



*Dedicated to Community, Committed
to Equality, Striving for Excellence*



The Holmesdale School

Mental Health Policy

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Lead DSL
DATE LAST REVIEWED	September 2025
DATE NEXT REVIEW	September 2026
DATE LAST APPROVED BY LGB	15th October 2025

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

1. Introduction

At The Holmesdale School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff. Our culture is supportive, caring and respectful. We encourage students to be open and want each student to have their voice heard.

We know that everyone experiences different life challenges and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our school, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility, we all have a role to play.

Implementing an effective whole school approach to mental health is beneficial not only to the wellbeing of students and staff, but can also help foster readiness to learn. It also results in improved attainment, attendance, reductions in behavioural problems, as well as happier, more confident and resilient students.

This policy was written in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) at The Holmesdale School.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff (including non-teaching staff) as well as governors and parents/carers.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy (internal policy) in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND and Inclusion Policy where a student has an identified special educational need and our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

CCTV surveillance at the school is intended for the purposes of:

- Protecting the school buildings and school assets, both during and after school hours.
- Promoting the health and safety of staff, students, visitors and monitoring student behaviour.
- Preventing bullying.
- Reducing the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour (including theft and vandalism).
- Supporting the police in a bid to deter and detect crime.
- Assisting in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting offenders.
- Ensuring that the school rules are respected so that the school can be properly managed.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health.
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers.

Lead members of staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, the mental health wellbeing team consists of: Mrs Beal (Senior Assistant Headteacher / Lead DSL and Mental Health First Aider), Miss Moody (SENCO / DDSL) and Mrs Ball (Safeguarding Support Officer / DDSL).

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should follow the normal child protection procedures by speaking to a member of the Designated Safeguarding Team and logging a safeguarding concern on My Concern.

If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to an outside agency is appropriate, this will be led by a DDSL and managed by Mrs Ball (Safeguarding Support Officer) and Mrs Beal (Lead DSL).

2. Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our values and ECCO time curriculum but are also featured wherever possible across the curriculum.

The content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others. Key topics included in the curriculum are: types of mental health, the effect of mental health on young people, discrimination, how celebrities deal with mental health, coping mechanisms to deal with mental health struggles, stigmas around mental health, how mental health can be affected in relationships (family, friends, forced marriages, grooming, LGBTQ+), body image expectation vs reality, how the media influences body image, eating disorders, how COVID has affected the mental health of teenagers and adults and how changes in their lives as teenagers can affect their mental health. We also have a focus on positive wellbeing and how we can stay mentally healthy. This is revisited throughout the year in ECCO time.

3. Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 communicate their concerns via logging a safeguarding concern on My Concern and/or speaking to a DDSL. This concern will be actioned by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for that student's year group and quality assured by the Lead DSL.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or 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
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Exasperation of traits related to a SEND diagnosis, which might impact on a child's attention span
- Dysregulated at home

4. Managing Concerns

A student may choose to share a concern about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately.

If a student chooses to share a concern about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'.

All concerns should be logged onto My Concern for a DDSL to action and if the concern is urgent, staff should also speak to a DDSL. This written record should:

- Be factual - opinions or assumptions have no place within safeguarding documentation.
- Use the words the student does, including swear words or words which are explicit.
- Provide the full account of the experience which formed your concern.
- Include any response or action you took and how the student responded to you.
- Dates, times, places and names/people are very helpful for the work a DSL will do.
- Upload pictures or screenshots of work/evidence which supports your referral. (No images of children will be uploaded to this system)

5. Confidentiality

We can never promise confidentiality if there is a risk of harm to the student. If it is necessary for us to pass on our concerns about a student, then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

Parents/carers must always be informed if a concern has been highlighted and students may choose to tell their parents/carers themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents/carers. We should always give students the option of informing parents/carers for them or with them.

If a student gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying student protection issues, parents/carers should not be informed, but the DSL on duty must be informed immediately as they will be able to secure support from other agencies.

6. Individual Risk Reduction Plans

It is helpful to draw up a risk reduction plan for students who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the student, parents/carers and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- The reason for the risk reduction plan

- Strategies or precautions to avoid or manage specific triggers
- Risk assessment on the identified risks
- Actions in school to minimise the risks
- Timescales - start of the plan and review dates

Where a risk reduction plan is appropriate, this will be led by a DDSL and managed by Mrs Beal (Lead DSL). Specific practical subjects may need to produce an individual risk assessment to support a student in accessing their subject area safely where appropriate.

7. Signposting

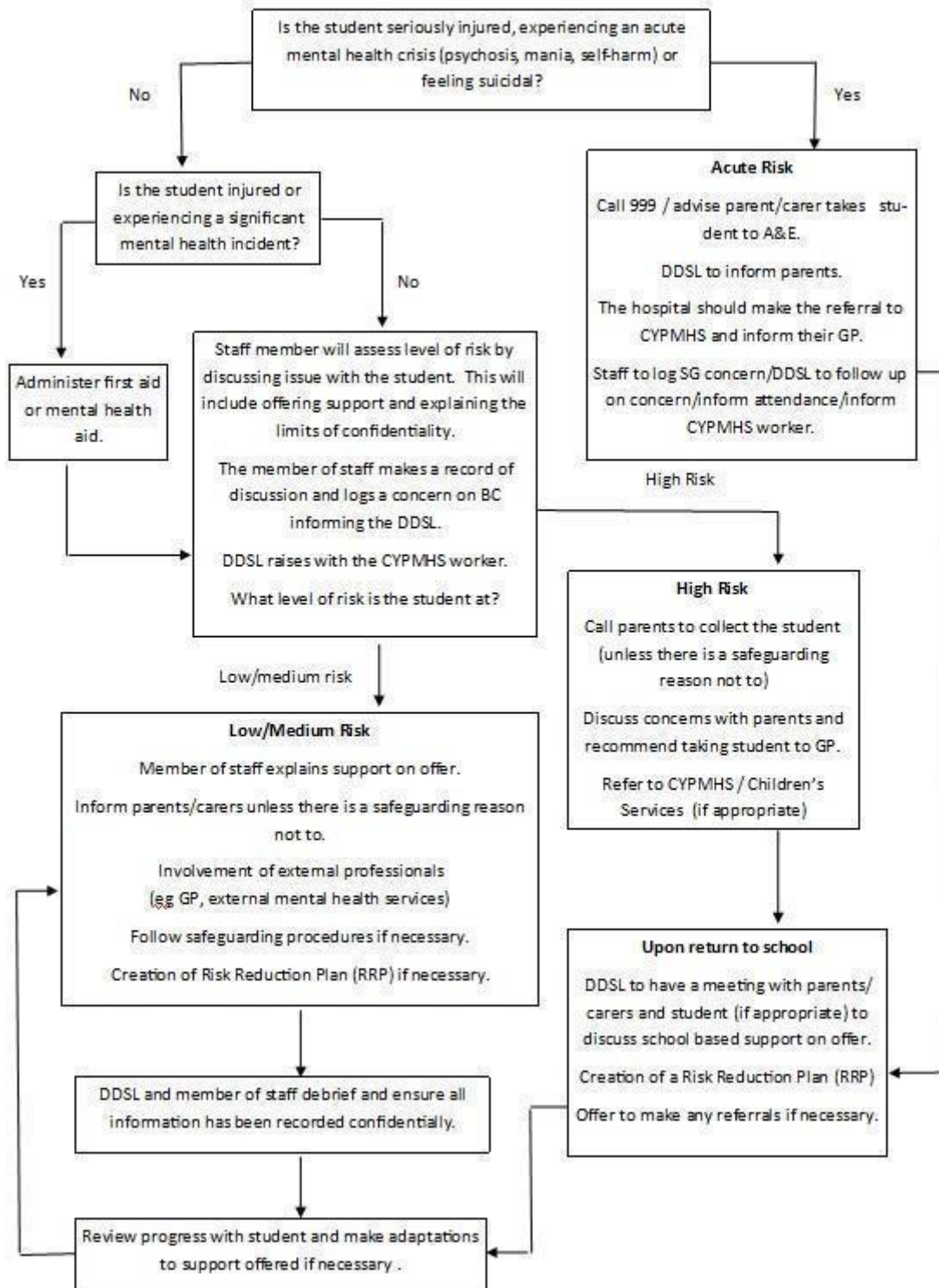
We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in **Appendix A**. There is also a Mental Health Bulletin on our website which is a student and parent friendly resource showing the different areas of support available. It can be found [here](#).

We will refer to further agencies for support, if they present with suicidal thoughts or concerns of self-harm, and ensure relevant people are aware of these feelings, so the student can be supported.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as year team offices, corridors and safe spaces and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum and assemblies. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

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

DDSLs will follow the procedure in a case of acute mental health crisis:



8. In-house Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Interventions

There is a range of in-house support which The Holmesdale School provides to students in need, this includes:

- Preventative self-help support
- In house risk reduction plans/subject risk assessments
- Counselling services
- Online counselling
- Self-harm support
- Drugs and alcohol support
- Bereavement support and referrals
- LGBTQ+ support
- Sixth Form support
- Understanding a diagnosis interventions (ADHD/ASC etc)

Students will be referred to this support via a member of the safeguarding team if a concern is highlighted and the student/parent or carer consents.

9. Working with Parents/Carers

We aim to support parents/carers as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents/carers, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.
- Share and allow parents/carers to access further support.
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child, provided students give consent. (ths-safeguarding@swale.at).
- Give parents/carers guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents/carers.
- Hold parent/carer forums on mental health.
- Keep parents/carers informed about the mental health training our school staff receive and how mental health is covered in our school curriculum.

Before disclosing to parents/carers, we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents/carers, the student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?
- Does the student give consent for the parents/carers to be informed of any involvement with supportive agencies?

The school will highlight further sources of information that may be helpful and provide clear means of contacting us. We will finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the student's confidential record.

10. Working with other Agencies

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our students' emotional health and wellbeing.

This might include liaising with:

- Paediatricians
- CAMHS
- Counselling services
- Therapists
- Family support workers
- Behavioural support workers.
- For students on our SEND register, STLS SEMH surgeries and LIF

11. Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. Peers often want to support but do not know how to access it. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that peers may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which peers may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents/carers with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told.
- How friends can best support.
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset.
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse) Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers.
- Where and how to access support for themselves.
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition.
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

12. Training

All staff receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training to enable them to keep students 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 developing situations with one or more students.

13. Swale Academies Trust and Stakeholder Support

As part of the trust, we have a network of mental health leads from across the school who we can share ideas and support with. Mental health leads meet regularly and also have Keeping in Touch meetings with a Swale Executive who oversees the mental health agenda. As part of this, a clear action plan for each school is formed to ensure our mental health response is clear, considered and has the impact it needs.

The Holmesdale School also has a Local Governing Body, (LGB) who meet termly. As part of this, they have access to the action plan for mental health and an analysis of where the school is in terms of Attendance, Behaviour and Safeguarding. This allows the LGB to ensure they have oversight of this and can give it the further focus and scrutiny it needs.

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every year. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.

Appendix A

Mental health support we can offer our students	
Preventative self-help support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Worry Button-If you are concerned about your own or somebody else's mental health, you can alert the safeguarding team via The Worry Button on our school website • The Mental Health Bulletin-The Holmesdale School's mental health bulletin, available on our website, includes a breakdown of different agencies that can support with mental health • The Castle-A safe space for our SEND students to be and to go to if they are feeling overwhelmed
Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Health: Students can access one to one counselling as well as other support methods. Referrals need to be done online: https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/school-health/ This goes to a single point of access (SPA) to be triaged and they can be contacted on: 0300 123 4496 for advice. • We have a school counsellor who comes into school. Sarah works in the Beckett office on a Thursday and Friday. Referrals need to go via the safeguarding team who can be contacted on ths-safeguarding@swale.at
Online Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You Are Not Alone (YANA) Project offers online wellbeing and emotional resilience workshops (tailored 1:1s, parent/carer workshops) https://www.imago.community/Children-and-Young-People/YANA • Kooth is an online mental health service that is free for students to access. https://kooth.com/ • Childline offer 1-1 counsellor support https://www.childline.org.uk/getsupport/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/ • Big White Wall can also offer counselling for mental health and wellbeing support https://www.bigwhitewall.co.uk/ • Young minds can also offer guidance and support https://youngminds.org.uk/
Alcohol/drugs support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRANK: Information/support about drugs and alcohol signpost students to FRANK: www.talktofrank.com/0300 123 6600 (24 hours a day 7 days a week). Text a question to 82111 and FRANK will text you back. Email: frank@talktofrank.com
Eating Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEAT: Charity to support young people and their families with eating disorders - helplines, chat rooms and resources: https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/

<p>Financial Support for Families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The links to the charities below can help families with the cost of living, including school uniform and equipment: https://www.inkinddirect.org/with-charitable-organisations https://www.svp.org.uk • Foodbanks / food vouchers: https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/swale/
<p>Young Carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Young Carers: https://www.imago.community/ Beccy Goddard - Young Carer YYP Team Leader (IMAGO) beccy.goddard@imago.community Sophie Tibbles - Sibling Support Coordinator (IMAGO) - offers 1 to 1 support for Young Carer. T: 0300 111 1110/M: 07739036602 - sophie.tibbles@imago.community
<p>Bereavement Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winston's wish: www.winstonswish.org.uk - A national bereavement support service, offering practical support and guidance for children, young people and families after the death of a parent/carer or sibling. Free helpline: 08088 020 021. • Holding on Letting Go: https://holdingonlettinggo.org.uk/ supporting bereaved children and their families in Kent. • CHUMS: Mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children, young people and their families https://chums.uk.com/
<p>Self-harm/ suicidal thoughts support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Health: referral online supports students with emotional health and wellbeing: https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/school-health/ • Alumina: is online support for self-harm and students can get free advice and support. Staff can also refer a student to Alumina: https://selfharm.co.uk/alumina • CALM HARM: Supportive app for self-harm: https://calmharm.co.uk/ • Papryus: is a confidential advice and support for students struggling with suicidal thoughts: Phone: 0800 068 4141/Text: 07786209697. • YoungMinds: support young people with their mental health/ Parents/carers helpline and webchat: https://www.youngminds.org.uk/ • SHOUT: provides free 24/7 support for young people experiencing a mental health crisis: Text YM to 85258. • Childline: free 1-2-1 counsellor chat and email support service: 0800 11 11 (open 24/7) • NHS Urgent Mental Health Helpline: Offers support and advice from a mental health professional (online) https://www.nhs.uk/servicesearch/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline • Samaritans: is a listening service - they do not offer advice and support: https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/
<p>LGBT+</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Be You Project: offers support for LGBT+ community in Kent and Swale. https://thebeyouproject.co.uk/

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mermaids: www.mermaidsuk.org.uk Supports gender diverse young people and their families, with lots of blogs, online chat support, support forums, a free helpline and lots of other useful information. Phone: 0808 801 0400.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind and HeadStart: have some really good resources and guides to mental health issues. https://www.mind.org.uk/ or http://www.headstartkent.org.uk/ • Anna Freud: centre also has some useful info and contacts: https://www.annafreud.org/
Sixth Form Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mix: https://www.themix.org.uk/ Helps 16-25 year olds take on any challenges, including disability, leaving care, money and racism. Includes 1-2-1 chat online and a free helpline, apps, useful info, discussion board and 24/7 crisis support. Phone: 0808 808 4994. • Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS): Support for over 18 who have lost someone to suicide. 0300 111 5065 / email.support@uksobs.org • Withyou: Offers drug and alcohol support: 01795 500881 https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/kent-for-young-people/ • FRONT DOOR: REFERRALS DSL's use the front door portal for early help and social services as usual: 03000 41 61 61 https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/care-and-support/howto-get-adult-social-care-support
Safeguarding concerns and referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRONT DOOR: REFERRALS DSL's use the front door portal for early help and social services as usual: https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-educationneeds/integrated-childrens-services/front-door Contact number: 03000 41 11 11 Email: frontdoor@kent.gov.uk Out of Hours Tel: 03000 41 91 91 • (CYPMHS) Children and Young People's Mental Health Service: Single Point of Access (SPA) referral link: https://apps.nelft.nhs.uk/SPAKentMedway-Support Contact number: 0800 011 3474 Email: nem-tr.kentchildrenandyoungpeoplehealthservices@nhs.net