



## School Counselling Services Policy

### 2024 Noosa Christian College

#### **Rationale**

Noosa Christian College is committed to the wellbeing of its students and community. Our dedication to nurturing our students is supported by a wellbeing department that includes chaplains and the School Counsellor, aiming to aid students, families, teachers, and staff during challenging times, such as mental health concerns, personal challenges, and relational conflicts. The College is an active learning community where staff, parents and community members work together to provide an excellent education for students. The wellbeing department aims to promote and enhance the wholistic education of our students – in intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social development.

#### **Scope**

This policy applies to all students and parents/guardians of Noosa Christian College.

*Student Counselling: All students of the College have equal opportunity to access support from the School Counsellor.*

*Parent Meetings/Feedback: The School Counsellor offers support and feedback to parents of students who are currently being supported by the Counsellor. Relevant and appropriate feedback is provided to parents, whilst upholding the confidentiality and ethical codes of the counselling practice.*

#### **Role of the School Counsellor**

The role of the School Counsellor is to help develop skills in the areas of emotional, social, mental and developmental needs of students. This is achieved by offering students 1 on 1 counselling sessions to explore difficulties and accompanying feelings but also to consider positive changes in overcoming their concerns and/or a situation.

For students to achieve their academic potential, they need to feel safe and supported at school. To remove or lessen emotional, social, or psychological obstacles to learning, the College will offer emotional, psychological, and mental health wellbeing assistance to students through established student wellbeing resources and access to counselling services, both internally and externally. This policy and procedure provides an inclusive framework for ensuring that the social, emotional, spiritual, and academic needs of all students are provided for, and suitable structures and procedures are in place to support student growth in all these areas.

The Counsellor may consult with parents/guardians regarding the wellbeing of their child or make recommendation for referral to an external agency for specialised, or ongoing support.

The Counsellor may also be involved in supporting staff and students through critical incidents. Reference should be made to Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) policies regarding the handling of critical incidents. The school Counsellor also works closely with staff, students and caregivers to provide up-to-date psychoeducation as new research arises.

### **Referral to School Counsellor**

Students may be referred from administration, teachers, parents, the wellbeing team, or the school chaplains.

#### Primary School:

All instances of referrals to the Counsellor for Preparatory to Year 6 students should be done in consultation with classroom teachers, Primary School Deputy, and parents. Written parental permission must be sought from the child's parents or carers prior to referring the child for counselling. Relevant information/feedback will be provided to parents.

In some circumstances, outside authorities will need to be informed (refer to Child Protection Policy and Procedures). Students and parents should be advised about mandatory reporting disclosure when they commence counselling as well as the limits of confidentiality as outlined below.

#### Secondary School

Teacher/Administration Referral: In the circumstance of a referral from a teacher or administration, parents may need to be informed. In some instances, outside authorities may need to be informed (refer to Child Protection Policy and Procedures). Students are advised about mandatory reporting disclosure when they commence counselling.

Student Self-referral: Parental permission is not necessarily required in secondary school, depending on the age of the student. Students in Years 7 to 12 can self-refer to the Counsellor by contacting the Counsellor directly or through the front office. In this case, the Secondary Deputy Principal will be made aware of the appointment.

In some instances, peer referrals may occur. That is a student's friends may bring them to the Counsellor or suggest to a trusted teacher that their friend may need the support of a Counsellor. In some circumstances, parents and/or outside authorities will need to be informed (refer to Child Protection Policy and Procedures). Students are advised about mandatory reporting disclosure when they commence counselling.

### **Limitations of Internal School Counselling Services**

The Noosa Christian College Counsellor is not able to conduct clinical or "in-depth" counselling, clinical diagnosis, or recommend medication. Such counselling may be required for students suffering from severe depression, anxiety, eating or other disorders, or phobias etc. In these instances, Counsellors may consult with the Principal, Primary or Secondary Deputy Principals, and/or parent to determine the most appropriate external provider for the circumstance. The Counsellor will determine whether a referral should be made within 1-6 sessions.

*In some instances, the School Counsellor may be engaged to work with the Learning Enhancement Department, supporting students with learning or behavioural difficulties. In these cases, information from counselling sessions that is shared to parents, classroom teachers and the Learning Enhancement Department and will be strictly confidential, and relevant to the child's learning development.*

The College can provide limited additional internal counselling support for such students, but this can only be done in conjunction with an outside psychologist or psychiatrist; it should never be seen as sufficient counselling to treat the individual's particular problem.

### **Counsellor/School Reporting**

All instances of child abuse revealed or uncovered by the School Counsellor are to be reported immediately to the Principal, Deputy Principal or delegate, and the procedures for mandatory reporting are to be followed (refer to Child Protection Policy and Procedures).

### **Counsellor Credentials**

The School Counsellor will have undertaken formal training in counselling studies and adheres to strict ethical guidelines as well as the current policies and procedures at Noosa Christian College. The Counsellor will maintain professional standards, including requirements to maintain registration with a recognised counselling/psychology organisation. The Counsellor will operate within the modalities taught as part of their formal training or additional professional development undertaken.

### **Confidentiality**

Sessions with the School Counsellor will be confidential.

However, there are circumstances where information cannot be kept confidential and must be reported as part of the College's duty of care. This would include, but not limited to child protection matters, issues of self-harm or suicide ideations as well as illegal actions. Additionally, where relevant, parents may receive useful feedback after sessions.

Within the ethical guidelines of counselling practice, the School Counsellor must attend appropriate hours of Clinical Supervision. The purpose of Supervision is to maintain professional and ethical standards of the Counsellor. Student cases may be presented to the Clinical Supervisor to maintain therapeutic proficiency.

### **Counsellor records**

The Counsellor is required to maintain records to track the sequence of events and nature of the services provided within the counselling relationship. Therefore, written counselling records will be established for students who access the Counsellor.

Students seen by the School Counsellor will be documented with limited information in SEQTA. The notes documented in SEQTA are entirely separate from notes taken by the Counsellor after session. Counsellor notes remain confidential unless requested for duty of care or legal purposes.

### **School closures/Lockdowns**

In the event of a school closure for a prolonged period of time, or a city/state-wide lockdown, counselling may still be available to students. The Counsellor is able to conduct counselling sessions using Zoom within the guidelines and policies of the governing body of Counsellor registration.

### **Counselling Hours and Crisis Support**

The School Counsellor is available and is reachable during school hours (8:00am – 4:30pm) for counselling sessions, check-ins, and to support the general well-being of the students.

Outside of school hours or during weekends, students and parents are encouraged to utilise available mental health services for crisis support. Please see [www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-helplines](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-helplines) for more information.

