27 March 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian

In light of the current health situation and school closures, Holy Trinity College is very pleased to be able to offer a continuation of the Independent Counselling Service (ICSS) for schools via the medium of online or telephone counselling.

We recognise that this is an unprecedented situation, but we are fully committed to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of our pupils. These are unusual times and this brings unusual stressors on young people and their families. There may be anxiety about the lack of exam grades, what will happen in the future, personal health or the health of loved ones. There may be grief over the loss of friendships, routine or people. We want to give a response that is supportive and safe for our young people who are the future of our world.

The online service works as follows:

* It is a confidential service for young people who would normally attend school from the ages of 11-18, applying to every year group from Year 8 - Year 14. The service will occur on the same day and time as counselling is usually delivered in school – Tuesday and Thursday.
* If your child is already receiving counselling you do not need to do anything. The counselling will continue via telephone or online. The school counsellor will be in contact with them in a few days.
* If your child wishes to refer themselves into the ICSS, this can be done through the Familyworks website [www.familyworksni.com](http://www.familyworksni.com) . As a parent / guardian, you can also refer your child to the service, but you should get their permission to do so first. You can do this by just asking them privately how they might feel about speaking to the school counsellor. Providing a quiet space to talk to the counsellor and away from the rest of the family is extremely helpful. There is a button on the website for parents and school staff to refer children / pupils to.
* The counselling service will be delivered to the same standard as in school, and will work under the school’s child protection policy so your child will be kept safe.
* A telephone Drop-in service will also be provided and the number and time for this will be on the school website shortly.

Finally, if your child is already receiving help from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), please ensure that this continues during this crisis. If you feel that your child is thinking about self-harm or suicide, please consult your GP or they can call the lifeline number on 0808 808 8000, or for those who are deaf or hard of hearing 18001 0808 808 8000.

Keep well and keep safe,

Yours sincerely

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**I Russell (Mrs) Principal**