DULWICH COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1619

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY AND GUIDANCE

General

Mental health affects all aspects of a child's development including their cognitive abilities, their social skills and their emotional wellbeing. Childhood and adolescence are when mental health is developed and patterns are set for the future. For most children the opportunities for learning and personal development offered at school are exciting and challenging and an intrinsic part of their school experience. However, they can also give rise to anxiety and stress. Children may also suffer anxiety or stress owing to circumstances outside school.

It is important not to pathologise emotional reactions to new experiences. A number of children may experience emotional or psychological difficulties that without appropriate professional support become persistent and inhibit their ability to participate fully in school and in other aspects of life. In addition, some children may arrive at school with pre-existing mental ill-health.

Mental ill health can seriously impair academic performance and may lead to complex behaviour. Minor difficulties that interfere with a child's capacity to work may also result in distress and undermine academic progress.

A more severely impacted child may require a significant level of professional support. Children do suffer from depression, anxiety and other serious mental health issues, and young people are vulnerable to suicidal feelings: in the UK, suicide rates among young people have been increasing in recent years, and men are three times more likely to take their own lives than women.

Aims of Dulwich College (including DUCKS)

As stated in its Safeguarding Policy, Dulwich College is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for pupils and promoting a climate where pupils will feel confident about sharing any concerns which they may have. We wish for them to be happy and to thrive whilst at the College and to ensure they acquire the skills necessary for life after school.

We aim to provide a supportive environment that will help pupils who experience mental health difficulties, alongside helping them to realise their academic potential and meet course requirements. By providing the opportunity to pursue social, cultural and sporting fulfilment, in addition to academic excellence, we also aim to facilitate and promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Dulwich College (including DUCKS) seeks to achieve these aims by:

- nurturing a supportive community that encourages a sense of social responsibility and spiritual and personal development; helping children to develop emotional resilience (including through the College's Wellbeing programme, including in DUCKS);

- providing a range of specialised and targeted approaches to pupils who may need help and support;
- maintaining a culture in which mental health problems are accepted, not stigmatised;
- liaising with appropriate services to ensure that pupils with serious mental health problems receive appropriate treatment as part of a co-ordinated approach within the wider pastoral network;
- meeting the support and study needs of pupils with mental health difficulties;
- making reasonable adjustments to policies and procedures which might otherwise unlawfully discriminate against pupils with mental health difficulties;
- ensuring that the availability of support is accurately represented to both prospective, current and former pupils and their families, facilitated in part by the appropriate transfer of relevant information between institutions;
- establishing consistent procedures across the College for helping pupils with mental health difficulties;
- providing guidance and awareness training to the teaching and other staff involved in the support and care of pupils;
- respecting the confidentiality of personal information provided by pupils with mental health difficulties in line with the General Data Protection Regulation.

Providing support: staff

The following can indicate that a pupil may be suffering from mental ill health and/or be warning signs that he/she is engaging in or contemplating self-harming behaviour:

- withdrawal;
- change in demeanour (uncommunicative; aggressive; heightened sensitivity);
- altered appearance (for example weight loss or gain; decline in personal hygiene; dishevelment);
- lack of appetite;
- fatigue and reduced concentration;
- decline (gradual or sudden) in academic performance;
- obsession with work – and failure;
- display of interest in harmful or risky behaviour;

- lack of engagement in co-curricular activities;
- drastic change in routine (for example beginning to exercise excessively);
- lateness or irregular attendance at school;
- risky behaviours, for example drug taking, alcohol misuse;
- lack of self-esteem, being overly negative;
- bullying of others; and
- significant change in friendships.

The following may be signs that a pupil has engaged in self-harming behaviour:

- regular bandaged wrists or arms;
- obvious cuts, burns or scratches (that don't look like accidents);
- a reluctance to participate in PE or change clothes; and
- frequent accidents that cause physical injuries.

All staff and teachers are expected to:

- be prepared to spot verbal and non-verbal signs indicating that a pupil may be suffering or in danger, and to act on these;
- listen to pupils in emotional distress calmly and in a non-judgmental way;
- not make promises (e.g. assuring confidentiality) which can't be kept;
- reassure pupils that in order to seek health and happiness people need to know about their problems so that they can help;
- broaden their personal knowledge about self-harm and mental health disorders.

In following the College's safeguarding procedures, any colleague to whom a pupil makes a disclosure, or who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, should contact the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular (who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the whole College: **safeguarding@dulwich.org.uk**) or, in their absence, a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm, the colleague should report the concern immediately. Please note that if disclosure is made to the College Counsellor he/she may wish to retain confidentiality unless there is a safeguarding concern.

All concerns relating to mental ill health are taken seriously. As a College, we aim to provide the most appropriate emotional support possible.

The Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular is responsible for co-ordinating support for pupils with mental health problems including incidents of self-harm at the College.

In each case, the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- keep records of incidents and concerns on CPOMS (the management information system used by the College for safeguarding information);
- liaise with local and counselling services about the help available;
- keep up-to-date with information;
- liaise with the Master as appropriate;
- contact parent(s) or guardian(s) at the appropriate time(s), wherever possible involve the pupil in this process; inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) about appropriate help and support available for their child;
- monitor the pupil's progress following an incident or raised concern;
- know when people, other than parents (e.g. the pupil's teachers, the Learning Support Department, social workers, educational psychologists), should be engaged as part of a wider support network;
- know when to seek help to deal with their personal feelings and distress (the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular and Assistant Head Safeguarding receive supervision).

Providing support: individual pupils

Pupils are given the contact details of people at the College and outside organisations whom they can approach if they wish to speak someone and are encouraged to report concerns. For example, all pupils can self-refer to the College Counselling Team and a poster with details of members of staff they can contact is displayed in all Form Rooms. Wellbeing hubs, posted in various points around the College, also contain information on which pupils can draw.

Most personal issues experienced at school can be resolved quickly by talking to a family member or a friend, by seeking help from the Form Tutor and/or Head of Year, or by emailing the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular and the Assistant Head Safeguarding at **safeguarding@dulwich.org.uk.**

Both the formal and informal systems of non-medical pastoral care are usually sufficient to address academic concerns that give rise to anxiety or stress.

More serious emotional and psychological issues identified by teaching and pastoral staff may require professional intervention by specialists such as: the College Counsellor, a member of the 'Discover' team, or the College Doctor. Pupils may self-refer, or be encouraged to engage with this provision by their parents or a member of the pastoral team.

Where deemed necessary a referral may be made to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) at the pupil's borough by the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular, the Assistant Head Safeguarding, or the College Doctor. Equally, the pupil's parents may decide to arrange a referral through the family GP, or to engage with private counselling.

If a pupil is experiencing suicidal thoughts it is important that the pupil is assessed by a medical professional. In most cases, the College requires assurance from a medical professional that it is safe for the pupil to be in school. In such cases, a safety plan can be implemented to formalise arrangements for keeping the pupil safe.

Providing support: peer groups

If mental health problems and in particular self-harming become known to wider group (e.g. year group) the following needs to be taken into account:

- the more 'public' the behaviour, the more 'public' consequences may be;
- support and guidance for the peer group (either from within the College or externally). These cases can be complex and protracted, and staff will not only be dealing with the pupil in question. They will also need to manage the reactions of the peer group (and possibly their parents), and will need to provide an appropriate combination of support, reassurance and information whilst observing carefully the need for patient confidentiality.
- The pupil's best interests would be the primary driver in all decision-making but this will need to be balanced against the needs of other pupils. Staff should consult the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular regarding the communication strategy with other parents if they become concerned.

Providing support: parents

We recognise that our pupils (day and boarders) come from a wide variety of backgrounds (including overseas), with differing attitudes and approaches to mental health issues.

Parents will be encouraged to:

- endorse the College's approach to self-harm education and pastoral care;
- work in partnership with the College.

It is important that the families of pupils who have, or have had, mental health difficulties are encouraged to share this information with an appropriate member of staff. The College needs to know of the pupil's

circumstances in order to provide proper support and ensure that reasonable adjustments can be made to enable them to learn and study effectively. Pupils and their families can share their relevant health information on the understanding that the information will be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis. In other words, only those who need to know will be informed.

Sharing information and respecting confidentiality

A pupil with mental health difficulties is extremely unlikely to seek help unless they know the information they will provide will be treated as confidential. Doctors, nurses, counsellors and chaplains are all required to observe confidentiality in accordance with strict ethical codes. Whilst emphasising the responsibility to respect privacy, these codes also provide advice about the very rare circumstances when it would be appropriate to share information with third parties who need to know that there are specific concerns about a pupil, for example where there is a significant danger of pupils harming themselves.

The College asks for a confidential reference from a pupil's previous school and specifically asks whether there are any pastoral, safeguarding or medical issues of which the College should be aware in order to discharge our duty of care. Equally, the College has a policy for the transfer of confidential information to other schools, universities and other higher education institutions, so that pupils can be provided with an appropriate level of support once they have left school.

Training and teaching about mental health

All staff receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training.

In addition, the College provides extra training on specific mental health issues to members of the pastoral team. External specialists in various aspects of mental health are invited to the College to deliver such enhanced training.

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils in order to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are taught within our Wellbeing and Physical Education curricula, and our programme of Assemblies, talks and awareness days.

Further information about common mental health issues

(A) Self-harm

Self-harm is a way of expressing and managing emotional distress. So self-harm may serve a number of purposes. It may seem a way of:

- getting the pain out;
- being distracted from the emotional pain;
- communicating feelings to others;

- finding a kind of comfort;
- self-punishing;
- a way to prevent a feeling of numbness;
- attempting to get control over life.

People can often feel ashamed or worried about others' perception of them if they reveal what they are doing, so it may become a hidden problem. Self-harm includes anything which causes physical harm to the self, where it is a regular habit (such as pulling hair out) or something that is only done at times of stress. It can include less obvious forms, such as risk-taking, eating problems, being in abusive relationships, overdosing, or simply being careless of emotional or physical needs.

Action to be taken when suspicion or evidence of self-harm

1. If a fresh injury that needs medical attention or any concerns about suicide risk, the pupil should be escorted as discreetly as possible to the Medical Centre for evaluation and not left alone.

2. The Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead should be informed, and other sources of help may be called upon e.g. the College Doctor or counselling team.

3. Information should be gathered from various sources as necessary in order to gain a complete pastoral picture (e.g. the pupil's Form Tutor, Head of Year or Boarding Housemaster).

4. A support structure is prepared by the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

5. Parents/guardians are informed, usually by a meeting, unless, in exceptional circumstances, there are sound, documented reasons for not doing so.

6. Usually with parental consent, a referral is made by the College to the pupil's local authority, or via the family GP.

7. Pupils are encouraged to:

    - not display open wounds/injuries (these must be dressed appropriately);
    - talk to an appropriate staff member if they are in emotional distress;
    - alert a teacher if they suspect a fellow pupil of being suicidal or self-harming, or at serious risk of harm to themselves, and know when confidentiality must be broken.

(B) Depression

Ups and downs are a normal part of life for all of us, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

Action to be taken for a pupil experiencing symptoms of depression

1. Pupils are encouraged to communicate any concerns regarding their mental health to a trusted member of staff, such as their Form Tutor or Head of Year.

2. Informational posters are displayed in all classrooms, providing details of additional staff members pupils may approach, as well as the safeguarding email address, which a pupil can use if they are experiencing symptoms of depression or if they are worried about a friend.

3. Pupils may self-refer to the college counselling service at any point throughout the academic year.

(C) Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias

Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed.

(D) Obsessions and compulsions

Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter our minds, which are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they do not turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms – it is not just about cleaning and checking.

(E) Eating problems

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people. This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

(F) Suicidal feelings

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings though they may openly discuss and explore them, while tragically other young people take their own lives without prior warning.

Action to be taken when a pupil is having thoughts of suicide

1. If there are any concerns regarding a pupil at risk of suicide, the pupil should be escorted as discreetly as possible and without delay to the Medical Centre for immediate evaluation. Under no circumstances should the pupil be left alone.

2. The Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead should be informed, and other sources of help may be called upon e.g. the College Doctor or counselling team.

3. Parents/guardians will be informed and required to attend the College to collect their child. Where the pupil is a boarder, the Boarding Housemaster will collect the pupil and notify the parents/guardians accordingly.

4. The pupil should be taken to A&E or attend a same-day GP appointment for urgent assessment. A referral to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) may also be made if deemed necessary.

5. Relevant information should be gathered from various sources as necessary in order to gain a complete pastoral picture (e.g. the pupil's Form Tutor, Head of Year or Boarding Housemaster).

6. Following hospital discharge, parents/guardians must accompany their child back to the College for a meeting with the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. A medical letter confirming that the pupil is safe to return to school is required.

7. A support structure is prepared by the Deputy Master Pastoral and Co-Curricular or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and a personalised safety plan will be developed for the pupil to follow upon their return to the College.

8. Pupils are encouraged to:

    - talk to an appropriate staff member if they are having thoughts of suicide;
    - alert a teacher if they suspect a fellow pupil of having thoughts of suicide or at serious risk of harm to themselves, and understand when it is necessary to break confidentiality.

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