



HOLMEWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

'Kindness, aspiration & self-belief'

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Policy Holder	Assistant Head Pastoral Care and Wellbeing
Date Approved	September 2026
Approval	SLT
Date for next review	September 2027

Named Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead:

Simon Porter (Assistant Head Pastoral Care and Wellbeing)

Named Governor with lead on Mental Health:

Amanda Barnes

WHY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IS IMPORTANT

At Holmewood House School we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents/carers) and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. All children go through difficulties during their school career and some face significant life events. For example, research¹ stated that 1 in 5 (20.3%) 8- to 16-year-olds had at least one mental disorder when assessed in 2023 and these can have an enormous impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. In many cases, it is life limiting.

The World Health Organisations state, "There is no health without mental health". Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. For some, school will be a place of respite and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

¹ Public Health England [NHS England » One in five children and young people had a probable mental disorder in 2023](#)

Our role in school is to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health issues developing and to uphold our core values of kindness, self-belief and aspiration to be a school where:

- All children are valued.
- Children have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma.
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued and declining mental health is recognised and addressed.
- Bullying is not tolerated.

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy sets out:

- How we promote positive mental health.
- How we prevent mental health problems.
- How we identify and support children with mental health needs.
- How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health problems
- Key information about some common mental health problems.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support.

DEFINITION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing

"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".

Mental health and wellbeing are not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people to:

- feel confident in themselves.
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately.
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others.
- cope with the stresses of everyday life.
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change.
- learn and achieve.

HOW THE POLICY WAS DEVELOPED AND WHO WAS CONSULTED

The development of this policy initially included consultation with children, staff, parents and carers, the school nurse and local mental health professionals.

- The Upper School council gave their views on what to teach children and the best ways to teach about mental health.
- Parents and carers were invited to share their views via the school newsletter and with their children's class teacher.
- Staff discussed the draft policy at a Wellbeing staff meeting.
- This is updated yearly or as required due to changes, reviews or new legislation.

In developing this policy we have taken account of:

- [Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England \(2021\).](#)
- [Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper \(2018\)](#)
- [Children and young people's mental health: policy and services \(England\)](#)
- [Preparing to teach about mental health, PSHE Association 2021.](#)
- [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE 2021.](#)
- [Supporting children with medical conditions, DfE 2015.](#)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE 2026

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Medical Needs, Anti-Bullying, SEND and Equalities. Links with the School's Behaviour Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need.

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise. Using the 5 ways to wellbeing framework we offer the following initiatives for staff and pupils:

1. **Connect:** Opportunities to socialise with our peers; a staff book club; pupil reading scheme; staff twilight CPD sessions; [Pets as Therapy Dogs](#) in school; pupil/staff drop-in sessions with heads of year; ability to access play therapy sessions ; Wellbeing café for parents. Pupil Wellbeing activities in the Learning Hub – lego, reading, mindful colouring etc., a huge selection of before school, after school and lunchtime clubs, special events put on for areas connect to mental health (safe internet day, cultural talks, world book day etc.).
2. **Be active:** A full sports programme for pupils. Sport, fitness and leisure opportunities for staff, a specialised PE curriculum, A huge range of pre, post and lunchtime clubs for all ages.
3. **Take notice:** MyHeart curriculum to support and develop a sense of emotional awareness for pupils. Themed assemblies for World Mental Health Day; World Kindness Day; Cultural Days and multiple displays in the school corridors and in classrooms.
4. **Keep Learning:** Pupil activities. Weekly staff CPD sessions, staff performance reviews, individual target setting in Hy Heart for pupils, positions of responsibility for pupils, e.g. House Leads, Head Boy and Girl.
5. **Give:** As a school community, we support many charitable endeavours throughout the year. We encourage the children to be involved with this as well as their parents, ensuring that pupils have an increased understanding of the needs of the recipients of the funds etc. The second-hand uniform shop has made substantial contributions to the school's chosen charities.

Following the **5 Ways to Wellbeing** and our **My Heart programme**, we aim to:

- Create an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
- Help children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
- Help children to be resilient learners.
- Teach children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
- Enable early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
- Effectively work with parents and carers.
- Support and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, such as physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown and bullying. They should also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging and emotional literacy.

Our Wellbeing Lead

- Will organise and work with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Promotes positive teaching about mental health.
- Provides advice and support to staff.
- Can signpost counselling support to pupils and staff
- Provides Supervision sessions to staff

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the School environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children with mental health needs and their families.

Sources of relevant support include:

- Our own Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Our DSL/deputies
- Our Head of Learning Strategies who helps staff understand their responsibilities to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including children whose mental health problems mean they need special educational provision.
- Our in-house medical team
- Our Boarding team
- Form Tutors

- Our School Play Therapist and Counsellor

SUPPORTING CHILDREN' POSITIVE MENTAL HEATH

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our School is developing a range of strategies and approaches including:

Pupil-led activities

- Year 8 Heads of House, who hold house meetings and are responsible for younger pupils.
- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
- Peer mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child.
- Read and Relax in the learning hub.
- Year 8's helping with sporting activities in the Pre-Prep.

Transition programmes

- Transition Programme to senior schools which includes all Year 8 children having a staff mentor (normally their tutor) to support a smooth transition to their new school – there is also visits from senior school transition leads to help pupils know what to expect or transition days that pupils attend.
- Transition Programme between school years with the Heads of Year in the Summer term – from 2025 Welcome to Year... brochures were produced and issued to all pupils and parents.
- New joiners to Holmewood are contacted to by Parental Reps to make sure that they know what they need to organise and they receive help on the parental side of starting.

Pupil activities

- Rewards – House points where children can be praised for certain duties, tasks or things they have done. This contributes to individual, house and year group prizes.
- Bi-weekly I:I's with tutors.
- Student council meetings every half term and pupil voice via it.
- Green Council Group.
- I:I or group support from the learning strategies team.
- Dogs as Therapy Dogs in school
- The Learning Hub – offering alternative activities at break time in a safe, adult-led environment

Staff

- Termly Social events lead by SLT and the Assistant Head Co-curricular and Operations.
- Displays and information around the School about positive mental health and where to go for help and support.
- Staff mental health training (MHFA) – 14 staff trained in 2026, additional sessions are planned for 2027.

Small group activities

- Nurture groups
- Sensory Circuits
- Pupil Book club in the Learning Hub.
- Mini tutor groups.

Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing

Through our PSHE program, 'MyHeart', we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help children to be more resilient, understand about mental health and be less affected by the stigma of mental health problems.

EYFS & Pre-prep children learn:

- To recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings.
- Simple strategies for managing feelings.
- How their behaviour affects other people.
- About empathy and understanding other people's feelings.
- To cooperate and problem solve.
- To motivate themselves and persevere.
- How to calm down.
- About change and loss and the associated feelings (including moving home, losing toys, pets or friends).
- Who to go to if they are worried.
- About different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable.
- How to resist teasing or bullying, if they experience or witness it, whom to go to and how to get help.

Prep children learn:

- What positively and negatively affects their mental and emotional health (including the media).
- Positive and healthy coping strategies.
- About good and not so good feelings.
- To describe the range and intensity of their feelings to others.
- To recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of feelings in others.
- To recognise that they may experience conflicting emotions and when they might need to listen to their emotions or overcome them.
- About resilience.
- How to motivate themselves and bounce back when they fail at something.
- How to empathise and be supportive of others.
- About change, including transitions (between Key Stages and schools), loss, separation and family relationships.
- About the consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including online bullying, prejudice-based language), as well as how to respond and ask for help if they are victims of this themselves.
- About the importance of talking to someone and how to get help.

IDENTIFYING, REFERRING AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Our 'child-centred' approach to:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and can be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Involve children in the care and support they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

Early Identification

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- 1:1 tutor meetings every 2 weeks.
- Termly completion of safety circles, to identify who pupils can speak to if they are worried / concerns about something.
- Analysing behaviour, visits to the medical room/school nurse, attendance and sanctions.
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
- Pastoral deep dives where all pupils have their current feelings checked.
- Staff briefing every week for staff to raise awareness of focus children.
- Weekly meetings with the HOY, Head of Learning Strategies and DSL's, where any pupils there are concerns with are discussed and any help needed are applied.
- Parents complete information at the start of the application process about any areas for concerns or where support will need to be provided.
- Our registrar gathering information from a previous school at transfer.
- Parental meetings in EYFS.
- Supporting children to raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Welcoming parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.

All staff at Holmewood House School have had training on the protective and risk factors and types of mental health needs (see Appendix I) plus signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to a member of the DSL team.

These signs might include:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits.
- Falling academic achievement.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism.
- Not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE.
- Wearing long sleeves in hot weather.
- Drugs or alcohol misuse.
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

Staff are aware that mental health needs, such as anxiety, might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour, which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home issues, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the School's child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency then the School's procedures for medical emergencies are followed. The school acknowledged that there is a chance that a Wellbeing concern may also be a safeguarding concern, depending on the actual cause of the needs and symptoms identified.

DISCLOSURES BY CHILDREN AND CONFIDENTIALITY

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

Assessment, Interventions and Support

In-house therapy will be offered to pupils in need. Play therapy or counselling are provided by qualified and trained practitioners who fully adhere to the professional practising code of ethics.

- **Step 1:** Parents will be invited to an appointment (telephone or face to face) to discuss their child and any goals the parents may have for therapeutic support at school. During this assessment session parents will be given choices in terms of the support available, this may be:
 - **Signposting** – other external support services available in the local area
 - **Pastoral support** – support given in school by a team of staff in terms of pupil wellbeing, ie: 1:1 sessions with the learning strategies department, targeted teacher support or peer mentoring
 - **Play therapy services in school** – A 6 session goal focused programme is usually offered. This is payable by parents and will be billed to them at the end of term. This programme is offered from the privacy of a therapy room to maintain client confidentiality.
 - **Counselling services outside of school** – Parents may be given guidance on seeking appropriate professional support outside of school, exploring what type of therapist would best suit the child's presenting challenge/needs. Currently we recommend The Children's Wellness Centre based in Tunbridge Wells.
- **Step 2:** The practitioner will meet with the pupil and offer either -
 - **Introduction session** - At this session the pupil will meet with the Play Therapist or Counsellor and the format of the sessions will be discussed so that the pupil feels safe and secure, increasing the chances of a successful outcome being achieved.
 - **Assessment Session** - If parents choose not to take up further sessions, parents will be provided with feedback from the assessment session and further recommendations if required.
- **Step 3: Session facilitated:** The practitioner will provide feedback at the end of this contracted session. If it is felt that further sessions may be beneficial, this will be discussed with parents/pupil. With parental consent, she will continue for an extended 6 session (on average) contract and provide full feedback at the conclusion of this extension.

INVOLVING PARENTS AND CARERS

Promoting mental health

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting children who do have mental health needs.

On first entry to the School, our parent's meeting includes a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. We ask parents to inform us of any mental health needs their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing, based on a list of risk factors pertaining to the child or family. It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the School so that we can better support their child from the outset. All information will be treated in confidence.

To support parents and carers:

- We organise a range of activities such as our Signposting of relevant support material via email, Talks on internet safety, Mental Health First Aid courses, Teacher, consultation about curriculum content for My Heart (PSHRE).
- We provide information and website links on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produce a newsletter for parents on mental health and resilience.
- We promote Mental Health Awareness days and encourage parents to support these.

Supporting parents and carers with children with mental health needs

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health issues are common, that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that help and advice are available. (Appendix 3)

When a concern has been raised, the School will:

- Contact parents and carers and meet with them (*In almost all cases, parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as where child protection issues are identified.*)
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information – this is also followed up with the information discussed via email.
- Be available for follow up calls – these are normally scheduled after a meeting if required.
- Make a record of the meeting and this is added to the school's pastoral and safeguarding databases as required for future reference.
- Agree a support plan using a Pupil Profile in conjunction with our school's Head of Learning Strategies, including clear next steps.
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support their child.
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions provided.

INVOLVING CHILDREN

We seek pupil's views about our approach, curriculum and in promoting whole school mental health activities. This is done via 1:1 Feedback, pupil voice collection e.g. student council feedback. Part of the My Heart programme helps pupils to develop communication skills to help them communicate how they are feeling in a number of different ways.

We always seek feedback from children who have had support to help improve that support and the services they received. Our learning strategies department are regularly updating pupil passports with new feedback gained by the close relationships they form with the children they help.

Certain age specific tools are used to help measure and communicate how someone is feeling. An example of this is the weekly use of blob trees in Years 3 & 4 whereas a colouring activity children shade in the figures that express how they are feeling.

SUPPORTING AND TRAINING STAFF

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in children and know

what to do and where to get help. A number of staff have previously been trained as Mental Health First Aiders.

Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and wellbeing such as celebrating Mental Health Awareness Week, World Kindness Day, Cultural Days and our SLT (responsible for organising team building events both physical and non-physical).

The mental health of staff themselves is monitored by the SLT, Heads of Year / Department and via the staff appraisal system. There is also a weekly Friday Pulse where how staff are feeling is monitored and any concerns dealt with. There is also a 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly', where staff have a forum to discuss their role, what is going well and what would improve their working life.

Our HR manager is fully experienced in supporting staff and signposting individuals to appropriate support services to assist at times of stress. Staff are able to arrange 1-1 meetings and there is an open-door policy for those who wish to call by and ask for advice. Additionally, all staff are supported through Education Support a dedicated employer's assistance programme for those in education and teaching roles. Staff receive regular emails regarding work-life balance, access to telephone support and further regular counselling sessions covering a range of life issues.
<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The policy is monitored at an annual review meeting led by the Assistant Head (Pastoral and Wellbeing) and involves staff with a responsibility for mental health, including specialist services supporting the school and governors.

The overall operation of the policy is completed by the SLT on an ongoing basis and by the pastoral team, Assistant Head Pastoral, Heads of Year) on a weekly basis. This evidence is documented by the weekly pastoral sheet that is sent to all staff containing all operations details that staff need to be aware of.

APPENDICES

Appendix I Protective and Risk factors (adapted from Mental Health and Behaviour DfE March 2021)

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the Child	• Genetic influences • Specific development delay • Communication difficulties • Physical illness • Academic failure • Low self-esteem • SEND	• Being female (in younger children) • Secure attachment experience • Outgoing temperament as an infant • Good communication skills, sociability • Being a planner and having a belief in control • Humour • Problem solving skills and a positive attitude • Experiences of success and achievement • Faith or spirituality • Capacity to reflect
In the Family	• Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship	• At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) • Affection • Clear, consistent discipline • Support for education • Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord
In the School	• Bullying • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Negative peer influences	• Clear policies on behaviour and bullying • 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems

	• Peer pressure • Poor pupil to teacher relationships	• A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging • Positive peer influences
In the Community	• Socio-economic disadvantage • Homelessness • Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events • Discrimination • Other significant life events	• Wider supportive network • Good housing • High standard of living • High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying • Opportunities for valued social roles • Range of sport/leisure activities

Appendix 2

Specific mental health needs most commonly seen in school-aged children

For information see Annex C Main Types of Mental Health Needs Mental Health and Behaviour in School DfE March 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

Annex C includes definitions, signs and symptoms and suggested interventions for

- ☐ Anxiety (including panic attacks, phobias and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder OCD)
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Eating Disorders
- ☐ Substance Misuse
- ☐ Self Harm

Appendix 3

Where to get information and support

For support on specific mental health needs:

Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk

OCD UK www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk www.selfharm.co.uk

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support:

www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and wellbeing
www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems
www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)
www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health
www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health
www.mhfaengland.org courses, resources and information on Mental Health First Aid
www.actionforhappiness.org 10 keys to happier living and wellbeing