



HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Person Responsible: Deputy Head Teacher
Link Governor: Mr I Stone
Date Adopted: Autumn 2023
Date of last review: Autumn 2023
Date of next review: Autumn 2025

1. AIMS

At Hoe Valley School, fostering a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing for everyone involved – from our students and staff to parents and carers – is a priority. Just as we value physical health, we place an equal emphasis on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of our community.

Hoe Valley School has been identified as a school with one of the highest needs for mental health support within Surrey. We understand that a student's mental health plays a pivotal role in their overall wellbeing and directly influences their academic progress. Mental health challenges can make learning substantially more difficult for some students compared to their peers.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice 2015 lists Social, Emotional, and Mental Health as a primary area of Special Educational Need. Every student will face challenges and experience highs and lows throughout their academic journey. A recent study found that 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year. 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14, which can profoundly affect their day-to-day life, interpersonal relationships, and academic performance.

The Department for Education (DfE) has highlighted the role of schools in strengthening student resilience and mental health. Hoe Valley School serves as a sanctuary for many students, providing a nurturing space to strengthen their self-worth and provide them with tools to overcome adversities. For some, our school becomes a haven from challenging home situations, presenting opportunities to form positive relationships and draw inspiration from admirable role models. This environment is instrumental in nurturing student wellbeing and fostering a strong community spirit.

Our commitment at Hoe Valley School is to support our students during turbulent times, instilling resilience, helping them reach their highest potential, and guiding them to appropriate resources whenever needed. We are dedicated to empowering them with knowledge about maintaining their mental health, understanding the factors that can affect it, demystifying associated stigmas, and ensuring they know where to turn for help.

Our vision for Hoe Valley School includes the following:

- Treating every student as invaluable
- Creating a space where students belong and feel secure
- Ensuring students can confide in trusted adults without facing prejudice
- Championing and valuing positive mental health
- Maintaining a strict no-bullying policy

Moreover, we acknowledge that our staff's mental and emotional well-being is just as crucial. As we support our students, we equally emphasise the well-being of every individual who makes Hoe Valley School the nurturing community it is.

2. OBJECTIVES OF HOE VALLEY SCHOOL'S MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Our policy explains:

- The measures we take to cultivate positive mental health
- Strategies to avert the onset of mental health issues
- Protocols to identify and assist students grappling with mental health concerns
- Our commitment to training and equipping staff with the knowledge to discern early indications of mental health issues and intervene before they exacerbate
- An overview of prevalent mental health issues
- Resources for parents, staff, and students seeking guidance and assistance

3. UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

Hoe Valley School embraces the World Health Organisation's perspective on mental health and wellbeing:

"... a condition where every individual acknowledges and attains their unique potential, manages the standard pressures of life, contributes positively to their community, and sustains productivity."

For us, mental health and wellbeing are not merely about mental disorders. We equip our students with the skills to:

- Cultivate self-confidence and self-assurance
- Express emotions healthily and constructively
- Forge and sustain meaningful relationships
- Handle everyday pressures and challenges effectively
- Adapt to changes and stressful situations
- Engage in productive learning and accomplish their goals

4. INTERCONNECTION WITH OTHER POLICIES

Hoe Valley School's Mental Health Policy is harmonised with other institutional guidelines, including Safeguarding, Inclusion, Looked After Children, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour For Learning, Personal Social Health Education (PSHE), Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), and our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.

The relationship between our Mental Health Policy and the Behaviour for Learning Policy is particularly significant. Behaviours, whether they manifest as disruptive, anxious, withdrawn, or in any other form, might indicate underlying mental health challenges. At Hoe Valley School, behaviour is seen as a form of communication.

5. HOE VALLEY SCHOOL'S COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR NURTURING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

At Hoe Valley School, our commitment to bolstering positive mental health is holistic. Our ambition is to nurture students who are resilient, joyful, accomplished, and adept at averting potential challenges.

Our approach encompasses seven integral facets:

1. **Cultivating a School Environment:** We endeavour to create an ethos with policies and practices where everyone recognises and inherently supports mental health and resilience.
2. **Fostering Interpersonal Relationships:** We assist our students in nurturing robust social bonds, encouraging mutual support, and emphasising the importance of seeking assistance when needed.
3. **Building Resilient Learners:** We focus on fortifying the inherent strength of our students, enabling them to face academic and personal challenges with confidence.
4. **Imparting Essential Life Skills:** We are committed to teaching our students crucial social, emotional, and mental health awareness skills, equipping them to navigate the complexities of modern life.
5. **Prompt Identification and Support:** We prioritise the early detection of students displaying signs of mental health concerns. We ensure they receive the necessary support by devising tailored support plans and, if required, collaborating with specialist services.
6. **Engaging with Parents and Carers:** Recognising parents and carers' pivotal role, we work in close partnership with them, ensuring a unified support system for our students.
7. **Empowering our Staff:** We provide our staff with the necessary training and resources, fortifying their abilities to support our students and ensure their resilience.

Moreover, we are acutely aware of the detrimental impact of stigmatising mental health issues. Our mission is to debunk myths, build understanding, and foster an environment where discussing mental health is accepted and encouraged. Hoe Valley School is steadfastly committed to being a place where open dialogue is encouraged.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across our school and for understanding risk factors. If any members of staff are concerned about a student's mental health or wellbeing, they should inform the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)/senior mental health lead.

Appointed members of staff have extra duties to lead on mental health and wellbeing in school. These members of staff include:

- Jane Davies – Head Teacher
- Kevin Kelly - Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) / Senior Mental Health Lead/ Deputy Head
- Matilda Cannon - Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)
- Natasha Johnson - Mental health lead
- Val O'Keeffe – Deputy designated safeguarding lead / Inclusion manager
- James Jagger– PSHE/RSE

7. WARNING SIGNS

All staff will be on the lookout for signs that a student's mental health is deteriorating. Some warning signs include: Changes in:

- Mood or energy level
- Eating or sleeping patterns
- Attitude in lessons or academic attainment
- Level of personal hygiene
- Social isolation
- Poor attendance or punctuality
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Secretive behaviour
- Covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously
- Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes
- Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause
- Physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

8. MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a student makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgmental and reassuring.

Staff will focus on the student's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow our school's safeguarding policy and pass on all concerns to the DSL/mental health lead and DDSL. All disclosures are recorded and stored in the student's confidential child protection file on CPOMS.

When making a record of a disclosure, staff will include:

- The full name of the member of staff who is making the record
- The full name of the student(s) involved
- The date, time and location of the disclosure
- The context in which the disclosure was made
- Any questions asked or support offered by the member of staff

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff will not promise a student that they will keep a disclosure secret – instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

A disclosure cannot be kept secret because:

- Being the sole person responsible for a student's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing
- The support put in place for the student will be dependent on the member of staff being at school
- Other staff members can share ideas on how to best support the student in question

Staff should always share disclosures with at least 1 appropriate colleague. This will usually be the DSL/mental health lead and the DDSL. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Before sharing information disclosed by a student with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the student and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will share
- Why they need to share that information

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the student to share their information, but the safety of the student comes first.

Parents/carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern. In this case the safeguarding policy will be followed.

9.1 Process for Managing Confidentiality Around Disclosures

1. Student makes a disclosure
2. Member of staff offers support
3. Member of staff explains the issues around confidentiality and rationale for sharing a disclosure with DSL/Senior Mental Health Lead/DSL

4. Member of staff will attempt to get the student's consent to share – if no consent is given, explain to the student who the information will be shared with and why
5. Member of staff will record the disclosure and share the information with the chosen elected member of staff
6. The DSL/Senior Mental Health Lead/ DDSL will inform the parent/carer (if appropriate)
7. Any other relevant members of staff or external professionals will be informed on a need-to-know basis

10. SUPPORTING STUDENTS

10.1 Baseline support for all student

As part of our school's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all students, our school offers support to all students by:

- Student led activities raising awareness of mental health during assemblies, tutor time, PSHE and mental health awareness week
- Signposting all students to sources of online support, through our school website and our mental health and wellbeing Google classroom.
- Having open discussions about mental health during lessons
- Providing students with avenues to provide feedback on any elements of our school that is negatively impacting their mental health
- Monitoring all student's mental health through assessments, such as strengths and difficulties questionnaires and a whole school wellbeing measuring system.
- Appointed both senior and a mental health lead with a strategic oversight of our whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing
- Offering pastoral support through tutors, heads of year and Pastoral leads
- Creating a wellbeing ambassadors program to provide peer support
- Transition meetings with parents/carers and relevant members of staff
- Displays and information around the school about mental health and where to go for support within school and outside of school.

10.2 Assessing what further support is needed

If a student is identified as having a mental health need, the Deputy Mental Health Lead and SENCo will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to assessing the support our school can provide, further to the baseline support detailed above in section 10.1.

Our school will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the student's mental health needs are
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

10.3 Internal mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a student will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our school includes:

- Emotional Support mentoring (ELSA) Reduced timetable
- Surrey Mental Health Team support
- Counselling and mentoring through Surrey Care Trust
- Early Intervention Co-ordinator Mindworks

10.4 Making external referrals

If a student's needs cannot be met by the internal offer our school provides, our school will make, or encourage parents/carers to make, a referral for external support.

A student could be referred to:

- Their GP or a paediatrician
- Mindworks Mental Health charities (e.g. [Samaritans](#), [Mind](#), [Young Minds](#), [Kooth](#))
- Local counselling services

11. SUPPORTING AND COLLABORATING WITH PARENTS/CARERS

We will work with parents/carers to support students' mental health by:

- Asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support
- Informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child
- Engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child
- Highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on our school website, including the mental health and wellbeing policy
- Liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child
- Providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support such as Surrey adult and family courses
- Keeping parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE, and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home via the school website

When informing parents/carers about any mental health concerns we have about their child, we will treat this with the highest sensitivity and confidentiality. These discussions can be difficult, so our school will ensure that parents/carers are given time to reflect on what has been discussed, and that lines of communication are kept open.

12. SUPPORTING PEERS

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be very challenging for students. Students may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

We will offer support to all students impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- Strategies they can use to support their friends
- Things they should avoid doing/saying
- Warning signs to look out for
- Signposting to sources of external support

13. SIGNPOSTING

Sources of support are displayed around our school and linked to on our school website, so students and parents/carers are aware of how they can get help.

The mental health leads will be available to provide further information to students and parents/carers if they want to learn more about what support is available. A list of available resources is laid out in 10.1 and we will also provide signposting on our school website.

14. WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

14.1 Mental health is taught in PSHE

We follow the [PSHE Association Guidance teaching mental health and emotional wellbeing](#).

Students are taught to:

- Develop healthy coping strategies
- Challenge misconceptions around mental health
- Understand their own emotional state
- Keep themselves safe

For more information, see our PSHE curriculum, click onto the curriculum section of our school website.

14.2 Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:

- Discussing mental health with students in order to break down stigma
- Encouraging students to disclose when their mental health is deteriorating

15. TRAINING

All staff will be offered training so they:

- Have a good understanding of what students' mental health needs are
- Know how to recognise warning signs of mental ill health
- Know a clear process to follow if they identify a student in need of help

16. STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We recognise that supporting a student experiencing poor mental health can affect that staff member's own mental health and wellbeing. To help with this we will:

- Treat mental health concerns seriously
- Support staff experiencing poor mental health themselves
- Create a pleasant and supportive work environment
- Offer an employee assistance programme through Strictly and Optimise Health that include services such as counselling, financial advice and a 24/7 helpline
- Reduced gym membership
- Cycle to work scheme
- Additional holiday at the end of the Autumn and Summer terms to recognise and reward the commitment of our staff

17. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Head Teacher.