

# Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for pupils

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## 1. Aims

At the British School of Amsterdam (BSA), we are committed to promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, parents, carers, staff, and other stakeholders. This policy focuses specifically on pupils' mental health and wellbeing and ensures a safe and supportive environment for all affected, both directly and indirectly, by mental health issues.

This policy aims to:

- Set out our school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils across the school.
- Provide guidance to staff on their role in supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing, including how they can foster and maintain an inclusive culture in which pupils feel able to talk about and reflect on their experiences of mental health.
- Support staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental health issues in pupils.
- Inform pupils and their parents/carers about the support they can expect from our school in respect of pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

The Mental Health Policy for BSA is informed by key legislation and internationally recognised guidance to ensure best practices in supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

As an accredited British School Overseas, this policy aligns directly with the [Standards for British Schools Overseas](#), particularly those detailing expectations for pupil welfare, health, and wellbeing in international schools, ensuring comprehensive support that reflects UK best practice in this context.

Additionally, we reference guidance from the [International School Psychology Association \(ISPA\) Code of Ethics \(ISPA, 2021\)](#) and the World Health Organization ([Mental Health in Schools Manual, WHO, 2021](#)) - both of which provide frameworks for effective mental health support in school settings.

Key legislation and policies that inform our approach include:

- UK Children and Families Act (2014) – Emphasises support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE Department for education, latest edition) – Provides safeguarding responsibilities for schools, ensuring pupil safety and wellbeing.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools Framework (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, latest edition) – Promotes early intervention and a whole-school approach to mental health.
- Equality Act (2010) – Ensures all pupils have equal access to mental health support, regardless of background or individual needs.
- Dutch Child and Youth Act (2015) – Highlights the importance of integrated care and collaboration with external mental health services.

By adhering to these frameworks and expert recommendations, The BSA ensures a comprehensive, proactive, and internationally informed approach to pupil mental health and wellbeing. In case of discrepancies local law or regulations will take precedence.

### 3. Definitions and scope

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, and stakeholders within The BSA community. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy reflects The BSA's commitment to promoting a supportive, nurturing environment where emotional wellbeing is valued and mental health is supported proactively. The policy aims to foster a school culture in which mental health and emotional resilience are prioritised as essential elements of personal development, academic success, and overall community health.

#### 3.1 Definitions

- **Mental Health:** A person's emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing, influencing how we think, feel, and behave, and how we manage stress and relationships. Mental health can fluctuate over time and be affected by life experiences and environment.
- **Wellbeing:** A holistic term that includes mental, emotional, physical, and social health - supporting individuals to feel safe, supported, and able to thrive within school and beyond.
- **Emotional Wellbeing:** The ability to manage emotions, respond to challenges, and maintain a sense of self-worth and resilience.
- **Mental Health Needs/Issues:** Difficulties or concerns such as anxiety, low mood or emotional distress, which require additional support beyond regular pastoral care. These may be diagnosed or undiagnosed.
- **Mental Illness:** A diagnosed condition that significantly impacts thinking, mood, or behaviour, and which typically requires clinical assessment and specialised treatment from health professionals (e.g., depression, generalised anxiety disorder, eating disorders etc).
- **Safeguarding Concern:** Where a pupil's mental health or wellbeing places them or others at risk, or when a pupil is affected by abuse or neglect, it is treated as a safeguarding matter under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- **Supportive Interventions:** A range of responses offered by school staff to support mental health, including in-class strategies, pastoral support, peer mentoring, wellbeing check-ins, school counselling, or referrals to external professionals.
- **Pastoral Lead:** A key member of staff, such as a Head of Year, Year Group Leader, Deputy Head of School, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Head of School, Principal, or a member of the Counselling Team, who is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the social, emotional, and mental wellbeing of pupils within their designated area of responsibility. This role involves providing direct support and guidance, identifying pupils who may require additional interventions, liaising with parents/carers, and working collaboratively with other internal teams and external agencies to ensure pupils receive comprehensive and appropriate care. The Pastoral Lead fosters a nurturing environment, helps address non-academic barriers to learning, and contributes to the holistic development of pupils.

#### 3.2 Scope of the Policy

This policy is designed to:

- Apply to all staff, pupils, and those working in partnership with The BSA.
- Inform staff practice, procedures, and decision-making in the identification, support, and monitoring of mental health and wellbeing.
- Clarify how the school promotes wellbeing as part of its curriculum, ethos, and daily interactions.

- Set out responsibilities for responding to concerns about mental health, both as an educational and safeguarding priority.
- Complement other key policies, these are listed above.

This policy does not replace medical or clinical mental health guidance, and it is not a diagnostic tool. While The BSA is committed to supporting pupils and staff, it recognises the limitations of its role and works in partnership with external professionals where appropriate.

As part of our commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, our school provides support for all pupils through education and awareness. Our goal is to foster an environment where mental health is openly discussed, pupils feel supported, and they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to maintain their wellbeing.

To ensure all pupils have a foundational understanding of mental health and wellbeing, we:

- Raise awareness through assemblies, tutor time, PSHE lessons, and dedicated events such as Mental Health Awareness Week.
- Signpost pupils to reliable resources where relevant.
- Encourage open discussions about mental health throughout the curriculum to reduce stigma and build resilience.
- Provide feedback opportunities so pupils can share concerns about aspects of school life that may impact their mental health.
- Monitor pupils' mental health using assessments such as The Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)
- The Senior Mental Health Lead oversees and implements our strategic approach to mental health across the school.
- Employ a team of dedicated mental health professionals to deliver targeted, brief intervention, on-site, in school.
- Offer pastoral support, including access to Heads of Year, Year group Leaders, and pastoral staff for guidance and reassurance.
- Provide quiet spaces, both within classrooms and elsewhere, such as the library areas, in which pupils can have a safe space to regulate their emotions.

## **4. Roles and responsibilities**

All staff at The BSA share a responsibility for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing within the school community and for recognising potential risk factors that may affect pupils. If a staff member has concerns about a pupil's mental health or wellbeing, they should report these concerns to the Mental Health Lead, a Pastoral Lead, or (Deputy) Designated Safeguarding Lead (D/DSL) as the first point of contact, to ensure expert guidance and proper recording.

To ensure consistency and accountability, all staff must document any concerns, actions taken, and follow-ups on CPOMS. This system allows for effective monitoring, information sharing, and continuity of care, ensuring that pupils receive appropriate support promptly.

## **4.1 The Principal**

The Principal:

- Provides overall leadership in embedding a school-wide culture of mental health awareness and support.

## **4.2 Heads of School**

The Heads of School:

- Oversee the implementation of mental health policies and ensure alignment with school-wide objectives.

## **4.3 Lead Counsellor and Mental Health Lead**

The Lead Counsellor and Mental Health Lead:

- Oversees and coordinates the school's overall mental health strategy, including developing policies and practices.
- Leads on providing staff training
- Monitors pupil wellbeing data.
- Ensures effective support for pupils in partnership with staff, parents, and external agencies.

## **4.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs (DDSLs)**

The DSL and DDSLs:

- Oversee and coordinate the school's response to significant mental health concerns, ensuring that all safeguarding procedures are followed.
- Provide oversight of pupil wellbeing throughout their respective school sections.
- Lead the school's pastoral care strategy, ensuring alignment with whole-school mental health policies.
- Support other members of staff in the consistent implementation of mental health initiatives across the school.

## **4.5 Year Group Leaders and Heads of Key Stage**

The Year Group Leaders and Heads of Key Stage:

- Oversee pupil wellbeing at their respective Year Group / Key Stage levels and ensure that mental health initiatives are effectively integrated within their areas.

## **4.6 Heads of Year (Senior School)**

The Heads of Year:

- Monitor pupil wellbeing at the year group level and provide targeted interventions where necessary.

## **4.7 Counselling Team**

The Counselling Team:

- Provides confidential drop-in opportunities for pupils seeking support
- Conducts initial triage and assessment of mental health needs
- Delivers brief, goal-focused individual counselling sessions
- Facilitates targeted group interventions to address specific issues (e.g., anxiety, friendships etc)
- Supports the PSHE curriculum through lessons and workshops on mental health topics
- Supports pupils during key transitions (e.g., starting school, moving year groups)

- Consults with staff, offering guidance and training to support pupil mental health
- Offers advice and support to parents/carers on pupil wellbeing
- Signposts to and liaises with external agencies, ensuring continuity of care between school and home
- Provide regular consultations with the Health Officer and Librarian to promote the early identification and support of pupils who spend unstructured time in quiet spaces (e.g. the library), helping to ensure they are supported rather than overlooked.

#### 4.8 Form Tutors and Class Teachers

Form Tutors and Class Teachers:

- Provide day-to-day monitoring, check-ins, and low-level ad hoc support for pupils.
- Ensure mental health education is embedded within PSHE planning and delivery across school sections, where relevant.

#### 4.9 Learning Support Team and Learning Support Coordinator/Head of Learning Support (LSCo)

- Recognising the significant overlap between pupils with SEN and mental health (MH) difficulties, the counselling team will collaborate closely with the Learning Support Team and LSCo through regular meetings to ensure early identification, shared understanding and a holistic approach to supporting pupils with additional needs. The counselling team will contribute to pupils' Learning Support Plans as necessary.
- The LS Teams will provide ongoing emotional support, including regular check-ins and low-level, ad hoc support, to promote pupils' wellbeing in the school environment.

#### 4.10 Health Care Officer

The Health Care Officer:

- Assesses and triages pupils presenting with physical health concerns and, where mental health needs are identified, refers them to the school's counselling and/or pastoral team for further support.

### 5. Guidelines for Implementation

At The BSA, the effective implementation of this Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for pupils is driven by a commitment to a whole-school approach. This ensures a supportive and resilient environment for our pupils, achieved through strategic actions and continuous development across several key areas:

- **Promoting a positive pupil culture:** We will actively cultivate a school-wide culture that champions positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for our pupils. This includes embedding a proactive mindset towards mental health across all facets of school life and everyday interactions.
- **Enhancing staff capability to support pupils:** Through targeted professional development opportunities, we will consistently increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues among all staff. These initiatives are designed to equip staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils and to understand how and when to access appropriate support for young people with mental health concerns.
- **Building pupil resilience:** We are committed to developing resilience among pupils. This will be achieved by integrating resilience-building techniques into the curriculum and fostering a safe environment where pupils feel empowered to manage their emotional wellbeing.
- **Structured pupil support systems:** To ensure effective and consistent support for pupils, The

BSA provides:

- Ongoing staff training and professional development focused on identifying and responding to pupil mental health concerns.
- Clear guidance for staff on safeguarding protocols and confidentiality in relation to pupil mental health issues, ensuring staff operate within defined ethical and legal boundaries.
- **A structured referral process:** for pupils requiring additional support, streamlining access to appropriate interventions both internally and externally.

## 6. Mental Health in the Curriculum

We are committed to a "whole-school approach" where mental health awareness is embedded in our culture and curriculum. Our proactive provision includes:

- **Evidence-Based Curriculum:** Aligned with PSHE Association guidance, our lessons build emotional literacy, teach healthy coping strategies, and challenge stigma. Pupils learn to manage their own wellbeing and support peers effectively.
- **Whole-School Initiatives:** Wellbeing is reinforced through assemblies, tutor time, staff training, and awareness days such as World Mental Health Day and Empathy Week.
- **Age-Appropriate Literacy:**
  - **Early Years** utilize Social Stories, The Colour Monsters
  - **Junior School** utilizes Zones of Regulation to help younger pupils identify and manage emotions.
  - **Senior School:** Curriculum focus shifts to managing specific adolescent pressures such as sleep hygiene, stress management, and procrastination etc.
- **Specialist Input:** School Counsellors actively contribute to the curriculum, ensuring education is grounded in clinical best practices.

## 7. Identifying and Responding to Mental Health Concerns

### 7.1 School Environment

We create a school environment where proactive mental health promotion is a priority. Alongside embedding wellbeing throughout the school curriculum, we will ensure all pupils feel safe and supported by:

- Encouraging open discussions about mental health and emotional wellbeing, while promoting positive relationships and a culture of inclusion, respect, and belonging
- Encouraging pupil voice through peer support systems and opportunities for leadership in wellbeing initiatives, while supplementing this by using school-wide digital wellbeing measures (Bounce) to help identify pupils who may be struggling.

Where appropriate, pupils will receive age-appropriate, tailored support as part of our graduated, multi-tiered approach to mental health and wellbeing interventions. Our school offers a comprehensive range of internal support options to meet individual emotional and mental health needs, including:

- **Ad-hoc, Low-Level Emotional Support:** Day-to-day emotional support is available across the school, ensuring that pupils can access timely help when they need it. This includes informal check-ins with staff and support during transitions or challenging periods.
- Supports the PSHE curriculum through lessons and workshops on mental health topics
- **Targeted Wellbeing Groups:** Small group interventions are offered to pupils with specific emotional or social needs. These groups focus on developing coping strategies, resilience, self-esteem, and social skills.
- **Supporting during Transition:** The school recognises that transitions - whether between year groups, educational phases, or when pupils join or leave the school - can significantly impact mental health and wellbeing. The counselling team will provide dedicated support during these periods, ensuring smooth transitions for all students. For pupils with more significant mental health needs, tailored and individualised support plans will be developed to meet their specific needs.
- **Drop-in Counselling:** Pupils may access drop-in counselling which offers a safe, confidential space to talk on a daily basis.
- **Brief, Targeted Counselling Sessions:** The counselling team triage and assess the mental health needs of pupils. They provide brief, structured, goal focused counselling sessions (approximately 5 per academic year) for pupils experiencing difficulties that impact their learning, relationships, or engagement with school life. These sessions are tailored to individual needs and prioritised according to the severity and immediacy of the issue. Where more complex or ongoing needs are identified, families will be supported in accessing appropriate external or clinical services.
- **Adaptations to the School Routine:** To meet individual pupil needs, the school may implement strategies such as time-out passes, access to designated quiet or safe areas, or reduced/flexible timetables. These adjustments aim to create a supportive environment that promotes emotional regulation and academic engagement.
- **Collaborative Support Planning:** The counselling team works closely with key pastoral staff, families, and external agencies to ensure a consistent and responsive approach to mental health support. Regular review meetings with pupils, parents/carers, and relevant staff are held to evaluate

the effectiveness of interventions and make any necessary adjustments. This collaborative, pupil-centred model ensures that support remains effective, flexible, and tailored to each student's evolving needs.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** We are committed to supporting the mental health needs of all pupils, taking into account diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Where possible, resources and support are adapted as needed to reflect our international community.

## 7.2 Identifying and responding to concerns

The BSA recognises that early identification and intervention are crucial. We:

- Encourage staff to be vigilant through their professional observations, augmented through the use of digital measures to identify signs of mental health difficulties and to take appropriate action when concerns arise.
- Provide annual staff training to equip them with the skills to identify and respond effectively to mental health concerns. This training is reviewed each year to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- Maintain a designated Counselling Team that parents, pupils and staff can approach for support when there are concerns about a pupil.
- Work collaboratively with parents, carers, and external mental health professionals to ensure pupils receive the appropriate help.

## 7.3 Responding to an acute mental health concern

- If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, they should first consult with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a DDSL, Pastoral Lead, and/or a member of the counselling team.
- All concerns must be recorded on CPOMs to ensure accurate documentation and appropriate follow-up.
- If there is a concern that the pupil is at high risk or in immediate danger, the school's child protection procedures should be followed without delay - as outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- In cases where a pupil presents with a high-risk medical emergency, staff must follow the relevant emergency procedures, including contacting the emergency services if necessary.
- The safety and wellbeing of the pupils and the wider school community are of paramount importance, and swift, coordinated action will be taken to provide the necessary support and intervention.
- Risk Assessment may be implemented when a pupil's safety is a concern

## 7.4 Parental involvement

Parents and/or Carers are pivotal in supporting their child's wellbeing, and at BSA we are committed to strong collaboration. We offer parents an open channel to discuss concerns, inviting conversations with the class teacher or Mental Health Lead. We also host frequent collaborative parent workshops focused on wellbeing needs identified by our parent community.

When a wellbeing concern is identified we carefully consider the best approach parents. In Early Years and Junior School parents are informed as a matter of course. In Senior School, while we prioritise and encourage children to involve their parents, we also respect the pupil's need for a safe and trusted space. For example, if safeguarding concerns arise requiring parental notification, we may offer the pupil the opportunity to inform their parents themselves, with a recommended 24-hour follow-up from the school.

We actively involve parents and carers in regular review meetings with key staff to discuss and evaluate the mental health support provided for their child. We recognise that discussing a child's mental health can evoke strong emotions. Staff approach every conversation with empathy and sensitivity by providing a supportive, non-judgemental space for parents and carers to share their views and concerns, offering clear, honest information and reassurance about the school's support and next steps and signposting to further support or external agencies when appropriate.

A record of each discussion is sent to parents, including key points and agreed actions and also stored securely on CPOMs.

## **7.5 Access to Support and Signposting**

We ensure that pupils, staff, and parents/carers are aware of the mental health support available and how to access it. Information about in-school, local and national support services, accessible to all, is provided on a needs-led basis, ensuring support is tailored.

Our aim is to help pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why they should access it
- What to expect when seeking support

By embedding mental health education into our curriculum and creating a supportive school environment, we empower our pupils to take care of their mental wellbeing and seek help when needed.

While The BSA provides in-school support, we also recognise the importance of specialist services. We:

- Maintain partnerships with local mental health organisations and professionals. To ensure relevance, we review our external contacts annually, however parents/carers are encouraged to conduct their own research and make informed decisions regarding their child's support.
- Work collaboratively with external agencies when written consent is given from parents, to facilitate consistency and ensure best possible outcomes for pupils.
- While we strive to consider the suitability and fit of any recommended external mental health support, we cannot guarantee the quality or effectiveness of their provision. Any engagement with external agencies is at the discretion of parents/carers, and the school is not responsible for the services they provide.

## **8. Confidentiality**

This section should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy. All staff, including school counsellors, must always be transparent with pupils about the limits of confidentiality and will not promise to keep a disclosure secret. Therefore, staff must share all disclosures and concerns about mental health where a safeguarding risk is present, via CPOMS as per policy. This ensures that appropriate colleagues, usually the Pastoral Lead, Mental Health Lead, or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), are notified. Any additional counselling notes will be stored securely under lock to maintain confidentiality and ensure data protection.

This following section outlines the application of confidentiality principles within the context of pupil mental health and wellbeing.

- Transparency with pupils: All staff, including school counsellors, are required to be transparent with pupils regarding the boundaries of confidentiality. Staff will explicitly inform pupils that a promise to keep a disclosure secret cannot be made.
- Mandatory disclosure of safeguarding risks: Where a pupil's mental health or wellbeing disclosure indicates a safeguarding risk, staff must share this information without delay via CPOMS, in line with established school policy. This ensures that the appropriate colleagues, such as the Pastoral Lead, Mental Health Lead, or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), are promptly notified to ensure pupil safety and support.
- Secure record keeping: Any additional counselling notes related to pupil mental health will be stored securely under lock, upholding confidentiality and adhering to data protection regulations.
- Need-to-know information sharing: Information regarding a pupil's mental health will only be shared with additional staff members or external professionals strictly on a need-to-know basis to facilitate appropriate support.
- Informing pupils and parents/carers about information sharing: Before sharing a pupil's mental health information with a third party, staff will discuss this with the pupil (age-dependent) and their parents/carers. This discussion will clearly explain:
  - Who the information will be shared with.
  - What specific information will be shared.
  - The rationale for sharing this information.
- Dutch legal considerations (Pupil Autonomy): It is important to note that, in accordance with Dutch law, pupils from the age of 16 years may choose not to involve or inform their parents about third-party involvement in their mental health support. The school will respect this legal provision while ensuring the pupil's safety and wellbeing remain paramount.

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

The Lead Counsellor and Mental Health Lead will monitor the effectiveness of this policy. Staff, pupils, parents, and other stakeholders will have opportunities to provide input and feedback.

This policy will be reviewed by the Lead Counsellor and Mental Health Lead at least once every 2 years.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the Management Board.