



Heathside School

Mental Health Policy

As a school committed to the principles and values of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this policy particularly highlights Articles 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,12,13,14,15,18,24,25

Staff Member with Responsibility: Miss Balson

Role: Assistant Principal

Reviewed by:

Student Learning & Progress Committee

Date of review:

Spring 2017

Date of next review:

Spring 2020

Introduction

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 Organisation)

At Heathside School, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both 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.

This policy 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.

Aims

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- To promote and open culture which Increases understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff and parents working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should make a referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead following the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the school's pastoral staff.

Risk Assessments

It may be helpful to create a risk assessment for students causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the student, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

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 PSHE curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the age and needs of the cohort, 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.

Heathside follows the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure it teaches mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner.

Signposting

We ensure that staff, students and parents are made aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.

Relevant sources of support are displayed in communal areas such as common rooms and corridors and we regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever sources of support are highlighted, we 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

The school website also signposts parents to some useful webpages on a range of topics.

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which 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 the Designated Safeguarding Team.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / 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

Managing disclosures and confidentiality

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, should this happen staff should follow the guidance from the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Working with Parents

In order to support parents with their child's positive mental health and wellbeing 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 information evenings
- Keep parents informed about any mental health topics their children are learn within the PSHE curriculum

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 either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by 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 / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs 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

The School Counselling Service

Heathside School offers a counselling service for all students in years 7-13. This is run by an experienced and qualified counsellor who is available two days a week to help support the mental wellbeing of our students. As a member of the BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy), our counsellor is bound by code of ethics, and practice in accordance to their guidelines and principles. More information can be found at www.bacp.co.uk

What is counselling and how may it help?

- It can help us understand relationships better and improve them
- It can help us to increase our level of self-awareness
- It can help us explore our feelings, and help us to manage them better
- It can help us to recognise unhelpful thought patterns and adopt new ones
- It can help us recognise the past and current behaviours which we do not want to take into our future
- It can help us to improve our communication skills
- It offers a place to reflect upon oneself and our relationship with the world

Counselling is a process which offers guidance and support when needed. The counsellor will provide a safe and confidential place for a young person to explore thoughts and feelings which perhaps are overwhelming and upsetting, in a drive to enable change.

Issues young people may struggle with:

- Bullying
- Academic pressure
- Parental divorce or separation
- Peer Pressure
- Drug and/or alcohol use
- Sexual health
- Arrival of new sibling
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Exam stress
- Bereavement
- Confusion
- Anxiety about the future
- Self-harm

Referrals and Assessments

Students can self-refer to the school counsellor or they can speak to a member of pastoral staff who can make a referral for them.

The young person may have needs that are not appropriate for counselling and may require alternative intervention. These needs may require signposting to other agencies, either within or outside of school.

Once a referral has been made, the counsellor will meet and assess the student. The process is important to identify the needs of the young person and to ensure they have agreed to attend. Counselling must be voluntary.

Students may engage in counselling for as long as is required, this may be a one off session or weekly sessions.

Confidentially

All young people are entitled to confidentiality as outlined by the BACP Code of ethics. This means that the information they bring to the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the counsellor. Information will not be shared unless the young person has agreed to it.

The counsellor will however state that they need to break confidentiality should they deem the young person to be at significant risk to themselves or others. At this point information may need to be shared with another party. The counsellor is aware of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and adheres to this policy as appropriate.

Young people are entitled to confidential counselling. Gillick competence will be assessed by the counsellor in the initial meeting and if deemed competent the young person will be able to give consent to counselling. Assessment of competence based on the Gillick principle depends on:

- The maturity of the young person
- The young person having sufficient intelligence and understanding of the consequences of his or her actions
- The young person having sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable them to understand what is being proposed

As a rule, most secondary students are deemed mature and intelligent enough to understand the counselling process, but there are occasionally those who are not. It is crucial, at this point that parental consent is obtained. Every effort is made to engage parents and where appropriate, young people are encouraged to inform their parents that they are receiving counselling.

For further information on the counselling service, please contact Miss Balson, Assistant Principal.

Training

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

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 additional training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Evaluation

The mental health provision at Heathside will be reviewed yearly and the following data will be collected:

- Yearly student surveys
- Evaluation of the impact of the schools' counselling service
- Review of the counselling and ELSA provision
- Review of the curriculum in relation to mental health
- Review of staff training needs