



PEGASUS SCHOOLS, EKET, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Approved/reviewed by	
The Head of Schools	
Date of review	January 2024
Date of next review	January 2025

POLICY STATEMENT

At Pegasus Schools, we endeavour to foster positive mental health among both staffs and students. Beyond that, our commitment extends to identifying and addressing mental health concerns through the formulation and execution of practical policies and procedures. This strategic approach aims to cultivate a secure and supportive environment for all students.

AIMS

This document describes our school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing and is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff. It should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue or a Safeguarding issue. The SEN policy will also apply where a student has an identified special educational need.

The Policy Aims to:

- a. Promote positive mental health in all students.
- b. Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- c. Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health.
- d. Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues.
- e. Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers.
- f. Value well-being from a whole school perspective in line with our core statement.

LEAD MEMBERS OF STAFF

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Ms. Eno Bassey - Designated child protection / safeguarding officer (Female)
- Mr. Peter Onwubolu - Designated child protection / safeguarding officer (Male)
- Mrs. Emily Jackson - Mental health lead
- Nurse Elizabeth, Nurse Helen and Nurse Queen - Lead first aider
- Mrs. Esther Eneyo - Pastoral lead
- Mrs. Monica Lewis - Continual Professional Development (CPD) lead

Where a cause for concern is noticed, discussions with the parents will be led and managed by PEGS Mental Health Lead.

ACHIEVING THE POLICY AIMS

The school will promote a culture of good mental health and wellbeing to all students as follows:

- a. Thorough effective communication designed to raise awareness and understanding about mental health and wellbeing.
- b. Implementing measures at all levels of the school system that provides an education environment that promotes good mental health.
- c. Listening to our students and adapting mental health policies (as required).

Knowledge and skills training to help management, supervisors and staff support their own mental health/wellbeing and that of students will be provided to address the following:

- a. The promotion of understanding the importance of mental wellbeing to all students, including best practice.
- b. How to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively.
- c. Ensure that any student suffering from mental illness is treated fairly, with respect and confidentiality without discrimination.

Providing support to our students:

Pegasus undertakes to provide the following measures to promote mental health and wellbeing.

- a. Working with staffs and student to create a culture where bullying, hazing, harassment, discrimination and tribalism is not tolerated.
- b. Providing training for all employees to raise awareness of everyday contributory factors, such as stress and excessive workload that undermine mental health.
- c. Ensuring that all staff are aware of their obligations to promote a good environment for their students.
- d. Implementing awareness programmes to create a culture where students are able to talk openly about mental health problems and disclose difficulties without fear of discrimination or reprisal.
- e. Providing proactive support for students who are experiencing mental health problems inside and outside the school, in a positive manner.

Where a student is experiencing mental health issues

Pegasus Schools prioritizes the holistic well-being of all students, emphasizing the cultivation of life-long learning and a sense of responsibility towards oneself and the community.

In cases where concerns regarding the mental health or well-being of a student has been expressed, it is imperative to communicate with the Mental Health lead as the initial point of contact. In situations where there is an immediate apprehension of potential harm to the student, an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be made.

In the event of a medical emergency involving a student, standard procedures for medical emergencies, including notifying first aid staff and reaching out to affiliated emergency hospitals for Pegasus, should be adhered to, followed by communication with the parents.

Furthermore, where a student has been identified to be experiencing mental health issues, The school will provide support in the following ways:

- a. Proactively making parents of students aware of third party organisations that might be able to provide information, advice and support in these situations.
- b. Offering continued education where practicable subject to appropriate adaptations to the method of teaching.
- c. In situations where the student experiences a period of absence from school due to mental ill-health, working with the parents of the student to develop a “Return to School Plan” that provides the best opportunity for the student to return to school as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- d. Ensuring that the student is treated fairly and without discrimination.
- e. Encouraging the parents of such students to seek the appropriate help through the hospitals or a mental health support organisation.
- f. Identifying and remediating any factors within the school culture that are contributing to the negative mental health issues.
- g. Dealing with the mental health related issues in a sensitive manner, respecting the student as an individual and acknowledging their right to confidentiality.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In instances where it is deemed necessary to inform parents, a careful and considerate approach is important. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- a. Is a face-to-face meeting possible and, if so, preferred?
- b. Determination of the appropriate meeting location, whether at school, the parents' residence, or a neutral setting.
- c. Identification of attendees, including parents, the student, and relevant staff members.
- d. Clarification of the meeting's objectives.

Given the potentially emotional nature of such revelations, recognizing that parents may initially react with shock, anger, fear, or upset is essential. Acceptance of these emotions, within reasonable limits, is encouraged, allowing parents the necessary time for reflection. Providing informational leaflets is recommended to supplement the conversation, as parents may find it challenging to absorb much information at once.

In addition to sharing general information, offering targeted resources for parental support is beneficial. Clear channels for further communication and inquiries should be provided, with consideration given to scheduling follow-up meetings or phone calls promptly, as parents often have numerous questions during the initial information processing stage. Each meeting should conclude with mutually agreed-upon next steps, and a record of the proceedings should be maintained in the child's care plan.

WARNING SIGNS

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issue. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Mental Health Lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- a. Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- b. Changes in eating / sleeping habits.
- c. Increased isolation from friends in school or becoming socially withdrawn.
- d. Changes in activity and mood.
- e. Vengeful thinking/ behaviour towards certain students/ adults.
- f. Perceived negative attention from other students/adults.
- g. Lowering of academic achievement.
- h. Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- i. Abusing drugs or alcohol.
- j. Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope.
- k. Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather.
- l. Avoiding PE or getting changed secretly.
- m. Lateness to or absence from school.
- n. Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause • An increase in lateness or absenteeism

INDIVIDUAL CARE PLANS

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for students causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the student, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- a. Details of a student's condition or concern.
- b. Special requirements and precautions.
- c. Medication and any side effects.
- d. What to do, and who to contact in an emergency.
- e. The role the school can play.

MANAGING DISCLOSURES

Students are encouraged to communicate any concerns, either about themselves or a peer, to any staff member. It is imperative that all staff members are equipped with the appropriate skills to respond effectively to such disclosures.

In the event that a student chooses to reveal concerns regarding their own mental health or that of a friend, the responding staff member is expected to maintain a composed, supportive, and non-judgmental demeanour. The focus should be on listening rather than providing advice, with paramount consideration given to the emotional and physical safety of the student. Utilizing the TED approach (Tell, Explain, Describe) is recommended in responding to disclosures.

All disclosures must be documented in writing and stored in the student's care file. This information should be communicated to the Mental Health Lead, who will appropriately secure the records and seek guidance on the necessary next steps.

Confidentiality is crucial, and information about a student should never be shared without their prior knowledge. While obtaining consent is ideal, there are circumstances where information must be shared with other staff members and/or parents. All disclosures should be shared with the Mental Health Lead to ensure the emotional well-being of staff members, as they are no longer solely responsible for the student.

Parents must always be informed, and students should be given the option of staff informing parents on their behalf or together with them. However, if a student raises concerns that suggest potential child safeguarding issues, parents should not be informed, instead, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be promptly notified.

TRAINING

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognizing and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them keep students safe.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually and monitored more frequently as required, for example to address issues highlighted through employee feedback. Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through feedback from students and staff including complaints, appraisals/performance reviews and outcome of any mental health issues supported through this policy.