



Gateacre School

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

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1.0 Policy statement

At Gateacre School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

2.0 Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining Gateacre Schools approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

3.0 Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

4.0 Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Pastoral Staff
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- SENCO
- Mental Health First Aid Champion
- PSHEe Coordinator

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to the appropriate Pastoral Lead. If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed. If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

5.0 Individual Care Plans

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

6.0 Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHEe curriculum and our peer mentoring programme.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing> incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges. **See Section 14 for Supporting Peers**

7.0 Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services. Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

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

8.0 Sources of support at school and in the local community

School based support - SEMH Coordinator

Students can be referred to the SEMH Coordinator for support with a range of emotional and mental health issues. Referrals can be made by the SENCO, School Counsellor, and Head of Year, Assistant Head of Year or any members of staff with concerns about a student. The SEMH coordinator provides a safe, calm, therapeutic environment which enables students to feel safe, secure and supported.

The aim of SEMH Intervention is:

- Supporting students with specific ASD difficulties
- Supporting students with specific ADHD difficulties
- Helping students with anxiety
- Helping students to understand and control their emotions
- Helping students with anger management
- Helping students to break down their barriers to learning
- Helping students to cope with grief and loss
- Helping students with social and communication difficulties
- Helping students with strategies for self-regulation
- Helping students to gain confidence in themselves
- Helping students with the stress and worry of exams
- To promote positive behaviour and mental health

The SEMH Coordinator adheres to the school child protection and safeguarding policies at all times. Where appropriate the SEMH Coordinator may refer students to the School Counsellor, SENCO or other outside agencies.

The SEMH Coordinator is based within the Inclusion area of the school and provides an initial 'interview' style process which will flag up any areas for concern and help her to gain an understanding of the individual student needs. Students are then offered sessions either weekly or as regular as required. The sessions are then personalised and tailored to suit the individual student needs. The SEMH Coordinator works closely with and liaises regularly with the School Counsellor and SENCO. The School Counsellor will refer students to the SEMH Coordinator at the end of their 6 week session for additional support if needed.

Students will access the support in a range of ways:

- One to one – The SEMH Coordinator works with the students on a one to one basis to effectively support them with a variety of issues. Students will attend sessions during the school day at an agreed time.
- Group work – The SEMH Coordinator will work with a small group of students who have similar difficulties, experiences and feelings. Common shared difficulties can include social skills, anxiety, low self-esteem etc.
- Intermittent sessions – The SEMH Coordinator offers less frequent sessions to students who feel they don't need regular contact. This can be in the form of drop in, email or a check in ever few weeks.
- Follow up care – The SEMH Coordinator will keep communication open with students even after they feel they don't need as much support. This will be in the form of a half termly check in on the students or an email.

School Counsellor

Students can be referred to the school counsellor for support with their mental health and wellbeing. The counsellor promotes a safe and supportive environment, enabling students to share, explore and understand any concerns that may be causing them difficulty or distress. The aim of these sessions is to

- Allow students to feel heard and supported without judgement.
- Enable them to gain a greater understanding of themselves and their emotions.
- To help increase awareness and utilisation of their personal resources
- To build their resilience
- To support their ability to address problems
- Pursue personal goals

The counselling relationship has identified boundaries and an explicit contract agreed between the student, counsellor and, where appropriate, parent or carer. The counsellor adheres to the school child protection and safeguarding policies. Where appropriate the counsellor may refer students to outside agencies and liaises with school staff and other professionals.

The counsellor offers an initial session to assess any potential risk and to gain an understanding of each student's needs and what support may be helpful. Students are then offered frequent sessions that are attended voluntarily over an agreed period of time.

- Individual counselling – The counsellor works with students on a one-to-one basis to help them effectively manage a variety of concerns. Students attend sessions during their school day and the frequency will depend on each student's individual need.
- Group work – Group work is often facilitated by the counsellor throughout the school year. Groups are organised according to student-identified needs often due to similar or shared experiences and feelings. Common group themes include anxiety, social skills, and self-esteem and exam worries.
- Intermittent sessions – The counsellor offers ad hoc sessions to students who may have previously attended more frequently or those who feel that they don't need regular sessions.

Local Support:

The SEMH Coordinator, School Counsellor and SENCO can sign post and refer to a range of groups and organisations offering support outside of school. These include CAMHS, YPAS and ADDvanced Solutions. These organisations can provide support for student's mental health and well-being through accessible support delivered to not only the students but their families too. The SEMH Coordinator will also direct students to access KOOTH – an online mental health tool which offers emotional and mental health support up to 10pm every day.

<https://www.kooth.com>

<https://www.liverpoolcamhs.com>

<https://ypas.org.uk>

9.0 Warning Signs

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 alert (insert name of mental health first aider).

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of 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
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

10.0 Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school nurses and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working closely with Liverpool City Council Children's Services, Liverpool CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach;
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs;
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Liverpool CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

11.0 Managing disclosures

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on the student's personal file, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with the Pastoral Lead the DSL.

12.0 Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as students up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed, but students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours is recommended to share this information before the school makes contact with the parents/carers.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

13.0 Whole school approach

13.1 Working with parents/carers

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

13.2 Supporting parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

14.0 Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided 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

15.0 Training

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. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal 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 Joanne Boyd AHT who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

16.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is January 2022

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes.

This is the responsibility of Joanne Boyd AHT

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.

Key Policy Holder: A.Boulton, Designated Safeguarding Lead/Assistant Headteacher

Policy updated: December 2020

Governing Body Approval: January 2021

Next Review: January 2022