

MOUGINS SCHOOL

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

1.Introduction

This policy sets out Mougins School's approach to promoting positive social and emotional well-being for students in school and recognising the mental health problems of students in more serious difficulty. This policy is for students, parents/carers and staff and is consistent with the school's overall aims and values.

2.Background information

Experiencing some level of mental health challenge in life is totally normal. The emotional and physical transitions involved in growing up can be stressful for all young people, and even completely predictable life changes, such as moving up through school years can be challenging and can affect learning. The hormonal shifts of adolescence bring profound emotional, intellectual and physical changes which shake the sense of self identity and relationships. The 'teenage brain' has less ability to regulate emotion and impulse and feel empathy than in childhood. Added to these 'normal' pressures we have the accelerating pace of social change, including the rise of IT and social media, with associated problems of isolation, dependency, and cyberbullying.

The statistics on mental health problems in the young are alarming:

- Half of lifetime mental illness starts by the age of 14
- 1 in 10 children and young people have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and/or emotional and behavioural problems (often the same children) and around one in seven has less severe problems that interfere with their development and learning.
- Anti-social behaviour and conduct disorder affect over five per cent of children, particularly boys, while anxiety and depression affect four per cent.
- Suicide is one of the three most common causes of death in youth and is rising: in 2014 there was a 443 per cent rise in the number of young people who admitted attempting suicide, while self-harm and eating disorders are a growing problem.

3.Promoting positive social and emotional well-being for students in school – a universal approach

Social and emotional well-being refers to a state of positive mental health and wellness. It involves a sense of optimism, confidence, happiness, clarity, self-worth, achievement, having a sense of purpose, engagement, having good relationships with others and understanding oneself. The following are ways in which Mougins School is actively promoting the well-being of its students.

- PSHE curriculum that combines a positive focus on well-being, strengths and healthy choices with specific information on problems and issues that may present at some point in life.
- Robust policies and practice in areas such as behaviour, anti-bullying and diversity that underpin our school values and ensure a safe environment for all students.
- Comprehensive pastoral and tutorial system that supports everyone as well as creating a supportive school and classroom climate.
- School Council. This is a programme to allow genuine consultation and involvement of all students in making decisions about school life. It allows students to feel a connection to school, whilst learning to take responsibility, building social skills and a sense of self.
- Staff development to help staff understand the risk factors to well-being and raise awareness about mental health problems and the school's role in intervening early.
- Ensuring open communication between school, parents/carers and students via formal (parent's evenings, presentations) and informal (conversations) means.
- Helping all students through predictable change and transitions
- Celebrating, sharing and rewarding everyday successes and achievements.

4. Tackling the Mental Health Problems of students in more serious difficulty – a targeted approach

Mental Health Problems refer to the wide range of mental health, emotional and social challenges, difficulties, conditions and illnesses that can affect students. The following is a brief and certainly not exhaustive list of such Mental Health problems.

- Anxiety disorders are the most common of the childhood disorders. These young people experience excessive fear, worry, or uneasiness that interferes with their daily lives. Anxiety disorders include:
 1. Phobia – an unrealistic and overwhelming fear of some object or situation,
 2. Generalised anxiety disorder – a pattern of excessive and unrealistic worry not attributable to any recent experience,
 3. Panic disorder – frightening panic attacks, with physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat and dizziness,
 4. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder – being trapped in a pattern of repeated thoughts and behaviours, e.g., counting or hand washing.
- Depression is marked by changes in emotion (withdrawn, sad, tearful, feelings of worthlessness), motivation (schoolwork declines, shows little interest in play), physical well-being (changes in appetite and sleep, vague physical complaints), thoughts (belief that they are ugly/unable to do anything right/ the world is hopeless).
- Bipolar Depression is marked by exaggerated mood swings between extreme lows and highs.
- Conduct Disorders cause children to act out their feelings or impulses towards others in destructive ways, often violating the rights of others and flouting any rules.

- Eating Disorders can be life threatening and include Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and Binge Eating Disorder.
- Self-Harm is where someone does something to purposely harm him or herself, for example, cutting. People self-harm for a number of reasons, which include managing difficult emotions or because of an underlying mental health issue.

Mougin Schools targeted approach to tackling such Mental Health problems is as follows;

- Robust policies and practice in Mental Health problems such as Eating Disorders and Self harm. Individual Health Care Plans for students with a Mental Health problem.
- Staff development and training to raise awareness of early warning signs, initiate early intervention and manage the student according to the requirements of the Individual Health Care Plan.
- Clear plans and pathways for referral, including the use of outside agencies.

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