

Therapeutic Support



In play therapy, toys are like the child's words and play is the child's language

(Landreth, 2002)

Whitley Park Primary have employed a full time therapeutic support worker, Natilie Cocker, who is a qualified counsellor specialising in play therapy for children.

What does a counsellor do?

Counsellors are trained to listen without judging and to help people sort out their thoughts and feelings about whatever is concerning them.

What is Play Therapy?

Play therapy is to children what counselling is to adults. Play therapy uses play, children's natural means of expression, to help them express their feelings more easily through toys and art instead of words.

Why would a child need play therapy?

Few of us are able to work well when we are stressed or unhappy. The impact of distressing or difficult situations can be felt even more so by children which in turn can affect their ability to engage in the classroom or with their family and friends. Situations such as bullying, family breakdown, bereavement, low self-esteem, inability to make friends etc. are just a few examples of why children attend play therapy sessions. If children are able to receive emotional support from a qualified professional, they will have greater opportunity to fulfil their potential.

How long is a session?

Sessions are usually 50 minutes for children in years 1-6 and 30 minutes for reception and nursery children

Where and when?

The sessions will be in school in a private room and will be at the same day and time each week to maintain consistency.

What if I don't want counselling for my child?

If a child or young person requests counselling and is able to understand what is involved in the process, then they have the right to access counselling. Parents and carers may not deny them this right. We would, however, prefer that we have your support for the work, and we are always happy to talk with you about any concerns that you may have about the idea of counselling.

What if my child refuses to have counselling?

The decision about whether or not to take up the offer of counselling is entirely voluntary for children just as it would be for an adult.



Confidentiality

Ensuring the confidentiality of the work is crucial for establishing trust so that the children feel confident to speak openly and freely about what is concerning them. Counselling is a time when it's OK to talk about concerns without fear of them being discussed elsewhere. However, if a pupil appears to be at risk of significant harm it may be appropriate to seek help from other agencies to keep them safe. The child will be aware of this from the outset.

What can I do?

Experience shows that the most helpful thing a parent or carer can do is to show an acceptance of counselling as a normal and useful activity, and to show an interest if their son/ daughter wishes to talk about it, but not to press them if they don't. We acknowledge that this isn't an easy task, and it is quite natural for parents to feel anxious about what may be being said in the sessions.

It is always the hope that talking with a trusted therapist will lead to greater openness with yourselves, but you may need to allow a little time for this to happen.

Support

The role of the therapeutic support worker extends to parents, carers and school staff. Consultations are available to help develop coping strategies and have a better understanding of the children in their care.

Referrals

If you wish to make a referral, this can be done either through the class teacher, SENCO or head teacher. If you wish, you can have an informal discussion with the Therapeutic Support Worker first.

