

PRESFIELD HIGH SCHOOL



Mental Health & Wellbeing

Date Ratified: **18th March 2025**

Date for review: **18th March 2027** (2 years)

Signed: 

Chair of Governors

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

(World Health Organization)

Contents

1. Promoting Positive Health
2. Mental health and wellbeing with Autism
3. What is anxiety?
4. What is depression?
5. What is Self-Harm?
6. The Process of Referral
7. Supporting students with mental health issues
8. Supporting staff who are working with students with mental health issues
9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability
10. Linked Policies
11. Suggested Resources

1 - Promoting Positive Health

As part of our school culture and ethos, and continued dedication to the health and happiness of our students, this guidance provides a clear set of protocols for ensuring the well-being and welfare of all students. Social progress and academic achievement in schools depends on this. Only medical professionals should make a diagnosis of a mental health difficulty however school staff are well placed to observe young people day to day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be suffering from a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

This guidance should be followed with close reference to the 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'.

We continue to be part of Sefton's Mental Health Support Team offer and they provide workshops on targeted mental health concerns for students such as exam stress. They can also offer small group sessions for students delivering bespoke targeted mental health support.

2 - Mental health and wellbeing with Autism

Due to the nature of Autism it can be difficult for individuals to engage with the aspects of wellbeing . This is due to the various obstacles they may be confronted with when trying to do so.

The links between Autism and mental health are well documented and this in part comes down to an individual's inability to be able to engage with some or all of the key factors of a person's wellbeing. Almost three-quarters of people have at least one associated mental health condition, while 40% have two.

(British Journal of Psychiatry)

The research, carried out by the Karolinska Institute (Sweden), found that those with autism after heart disease, suicide was the most common cause of death for this group of people. Past research has suggested that autistic women are more at risk of suicide than men and only half of autistic people who have considered suicide were categorised as depressed. Autistic people are 9 times more likely to commit suicide than non autistic people. (Autistica)

Evidence suggests that a small improvement in wellbeing can help to decrease some mental health problems and also help people to flourish. (New Economic Foundation)
The NHS explain the five aspects of wellbeing that can help to boost an individual's mental wellbeing as:

Connect - connecting with the people: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spending time developing these relationships.

At Presfield students have the opportunities to interact with an array of different people in school and out in the local community during community and life skills lessons. These opportunities help students to develop social skills necessary to access life in the community and form friendships with peers.

Be active - Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Finding an activity that an individual may enjoy and making it a part of their life.

Students enjoy a broad and balanced PE curriculum and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular sports and activities clubs. Students also complete their Duke of Edinburgh award in years 9 & 10.

Physical activity and positive mental wellbeing is promoted through walking the school therapy dog and animal care. Some students enjoy visits down to the local skate park when possible to be physically active . 'The daily mile' and 'couch to 5K' are also used by staff in school to promote physical activity and mental wellbeing. We refer to 'Sefton Active Move It' scheme to help students to be physically active outside of school as well.

Keep learning - learning new skills can give a person a sense of achievement and a new confidence; e.g. a cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figuring out how to fix a bike.

Students learn a range of social and academic skills which equip them for later life, we aim to enthuse individuals to have a lifelong love of learning. We teach new skills through our life skills curriculum. We use the school owned house to enable students to cook, make beds, take care of laundry and we have a designated music room to support students with an interest in music.

Give to others - even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve people's mental wellbeing and help build new social networks.

Students at Presfield regularly engage in charity events including whole school off timetable days, own clothes days, themed days. In key stages 4 & 5 students are involved in the planning and running of fundraising events. Students take part in days such as 'random acts of kindness ' day in school to promote positive wellbeing.

Be mindful - be more aware of the present moment, including thoughts and feelings, of the body and the world around. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way people feel about life and how they approach challenges.

At Presfield students are trained over time to regulate their anxieties through calming activities which help support their transition into their next stage in life wherever that may be. We run themed weeks for health and wellbeing which introduce students to an array of mindfulness activities which many of the students thoroughly enjoy.

(National Autistic Society)

Because of the statistics relating people with Autism and potential mental health issues, Presfield employ a school therapist who works closely with the Assistant Headteacher and also the DSL. The provision is based on the individual needs of the student and may be targeted support in the areas of managing anxiety or anger for example.

3 - What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life – for example, people may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam, or having a medical test or a job interview. During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal. However, some people find it hard to control their worries; their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives.

Anxiety is the main symptom of several conditions, including:

- panic disorder
- phobias – such as agoraphobia or claustrophobia
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- social anxiety disorder (social phobia)

However, the information in this section is about a specific condition called generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). GAD is a long-term condition that causes people to feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues, rather than one specific event. People with GAD feel anxious most days and often struggle to remember the last time they felt relaxed. As soon as one anxious thought is resolved, another may appear about a different issue. GAD can cause both psychological (mental) and physical symptoms.

These vary from person to person, but can include:

- feeling restless or worried
- having trouble concentrating or sleeping
- dizziness or heart palpitations

What causes generalised anxiety disorder? (GAD)

The exact cause of GAD isn't fully understood, although it's likely that a combination of several factors plays a role. Research has suggested that these may include:

- over activity in areas of the brain involved in emotions and behaviour
- an imbalance of the brain chemicals serotonin and noradrenaline, which are involved in the control and regulation of mood

- the genes you inherit from your parents - you're estimated to be five times more likely to develop GAD if you have a close relative with the condition
- having a history of stressful or traumatic experiences, such as domestic violence, child abuse or bullying
- having a painful long-term health condition, such as arthritis
- having a history of drug or alcohol misuse

However, many people develop GAD for no apparent reason. GAD is a common condition, estimated to affect up to 5% of the UK population. Slightly more women are affected than men, and the condition is more common in people from the ages of 35 to 59. GAD can have a significant effect on daily life, but several different treatments are available that can ease your symptoms.

These include:

- psychological therapy - such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
- medication – such as a type of antidepressant called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

There are also many things people can do to help reduce your anxiety, such as:

- going on a self-help course
- exercising regularly
- cutting down on the amount of fizzy drinks and caffeine they drink

With treatment, many people are able to control their anxiety levels. However, some treatments may need to be continued for a long time and there may be periods when symptoms worsen. (NHS 2016)

4 - What is depression?

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days. Most people go through periods of feeling down, but when depressed people feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days. Some people think depression is trivial and not a genuine health condition. They're wrong - it is a real illness with real symptoms. Depression isn't a sign of weakness or something someone can "snap out of" by "pulling yourself together". The good news is that with the right treatment and support, most people with depression can make a full recovery.

How to tell if someone may have depression?

Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms. They range from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things they used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many people with depression also have symptoms of anxiety. There can be physical symptoms too, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, having no appetite or sex drive, and various aches and pains. The symptoms of depression range from mild to severe. At its mildest, people may simply feel persistently low in spirit, while severe depression can make others feel suicidal, that life is no longer worth living. Most people experience feelings of stress, unhappiness or anxiety during difficult times. A low mood may improve after a short period of time, rather than being a sign of depression.

What causes depression?

Sometimes there's a trigger for depression. Life-changing events, such as bereavement, losing a job or even having a baby, can bring it on. People with a family history of depression are more likely to experience it themselves. But people can also become depressed for no obvious reason. Depression is fairly common, affecting about one in 10 people at some point during their life. It affects men and women, young and old. Studies have shown that about 4% of children aged five to 16 in the UK are anxious or depressed.

Living with depression

Many people with depression benefit by making lifestyle changes, such as getting more exercise, cutting down on alcohol, giving up smoking and eating healthily. Reading a self-help book or joining a support group are also worthwhile. They can help people gain a better understanding about what causes somebody to feel depressed. Sharing experiences with others in a similar situation can also be very supportive. (NHS 2016)

5 - What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm describes a wide range of behaviours that people use with the intent of deliberately causing harm to one's own body. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin
- Swallowing inedible objects
- Taking an overdose of prescription or non-prescription drugs
- Wallowing hazardous materials or substances

- Burning or scalding
- Hair-pulling
- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively

Recent research indicates that up to one in ten young people in the UK engage in self-harming behaviours; one in fifteen young people have deliberately self-harmed at some point. The most common age is between the ages of 11 and 25. Around four times as many girls as boys self-harm. Self-harm is a coping mechanism and it is more important to recognise and respond to the underlying reasons.

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person particularly vulnerable to self-harm.

- Depression/anxiety
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem solving skills
- Hopelessness
- Impulsivity
- Family factors
- Social factors

6 - The Process of Referral

As a School we aim to detect and address problems in their earliest stages. There is a fine line between appropriate responsiveness and inappropriate intrusiveness into the personal lives of students and their families however all staff must respond to well-being and welfare concerns of our students no matter what. Any staff member concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student should speak to the student's form teacher and form staff to share their concerns. Form teachers are well placed to spot changes in behaviour which may indicate a problem. If any member of staff is concerned about the wellbeing or safety of a student they should submit a concern form to the DSL so that appropriate action can be taken.

If the student has seriously self-harmed then staff should follow the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including seeking advice from the named member of staff responsible for First Aid.

7 - Supporting students with mental health issues

Schools offer important opportunities to prevent mental health problems by promoting resilience. Providing pupils with inner resources that they can draw on as a buffer when negative or stressful things happen can help them to thrive even in the face of significant challenges. However these strategies do not work for all young people and for some they may not feel able to cope with their problems.

It is important when responding to students who may be suffering with mental health issues that staff remain calm and non-judgemental.

Staff should not:

- dismiss concerns or disclosures as insignificant, they may provide a vital link to other information;
- keep such concerns to themselves;
- promise secrecy to children or adults making disclosures but reassure them that information will be shared appropriately and confidentially.

The school aims to increase the appropriate level of support available to students with mental health issues in partnership with outside health agencies and support groups. We are able to signpost and/or refer students, parents and carers to other agencies who support young people with mental health issues.

Support available includes, but is not exclusive to:

- Mentoring
- Teenage Health Drop-In sessions with the School Nurse
- Targeted Youth Support
- Counselling
- Behaviour support
- GP Services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Online services such as kooth.com
- Help line services such as the Samaritans
- Support from Sefton mental Health

8 - Supporting staff who are working with students with mental health issues

Presfield high school acknowledges that staff who are working closely with distressed students can themselves be placed under emotional strain. Presfield aims to increase the level of awareness and understanding amongst staff of issues involving the mental health of young people, in particular concerns with depression, anxiety, self-harm . Presfield will provide a range of opportunities for staff to access training in dealing with students with mental health problems, including opportunities to talk with other specialist professionals working with students with recognised mental health issues.

External supervision is in place to support staff who have been involved in supporting students with mental health concerns. We also have an SLT open door policy for staff to seek support and discuss their wellbeing after supporting students with mental health conditions.

9 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

The monitoring and evaluation of this policy will be carried out by the Senior Leader responsible for Health and Wellbeing.

10 - Linked Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour policy
- Care and control policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

11 - Suggested Resources

Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you've been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 08444 775 774 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm)

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Bipolar UK

A charity helping people living with manic depression or bipolar disorder.

Website: www.bipolaruk.org.uk

CALM

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15-35.

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Depression Alliance

Charity for sufferers of depression. Has a network of self-help groups.

Website: www.depressionalliance.org

Men's Health

Forum 24/7 stress support for men by text, chat and email.

Website: www.menshealthforum.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation

Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm)

Website: www.mind.org.uk

No Panic

Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and OCD. Offers a course to help overcome your phobia/OCD. Includes a helpline.

Phone: 0844 967 4848 (daily, 10am-10pm)

Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

OCD Action

Support for people with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Includes information on treatment and online resources.

Phone: 0845 390 6232 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm)

Website: www.ocdaction.org.uk

OCD UK

A charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news and treatments.

Phone: 0845 120 3778 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

Website: www.ocduk.org

PAPYRUS

Young suicide prevention society.

Phone: HOPElineUK 0800 068 4141 (Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm & 7-10pm. Weekends 2-5pm)

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)

Website: www.rethink.org

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

Sane

Charity offering support and carrying out research into mental illness.

Phone: 0845 767 8000 (daily, 6-11pm)

SANE email: sanemail@org.uk

Website: www.sane.org.uk

YoungMinds

Information on child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)

Website: www.youngminds.org.uk