

# Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

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## 1. Policy statement

At *Bedford Modern School*, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

## 2. Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining Bedford Modern School's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies. This includes but is not limited to:

- Academic Support Policy
- Nurses Department Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

## 3. Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.

- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/guardians for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

#### **4. Key staff members**

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Mental Health Lead
- PSHE Co-ordinator
- School Nurses
- SENDCo
- Student Support Assistants

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to the Mental Health Lead.

If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed.

If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

#### **5. Individual Care Plans**

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions including appropriate risk assessment and safety plan
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

#### **6. Teaching about mental health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing> Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

**See Section 14 for Supporting Peers**

## **7. Signposting**

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/guardians are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

We will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events. Information will be displayed physically within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, student wellbeing room etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites, parent portal and social media).

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

## **8. Sources or support at school and in the local community**

In addition to the services outlined below an appendix is included with this policy which provides links to local and national agencies which support young people and their mental health

### **School Based Support**

At Bedford Modern we have a range of support available to students for their emotional wellbeing this ranges from universal support to develop and encourage good mental health for all students to more targeted interventions for students with more specific needs.

### **Form Tutor**

The form tutor is the first port of call for student queries and concerns. Students have daily contact with the tutor. Within tutorials students explore a range of key ideas and themes including mental health awareness, and skills to support their own wellbeing.

### **Student Wellbeing**

The Mental Health Lead and Student Support Assistants provide emotional support to students at times of distress. The ethos of the Student Wellbeing department is to promote positive wellbeing and resilience. This includes identifying and understanding key trends across the school in emotional wellbeing for example exceptionally stressful periods for particular year groups. This learning enables the team to develop interventions to respond to these needs to support students during these times. Our student's wellbeing is monitored closely and as such support can be put in place swiftly to reduce the escalation of mental health difficulties.

### **School Counselling**

Counselling is accessible for students, at no additional cost. These sessions aim to provide more in-depth support in relation difficulties that a student may be experiencing. Students

are able to self-refer for this support, but referrals can also be made by parents or staff. To find out more about the counselling support available within school please refer to our counselling policy.

### **Local Support**

In Bedford, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These services deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

CAMHS  
CHUMS  
OPEN DOOR  
AQUARIUS  
GROUNDWORKS  
KOOH

## **9. Warning Signs**

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 record these swiftly, ensuring the student's Head of Year and the Wellbeing Team are alerted.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / 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

## **10. Targeted support**

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/guardians with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems.
- Working closely with local Council Children's Services (both statutory and voluntary) and mental health services.

- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHA), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems.
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach.
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs.
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including local CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur.
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality.
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it.
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

## **11. Managing disclosures**

If a student chooses to disclose mental health concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on the student's personal file, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with the Mental Health Lead and where necessary the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

## **12. Confidentiality**

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student.

We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell?
- What we are going to tell them?
- Why we need to tell them?
- When we're going to tell them?

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as students up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed, but students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours is recommended to share this information before the school makes contact with the parents/guardians.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

## **13. Whole school approach**

### **13.1 Working with Parents/Guardians**

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/guardians face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place? Some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

### **13.2 Supporting Parents**

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents/guardians to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents/guardians develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to mental health topics. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents/guardians and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

## **14. Supporting Peers**

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

## **15. 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. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

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.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Mental Health Lead who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

**Miss E Harbour  
Mental Health Lead**

**February 2024  
Review date February 2025**

# Counselling Policy

To be read in conjunction with

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022  
Mental Health Policy  
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

## Aim of Policy

This policy sets to outline the counselling support available to students within the Bedford Modern School (BMS) community.

## What is counselling?

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) states that "Counselling and psychotherapy are umbrella terms that cover a range of talking therapies. They are delivered by trained practitioners who work with people over a short or long term to help them bring about effective change or enhance their wellbeing."

Counselling can be incredibly helpful in making sense of difficult situations or emotions. Sometimes this process can feel quite demanding, especially exploring emotions which students may not have spoken about before.

## Counselling at BMS for Students

We currently have 2 external counsellors that each attend the school once a week to offer counselling to our students. When a student accesses counselling within school the initial appointment will take the form of an assessment appointment allowing the counsellor to build an understanding of the student's difficulties and for the student to learn more about what counselling is. Generally, 10 sessions will be offered in the first instance. Following these 10 sessions a review will take place, should the student and counsellor feel that further sessions are required the counsellor may continue to offer ongoing sessions which will be reviewed regularly.

## Accessing Counselling

Students are able to self-refer for counselling, parents and staff are also able to request counselling support on behalf of students. We ask that a short referral form is submitted in the first instance to which can be accessed here. Once a referral form is received this is reviewed by the Mental Health Lead to insure that counselling support is the most appropriate support at the current time.

## Attending Appointments

In order to achieve the maximum benefit from sessions it is important students attend regularly. Reminders are sent to students via their form tutor on the day of their appointment. Should a student miss two counselling appointments when they are in school, we may not be able to continue to offer appointments. Missed appointments due to sickness/absence, school trips etc are not considered as unattended appointments and will not be included in attendance figures for counselling appointments.



## Confidentiality

Pastoral systems within the school have responsibility for the wider welfare of students; counselling should also be considered within this context. The Mental Health Lead and the Deputy Head for Pastoral and Progress regularly review the support that is being offered to students to ensure that it is appropriate for their current level of need. These meetings also provide an opportunity to consider the presenting needs of the student body to ensure that the school adopts a proactive approach to supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of students.

In some circumstances students may access counselling without advising their parents/guardians. We would always recommend that students share with their parents/guardians however we will not refuse access to counselling for students considered to be Fraser Gillick competent who do not wish to share with their parents that they are accessing counselling support within school. A more detailed explanation of Fraser Gillick competencies can be found [here](#).

**In exceptional circumstances where Child Protection/Safeguarding concerns, including risk to the student or others are shared within a session the counsellor must follow the school's child protection policy and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead.** In this circumstance it will be necessary to share details of the content of the sessions to enable the safety of the student to be maintained. The limits of confidentiality are shared with students at the start of the counselling appointments and students are reminded of this regularly. If the counsellor does need to break the confidentiality of the student they will always advise the student that they are doing this sharing with them why they need to do this, what they are going to share and who they are going to share this information with.

Confidentiality is a key function of an effective therapeutic relationship. It is important that parents and school staff to understand that the content of counselling sessions will not be shared with them (with the exception of when there is a safeguarding concern). In order to maintain the therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and the student, parents do not normally meet the counsellor. The Mental Health Lead will act as an intermediary where necessary between the counsellor, student, other school staff and families.

**Miss E Harbour  
Mental Health Lead**

**February 2023  
Review Date February 2024**