

NOTRE DAME SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENT WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

NOTRE
DAME
SCHOOL



1.0 Introduction

As a school we aim to promote student wellbeing and positive mental health. Each student is a valued member of our community. Wellbeing is important in itself and also has a role to play in academic progress and physical health. Good emotional and social health at school helps young people to have positive long-term wellbeing. We aim to provide learning and support which promotes positive social and emotional wellbeing, gives students skills to enhance this for themselves and provide interventions where more help is needed.

The four aspects of wellbeing and mental health which are relevant to us as a school are:

1. **Prevention:** at Notre Dame this includes a whole school approach, PSHE, assemblies, the student planner, engaging positively, parent information evenings, and communication about wellbeing.
2. **Identification:** at Notre Dame this involves all staff and includes our pastoral care teams of tutors, Heads of year, Assistant Heads, medical room staff and Chaplain. We use a detailed pastoral tracking system.
3. **Early help:** at Notre Dame this includes the Reflection Room, peer supporters and the support of staff in the Year teams, medical room and Chaplaincy.
4. **Access to specialist help:** at Notre Dame this includes the school counsellor and referrals to CYPMHS and other outside agencies as appropriate.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002, the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Education Act 2011, and the Equality Act 2010.

In producing this policy regard has been paid to:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) (KCSIE)*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023) (WT)*
- *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools' (November 2018)*
- *Counselling in Schools: a blueprint for the future (February 2016)*
- *Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017)*
- *Education and Training (Welfare of Children) (Act 2021)*
- *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2019, updated September 2021)*

Mental health difficulties may indicate a safeguarding issue and so any concerns from staff must be reported immediately in line with our Safeguarding policy.

2.0 Mental Health and SEN

Consideration of SEN (Special Educational Needs) will be given to any situation where a pupil is considered to have a mental health need. The school is aware that some forms of SEN may make pupils more vulnerable to mental health issues. Some forms of SEN may require special mental health or emotional and behavioural support, and the school will consider whether we are reasonably able to provide this support. Some mental health distress may be as a result of unidentified SEN. We follow the SEND code of practice fully.

3.0 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Brief and accurate written notes will be kept of all incidents and concerns relating to individual pupils. These notes are recorded on the 'CPOMS' platform. This is a secure two-factor authentication platform. This includes written records of concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions and any linked documentation as necessary. This information may be shared with other agencies as appropriate.

4.0 Prevention

4.1 Whole school approach

The protective factors which encourage good mental health need to be integral to the whole school experience of every pupil.

In planning and teaching lessons and in extracurricular activities, staff should provide opportunities for students to:

- Develop communication skills
- Our extracurricular clubs such as those in drama and debating encourage good communication (all students in yr7-10 are encouraged to take at least three extra-curricular activities each week)
Students delivering parts of assemblies encourages good communication
Student leaderships encourage good communication
- Be an effective planner (for example using the student planner and Firefly)
- Have a sense of control (for example in the collaborative marking system we use and in student logs of targets)
- Develop humour
- Develop positivity (for example through our assemblies, and in how staff model positive thinking and provide positive and constructive feedback)
- Experience success (through our marking system, achievement points, postcards and letters and emails home, prize giving, commendations, sports colours, and the Friday mailing)
- Explore faith and spirituality (through our assemblies, Theology lessons, morning prayers, reflection days, and the work of our Chaplain)
- Encourage reflection (through reflection days, the weekly collective worship programme, the weekly examen activity, free access to the Chapel and the Prayer Garden for pupils, assemblies and the reflection room)

As a school we encourage good mental health by:

- Effective Safeguarding policy and reporting process using CPOMS
- Clear policies on behaviour and anti-bullying
- A clear staff code of conduct
- Staff training
- Parental pastoral information evenings
- An open door policy for students to raise worries to any member of staff
- Good pupil-teacher relationships
- Using Girls on Board and PSHE and form time to encourage good friendships
- Open door policy for staff to raise concerns about policies or processes

- Whistleblowing process for staff

Student wellbeing is a whole school issue and so is integral to every lesson, extracurricular event and interaction that occurs in school or on school trips. New staff understand this as part of their induction to the school. This approach includes positive behaviour management, formative and constructive marking, welcoming students into lessons and using their names, always being encouraging and supportive. Students are expected to also encourage and support each other. Our anti-bullying procedures are clear and applied firmly.

School council has a clear voice, and we also carry out regular surveys so that pupils' feedback and opinions are fully listened to and acted on where possible and appropriate. Student Year Reps are wellbeing champions and there is a ND6 wellbeing prefect.

4.2 Pastoral care teams

Our pastoral care teams are:

- Assistant Heads (Pastoral and Sixth Form)
- Heads of Year
- Chaplain
- Head of Wellbeing and Emotional Support and Mentors
- Form Tutors
- Medical Room staff
- School Counsellor

Each student has a form tutor. It is part of this role to provide mental health support to pupils and to encourage positive wellbeing. Specialist staff deliver the PSHE programme under the guidance of the Head of PSHE. Form tutors spend time getting to know their students and building positive relationships. They are often the first port of call for parents and students who have worries or need help and they should respond with care, kindness and attention to detail. All worries should be acted on and followed up and recorded.

Heads of Year supervise tutors and monitor the quality of form time and form assemblies. They provide additional support for students academically and pastorally both pro-actively and responsively. They coordinate the careful programme of induction for new students and their parents.

The Assistant Heads oversee the work of the pastoral teams as well as strategically planning the whole school pastoral approach, reviewing and evaluating our policies and processes regularly.

The Chaplain is available to students as a listener, and may be asked to come alongside a pupil who is struggling as part of a care package for that pupil.

The Head of Wellbeing and Emotional Support is responsible for coordinating pupils receiving wellbeing support, seeing some pupils themselves and arranging for wellbeing mentors (who will be members of staff) to see other pupils – some pupils will have been referred by HoYs or SLT or the nurse. She also researches and implements tools for pupils so that they can develop their own MH and wellbeing strategies and avoid learned helplessness and shares these tools with the wellbeing

team to enable them to use them with pupils. They also oversee provision (from themselves or by other team members) of wellbeing clubs, reflection room, D&T sessions and other group sessions.

The medical team offers mental health support and advice to those who present at the medical room. The Counsellor sees pupils who are referred for more specialist help.

4.3 PSHE

We aim to educate all students on the importance of wellbeing, and what they can do to improve their wellbeing through specific PSHE lessons, as well as in assemblies (both for the whole school and year groups). There is a clear PSHE programme and this continues in ND6 (the Sixth Form) in the General Studies and VESPA programmes. As part of these students learn about the adolescent brain as well as about wellbeing and how they can improve their wellbeing.

PSHE lessons in the senior school take place in one dedicated hour per week and every topic covered relates to improving student wellbeing. There are three broad strands to the programme offered. These are:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Relationships
- The Wider World

Students complete a unit of work per half term and each topic is built upon year on year on a level that is both age and stage appropriate. Necessary focus is also given to the Lestonnac Approach that underpins our ethos. Full details on what is covered when can be found on our KS3 and PSHE curriculum planning document.

We aim to encourage resilience through PSHE with lessons on the importance of developing a growth mind-set, facilitating the building of a 'wellbeing toolkit' that can be applied to everyday real-life situations and enabling our students to become healthy inside and out by becoming effective self-soothers. Empowering our young women with the tools needed for effective self-care will enable them to become healthy lifelong learners and achievers.

4.4 General Studies in ND6

As part of a varied programme, well-being is a key focus for the girls in the Sixth Form. The girls receive two hours of General Studies per week and these are timetabled sessions with their tutors of Head of Year. The sessions are designed to build on the PSHE programme that has been delivered at Key Stage 3 and 4.

The programme is varied and is delivered through a combination of whole Sixth Form presentations, tutor-led activities, team building, external speakers and group work. The girls have had sessions on, for example, safe driving, RSE, stress and anxiety, cooking for university and the learning brain. ND6 students take part in the Peer Education Project, working with younger students on wellbeing modules.

As part of the General studies programme, and to promote preparation for examinations as part of well-being, we are delivering the VESPA model to the girls. This model focuses on a key set of behaviours that will help the girls feel both mentally and academically prepared for their important

examinations. Building on the work on Growth Mind-set by Carole Dweck, VESPA encourages the following foci with the girls:

- V = Vision – how clearly is the future planned? What goals do you have for your future?
- E = Effort – what are you doing to work towards this vision? How many hours of active work and preparation are you doing per week?
- S = Systems – what systems do you have in place to achieve your goals? How organised are your files? How are you organising your time and space for work?
- P = Practise – what past papers are you doing? How are you practising these essential skills?
- A = Attitude – are you approaching things in a positive way? Have you got a can-do attitude?

Our belief is that by sharing these essential tools with the girls, we are helping their mental wellbeing as this is actively preparing the girls for the stressors of examinations. By focusing on the positive strategies, we are making seemingly big problems and worries more manageable.

The role of the tutor is essential here as we are able to step in and trouble shoot so that small problems do not become bigger problems; they are an essential part of the wellbeing in ND6.

4.5 Charity and volunteering

Working for others can be beneficial for wellbeing. Students are asked to engage charity events each year, and in the Sixth Form, to run events for RAG week. Students can visit the elderly at Whiteley when the care home is happy to accept visitors. Students (of all faiths and none) are invited to go to Lourdes as volunteers. Potential medical students often volunteer at the Princess Alice Hospice. The Chaplaincy team is made up of ND6 students and the charity activities are student driven.

4.6 Pastoral talks for parents

There is a programme of talks for parents. Wellbeing and the adolescent brain are covered each year. There is also a talk on healthy eating and on stress.

4.7 Assemblies

At the start of each year there is a series of assemblies on wellbeing for the whole school. The topic is addressed at intervals throughout the year as well. In year group assemblies relevant topics are covered each year.

4.8 The Student Planner

The planner contains templates for growth mind set activities which form tutors should complete with the students each term. This approach encourages resilience.

4.9 Reflection room

This is a space where students can spend time quietly. Wellbeing staff are present to offer support each lunchtime. The wellbeing dog is there twice a week. Activities are provided such as mindfulness colouring and picture books.

4.10 Engaging positively

Engaging positively with other students is beneficial to wellbeing.

Each year the set of clubs will be published on Firefly so students and parents know what they can engage in. Tutors will encourage students to participate. Clubs will be provided in a range of areas so that all students have something that they are interested in. Students in yr7-10 are expected to attend three clubs each week.

Reflection Days, for every year group, encourage team building and positive friendships. In Year 7 for example the theme each year is about friendship. The themes are developed as the girls go through the school.

These days also give the girls the opportunity to have some experience of silence for reflection.

Students also have access to the Prayer Garden and the Chapel where they are able to sit quietly and be still when they feel the need.

Peer Supporters are trained in listening and are supported by a designated member of staff. They lead on the activities for anti-bullying each year as well as staffing the reflection room.

The Girls on Board programme is explained to students in year 7-9 each year. This is led by the Heads of Year. This programme aims to encourage better friendships and quicker resolutions when there are problems.

Year 7 students are all assigned a 'Big Sister' who is a member of ND6. The paired 'Sisters' meet for hot chocolate, discuss learning projects and take part in the treasure hunt at the start of the autumn term. They discuss goals and aspirations and take part in team building.

4.11 Communication about wellbeing

Posters are updated as necessary and put up in form rooms to inform student of who they can see regarding their wellbeing. Posters also inform students of the location of the reflection room and its times of opening. Parents will be able to see this information in the parents' handbook.

A weekly 'wellbeing idea' is uploaded to Firefly.

A wellbeing noticeboard shows students tips and ideas about improving their wellbeing.

There are links on Firefly for students to access remote support for wellbeing, including the Wellbeing Hub, which is also available to parents and staff.

5.0 Identification

Most cases of mental health need will be identified by staff. Sometimes pupils will mask difficulties in school and parents may inform the school of problems which are evident at home.

Signs of distress which staff should report as possible signs of mental health problems are:

- Fearfulness
- Low self-esteem

- A pupil appearing withdrawn
- Aggressive or oppositional behaviour
- Habitual rocking
- Indiscriminate contact or affection seeking
- Excessive clinginess
- Coercive controlling behaviour
- Lack of ability to understand or recognise emotions
- Changes in attainment or attendance (this would be shown up by data)

Staff should report any concerns via the CPOMS platform.

Particular attention should be paid at times when there is a loss or separation at home, where a pupil has a new sibling or moves home, or if there is a traumatic experience.

Children in need, looked-after or previously looked-after children are monitored carefully to evaluate their mental health. Social workers are kept informed as necessary.

6.0 Early Help

At Notre Dame this is provided by the pastoral care team. When identification is made the school (usually the Head of Year or Assistant Head) will assess the pupil's needs and where a need is confirmed, make a plan to support that student. The plan should be reviewed regularly to see if it is working effectively. This could also include individual support from one of the Peer Mentors or a Big Sister if appropriate. Parents are usually invited to participate in early help situations. Early help usually takes one of these forms:

- Informing all staff about an issue so that all can keep an eye on the student and interact with the student in the best way.
- Specific advice and suggestions for the student to act on regarding an issue, followed up by the tutor or Head of Year.
- A recommendation to use the Reflection room on a regular basis.
- One-to-one regular meetings with a tutor, mentor, Head of Year or Assistant Head or the Chaplain, as appropriate and for a set period of time.
- Groups sessions with other students

7.0 Specialist interventions

Sometimes more specialist help is needed where a student is experiencing difficulties in wellbeing or mental health.

One of the medical room staff are trained specifically in Mental Health First Aid. Heads of Year are also trained in Mental Health First Aid or an alternative. Newly appointed Heads of Year will also receive training.

The medical room is open to all students from 9.45am to 4.00pm. Students should attend at break or lunch or a free period, except in an emergency when their class teacher will provide a note.

For some students, a group session on a topic may be beneficial. These are set up by the school counsellor or the head of Wellbeing as the need arises. Suitable topics would include dealing with anxiety, or exam stress.

For students with more complex needs the Assistant Heads or school nurse can refer them to the School Counsellor.

The School Counsellor has a separate room which is not be over-looked by other students, although other staff will be nearby. He/she will assess students and then see them for a number of sessions (usually around eight) with a view to providing help to improve their mental health. If at the end of the series of sessions more help is needed the counsellor will discuss that with the Assistant Head (Pastoral) or the Assistant Head (Sixth Form).

The school will refer to CYPMHS as appropriate. Parents will be informed where appropriate before a referral is made, but referrals may sometimes be made without parents' approval if there is a clear need to do so.

Sometimes family therapy will be recommended to parents.

8.0 Self harm and suicidal ideation in School

There is an immediate response to self-harm and suicidal ideation incidents in school.

The following process is followed in these instances:

- Parents are informed in a timely manner (unless this puts the young person at risk - in which case a Children's Services Referral would be made).
- Parents are directed to resources on the parent section of our wellbeing hub.
- A safety plan is created - putting the student at the centre - for home and school.
- Long term support would then be given as required - this may or may not be in school - dependent on child's wishes.

9.0 Evaluation

An annual wellbeing survey is carried out, asking parents and students for their feedback. This is then used to refine the policy and our school practice. The policy is reviewed regularly by the pastoral team.