Highcroft School

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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Contributors	Rob Arrowsmith		
Note	This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director		

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1. Supporting Documents

- Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002)
- PSHE & RSHE Policy (EDE.POL.003)
- Attendance Policy (EDU.POL.005)
- Behaviour Policy (EDU.POL.027)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy (EDU.POL.022)
- Anti-bullying Policy and Critical Incidents Policy (EDU.POL.045)

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

2. Introduction

At Highcroft School, we believe good mental health and wellbeing are the foundation for learning and for a happy life. We treat mental health with the same care as physical health. Many of our pupils have lived through difficult experiences and arrive with social, emotional and mental health needs, so supporting wellbeing is not an add-on for us. It is central to everything we do.

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This policy sets out our whole-school approach to promoting positive mental health, how we identify and support pupils who need more help, and how we respond with care when a pupil is struggling, including in relation to self-harm and thoughts of suicide. We work in a relational, trauma-informed way and in partnership with families and health services.

3. Aim & Scope

This policy applies to all staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers, and visitors at Highcroft School. It aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for every pupil and member of staff.
- Help staff identify pupils who need more support and respond early.
- Set out how we provide and arrange support, including referral to specialist services.
- Explain how we respond safely and compassionately to self-harm and to concerns about suicide.
- Make clear that mental health is treated as a safeguarding matter where a pupil may be at risk.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

Mental health and wellbeing. How a person thinks, feels and copes with everyday life. Good wellbeing is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to cope, to recover and to thrive with the right support.

Whole-school approach. Promoting mental health across every part of school life, from ethos and relationships to curriculum, environment, pupil voice, staff training, working with parents, and targeted support.

Senior mental health lead. The member of the leadership team who oversees the school's whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Self-harm. When a person hurts themselves on purpose, usually as a way of coping with difficult feelings. It is a sign of distress and is responded to with care, not punishment.

5. Policy Content

5.1 Principles and Approach

Our approach rests on the following principles.

Parity with physical health. We treat mental health and wellbeing as seriously as physical health.

A whole-school approach. We build wellbeing into our ethos, relationships, curriculum, environment and daily practice, not just into our support for those in difficulty.

Relational and trauma informed. We understand behaviour as communication, and we respond with relationships, safety and understanding.

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Early identification. We notice changes early and act, rather than waiting for a crisis. Staff support, they do not diagnose.

Our role is to notice, support and refer. Diagnosis is for trained health professionals.

Partnership. We work with parents, carers and health services, and we treat mental health as a safeguarding matter where a pupil may be at risk.

5.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing in Practice

A whole-school approach

At Highcroft School, we promote wellbeing through a calm, safe and welcoming environment, strong relationships between staff and pupils, and a culture where it is normal to talk about feelings and to ask for help. Pupil voice shapes our approach, and wellbeing runs through our curriculum, including our relationships, sex and health education.

Promoting positive mental health

We teach pupils about emotions, resilience and how to look after their own wellbeing and seek help, in an age-appropriate and accessible way. We build in opportunities for connection, achievement, physical activity and time outdoors, and we celebrate effort and progress so that every pupil can experience success.

Identifying pupils who need more support

Staff are well placed to notice when a pupil is struggling, for example a change in mood, behaviour, attendance, appearance, friendships or engagement. We pay particular attention to pupils who are more vulnerable, including those with special educational needs, those who have experienced trauma or loss, and those facing difficulties at home. Staff do not diagnose. They record what they notice and pass it to the senior mental health lead or designated safeguarding lead so that support can be put in place.

Graduated support and referral

Where a pupil needs more than universal support, we offer help that is matched to their needs. This may include time with a trusted adult, in-school wellbeing or therapeutic support, and an individual support plan agreed with the pupil and their family. Where a pupil needs specialist help, we make a referral with consent to services such as the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service or a Mental Health Support Team, and we work alongside them. Where mental health needs are part of a wider special educational need, we link this support to the pupil's plan and the SEND Code of Practice. We use early help where a family would benefit from coordinated support.

Working with parents and carers

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We involve parents and carers as partners. We tell them when we have a concern, listen to what they know about their child, and plan support together. We share information sensitively and only as needed, and we signpost families to further help. Where there is a safeguarding risk, we follow our Safeguarding Policy (EDE.POL.002).

Responding to self-harm

We respond to self-harm calmly, with compassion and without judgement, and we never treat it as a disciplinary matter. Where staff become aware that a pupil may be self-harming, they keep the pupil safe, seek any needed first aid or medical help, and involve the designated safeguarding lead and a trained member of staff straight away. We assess risk, agree a support and safety plan with the pupil and, in the great majority of cases, their family, and we work with health services where needed. We are mindful of the wellbeing of other pupils and of confidentiality, and we balance a pupil's privacy with the need to keep them safe.

Responding to concerns about suicide

We take any sign that a pupil may be thinking about suicide seriously. Staff who have such a concern act immediately, stay with the pupil, and contact the designated safeguarding lead and a trained member of staff without delay. We secure any immediate medical help that is needed, involve the pupil's family other than in the rare case where this would increase the risk, and work with health and emergency services as appropriate. We follow a planned, trained response, and we make sure staff and pupils affected are supported afterwards, linking to our Critical Incidents Policy (EDU.POL.045) where needed.

Following a serious mental health incident, the school will undertake a structured debrief and review to ensure lessons are identified and support is adjusted where necessary.

Mental health as a safeguarding matter

Keeping Children Safe in Education is clear that mental health is a safeguarding issue. Where a pupil's mental health gives rise to a concern that they may be suffering or at risk of harm, we act through our Safeguarding Policy (EDE.POL.002), involve the designated safeguarding lead, and record our actions. We are alert to the links between mental health and other concerns such as abuse, neglect, bullying, online harm and exploitation.

Supporting our staff

Supporting pupils with significant needs can affect staff. At Highcroft School, we look after the wellbeing of our staff, provide access to support and supervision, and make sure no member of staff carries a serious concern about a pupil alone.

5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

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Wellbeing concerns, support plans and any safeguarding actions are recorded on CPOMS. Leadership and the senior mental health lead monitor wellbeing and support data, review the impact of what we do, and report to the proprietor and governors, so that Highcroft School keeps improving its approach.

5.4 Equality and Inclusion

At Highcroft School, this policy is applied fairly and in line with the Equality Act 2010. We make reasonable adjustments so that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities can access wellbeing support, and we are alert to the particular pressures faced by different groups of pupils. Any concern that this policy disadvantages a pupil should be raised with the headteacher.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Pupils

Are encouraged to talk to a trusted adult about how they feel, and to look out for one another.

6.2 Staff

- Build positive relationships, notice changes in a pupil, and pass concerns to the right person promptly;
- Respond to distress, self-harm or talk of suicide calmly and supportively, and involve the designated safeguarding lead.

6.3 Leadership and the senior mental health lead

Leadership at Highcroft School makes sure wellbeing is a priority across the school. The senior mental health lead at Highcroft School oversees the whole-school approach, the support offer, staff training, and the links with health services.

6.4 Governance

The proprietor and governors at Highcroft School make sure the school has an effective whole-school approach to mental health and that this policy is followed, and they review wellbeing and support data.

6.5 Parents and carers

Work in partnership with the school regarding their child's wellbeing, and are involved in planning support.

6.6 Named leads

The Senior Mental Health Lead at Highcroft School is Christine Wade. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Stephanie Goddard. The Mental Health First Aider is Christine Wade.

7. Training Requirements

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All staff receive training to understand mental health and wellbeing, to spot the signs that a pupil needs help, and to respond to distress, self-harm and talk of suicide calmly and safely. The senior mental health lead, designated safeguarding lead and mental health first aiders at Highcroft School receive role-specific training, and our trauma-informed approach is refreshed regularly.

8. Equality Impact Statement

All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

9. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current statutory guidance and legislation, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025, and 2026 from 1 September 2026), which treats mental health as a safeguarding issue.
- Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges (DfE, 2021, updated 2026).
- Mental health and behaviour in schools (DfE, November 2018).
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance (DfE, 2025, statutory from 1 September 2026).
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice (2015), under which social, emotional and mental health is a type of special educational need
- Equality Act 2010.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026).

10. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The named owner for review at Highcroft School is the headteacher.

11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

At Highcroft School, the following local arrangements apply:

- Senior mental health lead: Christine Wade.
- Mental health first aiders: Christine Wade.
- In-school wellbeing and therapeutic support offer: there are many therapeutic tools available to pupils and we have a new sensory room that pupils can access when needed. 1-1 sessions allow areas for help to be identified allowing school to address areas to allow pupil to engage in school. We have a designated clinical team including occupational therapists, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists that attend school on a regular basis and work with pupils.

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11.2 Appendix B: Sources of Support

The Head completes this section so that pupils, parents and carers know where to turn for help, including in a crisis. Include the school's own contacts and local and national services.

- School contact for a wellbeing concern: Christine Wade
- Local services, for example the GP, CAMHS and the local crisis line:
  GP – Woodview Medical Practice – 01388 718202
  CAMHS – The Acley Centre, Newton Aycliffe, 01325 529520
- National sources of support the school signposts:

  Kooth: A free, safe, and anonymous online mental wellbeing community and counselling service for young people aged 11 and over.
  YoungMinds: Offers dedicated support, information, and a parents' helpline (Monday to Friday, 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM) around youth mental health.
  Shout: A confidential 24/7 text support service for anyone in crisis; text **SHOUT** to **85258**.
  Childline: Offers 1-to-1 online counselling, info resources, and phone support via **0800 1111** for children and teenagers.

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