



## Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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## **Aim and Purpose of the Policy**

At Two Bridges School Mental Health and Wellbeing is an important part of the pastoral care of our community which includes the young people in our care as well as their families and our own staff.

This Policy sets out our approach to mental health and wellbeing for all parties.

Those experiencing mental health difficulties should not face discrimination and the school is committed to helping to identify these difficulties and supporting people to overcome them.

### **At Two Bridges School we aim to:**

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing
- 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 and families suffering mental ill health

### **We will achieve these aims by:**

- Teaching and supporting our community to understand their emotions and feelings as they grow and change.
- Ensuring people feel comfortable and safe to share how they feel.
- Teach that it is OK to not be OK.
- Educate about healthy relationships and support people in forming and maintaining these.
- Promote the importance of good self-esteem and ensure we all know we have equal value to others.
- Encourage our community to be confident in themselves and have a sense of pride in who they are
- Support everyone to have emotional resilience
- Ensuring we comply with current legislation (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) which places a duty on the employer to make the workplace as safe as is reasonably practical. The legislation also requires individual employees to help themselves to stay safe.

### **We will promote a positive mental health culture by**

- Talking openly about our emotions and mental health to reduce any stigma associated with it.
- Modelling healthy relationships in our work.
- Promoting our School values and ethos and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting student voice and hearing their ideas and input into decisions.
- Celebrating achievements of all types.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibilities.
- Giving positive supported reflection times.
- Providing the right support at the right time wherever possible.

**Staff with responsibilities for Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

- The Head Teacher who is the DSL for the whole school.
- The Senior Mental Health Lead who is a member of the leadership team with specific training to lead this additional responsibility.
- DSL trained staff across the school.
- Leaders who hold responsibility for any group of staff
- Support Staff with responsibility for supporting students
- Teaching Staff with responsibility for the learning of students
- Administration staff with responsibility for communications and examination support.
- Vision Staff with responsibility for supporting students in and out of mainstream schools.

**The role of the Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL):**

Our School has a Senior mental Health Lead who acts as a champion for mental health and wellbeing, and is a central part of the leadership of the School.

Their role is not to necessarily provide all interventions, but to have a whole school overview and to coordinate the School's approach to positive mental health and wellbeing.

As endorsed by the Department for Education she will:

- Oversee the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, including how it is reflected in the design of policies, curriculum learning, pastoral support and engagement of students and families.
- Support the identification of mental health and wellbeing needs or ill health.
- Have knowledge of local mental health and wellbeing services and support referrals where deemed appropriate.
- Coordinate interventions made available to students staff and families.
- Raise awareness of needs and strategies to give all staff greater confidence to work with our young people.
- Oversee and monitor the outcomes of interventions on education and wellbeing.

The senior mental health lead reports directly to the Head Teacher and presents a written report for the Management Committee on Mental Health and wellbeing across the school.

She may also be involved in meetings to support staff or students with mental health needs.

## **Staff:**

### **1. Procedures**

#### **1.1 Working Hours Expectations**

- All staff are expected in work in time for the morning briefings at 8.25am however sites are open earlier if staff choose to arrive early and utilise the time for their own purposes or to avoid heavy traffic on the way into work.
- All staff are expected to stay to the end of the School day completing the end of day briefing, any reports that need writing up before leaving for the evening or to remain for their own purposes of planning etc. The sites are generally open until 4pm to support this however discussion can be had if staff felt a later time would be of benefit occasionally.
- On occasions it is necessary for staff to support a student/s on a PSP. The careful planning by Leaders should always ensure this responsibility is rotated across an even share of all staff whilst being mindful to include any staff with whom the student needs to develop a stronger working relationship or a higher minimum number of staff for Risk Assessment purposes or to support across a small number of PSPs.
- It is a best practice expectation that all work for 'today' is planned and resources before 'today' begins.
- Admin support and training is available for time management, paperwork support, IT support and copying to reduce the time spent completing these tasks.
- **COVID specific:** When remote learning is needed for students this is timetabled alongside in class responsibilities ensuring wherever possible staff do not have to repeat in class teaching for remote learning. All teaching staff should have resources that are remote ready in case of immediate isolation needs.

#### **1.2 Rest Time (hours outside of School working hours) and down time during School day**

- Planning rest time is important for all staff
- It is the expectation of the Head Teacher that all staff use rest time [time outside of work hours including holidays] for their own benefit and interests as desired and would only ask for School matters to be done in this time through discussion and prior agreement.
- Using rest time for working tasks ie sending emails is totally acceptable however unless the matter is truly urgent or of a safeguarding nature a response is not expected until the next working day.
- If any staff feel that their working responsibilities causes a workload that is beyond achievement within the reasonable working hours they should

bring this to the attention of their immediate line manager as soon as possible.

- All leaders will get to know the work patterns that are most effective for all of their staff through discussion and always try to work to these routines.
- During the school day it is not possible to give individual breaks away from the students until the end of day, staff are expected to communicate with each other to take 5 mins when they need this. If staff feel they cannot ask colleagues for 5 mins they should bring this to the attention of their line leader.
- **COVID Specific:** During lockdown periods every member of staff had calls from their direct leader every other day. Welfare checks were open and honest. Challenges as team were offered for staff to engage with ie Lands End to John O Groats km challenge.
- **COVID Specific:** Individual staff needs are considered during lockdown to ensure those who need to spend some time in school to work with colleagues have that option alongside those who need to shield or shield family members who worked from home consistently.

### **1.3 Managing deadlines and timed expectations.**

- In all practices across the School every effort is made to avoid setting a deadline on a Monday or on the first 2 days of a new term.
- All deadlines set at all levels across the School should give a minimum of 48 hours completion time as an absolute minimum for simple requests i.e.; passing on data information. Tasks that require additional work based on professional judgments should offer appropriate timescales to ensure an accurate and appropriately presented response can be made alongside the usual working demands of the staff having the task requested of them.
- Since March 2020 the decision was taken that no meetings are to be held after school. If the meeting is important then find the time in the school day for it to happen.
- No deadlines are to be set on a Friday or a Monday, weekends are not work times and therefore not to be used to achieve deadlines for Mondays nor catch up following a Friday deadline.

### **1.4 Supervision and emotional Support**

- New staff are asked to complete a medical questionnaire at the point of accepting a job offer, this also has a mental health sheet to be completed. If on completion this includes a disclosure of a Mental Health or Wellbeing nature the member of staff will have a meeting scheduled with the Senior Mental health Lead. At this meeting greater detail can be discussed and

strategies for support considered that sit in line with the JD for the post that has been accepted.

- Supervision is offered to all leaders from the Head Teacher on a 1:1 request basis which supports a flexible and rapid response to any need.
- Informal supervision is offered by all Leaders to support staff on a daily/weekly basis.
- Supervision does not form any part of the performance management process and is a separate response which might identify areas in need of support from the point of view of the individuals wellbeing needs.
- Leaders use their professional judgment to guide staff about the need for counseling or other support available via Supportline (included in item 4 of this document)
- Staff with medical or mental health needs are asked to disclose this information on the School medical questionnaire as part of their induction and where necessary this is followed up with a 1:1 meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss management of these needs and potential support available in school.

### **1.5 Home issues that come into the workplace**

- At times staff may have matters occurring outside of work that cause them an emotional response or additional concern. If these matters appear to be 'carried' into the workplace leaders will offer nurture support to this member of staff to help manage these matters.
- Staff themselves 'carrying' a home issue into work should be mindful of not sharing this too widely with staff for reasons of the persons own emotional wellbeing but also to protect staff from absorbing too much additional offloaded emotion from one another. (All staff generally want to support and be supported but this must always be managed carefully to avoid overload)
- Due to the nature of the working day and there not being a clear break time space to offload and share personal matters these conversations should only ever go on at times when students are not in the vicinity or once they have left for the day. It might also be appropriate with agreement of a staff member to highlight an issue at the morning briefing.

### **1.6 Electronic communications Expectations**

- This area is to be read in conjunction with the Two Bridges School Staff Acceptable Use Policy Appendix 1 email use document.
- Professional courtesy supports that staff reply to internal emails within 1 school day even if the initial response is a holding email whilst further info is gathered for a full response.
- Staff should avoid screen time immediately prior to sleep

- If an email evokes an emotional response it is always best to take some thinking time and check your response with a line leader before pressing send.
- Staff should be aware that in an emergency following a report at end of day briefing a staff member may be contacted by phone for checking further details if absolutely necessary.
- Out of school hours staff should feel confident to report to HT by email any safeguarding concerns they observe out of school with our current or previous students or staff.
- **COVID Specific:** During the pandemic it is clear most agencies have moved to holding meetings via Teams or Zoom. Staff engaged in these meetings should be aware of the potential impact of the emotional absorption following a meeting and taking a break before heading straight back into school support or teaching. This time to breath would usually happen in the journey back to school however Teams is meaning more meetings on more days and stepping straight from school work into and out of the meeting.

### 1.7 Occupational Health Matters and Support

- All new staff complete a medical questionnaire and details will be shared with leaders confidentially as required to ensure all risks to staff are assessed relating to working practices.
- Staff should report any new medical issues following appointment to the Personnel Officer so that appropriate adjustments can be discussed and actioned to support safe working practices for all.
- OH support is available through KCC and is considered by Leaders or the Head Teacher when dealing with health reports from staff. Equally a member of staff can request an OH referral if they feel it would be of benefit.

### 1.8 Appropriate Venting for staff

- No venting should ever be done in ear shot of parents, students, **active phone calls/remote meetings**, visitors or members of the public.
- Comments of a negative nature should never be shared on Social media. For further guidance please see the Staff Acceptable use policy.
- Debriefing is a group venting opportunity when necessary supported by leaders with actions, outcomes and informal supervision. All staff should feel able to bring issues to the end of day briefing when necessary.
- Debriefing will always include a check on staff wellbeing as well as mention of any positive feedback from leaders where appropriate.
- Details shared at end of day briefings will be managed by Leaders and may at times require items to be discussed individually outside of the meeting for safeguarding reasons.

- If a member of staff needs to vent they should remove themselves from the space, find an **appropriate** private place and colleague to let off steam about the situation to. This should support staff with an immediate release of emotion but not be a regular event. Staff who find they are regularly in need of venting should request a meeting with their line leader to discuss the issue.
- If a member of staff has an issue with a colleague that they cannot resolve quickly and simply with the person themselves then they should raise this with a line leader as soon as possible as appropriate in the staff handbook.

## **2. Practical Advice for staff managing own wellbeing**

**2.1** It is inevitable due to the different ages and needs of our student cohorts that some slightly different opportunities and support for staff wellbeing are in place as a result of the range of challenges presented at each Site and timetabling plans.

**2.2** It is the responsibility of each staff member to ensure they are emotionally secure [ie; able to approach the challenges of the day without feeling the possibility of imminent personal visible upset] each day before commencing their working duties. In the event of a member of staff dealing with an ongoing emotional challenge she/he should make their line leader aware of this matter.

**2.3** Maintaining a healthy diet and drinking plenty of water can make a huge impact to the success of other strategies that staff might use to maintain positive wellbeing. To support this there is a water machine in the main office at both sites and tea, coffee, juice and fruit is provided free for all staff weekly.

**2.4** Engaging in regular exercise or taking purposeful walks can contribute to the success of other strategies that staff might use to maintain positive wellbeing. There are a number of opportunities across the week when staff can engage in walks during the working day ie between sites for teaching, during wellbeing time which can also be used to supplement this exercise engagement.

**2.5** The school gym is available for use by all staff following an induction process with one of the qualified staff. A booking system exists to ensure equal access and private sessions are available to support staff who prefer to use the space alone. In addition a shower bathroom area has been added to ensure hygiene needs are met.



**2.6** We have 2 School Dogs on site almost every day. The therapeutic advantages of taking a few minutes to pet one of these is incredible and should be used as a strategy by any staff when needed.

**3. Leaders responsibility to protect Wellbeing of others.**

Leaders take their responsibility seriously to support all colleagues for whom they are responsible. Being aware of their wellbeing and any changes in pressures and demands placed on a staff member are high priority. Likewise new staff will be offered additional times to meet with line leaders to ensure a common agreement is reached around how the member of staff or line leader should best approach any concerns observed or experienced to ensure support is available promptly once an issue is identified.

Leaders also maintain an ongoing awareness of staff who support colleagues with a range of wellbeing matters and absorb emotional residue from them as well as from students.

We have a named Management Committee member responsible for mental health in the same way we have them for safeguarding, Finance and leadership as we hold this in equally high regard.

**4. Support available to all Staff relating to Wellbeing issues.**

**4.1** There is a rolling programme of support available on a Friday afternoons, which includes professional development along with staff planning and prep and Teaching and Learning type group meetings. These are held on a Friday afternoon when students leave at 1pm to ensure these valued parts of our week do not run on late after hours as can be the case in some institutions.

**4.2** Wellbeing time is allocated on a Friday afternoon when possible. Although of course not a given it is used as time to get staff off early for the weekend to recharge their wellbeing especially during busy periods of the year or ahead of a challenging week ie mock exams etc. This time it is felt is a bonus early finish that allows staff to get ahead of busy traffic or pop to the shops on the way home or stop for a mindful walk on route, all of which will of course positively impact our School the following week. In addition staff are offered a short break following end of day responsibilities and any meeting at 3pm.

**4.3** Where possible staff team building activities are included in the initial INSET day in September to allow new and existing staff the opportunity to get to know each other well before the onset of the academic year. In addition our INSET day in November always has a wellbeing focus for students or staff and our end of term day at Xmas and Summer finishes at lunchtime to allow for staff celebrations as a team.

**4.4** At any point when deemed appropriate the School will support additional events such as sponsored walks, beach clean days and other community projects. These events offer a collegiate opportunity for staff to take part in informal matters allowing for greater depth to develop in the shared wellbeing understanding across the staff which can be valuable in the close working proximity of a PRU environment.

**4.5** It is suggested to staff at regular intervals throughout the year that they check the wheel of wellbeing on the NHS website. Our intention here is that all staff choose some new goals for their personal wellbeing and if in need of support achieving them the wider staff can see if they can contribute.

Link to website: <https://www.wheelofwellbeing.org/>

**4.6** CPD training is available for the professional development of staff but at Two Bridges we also place value on developing skills to support wellbeing and mental health. We focus at least one full day and one twilight of our CPD calendar on mental health and wellbeing each year and staff are welcome to suggest training that they would like for personal support as well as that which might impact our students and their families.

**4.7** Two Bridges School buys in annually to the Platinum Personnel package available from KCC. This ensures any personnel matters are dealt with in a professionally accurate and timely manner. The Head teacher takes very seriously all matters relating to staffing including those where things need challenging for not being acceptable or appropriate and this is done in an open clear honest environment with the support of personnel specialists and staff are always encouraged to take advice from their own unions in these circumstances.

**4.8** Two Bridges School buys the Supportline package annually for all staff which includes access to counselling and CBT therapeutic support. In addition this information is emailed to all staff annually and a poster is placed in staff areas showing the contact details.

The Teacher Support Network also offers additional services and can be contacted on 0800 562 561 and [www.teachersupport.info](http://www.teachersupport.info)

## **5. Support for Leaders.**

Leadership is not easy and at times leaves those staff reflecting and reviewing their challenges and decisions to ensure they are making the best decisions for all and keeping the high standards and expectations of our outstanding school. The pressure of these responsibilities can be heavy to carry at times. To support all leaders across the school the following are available over and above the resources already identified in this document:

- Access to 1:1 supervision from the Head Teacher
- 1:1 Coaching sessions with the Head Teacher
- Consideration of private coaching or therapeutic sessions if identified as appropriate
- CPD programmes to support areas of development
- Leaders meetings to problem solve matters and communicate progress
- Full involvement in staffing discussions for their responsibility areas.
- Subscriptions to professional support agencies ie PIXL or Mindful practices etc

- Reading resources to review developments in their specific area of development.
- Ad hoc informal off-loading sessions with other leaders or the Head Teacher.

## **6. Staff suggestions for improvements in support of Wellbeing.**

Staff are welcome at any time to make suggestion to line leaders or the Head Teacher of any practices, support or staff based activities that they feel would support the Wellbeing for us all across the School. In addition any concerns can be raised by a staff member in confidence with any leader across the School, it does not have to be their direct leader that they speak to.

## **7. The environment in which we work.**

### **In our physical environment we would like:**

1. A well presented building with space
2. Positive aesthetic and olfactory characteristics that feel warm and welcoming
3. A tidy professional building that shows we care about all who spend time in it

### **In our emotional environment we value:**

1. A Welcoming Open Honest Friendly team with a community feel.
2. Clear communications
3. Recognition and fair challenge
4. Positive passion for being the best we can be with genuine equality.
5. To show kindness and respect with support, empathy and humour.

### **In our emotional environment we would like not to experience:**

1. Negative talk, bubbles of staff who share negative views or negative situations that are dragged through the day.
2. Rudeness.
3. Assumptions or judgements that lack care or trust (be the adult and check out the situation and discuss rather than assume and tell others).
4. Blanket blame that leads to lack of clarity and worry.
5. Gossip and Lies.

## **Students and Families:**

### **8. Pre Admission Meeting (PAM) following referral.**

At the PAM students and their parents or carers are asked to complete an additional sheet sharing any mental health or wellbeing difficulties they have experienced or any support or strategies that they have tried or use. This form is confidential and used to support the SMHL in assessing needs for students or their families as well as decision making around groupings and TT allocation etc.

## **9. Induction procedures**

During the induction process students can explore further how their mental health needs may impact their learning and social progress at our School. This 'Get to Know" process is then shared with the SMHL who will again make a professional decision about the extent to which this information needs to be shared.

## **10. Identification**

**10.1.** Students with mental health needs are often identified by those closest to them; their parents or staff who work closely with them. These discussions will be had with leaders in each area to ensure clarity of identification of need and potential supportive strategies.

**10.2.** Staff receive regular training on helping them to recognise the symptoms of a range of mental health needs specific to our students.

## **11. One to one support**

**11.1.** 1:1 support is available to all students and falls under the responsibility of one of the Pastoral team who will plan a series of sessions with a student to problem solve a particular issue or visit longer term emotional challenges and support with strategies for developing emotional resilience if needed.

**11.2.** Any student can self request these sessions, or a request can come from parents or carers or via one of our staff team.

**11.3.** Support sessions run for as long as is needed or may pause at any time and restart again at a later stage if required.

**11.4.** Where specific needs are identified that are adversely affecting a students mental health or wellbeing and we have exhausted all avenues of support through family, social services, home school etc we will evaluate the need for us to resolve the matter if it is felt to have a more positive long term impact for that individual. In past years this has included things like;

- paying for an initial Psychology assessment where the waiting list was too long for a Yr11 student and parents could not fund a private assessment themselves.
- Requesting a copy of a birth certificate online to allow a student to sign on with the GP for mental health support
- Providing additional FSM vouchers for holiday periods to top up the DfE provision for families struggling to make ends meet.
- Applying for welfare funding for families where additional support is needed.
- Supporting with completing written forms etc for parents where literacy is a challenge.

## **12. Student Support Survey**

Each year we survey our students to assess how they would best like to access support for their mental health and wellbeing. This can be via an APP, online

forums, professional agency referrals, in school 1:1 pastoral support or something new that a student identifies. We find the survey gives us a good confidential tool for students to feedback to us in a safe and confidential manner what they would like.

### **13 Outside agencies**

Students are fully supported in engaging with the external agencies that are allocated to them. Our leaders and staff will champion their needs and support in communicating the emotions and feelings of our students and their families.

### **14. Student wellbeing**

**14.1.** Students are supported to understand and share their thoughts and feelings around:

- Relationships
- Lifestyle choices
- Physical health
- Specific needs
- Home life challenges
- Peer group relationships
- Gender Identity and sexuality
- Transition to post 16

**14.2.** In addition, wellbeing is central to the daily planning of our School with personalised timetables being used that match needs and resilience levels. These are reviewed every few weeks.

**14.3.** Students are all given free school meals when attending. This is a budgetary decision made to ensure all students have access to healthy hot food daily despite their access to lunch money or their impulsive decision making that might choose to spend lunch money on other items. All parents and carers are aware students do not need cash for lunch money. This supports positive wellbeing daily.

**14.4.** Where it is identified that a student experiences very high anxiety linked to travelling on public transport a lift into school may be part of a students' learning plan. We would then work with the student and family to try to overcome the issues causing the anxiety but in the mean time would support with lifts to allow access to learning and social interactions.

**14.5.** Our staff supportline contract offers confidential online counselling and mental health support and is now extended to support students via phone, email, text or face to face appointments.

### **15. Transition to Post 16**

Students and families are fully supported in the process of visiting, making applications and the interview stages for transition to colleges or workplaces. Our pastoral manager responsible for transition will discuss any mental health or wellbeing needs with the student ahead of making it known to any future place of learning or work.

### **Monitoring arrangements**

The SMHL will monitor the effectiveness and impact of this policy and all aspects where mental health and wellbeing are included across the school and feed back to the leadership team and Management committee regularly.

The Head Teacher will ensure that every policy review and School Development plan item is assessed for the inclusion of deep and meaningful mental health and wellbeing inclusion wherever possible and appropriate.

The provision across the school for mental health and wellbeing will be regularly monitored to ensure developments where needed are acted on in a timely fashion.

### **Raising Concerns**

If a staff member has concerns about the mental health of a colleague, they should try and speak to them. If they remain concerned they should speak in confidence to the SMHL in the first instance or the Head Teacher.

If anyone has a concern about the mental health of a student they should speak to a pastoral manager in the first instance or go directly to the SMHL.

### **Training**

As part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan the SMHL and leaders across the school will assess and review the training needs of all staff, management committee members, students and family members who communicate with the school.

All staff are expected to complete mental health and wellbeing training at a basic level as part of the induction process and this is then updated each September for all staff to complete the refresher course.