



Sandwell College Positive Mental Health Policy

2022 - 2025

Policy prepared by: Director of Student Services

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Sandwell College Group: Positive Mental Health Policy: Student Policy

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Policy Statement:

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 make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

At our College, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole College 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 young people 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.

Scope:

This document describes the College'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 Safeguarding Policy; Self Harm and Suicidal Behaviour; Fitness to study; Health Safety and Welfare Policy; Additional Needs Policy

The Policy Aims to:

Promote positive mental health in all students by:

- ♣ Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- ♣ Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health in their learners
- ♣ Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- ♣ Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parent/guardians/carers

Lead Members of Staff:

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

Paul Smith - designated child protection / safeguarding officer
Amie Banford-Head of Pastoral Care Cadbury college Cadbury Safeguarding lead
Angela Tombs- Director of Student Services
Mark Salter- Head of Centre Sandwell College
Martin Smith- Health and Safety Lead

Mental health Concerns about a student's mental health may initially be shared and supported by: Director of Student Services; Mentors; welfare; PAMs; mental Health first aiders; safeguarding- these professionals will be able to advise and signpost to appropriate support, more serious concerns such as self-harm or suicide attempts- will require safeguarding intervention. See Safeguarding and Suicide and Self Harm Policy.

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 developmental Tutorial curriculum.

The specific content of tutorials 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. Additional specialist talks will be provided during the year. Students also have access to the Together All website which has useful short courses about mental Health.

We will ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

The student well-being site is also a good source of information.

Physical wellbeing:

- Promoting physical activity
- Supporting and promoting the benefits of a healthy, balanced diet and lifestyle

Signposting:

We will ensure that staff, students and parent/guardians are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and the student portal/ wellbeing site 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

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 with the safeguarding team or our mental health and emotional wellbeing lead. Possible warning signs include:

- ♣ Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accident
 - Changes in eating / 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 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

Managing disclosures:

A student 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 student 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 student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All serious disclosures where a student may be at immediate risk should be recorded in writing and held on CPOMs. 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 the Safeguarding who will provide store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. Including possible referral to CAHMS.

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

- ♣ Who we are going to talk to
- ♣ What we are going to tell them
- ♣ Why we need to tell them

Parent/guardians must always be informed if [X,Y,Z] and students may choose to tell their parent/guardians themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parent/guardians. We should always give students the option of us informing parent/guardians for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parent/guardians should not be informed, but the child protection office must be informed immediately.

Working with Parent/guardians: (Learners under 18 or vulnerable learners/ learners who are over 18 but ask for parent/guardian involvement).

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parent/guardians, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parent/guardians 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 parent/guardians, the student, other members of staff.
- ♣ What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parent/guardians 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/guardian 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 parent/guardians can also be helpful too e.g. parent/guardian 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 parent/guardians often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the student's confidential record.

Working with All Parent/guardians:

Parent/guardians are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health.

In order to support parent/guardians we will:

- ♣ Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues in newsletter to parent/guardians
- ♣ Ensure that all parent/guardians are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child: support information on website; contact from tutors, PAMs etc
- ♣ Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parent/guardians
- ♣ Share ideas about how parent/guardians can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings: e.g. Hope Virgo Anorexia talk
- ♣ Keep parent/guardians informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

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 in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the student who is suffering and their parent/guardians 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 / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- ♣ Warning signs that their friend 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

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 in order 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. Linked in training and Together All training is free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge, such as mental health first aid, will be considered as part of our appraisal and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due 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.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in May 2025. Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis.