



ABINGDON

From: Deputy Head (Pastoral): Mark Hindley

30 January 2015

Dear Parents,

Provision of Counselling

As part of our pastoral care, we feel that it is important that our pupils have access to a school counsellor. The world is complicated for today's teenagers: they face increasing pressure academically, socially, and in terms of body image.

Since we decided to appoint a school counsellor, the role has been admirably filled by Alexia Severis. Unfortunately Alexia has decided to relocate to Devon for personal reasons. She will be leaving us at half term, so I am writing to let you know about the provision of counselling in the future.

We have been very fortunate in securing the services of Phoenix Counselling Cooperative to replace Alexia immediately after half term. Phoenix Counselling are a cooperative of experienced counsellors who come highly recommended by a number of local schools such as Oxford High. They will offer contact support for the boys who want to access them, either by self-referral, referral by a member of staff, or referral prompted from home.

Clearly we will be replacing one counsellor with a consortium of four counsellors. This is a deliberate decision. It means that we will be able to offer more contact counselling hours per week, with a range of different counsellors, who have different strengths and areas of interest. This will mean we can match the needs of the pupil to the most suitable counsellor. However, please be reassured, what it does NOT mean is that a boy who is finding life problematic will be passed around the four counsellors with no certainty over who he will see for any given session. The counsellors will have weekly times when they are in school, and if a boy embarks on counselling, then he will be allocated to the most appropriate counsellor, and will then access that counsellor for the duration of his needs.

To try to help this process, we will also allocate a counsellor to each of the houses, so that a pupil in any given house will have a counsellor who is their initial point of contact, if they were so to choose. I envisage the counsellor fulfilling a number of attendant functions in this role. For example, she will liaise with the house pastoral team, via the housemaster and tutors, to discuss strategies if a boy is facing difficulties; she will deliver house assemblies to raise awareness of mental health issues when appropriate; she will help sixth form mentors and senior pupils to develop their listening skills; and finally she will address issues of self-esteem with targeted tutor groups over the course of the year.

It is a great shame that we are losing Alexia, but I am very excited that the silver lining is that we have the opportunity to engage Phoenix Counselling. Please do feel free to visit their website to find out more about them (<http://phoenixcounsellingcooperative.co.uk/>) If you have any more questions please do not hesitate to get in touch: my email is mark.hindley@abingdon.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

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