

## Emotional Wellbeing Guidance



### Statement

*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 her or his community.*

(World Health Organization)

At Thomas Gainsborough School, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

### Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This guidance is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. This should be read in conjunction with our SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

The Guidance Aims to:

- ♣ Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- ♣ Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- ♣ Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- ♣ Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- ♣ Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

### Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- ♣ Helen Yapp – Alternate DSL
- ♣ Christian Appleford – Designated Safeguarding Lead
- ♣ Nicola Wilby – Alternate DSL – Mental Health Lead
- ♣ Alison Hunt – Student Services Manager, Alternate DSL
- ♣ Claire Jackson – Alternate DSL
- ♣ Amanda Forster – Alternate DSL
- ♣ Claire Jackson- Mental Health First Aider
- ♣ Tina O'Beirne - Mental Health First Aider
- ♣ Tracy Martin - Mental Health First Aider
- ♣ Emily Davies – Mental Health First Aider
- ♣ Alex Blagona - CPD lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the mental health lead or another DSL in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures of Thomas Gainsborough School should be followed with an immediate referral using the student concerns form to the DSL team or the head teacher. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Nicola Wilby, mental health lead.

### **Individual Care Plans**

Where a student has an individual care plan, produced by a medical professional, the school will adhere to this and seek further advice, guidance and support where required.

### **Teaching about Mental Health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our core values and curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

The skills will be embedded throughout the year through a variety of methods, such as implicit teaching within curriculum areas of skills that support good mental health, and through the delivery of a variety of activities within our weekly tutoring programme lead by the Heads of House.

In addition, we will run our enrichment days and there will be a focus on including activities to recognise the importance of wellbeing, to deliver skills and strategies for supporting wellbeing, and to encourage and facilitate open discussion of mental health and wellbeing.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

### **Signposting**

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.

What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in our Early Help Offer, which is regularly updated and posted on our website.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas, and in particular in the Wellbeing Area located in Student Services, and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum.

Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- ♣ What help is available
- ♣ Who it is aimed at

- ♣ How to access it
- ♣ Why to access it
- ♣ What is likely to happen next

## **Warning Signs**

School 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 communicate their concerns with Nicola Wilby, our mental health and emotional wellbeing lead, or another member of the Safeguarding Team. Possible warning signs 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

## **Managing disclosures**

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure. If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' This should be in accordance with the school child protection procedures.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the student's confidential file.

This written record should be completed on the lilac student concerns forms located in the staff rooms or available from the safeguarding team, and should include:

- ♣ Date
- ♣ The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- ♣ Main points from the conversation

This information should be shared with the mental health lead, Emma Wilson-Downes who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

## **Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on then we should discuss with the student:

- ♣ Who we are going to talk to

- ♣ What we are going to tell them
- ♣ Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and/or a parent, for example students up to the age of 18 who are judged to be at risk or in danger of harm. This would usually be the mental health lead, Nicola Wilby, or a member of the safeguarding team; this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents will always be informed if the student discloses something which is of concern, and students may choose to tell their parents themselves unless they are at risk of significant harm (in which case the safeguarding team will make contact that day). If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. We should always give students the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the safeguarding team must be informed immediately.

## **Working with Parents**

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, the safeguarding team should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- ♣ Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- ♣ Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- ♣ Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, other members of staff.
- ♣ What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect. We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing.

Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g., parent helplines and forums. We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

## **Working with All Parents**

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- ♣ Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website; this will include details of the school's Early Help Offer
- ♣ Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child

- ♣ Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings

## **Supporting Peers**

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either 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 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

## **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 in order to enable them to keep students safe. We will share regular updates about a variety of safeguarding issues throughout the year, and this will include training on Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing .

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 Alex Blagona, our CPD Coordinator who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.