



Student Support Services



CHELTENHAM
COLLEGE

Welcome to Student Support Services

Wellbeing for all

Alongside the teaching and House staff, the Student Support Team plays an important part in helping students manage the ups and downs of school life.

In the normal course of events, all students will face challenges at some point in their College life - from the apprehensions of starting school for our youngest pupils, to concerns about independence and taking the big step of leaving College in the Upper Sixth.

For some children in our school there are the extra demands of handling life events and family changes: moving home, divorce, illness or bereavement. There are also the more ordinary, but not always easy, pressures on peer relationships and working out your own identity. In addition, students

may be faced with pressure from social media, and the academic work load. In all of these cases, we are available to parents, staff and pupils to help them think through issues, and find ways to move forward.

The Student Support Service operates from two very comfortable consulting rooms at The Health Centre, opposite the Prep School reception. The rooms are pleasant neutral spaces to talk or relax, and are also equipped with toys, art materials and a sand tray for use in sessions across the age span.

Who we are

Our team is comprised of two specialist Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists, Rachel Melville-Thomas and Stuart Hannah, who are both NHS trained and registered.

Rachel and Stuart are qualified to work with children and young people from

nursery through to age 25 years. They also have extensive training in consulting with parents, families and the adults supporting a child. As part of their experience of work within school and medical settings, they have also provided individual and group supervision/consultation to professionals working with children and families.

Rachel Melville-Thomas has an additional qualification as a Movement Therapist and has skills in movement assessment and non-verbal communication.

Stuart Hannah has previously qualified in and worked as a children and families social worker whilst completing his clinical training in child psychotherapy.

Both Rachel and Stuart's registration is with the Association of Child Psychotherapists:
www.childpsychotherapy.org.uk



Stuart Hannah and Rachel Melville-Thomas



The Student Support Service 13 - 18 years

What we do for College Students

We can offer an initial consultation either face to face, or via phone call to HSMs (Housemaster/mistress) and other staff who are concerned about a young person. We will plan in consultation with their HSM about ways of supporting that young person and if appropriate will offer an appointment to the student.

Please note that in our experience, the sessions which are likely to be of most benefit are where students themselves are willing to come.

Wherever possible we try to offer students who are siblings their own separate therapist.

We can offer direct one to one work with young people which is usually arranged on a weekly basis. College students can be offered up to 8 sessions without charge. If more sessions are indicated this can be arranged with parents, at the cost of £65 per session billed by College.

What is it like?

Having an appointment means a student is provided with about 45 minutes of their own private time with a College therapist in a quiet, neutral place where they get a chance to talk about and think through where they are, and what difficulties are presenting. The therapist will listen and try to understand, and, following the student's lead, they will begin a process of making sense of the difficulties. If necessary, the therapist may offer practical strategies, or suggest involving other members of staff or

parents as appropriate.

Who will know?

When attending an appointment at The Health Centre, anyone else waiting there will not know if the student has come for a medical reason or to have a talking session. At this level, it is possible to be quite anonymous. The student's House staff (Matron/HSM) will need to know that they are attending an appointment - but not what it is for, unless there has been a prior consultation with staff.

Sometimes it is necessary to seek permission to share basic information, so that Student Support is able to liaise with the pastoral structures that support young people at College. This will always be made clear to the student so there is an opportunity to discuss it first.

Parental involvement

As you can imagine, often young people speak more freely when they are assured that information will not be passed on to parents. However, there are many occasions when we feel that more progress will be made by communicating with parents, and sometimes students themselves are very keen that this should happen. It may also be beneficial for parents to come in themselves, either for a private consultation with the therapist to share their observations, or even have a joint session with the young person and the therapist.

We work hard to encourage parental involvement but if the young person is 16 or over, confidential choices must be respected.

International Parents

The Student Support team are always happy to maintain contact with parents living overseas, by telephone or video call, or ideally will offer times to meet parents in person at pick up points at the beginning and end of terms if possible. If there are differences in language, an interpreter can be arranged.

What if it's not helping?

It is really important to try and be honest with the therapist if it doesn't feel helpful, or if that is too difficult, then to give feedback to another member of The Health Centre team or Houseparent. Between the adults involved we will consider alternative ways of working. Sometimes, it can feel more helpful to seek support from outside agencies, and we can help direct the student to other resources if necessary. Engaging with outside agencies will normally involve the parent or guardian.



The Student Support Service 3 - 13 years

What we do for the Prep School

With the younger children we always seek parental permission before a child or young person is seen, and this is done in person or can be agreed over the phone.

It is part of the usual service to meet with parents to offer advice or tips on their child's emotional health and wellbeing. In this case, the child may not need to be seen at all.

However, it can be beneficial for the Prep pupil to have their own 'Talk Time' where they have space to express themselves in individual sessions.

The expectation would be, that whilst details of sessions are kept private and confidential (barring safeguarding issues) the themes of sessions may be shared with

pastoral staff and parents in order for them to further support their children.

What is it like?

Younger children don't find it so easy to put their thoughts and feelings into words, so a session for them will involve play, drawing and sand tray work. The therapist has a relaxed and friendly manner which enables a natural sequence of play and story making to develop, in which the child can express their views of things. The majority of Prep children really enjoy their sessions and the one-to-one attention.

As with the College service, there is the possibility of up to 8 sessions provided for Prep pupils without charge, including feedback to parents. After this, if further work is necessary, sessions are charged at £65 per hour.



What if it's not helping?

We encourage parents to ask for a consultation if things have become stuck. At this point we may either review the approach being used with the child, or suggest broader support services outside the school, such as family therapy, paediatric assessment or educational psychology.

Referral Process

Within the Prep school referrals are made via staff and/or parents who can contact us directly. When the referral comes from a member of the teaching staff, our usual practice would be to get in contact with parents and offer them a consultation either by phone or face to face before considering individual work with a child.

Within College, a young person can ask directly for an appointment with us (via phone, e-mail, or The Health Centre reception) or they may be referred (with their agreement) via the school GPs, Nurses, HSMs or Tutors.

What else is on offer?

- Nurture groups in the Prep School for children to talk through feelings together
- Regular input from Student Support to the College Floreat wellbeing programme

How to get in contact with us:

The Student Support team are available at the following times:

Rachel: Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays
9.30 - 5.00pm

Stuart: Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
9.00 - 5.00pm

Contact us at: sss@cheltenhamcollege.org

Rachel Melville-Thomas:
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Stuart Hannah:
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