

This policy sets out the school's expectations for whole school practice including Early Years and Out of School and the responsibilities of different staff in contributing to an outstanding learning environment. It should be read in conjunction with the following policies.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy	PSHE Policy
Early Years Policy	Activate Handbook
RSE Policy	Equity, diversity and inclusion policy

Resources and reference materials

Schools in Mind - The Anna Freud Centre

Mentally Healthy Schools

Young Minds

Every Mind Matters

[Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing](#)

Pupil Mental Health Lead	
Staff	Governor
Miss Kim Powell	Mrs Abbey Stewart

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Policy Dissemination and Review

This policy will be available to parents via the school website and information will be shared throughout the year via the school bulletin. Staff will be familiar with the policy through termly INSET meetings as part of the safeguarding updates and in weekly briefings where necessary. This policy will be formally reviewed each year by the Headteacher and PSHE Lead and updated as an ongoing process as required. The policy will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Governor on an annual basis.

Rationale and Aims

At Bowdon Preparatory School, we believe that mental health and emotional well-being are foundational to every child's happiness, success, and overall development. Inspired by the values of

care, respect, and nurturing the whole child, we are committed to fostering an environment where all pupils feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive both academically and personally.

Mental health, as defined by the World Health Organisation, is a state of well-being in which every individual realises their potential, can cope with life's challenges, works productively, and contributes to their community. At Bowdon Prep, we understand that positive mental health underpins all aspects of a child's growth, including their cognitive abilities, emotional resilience, and interpersonal skills.

Childhood and adolescence are critical times for shaping mental health, and while the excitement of learning presents opportunities for growth, it can also bring challenges such as anxiety and stress. We recognise that some pupils may also face mental health challenges arising from circumstances beyond the school gates.

As a school rooted in compassion and a culture of inclusivity, we are dedicated to providing a safe, supportive, and secure environment where pupils feel confident to express their feelings and concerns. Our policy reflects this commitment and seeks to ensure that every child feels seen, heard, and valued.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional well-being for all pupils, aligned with our ethos of care and respect.
- Foster understanding and awareness of common mental health challenges within the school community.
- Identify early warning signs of mental ill health and intervene with appropriate and timely support.
- Equip staff with the knowledge and resources to support pupils effectively.
- Provide tailored support for pupils experiencing mental health challenges, alongside their families and peers.

Together, as a school community, we are committed to nurturing the well-being of every pupil and ensuring that their time at Bowdon Prep lays the foundation for a fulfilling and emotionally resilient future.

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort being taught but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We follow the PSHE Association Guidance along with Think You Know and Young Minds guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Responsibilities of staff

All staff are responsible for fostering a culture which encourages pupils to openly discuss their problems, including any mental health concerns.

Where a concern about a pupil's mental health is identified, the DSL or Phase Leader will assess the risks to that pupil's welfare and begin a course of action in consultation with the pupil, her parents (where appropriate), other members of staff and Trafford school nurse team (as necessary) to safeguard, support

and monitor that pupil. Staff who see pupils on a daily basis (form teachers, subject teachers) are best placed to spot any changes in behaviour and should raise any concerns with the Phase Leader or DSL and record the concern on CPOMs. Staff should familiarise themselves with the risk factors and warning signs.

Staff may become aware of concerns over a pupil's mental health in the following ways (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- A pupil acknowledges that they have a problem and seeks help
- A pupil exhibits consistent disruptive, unusual or withdrawn behaviour
- A parent or another adult reports a concern about a pupil's mental health or behaviour
- Another pupil reports a concern about a pupil's mental health or behaviour
- encouraged to speak to a trusted adult before or after lessons if they wish to discuss personal matters.

Warning Signs - may include but are not limited to:

A child might need help if they:

- Often feel anxious or worried
- Has very frequent expressions of anger or is intensely irritable much of the time
- Has frequent stomach-aches or headaches with no physical explanation
- Are in constant motion; can't sit quietly for any length of time
- Has trouble sleeping, including frequent nightmares
- Loses interest in things they used to enjoy
- Avoids spending time with friends
- Has trouble doing well in school, or academic attainment declines
- Fears overweight gain or loss
- Has low or no energy
- Has spells of intense, inexhaustible activity
- Harms her/himself, such as cutting or burning her/his skin
- Engages in risky, destructive behaviour
- Has thoughts of suicide
- Thinks his/her mind is controlled or out of control; hears voices

Some Common Mental Health issues:

Self-harm

Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.

Online support

- SelfHarm.co.uk: www.selfharm.co.uk
- National Self-Harm Network: www.nshn.co.uk

Depression

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

Online support

- Depression Alliance: www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression

Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias

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

Online support

- Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Obsessions and compulsions

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

Online support

- OCD UK: www.ocduk.org/ocd

Suicidal feelings

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings though they may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide apparently out of the blue.

Online support

- Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrusuk.org

Eating problems

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people.

This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

Online support

- Beat – the eating disorders charity: www.b-eat.co.uk/abouteating-disorders
- Eating Difficulties in Younger Children and when to worry: www.inourhands.com/eating-difficulties-in-younger-children

Procedure

An assessment of immediate risk will be made by the Phase Leader. Any concerns should be recorded on CPOMs.

Where a concern about a pupil's mental health is identified, the Phase Leader will assess the risks to that pupil's welfare. Other professionals may also be involved in this process:

- DSL
- SENCo
- Class/Form Teacher

A decision will be taken as to whether any further action is required; this may include:

- Immediate medical assistance
- Contacting parents where appropriate
- Arranging professional assistance e.g. doctor/nurse
- Arranging an appointment with a counsellor
- Giving advice to parents, teachers and other pupils

The Phase Leader or another appropriate member of staff will discuss the matter with the pupil to develop a strategy to support and assist them. Support for the friends of the affected pupil, will also be considered, where appropriate.

SEMH Plan

Phase Leaders will draw up an individual care plan (SEMH Plan) to support pupils whose mental health and well-being is of concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play to support

Where it is decided that support and/or intervention is required, the Phase Leader will ensure that the pupil is monitored and periodically review the Care Plan seeking feedback from the pupil, parents and members of staff, as necessary.

The review will include consideration as to whether further intervention and/or external referrals are required.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Pupils may choose to confide in a member of staff if they are concerned about their own welfare or that of a peer. Pupils should be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality. If a member of staff considers a pupil to be at serious risk of harm, then confidentiality cannot be kept and the concern must be shared with the DSL or Phase Leader (see Safeguarding Policy). It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a pupil puts pressure on a member of staff to do so. A pupil may disclose at the medical centre in the first instance. This gives the medical team a key role in identifying mental health issues early. Confidentiality will be maintained within the boundaries of safeguarding the pupil and guidelines on information sharing. Varying grades of 'notes' can be recorded on CPOMs in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the pupil and others who may be affected by their actions.

Establishing a Safe Learning Environment

At BPS, we understand that curriculum content, especially in PSHE, often covers topics that are closely related to pupils' real-life experiences, it is crucial to establish a safe and supportive learning environment where all pupils feel secure and respected. To ensure that lessons are not a source of emotional harm, we begin each lesson by setting clear ground rules. These guidelines are designed to foster an atmosphere of trust and respect, where pupils feel confident to engage in discussions without fear of judgment or discomfort. Our ground rules include (but are not limited to):

- There are no silly questions.
- It is not OK to ask personal questions of others.
- We respect each other's opinions and experiences, even if we don't agree with or share them.
- It is not OK to share sensitive personal information about ourselves or others in the classroom; pupils are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult before or after lessons if they wish to discuss personal matters.
- We won't share personal information outside this classroom*

*This should always be caveated with an understanding around safeguarding and that teachers cannot guarantee confidentiality if they have any concerns.

In addition to these guidelines, we make clear that all pupils can expect to be treated with respect, kindness, and sensitivity, and we encourage them to extend the same treatment to their peers. This ensures that every pupil feels valued and safe in their learning environment. For pupils who may be more vulnerable to certain topics, we offer additional support and resources, ensuring that they feel prepared and safe to engage with the curriculum. We are committed to creating a learning environment where every child's well-being is prioritised, and where sensitive issues are addressed with care, respect, and a focus on safeguarding.

By establishing these clear boundaries and encouraging respectful dialogue, we create a learning space where pupils can engage with sensitive topics in a way that is both meaningful and emotionally secure.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we 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 be 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 information 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 are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

Meetings should finish with agreed next step and records of meetings should be added to the child's confidential record.

Training

All staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental and emotional health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep pupils safe. Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Phase Leaders and Mental First Aiders who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

APPENDIX 1

Signposting - Support for Children

YoungMinds

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. Just as people's bodies can become unwell, people's minds can become unwell too. Mental health problems are more common than you might think. Approximately three children in every classroom have a mental health problem. Young Minds offer information to young people and children about mental health and emotional wellbeing. If you need to talk, they can let you know about organisations that listen, plus they offer online support info.

Kooth

Kooth provides free online support for young people. Kooth counsellors are online Monday-Friday, 12 noon - 10pm and weekends, 6pm-10pm. You can speak to counsellors, read articles written by young people, get support from the Kooth community, write in a daily journal. XenZone is a provider of online mental health services for children, young people and adults. Kooth from XenZone, is an online counselling and emotional wellbeing platform for children and young people, accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and free at the point of use.

ChildLine

ChildLine is the UK's free helpline for children and young people. It provides a confidential telephone counselling service for any child or young person with a problem. It comforts, advises and protects. So, if you are worried about anything big or small do not bottle it up. It can really help if you talk to someone. If there is something on your mind, ChildLine is there for you. You can visit the ChildLine explore section for advice and information on a range of topics. Also, you can get support on the online message boards. 'Everyone helps each other out and is going through the same things as me - it's a really welcoming place'
Free phone 0800 1111 (24 hours and the call won't show up on your phone bill)

The Mix

The Mix provide free, confidential telephone helpline finding young people the best help whatever the problem. Provides free connections to local or national services and can text information to callers' mobile phones
Freephone 0808 808 4994 (7 days a week 1pm-11pm)

Samaritans

Samaritans volunteers listen in confidence to anyone in any type of emotional distress without judging or telling people what to do.
Call: 116 123 (24 hours a day 7 days a week)

FRANK

FRANK provides confidential information and advice for anyone concerned about their own or someone else's drug or solvent misuse.
Freephone 0300 123 6600 (24 hour service, free if calling from a landline and will not show up on the phone bill, provides translation for non-English speakers.

B-EAT youth helpline

B-EAT youth helpline provides online community information, help and support for anyone affected by eating disorders, anorexia, bulimia or any other difficulties with food, weight or shape.
Call: 0808 801 0711 (Monday - Friday evenings from 4.30pm to 8.30pm and Saturdays 1.00pm to 4.30pm).

Kidscape

Kidscape are the first charity in the UK established specifically to prevent bullying and sexual abuse. The website offers advice and practical skills on how to deal with bullying. Remember no-one deserves to be bullied. Nearly everyone is bullied at some time in their lives; by brothers and sisters, neighbours, adults or by other children/young people. If you are being bullied you may feel scared, vulnerable and quite alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops.

It Gets Better Project

It Gets Better Project is an internet-based project created to inspire hope for young people facing harassment. A place where young people who are lesbian, gay, bi or trans can see clips of other people's coming out stories.

Bullying UK part of Family lives

Bullying UK provides support for children and parents who have had to deal with bullying, including bullying in the workplace. There are confidential helplines, parenting advice videos, forums and parenting courses.

Anxiety UK

Anxiety UK help with dealing with different forms of anxiety and what leads to it. A support network offering advice for overcoming anxiety.

OCD-UK

OCD UK's vision is to guide anyone who is affected by obsessive compulsive disorder.

Depression Alliance

The Depression Alliance is a charity helping to bring people out of isolation and depression and to bring people together who have experienced depression.

Selfharm UK

Selfharm UK is a national self-harm network dedicated to self-harm recovery and support.

Diabetics with Eating Disorders

Support information

Papyrus

Suicide UK. Suicide is something that Papyrus takes seriously and wants to reach out and support people who have suicidal feelings.

SLT member responsible	KiP/ SMT
Governor / Board Responsible	Board
Date of review	Jan 2025
Date of next review	Jan 2026