynolds	32
Shackleton	14

**YEAR 7**

1 - 3	17
4 - 7	7
8 – 14	11
15+	2
Total Sessions Offered	260
Total Sessions Attended	208
Total Sessions DNA	21
Total sessions not attended due to sickness or other absence from school	18
Total Sessions Canx by students with warning	5

**YEAR 8**

1 - 3	7
4 - 7	6
8 – 14	3
15+	2
Total Sessions Offered	167
Total Sessions Attended	114

Total Sessions DNA	20
Total sessions not attended due to sickness or other absence from school	23
Total Sessions Canx by students with warning	4

### **YEAR 9**

1 - 3	9
4 - 7	2
8 – 14	3
15+	1
Total Sessions Offered	104
Total Sessions Attended	86
Total Sessions DNA	11
Total sessions not attended due to sickness or other absence from school	3
Total Sessions Canx by students with warning	2

### **YEAR 10**

1 - 3	10
4 - 7	4
8 – 14	3
15+	1
Total Sessions Offered	114
Total Sessions Attended	84
Total Sessions DNA	15
Total sessions not attended due to sickness or other absence from school	7
Total Sessions Canx by students with warning	3

### **YEAR 11**

1 - 3	8
4 - 7	2
8 – 14	1
15+	2
Total Sessions Offered	113
Total Sessions Attended	84
Total Sessions DNA	11
Total sessions not attended due to sickness or other absence from school	8
Total Sessions Canx by students with warning	1

## YEARS 12/13

1 - 3	1
4 - 7	4
8 - 14	4
15+	0
Total Sessions Offered	64
Total Sessions Attended	41
Total Sessions DNA	11
Total sessions not attended due to sickness or other absence from school	1
Total Sessions Canx by students with warning	7

### Referral Route:

SELF	41
STAFF	58
OTHER	11

### Report:

As a counsellor, I work in the business of change, and a core task of schools is to nurture and chaperon the process of change. Change can bring up different things for each of us, but one feeling that seems to underpin change is the experience of loss – in order to allow something else to happen or something new to begin, we have to let something else go or leave something or someone else behind. Although a very ordinary and necessary part of living, change can be a more complicated and painful process than we sometimes like to admit and the fact that we go through many changes does not necessarily make the experience any easier.

Last academic year, one of the major themes both within the school and within the counselling service was that of 'change' and therefore of 'loss'. The school had a number of changes, as schools always do, and one to highlight was the change in Head Teacher. After many years of working at Forest Hill, Mr Brady decided that it was time for him to move on to pastures new. Everyone would have experienced this differently, but it is a significant change nonetheless and bound to stir up various feelings as we enter into a new 'era'. Taking up the position at the helm is Mr. Sullivan, another long-standing member of Forest Hill, and we now collectively move forward behind his leadership and guidance.

Adolescence itself is a time of great change, physically, relationally, emotionally and psychologically, thus it is also a time of loss. Teenagers are one step closer to adulthood and thus greater independence, and while this can be an exciting prospect, it also raises anxieties and many questions. Relationally, teenagers start to spend more time with peers than with family, and this shift, while normal, can be difficult and hard for everyone. Relationships are a key part of all of our lives, but adolescents in particular are incredibly sensitive to the way these ebb and flow. As new relationships are formed and old ones left behind, feelings of abandonment, betrayal and powerlessness can surface. Relationship fall-outs are common, whether within their peer group or family, and these experiences can increase a teenager's feelings of loneliness and isolation. Sometimes just one significant

relationship with an adult, whether within or outside of the family, can be enough to anchor an adolescent and provide a sense of safety and security.

### **WORK WITH STUDENTS**

The counselling service was the busiest it has ever been since I started here three years ago and there are probably a handful of reasons for this. Last year being my third year here, there is probably more trust from students and staff in my capacity to 'stick around'. There has been more research which highlights a rise in the number of young people experiencing stress and anxiety across the country, some of which is attributed to the continued pressure they feel around school and exams, but also the uncertainty they face when they leave school. I am pleased that more students are requesting time and space for themselves to talk with someone about their worries. At certain times I did have to implement a waiting list, but students were on average seen for an initial session within the 2 weeks, and for further sessions within 3 weeks.

Year 7 had the biggest number of referrals, and although this continues a general pattern from previous years, the numbers this year were much higher, double of any other year group. It goes without saying that the 'jump' from Primary to Secondary is big and for some students can feel overwhelming. I liken it to the expression of going from being a big fish in a small pond, to a small fish in BIG pond. Counselling can be very helpful for these students, offering them a safe space to explore their worries and fears, confidentially and without judgement, whilst they learn to navigate the new waters in which they find themselves.

Whilst the younger students were struggling with transitioning 'in', the older students, particularly the Year 11s and 13s, were getting to grips with their transition 'out'. I find that even the students who have had a challenging time at school or college and express a readiness to leave, feel some sense of loss and worry about what comes next for them. Questions around their future and the kind of adult life they will have can feel overwhelming to a still developing 16 and 18 year old. Questions around identity surface, as well as whether they are confident and capable enough to manage yet more independence and responsibility.

Although many students I saw were for short-term work – between 1 and 3 sessions – there were plenty of students who committed to longer term work in counselling, exploring in more depth their thoughts and feelings, getting to know and understand themselves better. Short term counselling, or even a 'one-off' session, can be very useful as well, acting as a brief holding space for students who might be experiencing a particular crisis or challenging situation.

### **LOOKING BACK, GOING FORWARD**

There were challenges I faced last year, some of which included: keeping up with the Reflective Practitioner Group for staff and maintaining Themed Parents' Evenings. Whilst time did feel more pressured for everyone within school, the departure of my teaching colleague and co-facilitator for the Practitioner Group mid-year proved to be a difficult hurdle to overcome, although we were able to run one successful group in the first Term.

However, Mental Health Awareness Week was again on the school's calendar and it was a successful week. Students were given information on how to look after their mental health, with resources for Tutor Time, and I was delighted to run another Whole School Assembly that addressed this year's theme, 'Relationships'.

**Plans/Goals for 2016 – 2017 Academic Year:**

- Reinvigorate the staff Reflective Practitioner Group; with an aim to have at least two groups
- Bring back Themed Parent's Evenings, with an aim for at least one
- Continue to mark Mental Health Awareness Week within the school and getting more teachers/staff involved
- Improve uptake within Year 11 and 6<sup>th</sup> form; although both have been increasing little by little each year

It is clear that the school continues to work hard to maintain a caring environment for the students; the presence and on-going support of a counselling service is one part of this, even if not every student will use it. Because teenagers are constantly changing they are vulnerable to mental health difficulties, some more so than others. Therefore, the presence of a service where students can talk through and explore their difficult feelings and experiences with someone else is of vital importance.

The experiences of change and of loss will continue to be part of our collective and individual livelihoods, sometimes expected, but many times unexpected. In keeping with the theme of last year's Mental Health Awareness Week, *Relationships*, and in the midst of continual change and the many feelings this can stir up, the significance of being present, whether as a counsellor, teacher, friend, parent or other family member, cannot be underestimated. Our capacity to be there for others around us, genuinely and wholeheartedly, is perhaps one of the most important and hopeful ambitions that we can aspire to within our relational worlds.

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September 2016