



# Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy June 2023

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While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Heathermount School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility considers a 'parent' to include:

- All biological parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative.
- Any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person.
- A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- Peninsula BrightHR
- Peninsula BusinessSafe (Health and Safety)
- Atlantic Data (DBS)
- Educare (online CPD)

Heathermount School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Heathermount School.

The policy documents of Heathermount School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the re-publication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

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### 1. Introduction

Positive Mental Health for all – The whole school community Everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable. At times, anyone may need additional support to maintain or develop good mental health.

The mental health of the students, staff in school, parents and carers and the wider whole school community will impact on all areas of development, learning, achievement, and experiences.

All students and staff have the right to be educated or work in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody.

### 2. Aims of the policy

The implementation of this policy for promoting positive mental in the school will:

- Give school a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to mental health across the whole school community. This includes students, staff, parents/carers and wider family members and supporters.
- Raise awareness as to how the whole school community can look after their own mental health and that of others
- Help to de-stigmatise mental health and promote positive language around mental health and being mentally healthy.
- Support the whole school community and provide opportunities that enable everyone to reach their potential.
- Provide foundations for life-long learning as defined within the school ethos of "Building confidence – preparing students for life"
- Promote and strengthen resilience throughout the whole school community and empower everyone to face life's challenges.
- Incorporate and link to all other policies within the school setting and ensure that mental health and positive wellbeing is addressed in all policies.

### 3. Definition of 'mental Health' & 'mental health difficulties'

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as:

"A state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2007)"

Emotional wellbeing is described by the National CAMHS Support Service (2011) as: "A positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment"

### 4. The School Ethos and context of mental health for students

It is widely recognised that a child's emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development and learning, as well as their physical and social health and their mental wellbeing in adulthood. A healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health through the standard curriculum and extended provision,

e.g., reflection time, movement sessions, the employment of therapy staff and family partnerships.

Poor mental health undermines educational attainment. Having a sense of belonging to a school is a recognised protective factor for mental health.

The Department for Education recognises that, "in order to help their pupils succeed: schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy." However, school contribution should be considered as one element of a wider multi–agency approach and in partnership with home.

As a school, Heathermount, are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all our students, staff and parents and promoting positive mental health. These are underpinned by the school's vision of:

### "Building confidence – preparing students for life"

### 5. Identification

Heathermount is an Autism specific learning environment, and it is important that all staff recognise that, whilst some behaviours demonstrated may be borne out of the pupils Autism profile, this does not exclude a mental health condition being present. It is important to recognise <a href="that only a medical professional">that only a medical professional</a> should make a formal diagnosis of a mental health condition.

Schools, however, are well placed to observe children day—to—day and raise concerns about those students whose behaviour suggests that they may be suffering from a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. Schools are not medically trained practitioners or therapists but if observations raise concerns, then referrals should be made as well as signposting parents or carers to appropriate support.

When a child displays behaviours, it does not necessarily mean that a child or young person has a possible mental health problem or a special educational need. Consistent disruptive or withdrawn behaviours can, however, be an indication of an underlying problem, and where there are concerns about behaviour there should be an analysis to determine whether there are causal factors such as undiagnosed learning difficulties, difficulties with speech and language or mental health issues.

Reference to warning signs that students may have a mental health difficulty can be found at: <a href="https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/">https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/</a>

### 6. School Responsibilities to Students

All staff see students on a regular basis, in varying contexts. They know them well, develop positive relationships and are well placed to spot changes in behaviour that might indicate a problem.

### All staff will:

- Make time to speak to students, check they are okay and let them know they are there to listen.
- > Actively listen to the student and be non-judgemental.
- > Use the "My concern" system to flag wellbeing and mental health concerns.
- > Speak directly to the school's Wellbeing Team for further guidance and support
- > Actively participate in any interventions or support plans and attend training.

### 7. Supporting students with mental health issues

It is important when responding to students that you remain calm and non-judgemental. You should not:

- **Dismiss concerns** or disclosures as insignificant, they may provide a vital link to other information.
- Keep such concerns to yourself.
- **Promise secrecy** to children or adults making disclosures but reassure them that information will be shared appropriately and confidentially.

The school's process and procedure to supporting students with mental health difficulties is provided in Appendix A.

### 8. Positive mental health

Heathermount School recognises that all our students need the foundation of positive mental health to benefit fully from all the opportunities available to them. We strive for students to be:



Heathermount School provides opportunities for a preventative approach to mental health problems by:

- Promoting resilience;
- Providing students with inner resources that they can draw on as a buffer when negative or stressful things happen.
- Directly supporting them to thrive even in the face of significant challenges.
- Provision of a whole school PSHE programme which includes positive mental health and healthy relationships.
- Assemblies with a mental health focus, positive words around differences and mental health.
- School information displays.

### 9. The school ethos and context about mental health for staff

A mentally healthy environment is a place where the whole school community:

- Is involved in promoting positive mental health
- Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health
- Contributes towards the ethos of the school

At Heathermount School we recognise that our staff are our most important resource and are valued, supported and encouraged to develop personally and professionally within a caring, purposeful learning community.

We recognise that there is a direct correlation between the wellbeing of our staff and the wellbeing of our students and that the culture and ethos of a school are determined by the extent to which staff work towards a shared vision.

We believe that it is essential that all staff feel part of a valued team, can express their views and are supported to manage their workload within a culture that supports a healthy worklife balance.

It is acknowledged that working at Heathermount, can at times, present a challenging environment in which to work. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we support staff health and wellbeing to minimise the harmful effects of stress and ensure that there is a cohesion in working towards health and wellbeing for all staff

The Senior Leadership team (SLT) of the school are responsible for ensuring that staff are supported in their day-to-day work in school. They are responsible in making sure that the right support is available at the right time should staff require additional wellbeing and mental health support and signpost them to appropriate resources.

Guidance for supporting staff can be found at:

https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-approach/supporting-staff-wellbeing

Staff can be further supported by contacting:

Education Support Partnership: <a href="https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/">https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/</a>

D.A.S: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/">www.threshold-das.org.uk/</a> MIND: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/">https://www.mind.org.uk/</a>

Every Mind Matters: <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/">https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/</a>

Heads Together: <a href="https://www.headstogether.org.uk/">https://www.headstogether.org.uk/</a>

Or you can call the employee assistance programme helpline on 01179342121

### 10. What we will do for our school community

Heathermount School will provide a mentally healthy environment by having:

- A clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all
- A commitment to being responsive to students' needs

- A commitment to being responsive to the needs of staff
- Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals
- Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information
- A named lead for mental health promotion with the expectation that there is support and involvement and an ethos that 'mental health is everyone's business'

### Student's will:

- Have opportunities to contribute to activities that encourage belonging
- Have opportunities to participate in decision making
- Have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed
- Have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Have opportunities to reflect
- Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs
- Have an environment that is safe, clean, attractive, and well cared for
- Be surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions, and ways of relating at all times

### Staff will:

- Have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way
- Have a range of strategies that support their mental health
- Have recognition of their work life balance
- Feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes
- Celebrate and recognise success
- Feel able to carry out roles and responsibilities effectively
- Be provided with opportunities for CPD, both personally and professionally
- Have their unique talents and skills recognised and be offered opportunities for development
- Have time to reflect and recuperate, particularly when an incident may have happened
- Treat each other with empathy, respect and kindness and value each other's contribution.
- Be committed to the ethos of staff wellbeing and keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of colleagues
- Be responsible in taking care of their own health and safety at work and communicate with key staff where they need support
- Be able to access proactive strategies and systems to support them at times of emotional needs in both the short and long term

### Parents/carers will:

- Be recognised for their significant contribution to pupils' mental health
- Be welcomed, included and work in partnership with school and other agencies
- Be provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed
- Be clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working in partnership with schools

- Have their opinions sought, valued, and responded to
- Have their strengths and difficulties recognised, acknowledged, and challenged appropriately

The school's Senior Leadership team (SLT) will:

- Ensure that staff receive appropriate training for their role
- Fulfil their duty of care as an employer
- Update the mental health policy and review according to current legislation and guidance
- Embed the mental health standards across the school
- Respond to students and staff need (e.g., by bringing in appropriate agencies and outside bodies)
- Regularly review the mental health and wellbeing of the whole staff.
- Involve staff in decision-making processes
- Recognise and promote the importance of a happy team and ensure that all staff feel valued
- Operate a sensitive performance management policy
- Create a space within the school where there is space to relax as well as work
- Carefully consider staff workload by monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of systems and procedures in school
- Model good practice and positive approaches to mental health
- Respond sensitively and flexibly to external pressures that impact on staff lives, whilst ensuring the efficient running of the school
- Promoting information about and access to supportive services both within the school remit and externally
- Invest in related research and/or good practice, considering equality implications.
- Refer to occupational health professionals and/or counsellors, where appropriate and with consent.

Information of the School Wellbeing Team is provided in Appendix B.

### 11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through: -

- Senior Leadership (SLT) meetings with all staff throughout the year.
- > Speaking to students as to their wellbeing either daily, weekly or through school questionnaires.
- Feedback from parents and carers through parent forums and questionnaires.
- Feedback from staff well-being survey at least annually and direct dialogue with staff through CPD events to encourage participation and development of policy and practice.
- Discussion at school council/ pupil voice meetings
- ➤ The appointment of a Designated Mental Health lead, who will contribute to the School Development Plan.

The monitoring and evaluation of this policy will be carried out by the Head Teacher, Designated Mental Health Lead, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Head of Therapy, Senior Leadership and scheduled reporting to Governors.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and in accordance with changes to government guidance and strategy in respect of mental health and wellbeing in schools.

### 12. Linked Policies & Guidance

Heathermount Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy – May 2023 Heathermount Anti-Bullying Policy – January 2023 Heathermount RSE Policy – April 2023

"Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges" – DFE June 2021

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mental health and behaviour in schools" – DFE November 2018

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools" – DFE October 2018

<sup>&</sup>quot;Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing – A whole school or college approach" -HMG & Children and Young People's mental health coalition September 2021

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mental health & wellbeing resources for Teachers and teaching staff" DFE June 2021

#### APPENDIX A.

# Heathermount School Process and procedure for supporting students with mental health difficulties

Remember you are not expected to be a trained counsellor, and certainly not in a position to diagnose mental health conditions.

Heathermount School has a Wellbeing team available to help and support with any disclosures made and will work with you in establishing the best way forward with supporting that student.

### Step 1.

It is important that if you have any concerns about a student's wellbeing or mental health, or a student makes a disclosure about their mental wellbeing, that you log the information, in as much detail as you can using the "My Concern" system, as you would any safeguarding matter.

### • Step 2.

The information you have logged will immediately alert, via email, the school's Designated Mental Health Lead and the other members of the Safeguarding team.

If the matter is urgent, please talk directly to the Designated Mental Health Lead: Julie Swann Tel: 07764 261727

### Step 3.

The information provided will be reviewed and triaged by the Designated Wellbeing lead and other members of the safeguarding team and the Senior Lead Therapist.

### Step 4.

Action is taken.

This may include but not be restricted to:

- Speaking to the class tutor who may have further insight into issues affecting the student's wellbeing;
- Speaking to you about what you heard and seeking some further clarity;
- Re-assuring you that you have been heard and that actions are being taken;
- Working with you to further support the student concerned; especially where you may have already established a rapport. This could include you being provided with direct support of a Mental Health First Aider (Youth) person to give further advice and support to you if required. This will also include support for you as your mental wellbeing is just as important and you may be supporting the student with very difficult and complex and emotive subjects, such as self-harm;
- Talking to the parent/carer of the student;

- Referral to our in-house therapy team;
- Referral for direct sessions with our Mental Health first aiders (see appendix c);
- The creation of a Student Mental health support plan;
- Review of the concern/disclosure using mental health tools to establish risk levels;
- Referral to external services such as CAMHS, Safeguarding;
- Signposting the parent/carer/student to external services that can help and guide;
- Allocation of a mental health first aider to talk further to the student;
- Emergency referral to mental health support via A&E or local mental health teams.

Sometimes students at Heathermount may not come to you directly but you may notice a change in their behaviour. You might want to consider opening up a conversation with them. Starting with "I have noticed/you seem... Is everything okay?

Remember though, to do this discretely. Lots of students find it really hard to open up about their feelings, especially in front of others, so maybe offering to do a "walk and talk" would be a good of way of getting the student to relax and feel comfortable enough to tell you what is happening in their lives.

Talking to young people about their concerns, worries and anxieties can be difficult, but we hope the following will be useful as a guide to give you confidence going forward.

### Talking to students when they make mental health disclosures

The advice below is from students themselves, in their own words, together with some additional ideas to help guide initial conversations with students when they disclose mental health concerns. This advice should be considered alongside the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

### Focus on listening

"She listened, and I mean REALLY listened. She didn't interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone, but I knew quite quickly that I'd chosen the right person to talk to and that it would be a turning point."

If a student has come to you, it's because they feel they can trust you and want to share their difficulties with someone. Let them talk. Ask occasional open questions if you need to, in order to encourage them to keep exploring their feelings and opening up to you. Just letting them talk about what they are thinking and feeling can make a huge difference and can be an important first step in recovery. Up until the point they start to talk to you, they may not have admitted, even to themselves, that there is a problem.

### Don't talk too much

"Sometimes it's hard to explain what's going on in my head – it doesn't make a lot of sense and I've kind of gotten used to keeping myself to myself. But just

'cos I'm struggling to find the right words doesn't mean you should help me. Just keep quiet, I'll get there in the end."

The student should be talking at least three quarters of the time. If that's not the case, then you need to redress the balance. You are here to listen, not to talk. Sometimes the conversation may lapse into silence. Try not to give in to the urge to fill the gap, but rather wait until the student does so. This can often lead to them exploring their feelings more deeply. Of course, you should interject occasionally, perhaps with open questions to encourage the student to explore certain topics they've touched on more deeply, or to show that you understand and are supportive. Don't feel an urge to over-analyse the situation or try to offer answers; that may be appropriate later. For now, your role is simply one of supportive listener. So make sure you're listening!

### Don't pretend to understand

"I think that all teachers got taught on some course somewhere to say 'I understand how that must feel' the moment you open up. YOU DON'T – don't even pretend to, it's not helpful, it's insulting."

You may find the concept of a mental health difficulty such as an eating disorder or self-harm to be difficult to understand, particularly if you have not had first-hand experience. You may experience judgemental thoughts, perhaps wondering why someone would do these things to themselves. You may have had similar experiences yourself and be tempted to say 'I know exactly how you feel'; however, this may be experienced as patronising. Whether we think we might understand or not, it is important to bracket off any judgements and avoid asking intrusive questions. Instead, continue to listen carefully, using open questions. Encourage the young person to keep talking and try to get a sense of the emotions they have been experiencing - the 'music behind the words'. Demonstrating empathy by reflecting back your sense of how the young person may be feeling can be validating.

### Don't be afraid to make eye contact

"She was so disgusted by what I told her that she couldn't bear to look at me."

It's important to try to maintain a natural level of eye contact (even if you have to think very hard about doing so and it doesn't feel natural to you at all). If you make too much eye contact, for example staring straight into the eyes of the student rather than a soft focus on their face, the student may feel uncomfortable or even threatened. However, if you don't make eye contact at all, for example looking away from them or looking at a computer screen, then a student may interpret this as evidence that you are disgusted, to the extent that you can't bring yourself to look at them. Maintaining natural eye contact will convey a positive message to the student that you are interested in what they have to say and focussed on wanting to support them.

### Offer support

"I was worried how she'd react, but my Mum just listened then said 'How can I support you?' — no one had asked me that before and it made me realise that

she cared. Between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me stop self-harming."

Never leave this kind of conversation without agreeing next steps. These will be informed by your conversations with appropriate colleagues and the school's policies on such issues. Whatever happens, you should have some form of action/s to carry out after the conversation because this will help the student to realise that you're working with them to move things forward.

### Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues

"Talking about my bingeing for the first time was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking, my teacher looked me in the eye and said 'That must have been really tough' – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me."

It can take a young person weeks or even months to admit to themselves they have a problem, let alone share that with anyone else. If a student chooses to confide in you, you should feel proud and privileged that they have such a high level of trust in you. Acknowledging both how brave they have been, and how glad you are they chose to speak to you, conveys positive messages of support to the student which will encourage them to keep seeking support.

### Don't assume that an apparently negative response is actually a negative response

"The anorexic voice in my head was telling me to push help away so I was saying no. But there was a tiny part of me that wanted to get better. I just couldn't say it out loud or else I'd have to punish myself."

Despite the fact that a student has confided in you and may even have expressed a desire to overcome the mental health problems they are experiencing, that does not mean they will readily accept help. The distress they are experiencing may result in them resisting help for as long as they possibly can, which may be particularly the case for eating disorders. Try not to be offended or upset if your offers of help are met with anger, indifference or insolence; it's the illness talking, not the student.

### Never break your promises

"Whatever you say you'll do you have to do or else the trust we've built in you will be smashed to smithereens. And never lie. Just be honest. If you're going to tell someone just be upfront about it, we can handle that, what we can't handle is having our trust broken."

Above all else, a student wants to know they can trust you. That means if they want you to keep their issues confidential and you can't then you must be honest. Explain that, whilst you can't keep it a secret, you can ensure that it is handled within the school's policy of confidentiality and that only those who need to know about it in order to help will know about the situation. You can also be honest about the fact you don't have all the answers or aren't exactly sure what will happen next.

<u>Consider yourself the student's ally rather than their saviour</u> and think about which next steps you can take together, always ensuring you follow relevant policies and consult appropriate colleagues.

### Remember that you can make a difference

"Even though I said I didn't want to talk and that it was none of their business, it felt like I was a bit closer to getting help because someone bothered to notice that I was struggling."

Even if you don't think the approach that you made may have been helpful, the fact that you tried can make a real difference. Leave the door open.



### Appendix B: The School Well-being Team 2022-2023

We all have a duty to promote and support positive well-being and monitor the mental health of all members of the school community. However, to support you further we have a specific team with whom you can consult directly with.



Julie Swann
Designated Mental
Health/Safeguarding
Lead
Pastoral/Family Lead
Mental Health First Aider

(Youth)



Mental Health First Aider (Youth)



Mandy Vizer-Allen

Mental Health First Aider
(Youth)

Attendance officer



Mental Health First Aider (Adult)



Margot Heurtematte
Clinical Psychologist



Priya Pillay
Senior Lead Therapist

### You can also talk to:



Head Teacher

Mr Stewart



Craig



Nicole



Amy

## Appendix C: Heathermount Mental Health Team – Parent/Guardian Referral

ow 🗌 High	Emergency
t apply):	
сарріу).	
School Cor	ncerns
Frequent Homewo Low test. Motivatio Poor class Sleeping Sudden Walking  Home Cond Fighting Illness/de Parental Suspecte Relationshi Bullying Bullying Difficulty Poor soo Problem etc.)  Sensory sensitiviti	tly late or absent in/incomplete ork not turned /assignment grades on estroom performance in class / Always tired change in grades out of class  cerns  with family members eath in the family divorce/separation ed abuse  ips  - target - perpetrator making friends eial skills with friends riend issue
ent situation? What	problems is she/he
	school Corest Disorgant Prequent Homewood Sleeping Sudden Walking  Home Concest Parental Suspecter Poor social Sullying Problem Boy/girlfr

Have you con		paediatrician/GP/CA	MHS or any other services about
☐ Yes ☐ No Date:			Date:
If yes, please	explain below the outc	ome of contact:	
Is there any o share with us		evant to your child's	s difficulties that you would like to
			discuss your concerns with a  T), either remotely or in school?
Parent/Guard Date:	lian Signature		Thank you for trusting the HMHT and sharing your concerns with us. We win touch as quickly as possible – pleanote that referrals are triaged accord to the nature, severity and urgency oproblems based on the information shared here.
	Cli	inical Psychologist Us	e Only
	Date seen	Seen by:	