

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

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Contents

Contents.....	2
Policy Statement.....	3
Introduction and purpose.....	3
Legislation and regulation	4
Proactive and Preventative measures.....	5
Teaching about Mental Health & Training	5
Responsibilities	6
Monitoring and evaluation	6
Appendices	7
Appendix 1: Protective Factors and Risk Factors.....	7
Appendix 2: Websites for Support.....	8

Policy Statement

This policy outlines how Guildhouse School will work to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the school community, enabling all individuals to flourish. This policy applies to staff, students, visitors, and the wider school community, reflecting our core value to “be kind.”

Introduction and purpose

Guildhouse School is committed to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all members of our community (students, staff, parents, and carers). We acknowledge the importance of mental health to overall wellbeing, recognising its equal significance to physical health.

Mental health challenges, including those stemming from significant life events, can impact emotional wellbeing, learning, and achievement. As a school, we aim to:

- Provide a nurturing environment that fosters resilience and self-esteem.
- Equip students with knowledge and skills to maintain positive mental health.
- Reduce stigma around mental health issues and ensure access to support.

The policy aligns with the Department for Education’s recognition that schools play a key role in supporting mental health (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, 2018) and meets the requirements of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) regarding personal development and safeguarding.

Guildhouse School aims to:

- Ensure every student feels valued, safe, and a sense of belonging.
- Promote a culture where students feel confident to discuss mental health without stigma.
- Actively prevent and address bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- Develop resilience and protective factors to support mental health.

Definitions

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is “a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community.” Mental health encompasses more than the absence of illness and includes:

- Confidence and self-esteem.
- Emotional expression and regulation.
- Positive relationships.
- Coping with stress and change.
- Achievement and learning capacity.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy operates in compliance with:

- **Equality Act 2010:** Ensuring no discrimination, harassment, or victimisation of students with mental health challenges.
- **SEND Code of Practice 2020:** Supporting students with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- **Safeguarding Policies:** Aligning with “Keeping Children Safe in Education” (KCSIE 2024) and other statutory guidance.

Relevant documents include:

- The Mental Health Act (2007) and amendments.
- Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision (Green Paper, 2018).
- ISI Inspection Framework (2023).

Proactive and Preventative Measures

Guildhouse School will:

- **Safe Environment:** Provide a safe, inclusive space for students to express themselves.
- **Awareness and Training:** Ensure all staff receive regular training on recognising and addressing mental health challenges.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Embed mental health education in PSHE, RSE, and other subjects to empower students with knowledge and skills.
- **Parent Engagement:** Offer resources and workshops to support parents/carers in understanding and promoting mental health.

Identification and Support The school will:

- **Early Identification:** Proactively identify students experiencing mental health challenges through observations and regular wellbeing check-ins and initial sessions with our Wellbeing Counsellor or Nurse.
- **Individual Care Plans (ICPs):** Develop personalised plans for students requiring additional support, in collaboration with parents, staff, and external professionals.
- **External Referrals:** Partner with external agencies such as CAMHS and charitable organisations to ensure students receive appropriate care.

Warning signs of mental health challenges include:

- Physical harm or changes in appearance.
- Behavioural changes (e.g., isolation, socially withdrawn, mood swings).
- Declining academic performance.
- Expressions of hopelessness or self-harm.
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour

- Lateness to or absence from school

Crisis Management and Safeguarding

Crisis Protocols: Follow safeguarding procedures if a student is at risk of harm. For medical emergencies, staff will immediately escalate to the appropriate services.

Disclosures: Train staff to handle disclosures non-judgementally and confidentially. All concerns will be reported to the Safeguarding Team.

Any disclosure must be dealt with confidentially in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

Managed in a calm, non-directive and non-judgmental manner, the listener must document:

- Date (including year)
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps and arrangement/consent to see the School Wellbeing Counsellor

This information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and always with the Safeguarding Team and appropriate staff, who will store the record safely and offer support and advice about next steps.

Support for Peers: Provide guidance and emotional support for students affected by their peers' mental health challenges.

Parental Collaboration

Guildhouse School values collaboration with parents/carers. Before sharing concerns, staff will consider:

- Meeting format (in-person, virtual, etc.).
- Attendance (parents/carers, student, staff).
- Language or accessibility barriers.

Staff must exercise sensitivity when collaborating with parents / carers of individual students.

Teaching about Mental Health

Mental health education will:

- Reflect the cohort's specific needs.
- Equip students with skills to seek help for themselves or others.
- Promote resilience, empathy, and understanding.

Training and Responsibilities

All Staff: Promote positive wellbeing and identify students needing support.

Where necessary, school staff will work alongside the designated member of staff for Access Arrangements to support identification and the assessment for a student to ascertain if they should be identified as 'SEND Support' under the category of Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) as part of the SEND Code of Practice.

Mental Health Lead: Oversee mental health education, coordination, and provision.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT): Ensure policy implementation and compliance.

Youth Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA): Provide immediate support and guidance using the ALGEE framework:

A: Approach, assess, and assist.

L: Listen non-judgementally.

G: Give support and information.

E: Encourage professional support.

E: Encourage other support networks.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring a member of the senior leadership team is the designated mental health lead.

The Mental Health Lead will:

- Regularly review and update this policy.
- Monitor its implementation through feedback from students, staff, and parents.
- Use wellbeing metrics (e.g., surveys, incidents) to assess effectiveness.
- Report outcomes to the SLT and governing bodies.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Protective Factors and Risk Factors

(Adapted from Mental health and behaviour in schools (November 2018)).

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genetic influences Specific development delay Communication difficulties Physical illness Academic failure Low self-esteem SEND 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure attachment experience Outgoing temperament as an infant Good communication skills, sociability Being a planner and having a belief in control Humour Problem solving skills and a positive attitude Experiences of success and achievement Faith or spirituality Capacity to reflect
In the Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overt parental conflict domestic violence Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) Inconsistent or unclear discipline Hostile and rejecting relationships Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs Physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect Parental psychiatric illness Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder Death and loss – including loss of friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) Affection Clear, consistent discipline Support for education Supportive long-term relationship or the absence of severe discord
In the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying Discrimination Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships Negative peer influences Peer pressure Inconsistent implementation of the behaviour policy Poor relationships with staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear policies on behaviour and bullying 'Open door' policy for students to raise problems Self-referral/triage system for seeing the Wellbeing Counsellor A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health Positive relationships between students and staff 'Concern' email address for confidential disclosures or communication of concerns

Appendix 2: Websites for Support

- Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- OCD UK www.ocduk.org
- Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org
- Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com
- National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk www.selfharm.co.uk
- Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – POPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org
- Champions of young people’s mental health and wellbeing www.youngminds.org.uk
www.mind.org.uk
- Advice & support on mental health problems www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)
- Tackling the stigma of mental health www.time-to-change.org.uk
- Attitudes towards mental health www.rethink.org