

WHITGIFT SCHOOL

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING POLICY

Colleagues responsible for this policy:

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“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 his or her community.”

(World Health Organisation)

Policy statement

Whitgift School is committed to promoting the mental, physical and emotional well-being of all within its community. We aim to foster an environment that encourages self-confidence, a feeling of self-worth, and the knowledge that students' and staff concerns will be listened to and acted upon swiftly and sensitively. “Every student should feel safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.” (Every Child Matters, 2004, DfES).

The School recognises that the key to successful implementation is ensuring that staff, parents, and students are equipped with a shared awareness and understanding of current mental health issues, so they can support themselves and others effectively. This enables early intervention and active promotion to destigmatise mental health challenges. Whitgift seeks to achieve this through the Ideatum (PSHEE) programme, a range of visiting speakers, regular staff training, and pastoral parental engagement.

Well-being is central to the School's ethos and as such, is the responsibility of all, as recognised through our whole-school approach. The physical, mental, and emotional health benefits of exercise are well documented, and the School actively encourages sport for all. Our focus on mental health and well-being not only helps to provide a healthy and happy school environment for all, and prepares the citizens of tomorrow with sound character and values, but also directly supports our more immediate mission: the promotion of effective learning and academic success.

Policy aims:

This policy aims to:

- Describe the School's approach to social, emotional and mental health issues
- Increase understanding and awareness of mental health issues to facilitate early intervention of mental health concerns
- Provide support and guidance to all staff, including non-teaching staff and governors, responding to students who may experience mental health issues or who show signs of concern regarding their mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide support mechanisms for students experiencing mental health issues, as well as their peers and parents / guardians.

Policy integration:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's broader policies, including, but not limited to:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy
- Substance Use and Misuse (Education) Policy
- Substance Use and Misuse (Discipline) Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Counselling Policy

Child protection responsibilities:

Whitgift School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, visitors, and volunteers to share this commitment. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Ally Tiltman (Director of Safeguarding / Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Ali Watkins (The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead / Teacher with responsibility for Prevent)
- Oz Bhatti (Assistant Head - Student Welfare / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Rachel Attenborough (Senior Deputy / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Adrian Norris (Assistant Head – Pastoral & Boarding / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Faye Carter (Director of Sixth Form / Designated Mental Health Lead / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Ross Munro (Director of Middle Years / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Kerry Mason (Director of Junior Years / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Katy Lake (Senior School Nurse / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Annabel Roditi (Lead School Counsellor)
- Nikki Berry, Giulia Dallas, and Sharon Rennie (School Counsellors)
- Kirstie Richardson (Head of Learning Support/SENDCo / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)

The Headmaster is responsible for ensuring that the procedures outlined in this policy are followed on a day-to-day basis.

The School has appointed a senior member of staff with the necessary status and authority (Director of Safeguarding / DSL) to be responsible for matters relating to child protection and safeguarding. They are supported by the Deputy DSLs, including the three Directors of Section, who oversee the pastoral work of the year group teams. Parents are welcome to approach the DSL if they have any concerns about the welfare of any child in the School, whether these concerns relate to their own child or any other. If preferred, parents may discuss concerns in private with their child's Tutor, Head of Year or Director of Section, who will notify the DSL, in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Confidentiality and information sharing:

Whitgift School recognises the importance of open communication between families and the School to ensure the wellbeing of students.

Parents are advised to disclose to the School any known mental health problems or any concerns they may have about a student's mental health or emotional well-being.

This includes any changes in family circumstances that may impact the student's well-being. This enables the School to put the appropriate support mechanisms in place.

Students may choose to confide in a member of the School staff if they are concerned about their own welfare or that of a peer. Students should be made aware that **if a member of staff considers a student to be at serious risk of causing themselves or others harm, then confidentiality cannot be kept**. Staff will not make promises of confidentiality, even if a student puts pressure on a member of staff to do so. The usual route will be for the member of staff to inform the Director of Safeguarding/Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Parent involvement is encouraged wherever possible, although the student's wishes should always be considered and Gillick competency will always be taken into account. The School will balance the student's right to confidentiality with its overarching duties to safeguard students' health, safety, and welfare, and to protect students from suffering significant harm.

In the event of a mental health crisis presenting in School, parents will be contacted and requested to accompany their child to the Accident and Emergency department. In the event of being unable to contact parents, the School reserves the right to accompany the student in need to appropriate medical care.

Promoting students' mental health at Whitgift School

Whitgift School works to mitigate the risk of mental health problems in our students, by supporting them to become more resilient and by addressing problems as they arise. Whitgift School also has arrangements in place which reflect the importance of safeguarding and protecting the welfare of its students as set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Whitgift School is committed to supporting the social, emotional and mental health of all within its community through:

- **A committed Senior Leadership Team** that sets a culture within the School that values all students, allows them to feel a sense of belonging, and encourages open, non-stigmatising conversations about mental health.
- **An ethos of setting high expectations of attainment for all students with consistently applied support.** This includes clear policies on behaviour and bullying, online safety, and IT use. The School's Acceptable Use Policy sets out the responsibilities and expected standards of behaviour for all individuals accessing the school's digital environment, including the use of school devices and the school network.
- **An effective strategic role for the Head of Learning Support/SENDCo** ensuring all adults working in the School understand their responsibilities to the

children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including students whose persistent mental health difficulties mean they need special educational provision.

- **Providing targeted support for students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)**, recognising that language barriers can impact both academic progress and emotional wellbeing, and ensuring inclusive access to pastoral care and support.
- **Working with parents and guardians as well as with the students themselves**, ensuring their opinions and wishes are considered and that they are kept fully informed so they can participate in the decisions made.
- **Continuous professional development for staff** that makes it clear that promoting good mental health is the responsibility of all members of the School staff and community, informing them about the early signs of mental health problems, what is and is not a cause for concern, and what to do if they think they have spotted a developing problem. A number of staff members are trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid and a programme of training will continue.
- **Clear systems and processes to help staff who identify children and young people with possible mental health problems**, providing routes to escalate issues, with clear referral and accountability systems. Year group teams and tutors play a pivotal role in identifying patterns of behaviour which might point to mental health concerns, and all staff have the possibility of adding any concerns, however minor, to CPOMS, so that individual incident and concerns are viewed in isolation. Whitgift School works closely with other professionals to have a range of support services that can be put in place, depending on the identified need.
- **A healthy whole-school approach to promoting the health and well-being of all students in the School**, through co-ordinated teaching about the benefits of sport, exercise, healthy eating, managing stress, encouraging the active participation of all through the School's co-curricular programme, and education about promoting positive mental health, signs and symptoms, substance misuse and online activity through the Ideatum (PSHEE) programme of study.

Supporting individual students

All members of staff will work together to identify and monitor mental health concerns. Sensitive and prompt communication between members of staff will help to create a 'first line' in supporting individual students and responding to disclosures. Staff will record information accurately and regularly in order to track concerns. This will complement the School's pastoral tracking processes in iSAMS and CPOMS. In addition, Directors of Section, Heads of Year and the Senior Housemaster meet regularly to review each Section's 'Monitored Students', to discuss acute concerns and make suitable arrangements for follow up or support, as required. Pastoral

check-ins take place on a regular basis after a concern is raised, if the incident itself did not lead to a specific action at the time.

The key elements that enable Whitgift School to identify children at risk of mental health problems are:

- **Effective use of data** so that changes in students' patterns of attainment, attendance, punctuality, behaviour or presentation are noticed and can be acted upon.
- **An effective pastoral system that prioritises individualised care** so that tutors know the students in their tutor group well and can quickly pick up on poor or unusual behaviour. Tutors will also ensure that they establish close communication with all families of tutees early on to facilitate the sharing of information. Effective handovers will also take place between Heads of Year from one year to the next.
- **An effective system of behaviour and sanctions**, which provides the structure through which staff can escalate issues and address the root causes of poor performance.

All staff will be encouraged to look out for a number of may signify mental health issues. It is important that all those who work with children and young people are alert to emerging difficulties and respond promptly. In particular, parents know their children best, and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development. They should also listen to and address any concerns raised by the students themselves.

Whitgift School is mindful that some groups of children are more vulnerable to mental health difficulties than others. These include but are not limited to looked-after children (LAC) and children with care experience; children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); Children from diverse backgrounds who may encounter barriers to inclusion or experience discrimination; Young Carers; and and self-driven, high achieving and/or anxious individuals. These students are carefully monitored by pastoral staff.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Persistent mental health difficulties may lead to students having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age. Whitgift School will consider whether the student will benefit from being assessed for possible Special Education Needs or Disability, taking into account the views and wishes of the students and parents. Even in the absence of a diagnosis, the School will consider what "reasonable adjustments" should be made to support a student displaying possible traits of SEND.

Where Whitgift School has identified that a student needs additional educational provision due to their mental health problems, this will be in to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age. This means provision that goes beyond the differentiated approaches and learning arrangements normally provided as part of high-quality, personalised teaching. It may take the form of additional support from within school or require the involvement of specialist external staff or support services.

Whitgift School has a range of means to support such students through strong pastoral support, including:

- Access to counselling (very careful consideration is given to supporting adopted children)
- The School's Medical Centre
- Learning Support Department
- Tutors and Year Group Teams
- Sixth Form mentoring scheme
- Trained Mental Health First Aiders
- Staff mentors and trained coaches

Whitgift School has a good understanding of the mental health support services that are available in its local area, through the NHS, and private and voluntary sector organisations. The School works closely with our own counsellors and with local health partners to ensure that they are clear when referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are appropriate.

Most children with SEND will have them met through the School and will not need Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or Statements.

Mental Health First Aid

In order to ensure adequate mental health first aid provision and awareness, it is our policy that members of trained personnel (teaching and support staff) in Youth Mental Health First Aid are available to support those students who are experiencing mental and/or emotional difficulties. These trained staff members will be made known to the students through the wearing of a yellow lanyard, and they can be approached at any time.

A qualified youth mental health first aider is someone who has undertaken a training module approved by MHFA England and holds a valid certificate of competence. MHFA does not prepare people to become therapists. It does, however, enable people to recognise the symptoms of mental ill health, how to provide initial help (firstaid) and

how to guide a person towards appropriate professional help. The certificate must be issued by an approved organisation. See Appendix I for a list of current Youth Mental Health First Aiders.

By way of support for staff members, all pastoral leads dealing with significant safeguarding matters also have access to professional supervision services to allow them to discuss and manage their workload confidentially. Any member of Whitgift staff may access support for their own mental health via their line manager in the first instance, or, if they prefer, through the Employee Assistance Programme provided by the John Whitgift Foundation.

Counselling Provision

Whitgift has two designated counselling rooms with the aim of promoting feelings of trust, safety, containment and confidentiality.

For students who suffer from emotional or psychological difficulties and distress, counselling offers an accepting, confidential space for regular one-to-one sessions during term time. Whitgift counselling takes a person-centred approach which is non-directive and non-judgmental. Counselling is an opportunity for students to explore anything that is troubling them, how they feel about themselves, their relationships, patterns of thinking, feelings, behaviour, life choices, difficult experiences, and it can facilitate change.

The counsellors are skilled listeners who help students to connect with feelings and clarify thinking, while providing support to find their own meaning to explore misunderstanding, and recognising choices, facilitating personal growth and self-awareness.

Students of 16 and over are entitled to consent to therapy independently from their parents. Under the age of 16, students deemed 'Gillick competent' (a term originating in medical law to determine if a child has the maturity to consent to treatment without need for parental permission) have the legal right to request counselling without their parents being informed – this is assessed on an individual basis.

Whitgift staff members may also access the counselling service through discussions with the Senior Deputy. Individual needs will be assessed by the counselling lead, and either sessions provided, or signposting offered toward external services if more appropriate.

Further details regarding the school's counselling services and the school counsellors can be found in the Counselling Policy.

Documents consulted in drawing up this policy:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (July 2025) (DfE)
- *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper and next steps* (Dec 2017) (DfE)
- *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (Nov 2018) (DfE)
- *Promoting children and young people's emotional health and well-being: a whole school and college approach* (March 2015)
- *Behaviour solutions – Understanding and supporting Mental Health in Children and Young People*
- *Counselling in Schools: a blueprint for the future* (DfE)
- *School Counselling for All* (BACP)
- *Suicide risk management* (BMJ)
- *MOSA School Mental Health Policy*
- Current Whitgift School policies

Appendix I

Youth Mental Health First Aiders

Yvette Beckford-Dawkins	Geography / Second Form
Leyla Blake	Office Support staff
Oli Brown	History / Upper Sixth Form
Faye Carter (Designated Mental Health Lead)	Languages / Sixth Form / Deputy DSL
Jae Chang	Maths / Boarding
Chi Cheng	Maths
Anna Cook	Learning Support
Will Dickens	Maths
Amanda Glenin	Learning Support
Kate Goldberg	English
Niyaz Haji	Maths / First Form
Andrew Hunt	Languages
Katy Lake	Medical
Anne-Marie Lam	Maths
Katy Littler	Art
Sami Michael	English / Junior Years / Deputy DSL
Ross Munro	PE / Middle Years / Deputy DSL
Jonathan Nash	Physics
Angela Nicholls	DT support staff
Marianne Ofner	EAL / Languages
Kirstie Richardson	Learning Support
Angie Robe	Boarding / Deputy DSL
Amelia Saer	Classics
Matteo Siano	Geography
Annie Shaw	Medical
Zakary Twist	Mandarin Chinese
Daniel Webb	PE
Edward Westropp	Biology / Upper Sixth Form

APPENDIX II

Useful resources

- [Young Minds](#) is one of the UK's leading charities for children and young people's mental health.
- [Place2Be](#) is one of the UK's leading children's mental health charities.
- [Mind](#) is the UK's leading mental health charity, offering a great deal of useful information on children's mental health.
- [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\)](#) provide support to children and young people with a wide range of behavioural and emotional issues.
- [Anna Freud Centre](#) is a children's mental health charity providing specialist help and training
- [ChildLine](#) is a counselling service for parents, children and young people
- [Samaritans](#) is a confidential emotional support service
- [Papyrus](#) offers advice and information for parents, carers, teachers and friends of young people at risk of suicide
- [Shout](#) is a 24-hour mental health texting service for support in a crisis
- [Children's Mental Health Week](#) is an annual opportunity to encourage children, young people and adults to celebrate their uniqueness.