



# MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Date of Issue	February 2020
Review Date	February 2022
Ratified by	Standards & Achievement Committee
Date	February 2020
Produced by	School
SLT responsible:	Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral
Signatures:  Chair of Governor   Headteacher	

FEARNHILL SCHOOL

## **Policy Statement**

*Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (World Health Organization).*

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

## **Scope**

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

## **The Policy Aims to:**

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

## **Lead Members of Staff**

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Nat Baker - Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer
- Verity Burgess - Mental Health Lead
- Nat Baker- Deputy Mental Health Lead
- Mary Penny – Mental Health Governor
- Cora Fletcher - Lead First Aider
- Verity Burgess - Bereavement Lead
- Liz Ellis - CPD

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the mental health lead/ deputy in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officer, the head teacher or the designated governor. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

You can also access toolkits and advice forums here;  
<https://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/young-people>

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the mental health lead/ deputy or other relevant staff e.g. pastoral leaders.

### **Mental Health Lead/Deputy's Role**

The mental health lead is responsible for implementing a whole-school approach towards mental health to promote good mental wellbeing and resilience amongst pupils and staff. In particular, they are responsible for:

- Overseeing the whole-school approach towards mental health and wellbeing, including how it is reflected in the design of behaviour policies, curriculum and pastoral support, how staff are supported with their own wellbeing and how pupils and parents are engaged.
- Supporting the identification of pupils at risk of, or showing signs of, mental ill health.
- Gaining knowledge of the local mental health services and working with clear links into pupils' mental health services to refer pupils to NHS services where it is appropriate.
- Coordinating the mental health needs of pupils and overseeing the delivery of interventions where these are being delivered in school.
- Supporting staff in contact with pupils with mental health needs to help raise awareness and give all staff the confidence to work with pupils.
- Overseeing the outcomes of interventions for pupils' education and wellbeing.

### **Staff Wellbeing**

Teaching can be immensely rewarding but also physically and emotionally draining. If we want our school staff to do what is asked of them, then we need to make sure that their mental health and wellbeing is effectively supported. We do this by offering:

- Briefing and debriefing
- Tea, coffee and cakes provided termly by SLT
- Herts rewards scheme
- Open door policy to SLT
- CPD offered to all staff where needed
- Social events

Staff can also access this website for quick tips on looking after themselves.  
<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/resources-for-schools/supporting-staff-wellbeing-in-schools/>

### **Student Wellbeing**

#### **Positive approaches within school**

- Counsellor – external professional
- Internal mentoring when needed

- Referrals to external agencies
- Use of positive behaviour plans
- Trips out
- Fearnhill student tracker
- Lunch time food provided for all students
- Systemic family work
- Rewards including termly trips
- House days each term
- Parental involvement – celebration of achievement at end of year
- Student voice

### **Teaching about Mental Health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHCE curriculum and through form time sessions.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

### **Signposting**

We will ensure staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within the school and in the local community. What support is displayed around the school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in Appendix.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as common rooms and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help seeking by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

### **Warning Signs**

Staff may become aware of warning signs that indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with, our mental health and emotional wellbeing lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood

- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

### **Managing conversations**

A student may choose to discuss concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

All staff at the school are to complete level 1 foundation training awareness course on mental health.

If a student chooses to discuss concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively visit; <https://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/parents-and-carers/talking-your-teen-10-tips-parents-young-people/just-talk-advice-parents-and> or see appendix.

All conversations should be recorded on CPOMS and held on the student's confidential file. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the conversation was had with
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the mental health lead/ deputy, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. See appendix F for guidance about making a referral to CAMHS.

The mental health lead/ deputy can also refer locally through counselling teams and Kooth. <https://www.kooth.com/>

### **Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSP must be informed immediately.

### **Working with Parents**

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions (on a case-by-case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible, as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

### **Working with All Parents**

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

### **Supporting Peers**

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in either one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves

- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

### **Suicide awareness**

Guidelines adapted from 'spot the signs' suicide awareness campaign for Hertfordshire.

<https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/information-and-resources/spot-the-signs/>

When a student has a conversation that they are having suicidal thoughts or thinking of taking their own life we have a duty of care to take action.

Staff are required to Ask-Listen-Respond to the student (details can be found in the appendix). Staff should notify the mental health lead/ deputy and together they will assess if the young person is at immediate risk. In this case, staff can call 11 or take the student to A&E. If the mental health lead/ deputy decide that the young person is not at immediate risk, a safety plan will be put into place for the student.

All conversations about suicide should be taken seriously and recorded on CPOMS.

All staff are required to complete the following training to raise awareness.

<https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/>

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal <https://www.minded.org.uk/> provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with SLT, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

As a school, we are currently working towards the mental health kite mark.

## Managing a Young Person with Depression

### What does it look like in a young person?

1. Sadness or hopelessness
2. Irritability, anger, or hostility
3. Tearfulness or frequent crying
4. Withdrawal from friends and family
5. Loss of interest in activities
6. Poor school performance
7. Changes in eating and sleeping habits
8. Restlessness and agitation
9. Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
10. Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
11. Fatigue or lack of energy
12. Difficulty concentrating
13. Unexplained aches and pains
14. Thoughts of death or suicide

### What we do

- Tutor mentoring
- Inform parents carers to refer to the GP
- Refer to our school counsellor
- Communicate effectively with parents and carers
- Involve the student in cultured trips and experiences
- Provide hot meals and uniforms
- Praise and reward young people

### What you can do

- Communicate
- Encourage social connection
- Make physical activity a priority
- Know when to seek professional help
- Support
- Take care of yourself and the rest of the family

### Useful websites

<https://www.justtalkherts.org/young-people/young-people-and-parents.aspx>

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/about-us>

<https://www.headspace.com/>

<https://theolliefoundation.org/>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/Schools-and-education/Childcare-and-advice-for-parents/Parents-and-family-support/Parents-and-family-support.aspx>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/>

<https://www.minded.org.uk/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/>

<https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/>

<https://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/>

<https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/information-and-resources/spot-the-signs/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.kooth.com/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

<https://www.ychertfordshire.org/>