



COLLEGE COUNSELLING POLICY

This document which applies to the whole college inclusive of boarding is publicly available on the college website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the college office.

Availability

This policy applies to the whole College, including boarding provision, and is publicly available on the College website. Copies may be obtained from the College Office and can be provided in large print or other accessible formats where required.

Reviewed: February 2025

Next Review: February 2026

Signed

David Game
Founder

John Dalton
Principal

Scope

This policy applies to all adults working for or on behalf of the College, including teaching and non-teaching staff, boarding staff (including night and weekend staff), governors, volunteers, contractors, and supply staff. It applies at all times, including outside normal College hours, during off-site activities, educational visits, and residential provision.

All staff and volunteers are required to read, understand, and comply with this policy, confirming this by signing the College Policies Register.

Legal Status

This policy complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. It supports the College's statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

Monitoring and Review

The policy is subject to ongoing monitoring by the Co-Principals and is formally reviewed on an annual basis. It is updated without delay where safeguarding concerns, risks, or deficiencies are identified. All staff are informed of updates promptly.

Statement of Purpose

David Game College recognises that mental health difficulties are common among children and young people and that suicide is a leading cause of death in this age group. The College is committed to being a suicide-safer environment in which students feel able to seek help, staff are trained and confident to respond appropriately, risks are identified early, and safeguarding always takes precedence over confidentiality.

Counselling Provision

Counselling and therapy are forms of talking therapy that provide students with a safe and supportive environment in which to explore thoughts, feelings, and experiences. For the purposes of this policy, the term *counselling* includes both short-term counselling and longer-term therapeutic interventions.

The College Counsellor is an independent practitioner commissioned by the College. The Counsellor holds a recognised postgraduate qualification in counselling or psychotherapy, is professionally accredited, and undertakes regular external clinical supervision. While clinically independent, the Counsellor works fully within the College's safeguarding framework and complies with all safeguarding policies and procedures.

The Counsellor is available during term time and may offer remote sessions where appropriate and safe.

Governance and Safeguarding Oversight

The Counsellor is line-managed for operational matters by the Mental Health Lead and works closely with the Head of Safeguarding (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and Deputy DSLs. Counselling provision forms part of the College's tiered pastoral and safeguarding approach. Confidentiality is overridden where there is a risk of harm to the student or others.

Referral and Access to Counselling

Students may raise concerns about their mental health with any trusted member of staff, and parents or staff may also identify students who may benefit from counselling support.

Formal referrals to the College's independent Counsellor may only be made by the Mental Health Lead or the Head of Safeguarding (DSL).

This ensures that safeguarding thresholds are assessed appropriately, risks are identified and managed effectively, and counselling provision operates within the College's safeguarding framework. All referrals are triaged promptly and include consideration of risk, safeguarding concerns, confidentiality, and Gillick competence where applicable. Where counselling is not immediately available, appropriate interim welfare support and supervision are put in place.

Confidentiality and Gillick Competence

Confidentiality is explained clearly to students at the outset of counselling. Confidentiality will be overridden where there is a risk of harm to the student or others. Gillick competence is assessed for students under 16, and decisions regarding competence and information-sharing are recorded on the College safeguarding system. Counselling is not a substitute for safeguarding.

Suicide Prevention and Crisis Response

All expressions of suicidal thoughts or intent are taken seriously. Talking about suicide does not increase risk. Student safety always takes priority over confidentiality.

If Any Member of Staff is Alone with a Student Who Discloses Suicidal Thoughts or Intent

Any member of staff who is alone with a student who states that they are feeling suicidal, or at risk of harming themselves, must treat this as an immediate safeguarding concern. The staff member must remain with the student at all times and must not leave them alone in order to seek help.

The staff member must contact the Head of Safeguarding (DSL) or a Deputy DSL immediately by phone. If neither is contactable, a member of the Senior Leadership Team must be contacted without delay.

Where there is immediate danger to life, or where appropriate safeguarding support cannot be accessed promptly, the staff member must call emergency services (999) while remaining with the student.

The concern must be recorded factually on the College safeguarding system as soon as it is safe to do so.

General Staff Responsibilities Following a Disclosure

Any staff member receiving a disclosure must listen calmly, avoid making promises of confidentiality, reassure the student that they have done the right thing in speaking up, and follow safeguarding escalation procedures without delay.

Boarding and Out-of-Hours Arrangements

Boarding students identified as at risk are supervised at all times. The on-call safeguarding lead must be contacted immediately, and enhanced supervision arrangements, including overnight supervision, are implemented as required.

Any boarding student who leaves site or goes missing while expressing suicidal intent is treated as an emergency safeguarding incident. The Missing Student Procedure is activated immediately, emergency services are contacted without delay, and all communications are preserved.

Information Sharing and Record Keeping

Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis to protect the student's welfare. All records are stored securely within the College safeguarding system, with access restricted to authorised safeguarding personnel.

Post-Incident Support

Following a crisis or serious incident, an individual safety plan is implemented and reviewed regularly. Parents or carers and external agencies are involved where appropriate and safe. Ongoing monitoring is overseen by the Head of Safeguarding, and staff affected by serious incidents are offered appropriate support and debriefing.

Training

All staff receive safeguarding training, including mental health awareness and suicide prevention. Boarding staff receive additional role-specific training, and suicide awareness training is refreshed at least every three years.