

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Date of policy review:	September 2026
Date for review:	September 2027
Lead for review:	Deputy Head Pastoral and School Nurse

Policy Statement

Guildhouse School is committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing across our entire school community. We believe that mental health is a crucial component of overall wellbeing and that every individual, students, staff, visitors, and members of the wider school community should be supported to flourish in a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment.

In line with our core value to “Be Kind,” we recognise that mental health is both a safeguarding and an equality issue. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments, as required under the Equality Act 2010, to ensure that individuals with mental health conditions are not placed at a substantial disadvantage and can fully participate in school life.

This policy aligns with statutory safeguarding guidance, including:

[Working together to safeguard children 2026](#)

[Keeping children safe in education 2026](#)

We understand that safeguarding and mental health are deeply interconnected. Our approach ensures that concerns about mental health are addressed promptly and appropriately, with clear pathways for support, referral, and intervention. We aim to foster a culture where mental health is openly discussed, stigma is challenged, and everyone feels empowered to seek help when needed.

Introduction and purpose

Guildhouse School is committed to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all members of our community (students, staff, parents, and carers). We acknowledge the importance of mental health to overall wellbeing, recognising its equal significance to physical health.

Mental health challenges, including those stemming from significant life events, can impact emotional wellbeing, learning, and achievement. As a school, we aim to:

- Provide a nurturing environment that fosters resilience and self-esteem.
- Equip students with knowledge and skills to maintain positive mental health.
- Reduce stigma around mental health issues and ensure access to support.

The policy aligns with the Department for Education’s recognition that schools play a key role in supporting mental health (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, 2018) and meets the requirements of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) regarding personal development and safeguarding.

Guildhouse School aims to:

- Ensure every student feels valued, safe, and a sense of belonging.
- Promote a culture where students feel confident to discuss mental health without stigma.
- Actively prevent and address bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- Develop resilience and protective factors to support mental health.

Definitions

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 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 contribute to their community.” Mental health encompasses more than the absence of illness and includes:

- Confidence and self-esteem.
- Emotional expression and regulation.
- Positive relationships.
- Coping with stress and change.
- Achievement and learning capacity.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy operates in compliance with:

- **Equality Act 2010:** Ensuring no discrimination, harassment, or victimisation of students with mental health challenges.
- **SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years:** Supporting students with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- **Safeguarding Policies:** Aligning with “Keeping Children Safe in Education” (KCSIE 2026) and other statutory guidance.

Relevant documents include:

- The Mental Health Act (2007) and amendments.
- Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision (Green Paper, 2018).
- ISI Inspection Framework (Dec 2024).

Proactive and Preventative Measures

Guildhouse School will:

- **Safe Environment:** Provide a safe, inclusive space for students to express themselves.
- **Awareness and Training:** Ensure all staff receive regular training on recognising and addressing mental health challenges.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Embed mental health education in PSHE, RSE, and other subjects to empower students with knowledge and skills.
- **Parent Engagement:** Offer resources and workshops to support parents/carers in understanding and promoting mental health.

Identification and Support

- **Early Identification:** Proactively identify students experiencing mental health challenges through observations and regular wellbeing check-ins and initial sessions with our Wellbeing Counsellor or Nurse.

- **Individual Care Plans (ICPs):** Develop personalised plans for students requiring additional support, in collaboration with parents, staff, and external professionals.
- **External Referrals:** Partner with external agencies such as CAMHS and charitable organisations to ensure students receive appropriate care.
- **Wellbeing surveys:** Surveys conducted with students and staff serve as a vital source of evidence to inform our mental health strategy. These surveys help us monitor trends, identify emerging needs, and evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions, ensuring that our approach remains responsive, inclusive, and grounded in lived experience.
- **Termly review points on emerging trends and data**

Whole School approach

The Wellbeing Counsellor plays a key role in embedding mental health awareness across the school. Through regular workshops, assemblies, and targeted sessions, helping foster a culture of openness, resilience, and self-care. These activities complement our curriculum and pastoral care, offering students and staff practical strategies for managing mental health and promoting emotional wellbeing. The impact of these initiatives is monitored through termly review points, using emerging trends and data—including wellbeing surveys—to inform ongoing provision and strategic planning.

Warning signs of mental health challenges include:

- Physical harm or changes in appearance.
- Behavioural changes (e.g., isolation, socially withdrawn, mood swings).
- Declining academic performance.
- Expressions of hopelessness or self-harm.
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Lateness to or absence from school

Concerns relating to self-harm or suicidal ideation will always be treated as safeguarding concerns and referred immediately to the DSL or DDSL.

Mental health concerns may be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Crisis Management and Safeguarding

Crisis Protocols: Follow safeguarding procedures if a student is at risk of harm. For medical emergencies, staff will immediately escalate to the appropriate services.

Disclosures: Train staff to handle disclosures non-judgementally and confidentially. All concerns will be reported to the Safeguarding Team (DSL/Deputies)

Any disclosure must be dealt with confidentially in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

Managed in a calm, non-directive and non-judgmental manner, the listener must document:

- Date (including year)
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps and arrangement/consent to see the Wellbeing Counsellor

This information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and always with the Safeguarding Team and appropriate staff, who will store the record safely and offer support and advice about next steps. It will be logged on the iSAMS portal.

Support for Peers: Provide guidance and emotional support for students affected by their peers' mental health challenges.

Eating Disorders

Guildhouse school recognises eating disorders as a mental health and safeguarding issue, and they are therefore handled by the Pastoral Team with input from the School Nurse as appropriate. Early intervention and professional help are essential. Eating disorders can affect people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and ethnicities, and are likely to first develop in the adolescent years.

Guildhouse School aims to:

- Raise awareness about eating disorders
- Help staff and pupils to recognise symptoms and potential problems early
- Support pupils affected by eating disorders and work with their parents/carers
- Confidentiality must be subordinate to the need to protect the interest of the pupil's welfare
- Offer tools for support and prevention and refer to specialist help where necessary
- Ensure the core team of Heads of Pastoral care, the School Nurse, and the School Welfare Counsellor, are available for collaboration, consultation and support.

Boarding context

The school recognises that some students may be studying and living away from home for the first time. Additional support may be required for international students experiencing cultural transition, homesickness, isolation, bereavement, academic pressure or adjustment to boarding life.

Parental collaboration

Guildhouse School values collaboration with parents/carers. Before sharing concerns, staff will consider:

- Meeting format (in-person, virtual, etc.).
- Attendance (parents/carers, student, staff).
- Language or accessibility barriers.

Staff must exercise sensitivity when collaborating with parents / carers of individual students.

Teaching about Mental Health

Mental health education will:

- Reflect the cohort's specific needs.
- Equip students with skills to seek help for themselves or others.
- Promote resilience, empathy, and understanding.

Training and Responsibilities

All Staff: Promote positive wellbeing and identify students needing support. They receive annual refresher safeguarding and ongoing mental health awareness training.

Where necessary, school staff will work alongside the SENCO to support identification and the assessment for a student to ascertain if they should be identified as 'SEND Support' under the category of Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) as part of the SEND Code of Practice.

Senior Mental Health Lead: Jamie Forbes, Deputy Head Pastoral & Boarding/Designated Safeguarding Lead: oversees mental health education, coordination, and provision.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT): Ensure policy implementation and compliance.

Youth Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA): Provide immediate support and guidance using the ALGEE framework:

A: Approach, assess, and assist.

L: Listen non-judgementally.

G: Give support and information.

E: Encourage professional support.

E: Encourage other support networks.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Senior Mental Health Lead will:

- Regularly review and update this policy.
- Monitor its implementation through feedback from students, staff, and parents.
- Use wellbeing metrics (e.g., surveys, incidents) to assess effectiveness.
- Report outcomes to the SLT and governing bodies.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Protective Factors and Risk Factors

(Adapted from Mental health and behaviour in schools (November 2018)).

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the Child	- Genetic influences - Specific development delay - Communication difficulties - Physical illness - Academic failure - Low self-esteem - SEND	- 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 - 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 - Peer pressure - Inconsistent implementation of the behaviour policy - Poor relationships with staff - Cyber/social media risks	- Clear policies on behaviour and bullying - Clear policies on ICT Acceptable Use 'Open door' policy for students to raise problems - Self-referral/triage system for seeing the Wellbeing Counsellor - A Whole School approach to promoting good mental health - Positive relationships between students and staff 'Concern' email address for confidential disclosures or communication of concerns

Appendix 2: General Mental Health Support

General Mental Health Support

YoungMinds (children and young people)

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/> [\[nhs.uk\]](https://www.nhs.uk/), [\[youngminds.org.uk\]](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/)

Mind (mental health information and support)

<https://www.mind.org.uk>

NHS Every Mind Matters (wellbeing, stress, anxiety, sleep and resilience resources)

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>

Suicide Prevention

Papyrus Prevention of Young Suicide

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org>

HOPELINE247 (under 35s and those concerned about them)

Call: 0300 102 2470

Text: 88247

Website: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org>

Eating Disorders

Beat Eating Disorders

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

Anxiety and OCD

Anxiety UK

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

OCD UK

<https://www.ocduk.org/>

Self-Harm

Self-Harm UK

<https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>

YoungMinds Self-Harm Support

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Professionals and Staff Training

MindEd (mental health e-learning for professionals and parents)

<https://minded.org.uk>



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