

St. Lawrence College

Senior School Mental Health Policy



Our school is one community, united in our respect for each other, tolerant of differences and proud of our diversity, honest and positive about our learning and behaviour every day.

Issued: 2021

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AT ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE

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 our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our pupil and staff body in the senior school. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at individual pupils.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. According to British research, 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 pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

SCOPE

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

THE POLICY AIMS TO:

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

LEAD MEMBERS OF STAFF

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

- Mr P. Holden – Headmaster and designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Ms V. Walters – Deputy Head (Pastoral)
- Ms K. Perraki – Head of Year 7
- Ms M. Bogdan – Head of Year 8
- Ms A. Loveday – Head of Year 9
- Mr F. Tzellos - Assistant Head Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)
- Mr R. Courts - Assistant Head Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13)
- Ms S. Zarri – School Counsellor
- Mr J. Robinson – Chinese Welfare Officer

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil or teacher should speak to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or the relevant Key Stage Assistant Head/Head of Year for a pupil in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil 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 Headmaster.

INDIVIDUAL CARE PLANS

At St. Lawrence College we believe it is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This is drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil'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

TEACHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We follow the [PSHE Association Guidance](#) to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

SIGNPOSTING

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

At the back of the school homework diary sources of help in Greece and beyond are shared with all senior school pupils. We also display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as on the Key Stage noticeboards & in toilets and regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum.

WARNING SIGNS

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil or teacher 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 to Ms Victoria Walters (Deputy Head Pastoral) or the relevant Key Stage Assistant Head/Head of Year.

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 – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping P.E. 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

MANAGING DISCLOSURES

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with Ms Victoria Walters (Deputy Head Pastoral) and Mr Phil Holden who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on, then we should discuss with the pupil:

- Who we are going to talk to

- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent, for instance if a pupil is in danger of harm. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) or relevant Key Stage Assistant Head/Head of Year will contact parents about such issues.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection officer, Mr Phil Holden, must be informed immediately.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Deputy Head (Pastoral). This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

INFORMING 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?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, 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 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.

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
- 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 the school counsellor

SUPPORTING PEERS

When a pupil 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 in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the pupil 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 (e.g. signs of relapse)

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

TRAINING

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 pupils safe.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD about mental health should be discussed with Ms Victoria Walters.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every year. Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be emailed to Ms Victoria Walters (Deputy Head Pastoral) at walters@slc.gr.

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