

RIDGEWAY ACADEMY



MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING POLICY

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MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING POLICY

At Ridgeway Academy, 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. This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining Ridgeway Academy's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

1. AIMS

- 1.1 Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- 1.2 Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- 1.3 Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- 1.4 Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- 1.5 Provide the right support to students with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- 1.6 Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience-building techniques.
- 1.7 Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from the Leadership Team 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.

2. KEY STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

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:

Pastoral Staff – Student Mental Health Lead and Directors of Learning
Designated Senior Persons
SENCO
Subject Leader: Personal Development

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to the Student mental Health Lead / Designated Senior Person(s). If there is a concern that the student is at 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.

3. INDIVIDUAL CARE PLANS

When a student 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 students, 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
- Medication and any side effects

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- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

4. 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 Personal Development 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.

5. SIGNPOSTING

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

Within the school (tutor noticeboards, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (Ridgeway News, website), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

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

6. SOURCES OF SUPPORT AT SCHOOL AND IN THE COMMUNITY

6.1 Peer mentoring

Sometimes it is appropriate for the pastoral team to foster a relationship between students so that they can support one another. More often than not this is a student from an older year group supporting those lower down the school, but these mentoring partnerships are set up very much on a needs basis. The needs on the student needing support are usually 'low level' and we feel that they benefit from hearing from another individual closer to their age that may have experienced similar issues.

6.2 Staff mentoring

If the needs of a child are slightly more significant and require an adult to support them, the pastoral team will work to develop a mentoring partnership between a student and their chosen adult in the school. This mentoring will normally take place once a week but can be on a needs basis, and staff mentoring is usually appropriate for students whose academic studies or social wellbeing are beginning to affect their happiness or wellbeing.

6.3 Support for Young Carers

We are aware of the impact that being a young carer can have on our students and as such, have developed a programme for them to be supported. The structure of which is direct access to support from the pastoral team or a school counsellor and numerous fun activities throughout the year whereby they can feel supported by staff members and each other.

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6.4 School counsellors

At Ridgeway, we utilise the service of external counsellors that hold weekly specialist counselling sessions with students. This is a confidential, targeted therapy service that students can access to support them often with significantly poor emotional or psychological wellbeing.

The following is a list of external agencies that the school works with to support the wellbeing of our young people. These are agencies support with a wide range of needs. There are also others that we can utilise that are more specific in terms of needs. Please feel free to contact a member of the pastoral team at school to discuss any of these further.

6.5 School nurse team

The school nurse team is available to support young people with a range of wellbeing needs that centre on health and physiological wellbeing. Referrals can be made by parents, schools and the GP and can be done so by accessing the website at the following link

<https://www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services/school-nursing/>

There is also a 'Chat Health' service which is a text messaging service for all young people to access confidentially. It is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Young people can message for advice on all kinds of health issues such as sexual health, emotional health and wellbeing, bullying, healthy eating and any general health concerns.

The text number is: 07480 635050

6.6 YC Hertfordshire

YC Hertfordshire is a service which provides youth work projects and programmes, information, advice, guidance, work related learning, outdoor education and support for young people.

Emma Fuller is our Personal Advisor in school and she can be accessed via student services.

6.7 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

An external agency that supports students with a broad spectrum of wellbeing needs. It can be accessed by seeking a referral from a GP, or in some cases a referral from a member of the pastoral team at school. In order to support students completely, it is essential that school is aware of any referral that has been made to CAMHS so that we can work together to support the young person.

6.8 Education Support Teams for Medical Absences

Occasionally, a young person's wellbeing can be poor enough for them to be unable to attend school. The ESTMA team supports young people who are unable to attend school temporarily because of medical reasons, whether that be emotional, psychological or physical. The teams work closely with the school to minimise the disruption to the child's education and to support their re-integration as soon as possible. As well as schools the team works with parents, the young people and other professionals to ensure children and young people's education continues as normally as possible.

7. WARNING SIGNS

Staff may become aware of warning signs that 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 alert the Student Mental Health Lead / Designated Senior Persons by recording on CPOMS and speaking with a member of the DSP team.

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

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- 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

8. 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/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school nurses and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

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 Children's Services, CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), 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;
- Ensuring young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Providing 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;
- Providing young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and the identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

9. MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. The Student must also be made aware that the disclosure may have to be passed on to other teachers/professionals.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on CPOMS, 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

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This information will be shared with all Designated Senior Persons in the school immediately.

10. 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/carers.

If a student 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.

11. 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. Numerous members of the pastoral team will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We 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 Designated Senior Person for Safeguarding who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.