

**BROCKWOOD PARK SCHOOL**  
**MENTAL HEALTH POLICY**



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## **1 Introduction**

Recent developments in society, medicine and psychology have highlighted the importance of good mental health for the overall well-being and development of an individual. More awareness exists about the link between mental health, trauma, early childhood experiences and behaviour. Many mental health issues develop in the early teenage years and schools play an essential role in identifying issues and providing support for those in need.

The context of an international boarding school brings additional factors that can affect the mental health of students and staff. Many students leave their home for the first time when joining Brockwood, and their parents often live far away in other parts of the world. They live in close proximity with other students and can be affected by what other students experience.

Since its inception in 1969 and deeply embedded in its intentions, Brockwood has been focussing on providing excellent pastoral care and a warm, caring atmosphere in which students can face and learn about the issues of their inner life with the steady support of teachers, floor people, student advisers and other staff members. Further, and in recognition of the importance of family support in these matters, a collaborative approach among the school, students, and their families is considered essential.

Brockwood recognises the importance of the topic of mental health for all its students and staff and is committed to continue providing an education and atmosphere that positively contributes to the overall well-being of all members of the school, and to provide specific mental health support wherever needed.

This policy outlines the structures and processes in place at Brockwood to support good mental health and emotional well-being.

## **2 Whole school approach**

Brockwood's intention is to educate the whole human being, encompassing academic, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects. Furthermore, at its core is the intention to understand oneself in relationship with others and the wider world. The school provides an atmosphere that is characterized by care, affection and a sense of friendship and equality, and that is free of fear.

Learning at Brockwood is understood as an activity based on curiosity and understanding, rather than on fierce competition and the principles of reward and punishment. Students are able to express themselves in a safe environment where deeper questions can be asked and there is freedom to learn. While staff members naturally have more experience in life and in their subjects, they consider themselves psychologically equal to students.

Students have ample opportunities to express their voices and to participate in decision making processes, such as in Core Group meetings (also called Forum), school meetings, floor meetings, Inquiry Times and other forums for dialogue and discussion.

Students and staff embark together on a journey of self-discovery through relationship. This is supported by the whole set-up of the school which enables small class sizes, living and working together as a whole community, and ample forums for discussion and dialogue. Healthy lifestyle choices are discussed throughout the year as a means of supporting students' wellbeing. Quality sleep is promoted through the no-device policy, the fixed bedtime at night and the relatively late start to the day in the morning, outdoor work and contact with nature is part of our curriculum, and the whole school regularly engages in sports and exercises.

### **3 Well-being at Brockwood**

One fundamental aspect in creating an environment that nurtures well-being at Brockwood is the restriction on smartphones and limited access to social media during the week. By minimizing distractions and reducing exposure to potential online harms, students are encouraged to focus on their studies and develop healthier, stronger relationships with each other and within the community. This intentional approach helps create a balanced and more mindful learning environment.

Another essential element is the recognition of the significant impact sleep has on mental health. The school adopts a late start time, allowing students, including "night owls," to obtain a healthy amount of sleep. This commitment to prioritizing rest ensures that students are well-rested, energized, and better equipped to engage in the community life and in their academic pursuits.

Regular exercise is integrated into the school's timetable, with sports activities scheduled three times a week in the afternoons. In addition, outdoor gardening and Human Ecology sessions provide opportunities for students to connect with nature and experience the numerous mental health benefits associated with spending time outdoors. Optional morning activities further enhance the physical well-being of students, encouraging them to engage in activities that promote a healthy lifestyle.

At Brockwood we put emphasis on agency and interest in learning rather than on fierce competition. By encouraging students to take ownership of their education and explore their passions, the school fosters a love for learning and promotes a positive attitude towards academic pursuits.

Central to our approach is also the creation of a tight-knit community and robust pastoral care system. Students benefit from a strong sense of belonging, peer support, and close relationships with caring staff members. This environment provides a safe and supportive space for students to share their challenges, seek guidance, and receive the necessary support to navigate their personal and academic journeys.

To ensure comprehensive mental health education, at Brockwood we offer a strong PSHE/RSE programme. Through ATWAMs, presentations, and Core Health & Movement classes, students receive age-appropriate information about stress, mental health, and well-being. These activities equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop resilience, manage stress, and make informed decisions concerning their mental health.

The school also places a significant emphasis on silence and downtime, recognizing the value of being quiet and self-reflection. Each day we start the day with silence and throughout the day, students are provided with space and downtime to recharge and reflect.

The provision of healthy food and nutrition is paramount at Brockwood. Recognizing the vital connection between diet and mental health, the school ensures that students are offered well-balanced, nutritious meals each day.

Situated in a beautiful natural setting, surrounded by serene landscapes, students have the opportunity to enjoy the restorative effects of the natural environment by going on walks or spending time outdoors.

All these aspects create a whole school atmosphere that contributes to positive mental health and a feeling of overall well-being. However, some students with stronger or pre-existing mental health issues or emotional trauma might need specialised support which is being provided throughout the year.

## **4 Roles and responsibilities**

All staff members are responsible for the creation of the special, caring atmosphere of the school and the pastoral care of the students as pointed out in our 'Pastoral Care and Boarding Policy'. They will also be instrumental in the identification of mental health issues in students, and certain early help measures (see annex A in the appendix).

The pastoral coordinators act as mental health leads of the school. They are responsible for overseeing the mental health of the student body, which includes identifying issues, putting in place early help measures as well as specialised support, and liaising with parents of students with specific mental health needs. They are also responsible for the mental health education of both students and staff.

All staff are trained to be able to identify and first-respond to mental health issues, as well as to pass this information on urgently to the pastoral coordinators. The pastoral coordinators (sometimes together with other selected staff members and the pastoral support staff) meet once a week to discuss pastoral and mental health related matters, including specific cases of students with mental health needs. In these meetings, early help measures are decided upon, action plans devised and, if needed, external support arranged for the student in need (dependent upon their consent).

For specialised support, the school cooperates with external providers such as counsellors ([see section on external support](#)).

## **5 Mental health education**

Brockwood is committed to raise awareness and educate its students and staff about mental health issues and general well-being. Specific activities for students and staff are listed below.

### **5.1 For students**

All students receive education on mental health issues during their stay at Brockwood. This consists of presentations in school meetings and longer ATWAM sessions on mental health (at least once or twice each academic year). The topic is also covered in the course Core Health & Movement which is compulsory for our youngest students, and interested students often have the opportunity to attend a peer mentoring course to develop listening skills and learn about boundaries and basic factors contributing to well-being. When preparing lessons and activities on mental health, we use resources from the [UK government](#) and the [PSHE Association](#) and adhere to best practice principles.

We aim to always follow the following principles laid out by the PSHE Association to create a safe environment in the PSHE classroom.

- Ground rules – all students will be made aware of certain ground rules when discussing topics related to mental health (e.g. the right to pass, the necessity to use correct terminology)
- Distancing techniques – issues will be raised in a non-personal way, using distancing techniques such as stories and scenarios with characters that students can relate to in terms of age and cultural background
- Handling questions safely – teachers are trained to handle tricky questions in a safe manner (e.g. using ask-it baskets, or buying time by answering tricky questions one-on-one outside the lesson time)
- Signpost support – teachers always signpost relevant ways of support and resources to students when talking about mental health related issues

#### **5.1.1 Mental health presentation and essentials**

The first 10 days of each academic year follow a special timetable in which the school organises many introductory activities that serve for all members of the school to get to know each other, and as an induction to the school and its different aspects (pastoral, curriculum, etc.) to the students. As part of this induction, the pastoral coordinators present to all students some essential points regarding their overall well-being during their stay at Brockwood. In this presentation, it is explained what Brockwood considers well-being and what the different routes for students are to get support if they are going through emotional difficulties or feel the need to talk to someone about problems they have. The roles of the pastoral coordinators and the independent listener are explained, and the different external services are mentioned (online or in-house counselling, as well as other online and phone services such as Childline and Kooth). Within the school set-up, students can access support in a variety of ways and they are encouraged to raise difficulties with any staff member, and to seek support from the pastoral coordinators if they ever feel the need.

### **5.1.2 ATWAMs on mental health**

Every year, the school organises at least one or two longer educational activities on mental health related topics for the whole school. This may also include events with guest speakers. These activities will always touch on the essentials (see above), remind students of how and where they can get support and emphasise the school's support systems, but focus on different aspects. This includes the following topics as pointed out in the PSHE/RSE policy:

- Feelings / Emotions
  - a. Difference between feeling and emotions
  - b. How feelings affect our thinking / vice versa
  - c. How feelings affect behaviour
  - d. Are there good or bad feelings/emotions?
- Stress and anxiety; coping mechanisms
- Depression and low mood
- Psychological first aid and where to get help

### **5.1.3 Core Health & Movement classes**

All first-year students under the age of 15 attend the weekly Core Health & Movement classes. The course includes basic education on mental health and emotional well-being. See below for an excerpt from the scheme of work, showing activities related to mental health.

- Psychology + Mental well-being 1
  - Functions of the mind (thinking, emotions, autonomic functions, perception)
  - Emotions, what is mental health, how to get help
  - Psychological disorders; dangers of self-diagnosis and self-medication
- Psychology + Mental well-being 2
  - effects of social media; conversation vs connection; nature deficit disorder
- Stress I
  - recap homeostasis, introduction to stress and stressors, stress related diseases, fight-or-flight response, role of the ANS
- Stress II
  - effects of stress, dealing with stress, thought and stress, resilience
- Sleep I
  - includes sleep journal, blue light, night time routine, stimulants
- Sleep II
  - sleep stages, consequences of bad sleep habits, sleep hygiene

### **5.1.4 Peer mentoring course**

In cooperation with an ex-Brockwood staff member who is a trained counsellor and well-being coach, the school may offer its students the opportunity to participate in an online course on Peer Mentoring. The course aims to teach interested students about the role of peer mentors, the importance of listening, the boundaries and responsibilities of peer mentors and to engage with them about the wider meaning of well-being. Students are informed about this possibility



at the beginning of the year and can express interest to participate by talking to the pastoral coordinators. The course usually takes place over the winter term. Graduates of the course can then become peer mentors at the school. Their names are made known to the wider community if they wish to be named.

## **5.2 For staff**

All residential school staff receive regular training on mental health issues and support. This can include topics like self-harm, eating disorders, and others related to the general wellbeing of adolescents. The training is usually conducted or organised by the pastoral coordinators who themselves regularly undergo training in the areas of mental health, trauma, brain development and emotional well-being.

At least once a year, the school asks staff to do a mental health related training or to attend a session with a mental health professional as part of their continuing development. Over the course of the year, several sessions are organised for staff to discuss mental health issues and support with each other, to share experiences and skills related to this topic. Additionally, during weekly staff meetings, ways on how to better support our students are discussed, as well as more specific topics. All these are instrumental in the identification and first response to mental health issues in students, as well as passing on that information urgently to the pastoral coordinators.

## **6 External support**

As pointed out above, most students are well supported through the unique atmosphere at Brockwood, characterized by a sense of care among all members of the community. Some students, however, need specialised support which our residential staff members can sometimes not provide due to lack of time or expertise. For this reason, the school cooperates with professionals in the field of mental health and emotional well-being.

These include two counsellors, with long-term associations with Brockwood who are available for sessions online.

The external support is organised and supervised by the pastoral coordinators. Parents are made aware of the support during an online meeting at the beginning of each year and kept informed throughout the year whenever private support sessions are organised.

Should a student wish to speak anonymously to an external person, the school has an independent listener whose name and details are always available on the school board in the Pastoral section.

Other child support services such as [Childline](#) and [Help at Hand](#) are regularly signposted to our students during classes and ATWAMs, and through posters and signs on our school notice board.

## **7 Safeguarding and confidentiality**

When students suffer from a more serious mental health condition (like self-harm, eating disorders, etc.), safeguarding is often an important consideration, usually when the student is either at risk of harm or considered a threat to himself or others. Staff members are expected to identify such situations and follow the school's 'Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy'.

All staff work closely to best support students and information is shared to provide a wider support network for students who seek help. This is explained to students with the intent of enabling them to receive more support. When a referral to the DSL is necessary, and before communicating with parents, the student is informed in advance and is given the reasons why this is necessary. According to the need and in consultation with the student, a safety plan is put in place and closely monitored.

Concerns shared directly and privately by the student with our school counsellors or our life coach, remain confidential. Exceptions may only apply (and these circumstances are explained at the initial appointment and at the time of disclosure) when there is a perceived risk or danger to self or to others, or a disclosure is made which falls under the Children Act 1989, in which case the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in the school will be notified.

## **8 Suitability and reasonable adjustments**

At Brockwood the well-being and mental health of our students is of utmost importance. However, while we strive to provide a supportive environment, it is important to acknowledge that the school may not be a suitable place for young people who require extensive mental health support.

It is essential that mental health history and specific mental health needs are disclosed during the admissions process so the school can evaluate whether it can fully support the applicant according to their specific needs. Once enrolled, parents can help by sharing more details about any mental health needs and history with the pastoral coordinators via a pastoral file/questionnaire which will be shared with all parents at the beginning of the school year.

Reasonable adjustments, and often beyond, will be made to accommodate students with specific mental health needs. The school is committed to offering appropriate support and working collaboratively with students, their families, and external professionals to ensure their well-being. However, there are limitations to the level of support that can be provided within our resources and expertise.

The school cannot accept responsibility for students who are not fully functional or who are unable to fully participate in school and community life. Additionally, students who pose a sustained risk to themselves or others for a prolonged period of time may not be able to receive the necessary support within our school setting.

In cases where obtaining suitable mental health support at Brockwood becomes challenging, the school may need to ask the student to return to their family and for the family to organise specialist support at home. This decision will be made in consultation with the student, their family, and relevant professionals involved in their care, ensuring that their well-being and safety are prioritised.

## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Mental Health Recognition and Response procedure (Annex A)

#### **Brockwood Park School - Mental Health Recognition and Response Procedure- Annex A**

A staff member (teacher, floor staff, student adviser, pastoral) observes certain behaviours in a student that makes them suspect a possible underlying mental health issue.

E.g. infirmary or school staff might notice a change in attendance (for example to morning meetings, or an increase in sick days).



The staff member reports these observations to the pastoral team, or shares their concern in the weekly staff meeting where students are discussed.



Pastoral staff discuss the case in a pastoral meeting, and carry out an assessment. This can be in the form of a conversation with the student, their adviser, the parents or other staff at the school, in order to find out more about the student's background and needs.



Pastoral staff, in a subsequent meeting, discusses the case again and design a plan, often in collaboration with the adviser. If appropriate, this plan gets shared with the rest of the staff body, or with certain individuals.



Pastoral staff as well as floor people, teachers, adviser carry out the actions set out in the plan, which might be regularly checking in with the student, organising external support (e.g. counselling) or supporting the student with their individual plan.



Pastoral staff (and adviser) regularly reviews the case in pastoral meetings to evaluate effectiveness of provision and make changes.

## 9.2 Mental Health Support sheet for students 2023/24 (school notice board)

### Pastoral Coordinators and Pastoral Support Staff as first point of contact

- Elena and Thomas (pastoral coordinators)
- Charley (pastoral support staff)
- Our pastoral coordinators also act as mental health leads - they have some training in mental health matters and can help you find the right support, either within the school or using external services

### Independent Listener

- The Independent Listener is a person outside the staff, who students may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school
- Our current Independent Listener is Anne Green
  - Tel: 0797-666-7473

### Online Counselling

- Please contact Elena, Thomas or Charley to organise sessions with Celeste or Amanda – if you feel you would like to try it out, a trial session can be arranged free of charge
  - Celeste Calvet - well-being coach and counsellor ([celeste@innerbloom.org.uk](mailto:celeste@innerbloom.org.uk))
  - Amanda Cozens – counsellor ([amandacozenscounselling@gmail.com](mailto:amandacozenscounselling@gmail.com))

### External services

- Childline
  - <https://www.childline.org.uk/> (Tel: 0800 1111)
  - Free phone and online counselling services for people under 19
- Help at Hand
  - <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/> (Tel: 0800 528 0731)
  - Free and confidential service (email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk))
- Kooth
  - <https://www.kooth.com>
  - Free online counselling services
- Shout
  - <https://giveusashout.org/> (Tel: 85258 for text messages)
  - Free mental health support through text messages

### Information on mental health

- YoungMinds - <https://youngminds.org.uk>
- Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- On My Mind (Anna Freud Centre) - <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/>
- Stem4 - <https://stem4.org.uk>
- CAMHS resources - <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/>