



Devonshire House Preparatory School

# Mental Health and Well Being Policy

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| Last review date | <i>October 2025</i> |
| Next review date | <i>October 2026</i> |
| Lead reviewer    | <i>Louise Reen</i>  |

## **Serving North London Families**

Devonshire House is a co-educational prep school, offering unparalleled preparation for senior school and life thereafter. Our unwavering emphasis on individual growth, within an inclusive community, balances traditional values and modern practice to inspire fearless life-long learning.

Our school values are:

- **Growth** – we reach high
- **Courage** – we learn fearlessly
- **Wonder** – we are inspired to find our spark
- **Belonging** – we care and come together

At Devonshire House School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff. We encourage pupils' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.



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This policy is a guide to all staff, including non-teaching, outlining the school's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

The Policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.
- Create an environment where everyone is willing to talk about their mental health issues and where they feel they will be supported.

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however, key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Pastoral Staff
- Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies
- SENDCo
- PSHE Coordinators

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, in the first instance they should speak to the form tutor. If there is a concern that the pupil is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed. If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.



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The skills, knowledge and understanding our pupils need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHEE curriculum.

As part of the PSHEE programme, the children are taught about mental and emotional health safely and sensitively, promoting pupils' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, lessons are used as a vehicle for providing pupils who do develop difficulties, with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting pupils to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

We ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support available to them, and how they can access these services. Within the school (noticeboards, classrooms etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we share and display relevant information about mental health and wellbeing.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

Staff may become aware of warning signs that indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should alert the form tutor.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope



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- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Staff recognise that some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health, for example, those who are living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support by providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems. The school provides clear information about what is available for pupils to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns.

If children disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing.

Where the school's concerns are high, parents will be informed. The school is mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

The family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing.



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### **School Based Support**

All pupils are encouraged to speak about how they are feeling mentally, to form teachers or a trusted adult. This is communicated in school assemblies, through workshops and in lessons. All mental health initiatives across all areas of the school are transmitted to parents via the newsletter or communication from a member of the pastoral team.

Children in the Early Years are supported by the Key Person approach, whereby one member of staff is allocated to a child. This enables an attachment to be built and for the school to work in harmony with younger pupils and their families. Children at this age do not yet possess the maturity to make sense of their emotions, so much emphasis is put upon careful observation, helping to devise a plan for the best care and support. Teachers/learning support assistants/Key People also use Makaton to demonstrate signs for 'sad, happy, sorry, friends' which helps to cement understanding further. The Early Years environment is structured to enable children to explore, making independent choices, allowing them to be satisfied with their own learning outcomes.

In the Early Years, teachers are aware that every child is different, and that some may be more resilient, due to having a wider exposure to situations (larger families etc.) Every child is tended to with an individual approach, helping them to gain a stronger self-confidence and self-awareness.

### **School Counsellors**

Therapeutic support from a team of counsellors from Terapia is available to students.

The referral process operates through form teachers, the SEND team and the Senior Deputy Head Pastoral, who has oversight of all pupils in the school.

The counsellors work alongside parents and staff to ensure the right support is provided to the child through a course of weekly 1:1 sessions.

Terapia counsellors also provide Reflective Parenting sessions to parents and workshops to groups of children at school to provide a holistic approach to mental well being.

### **Nurture Groups**

Nurture groups operate within each year group to provide support to groups of pupils, identified by form teachers, who would benefit from some additional strategies to cope with everyday school life. These groups are led by a trained member of staff and are an opportunity for children to take part in craft and play-based activities in a small, supportive environment with focus given to issues such as friendship difficulties, anxiety and transitions.



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### **Tooled Up Education**

Devonshire House also collaborates with Tooled Up Education, an online library of resources covering all aspects of parenting, education, and family life. All Devonshire House families can sign up for free to access a wide range of materials, request bespoke resources, and receive a weekly "Wednesday Wisdom" email.

### **Dukes Employee Assistance Programme**

For staff, Dukes offer membership to a confidential and professional life management service which provides all staff with a qualified counsellor who can offer personal support for any practical or emotional challenges they may be facing. The EAP is available to all staff and is available 24/7, 365 days a year.

### **Staff Training**

All staff receive regular training and updates about recognising and responding to mental health issues yearly and as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep pupils safe.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupils.



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