

Date Adopted	Spring 2019
Latest Review	Autumn 2022
Lead Members of Staff updated	Feb 2024



MENTAL HEALTH POLICY	Non-Statutory
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1. Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

At Gordano School, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

2. Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

3. The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- 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 suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

4. Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Johnny Mailey (Deputy Head) - Strategic Safeguarding Lead
- Jeanne Fairs (Assistant Head) - Designated Safeguarding Lead and Mental Health Lead
- Natalie Tester - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Holly Davies - Lead First Aider
- Carolyn Tipler (Deputy Head) - CPD lead
- Greg Horner - Head of PSHCE
- Lorna Moss - Mental Health Working Group Lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the Mental Health Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed, with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officer, the head teacher or the designated governor. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Safeguarding Team in conjunction with the Mental Health Lead.

5. Medical Action Plans

It is helpful to draw up support plans for students causing pastoral concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the student, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a student'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

6. Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and pastoral programme.

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

7. Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.

We display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as common rooms and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

8. Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which 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 communicate their concerns on CPOMS. The Safeguarding Team will monitor these and consult with the DSL.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- 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 - eg 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

9. Disclosures

All mental health disclosures should be treated in the same way that we would treat Child Protection or Safeguarding disclosures.

All disclosures should be recorded on CPOMS

This information will be shared with the Safeguarding Team and Mental Health Lead, Jeanne Fairs, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

10. Confidentiality

All staff should follow the confidentiality disclosure protocols outlined in the Safeguarding Policy.

Parents must always be informed if the school is concerned about a student's mental wellbeing or safety via the Safeguarding or Pastoral team, and students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents, unless they are at immediate risk of harm; if there is suspicion of fabricated or induced illness or if a child discloses that they are pregnant. In these circumstances, other services such as Social Care or the School Nursing Service should be consulted for advice in the first instance.

11. 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 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 leaflets 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're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

12. Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our Mental Health Policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings

13. Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either

one to one or in group settings, and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (eg signs of relapse)

Students have access to pathways to Wellbeing literature and links from Firefly for wellbeing conversations with the pastoral team.

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

14. 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.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The [MindEd learning portal](#)¹ 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 to 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 our DSL and our CPD Coordinator, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in Autumn 2025.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad-hoc basis. Any questions or suggestions about improving this policy should be addressed to Jeanne Fairs, Mental Health Lead via phone [01275 842606](tel:01275 842606) or email jfairs@gordanoschool.org.uk.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.

Date Policy adopted: 9th January 2023
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Neil Wiley

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Chair of Governors



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Headteacher