



September 2020

Dear Year 7 Parents and Carers,

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 community at Forest Hill School. I am the school counsellor, and every year I like to write to Year 7 parents and carers to briefly introduce myself and let you know about the counselling service.

Starting Secondary school is a time of big transition and change, and this year in particular has been extraordinary in that all of us are coming back after a long period of disruption that has impacted, and continues to impact, on nearly every part of our lives. Within this new world we are experiencing, the move to Secondary continues to be an important period of transition for children and families. There can be anticipation and excitement about the new opportunities and experiences the lie ahead. But there can also be worry and uncertainty; the move from Primary to Secondary is not always smooth or straightforward and there can be bumps along the way as students adjust to the new building, new routine, new teachers and new environment.

The school takes the emotional health and well-being of its students seriously, and the counselling service has been an integral part of the help and support that is available to students for many years. Numerous students who have experienced difficulties have sought out the support of counselling at some point during their time at school. The service is confidential, open to all students and can be accessed several ways at any time throughout the school year. The main ways are 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 will always encourage the students who self-refer to let their parents/carers know, but if they are not yet ready to do this, I will respect their confidentiality.

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

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Over this Half Term, I will be making visits to Year 7 classes to introduce myself, talk about my role as the school counsellor and explain a bit about what counselling is. This is something that I like to do every year so students are aware of what support is here for them and how they can access it if they ever needed or wanted to.

The school and I make every effort to keep families and students informed about the counselling service, and there are information sheets available through the school website that you might find helpful to read; they explain more about the counselling service so you have a better idea of what to expect. There are also links to websites/organisations specifically for parents/carers around matters pertaining to young people and mental health that you might find useful. I have added a COVID information sheet about what safety measures I am putting in place to make sure as much as possible there is minimal risk of transmission in the counselling service.

I am available for parents/carers who have concerns or worries about their child that they would find helpful to think about with me. I am happy for you to contact me, via the contact details below, to talk through any concerns you have; we can then arrange a time to have a meeting at school or simply continue to talk over the phone.

I am looking forward to the start of this new 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  
School Counsellor

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