



September 2023

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 here, and every year I take the opportunity to introduce myself to the families of our Year 7 students.

Starting Secondary School is an important time of transition and change both for students and families. While there can be much excitement and anticipation about the opportunities that lie ahead, there is also understandably some worry and uncertainty about the move to a larger and busier school. There can be bumps along the way as our Year 7s adjust to the new building, new teachers, new routine, new everything!

Forest Hill takes the emotional health and well-being of their students seriously, evidenced by the many years the school has had a counselling service. The service has been an important source of support for many of our students, who have at some point experienced difficulties and faced challenges 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 members of staff (Heads of Year, Inclusion, SENCo)
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.

Over Autumn Term, I will be making visits to Year 7 classes to introduce myself, explaining my role and what counselling is, and how students can access the service if they ever needed or wanted to. This is something that I like to do every year as it is a helpful way for students to be aware of what support is here for them during their time with Forest Hill.

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

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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.

Two sites that I have found to be particularly helpful and with lots of information for parents/carers are YoungMinds and The Anna Freud Centre; I have put the links for these sites below.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers/>

I am also available for parents/carers to get in touch to discuss any concerns or worries you may have about your child. I can be contacted via the details below, and together we can talk through the concerns you have; we can then either arrange to meet in-person at school or simply continue talking over the telephone.

I have been 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
School Counsellor

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