



# **Positive Mental Health Policy**

## **2023/24**

Version control

Policy author: Vice Principal

Policy approved by: Local Stakeholder Board

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Next policy review date: Summer term 2024

Version	Date	Details
1.1	January 2023	Updated to reflect staffing changes.
1.2	September 2023	Updated to reflect staffing changes.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty**

This policy is written with due regard for the public sector equality duty that is placed on all schools. Tavistock College will make reasonable adjustments for members of the school community with SEND and protected characteristics and guard against discriminatory practices and victimisation to ensure no-one is treated unfairly.

## **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 College, 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. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. 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:

- James Buchanan - Vice Principal
- Hazel Blackmore - Assistant Principal, Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Rachel Turner - Director of SEND
- Rob Kelly - Assistant Principal, Disadvantaged lead
- Nick Read - Assistant Principal, Behaviour
- Heads of Year
- Julia Tosdevin - Head of Faculty (Social Studies inc PSHE)
- Neil Hosking

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the mental health lead 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.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the relevant Head of Year.

## **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 developmental PSHE curriculum and Personal Development offer.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific 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.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

## Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. This is delivered through our PSHE curriculum, our Personal Development offer, communication with families (i.e. newsletter), assemblies et al. 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

## Indicators of concern

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 Head of Year or one of our mental health and emotional wellbeing champions.

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 disclosures**

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

If a student chooses to disclose 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?'.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the student's CPOMS record. This written record should include:

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

This information should be shared with the Head of Year and a member of the pastoral team via CPOMS record so as to ensure there is a swift and timely response to the concern raised.

## **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

We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. The premise of good safeguarding and the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2022 et seq apply.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the pastoral team or strategic lead. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents must always be informed if a child discloses mental health concerns, especially if they disclose that they are self-harming or have suicidal ideation. Students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. We should always give students the option of the College informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSL or DDSL must be informed immediately following the college/DMAT policy and protocols.

## Working with families

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform families, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to families, 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 families 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 family 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're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at families can also be helpful too, e.g. family 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 families 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.

## **Working with all families**

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

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all families 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 families
- Share ideas about how families can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- Keep families informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

## **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.

Support and training is provided centrally from the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust as well as engaging with external providers such as the Anna Freud Centre.

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.

Ongoing CPD is delivered through our morning briefings which take place three times a week.

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

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in Summer term 2024

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to the Vice Principal via email [j.buchanan@tavistockcollege.org](mailto:j.buchanan@tavistockcollege.org)

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.