



British International School
of Ljubljana
an Orbital Education School



Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

2023-2024



Introduction

The British International School of Ljubljana is a community of resilient, respectful lifelong learners which offers a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment where every member of the community is encouraged to strive for excellence.

At BISL we are committed to providing all learners with high quality learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of student achievement and attitude.

This policy summarises our expectations and common working practices, which reflect the aims and objectives of the School and support its Vision Mission and Values.

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

We aim to inspire lifelong learners and caring global citizens, in a community where everyone feels encouraged, supported and challenged.

Mission

We provide a high-quality British style international education in English, balancing tradition and innovation. Our passion is creating a positive, safe and nurturing learning environment in which everyone is valued as individuals, empowering them to be versatile, motivated and caring people. We will endeavour to create opportunities to develop creativity, collaboration and critical thinking skills through an inclusive and personalised experience.

Values

Excellence - We strive for excellence in everything we do.

Respect - We learn at school by showing respect to everyone in the community

Responsibility - We are engaged, promoting actions and behaviours that support a sustainable future.

Integrity - We are transparent, honest and ethical in all our relationships.

Compassion - We are kind and caring, encouraging everyone to succeed.

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1. Aims

At BISL, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students, parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders.

This policy focuses on students' mental health and wellbeing. It aims to:

- Set out our school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all students across our school.
- Provide guidance to staff on their role in supporting students' mental health and wellbeing, including how they can foster and maintain an inclusive culture in which students feel able to talk about and reflect on their experiences of mental health.
- Support staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental health issues.
- Inform students and their parents/carers about the support they can expect from our school in respect of students' mental health and wellbeing and provide them with access to resources.

This policy should be considered in conjunction with, and with reference to:

- BISL Mission, Vision and Values;
- BISL Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- BISL Positive Behaviour Policy;
- BISL Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- BISL Anti-Bullying Policy

2. Guidance

This policy was written with regard to:

- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- Articles 3 and 23 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

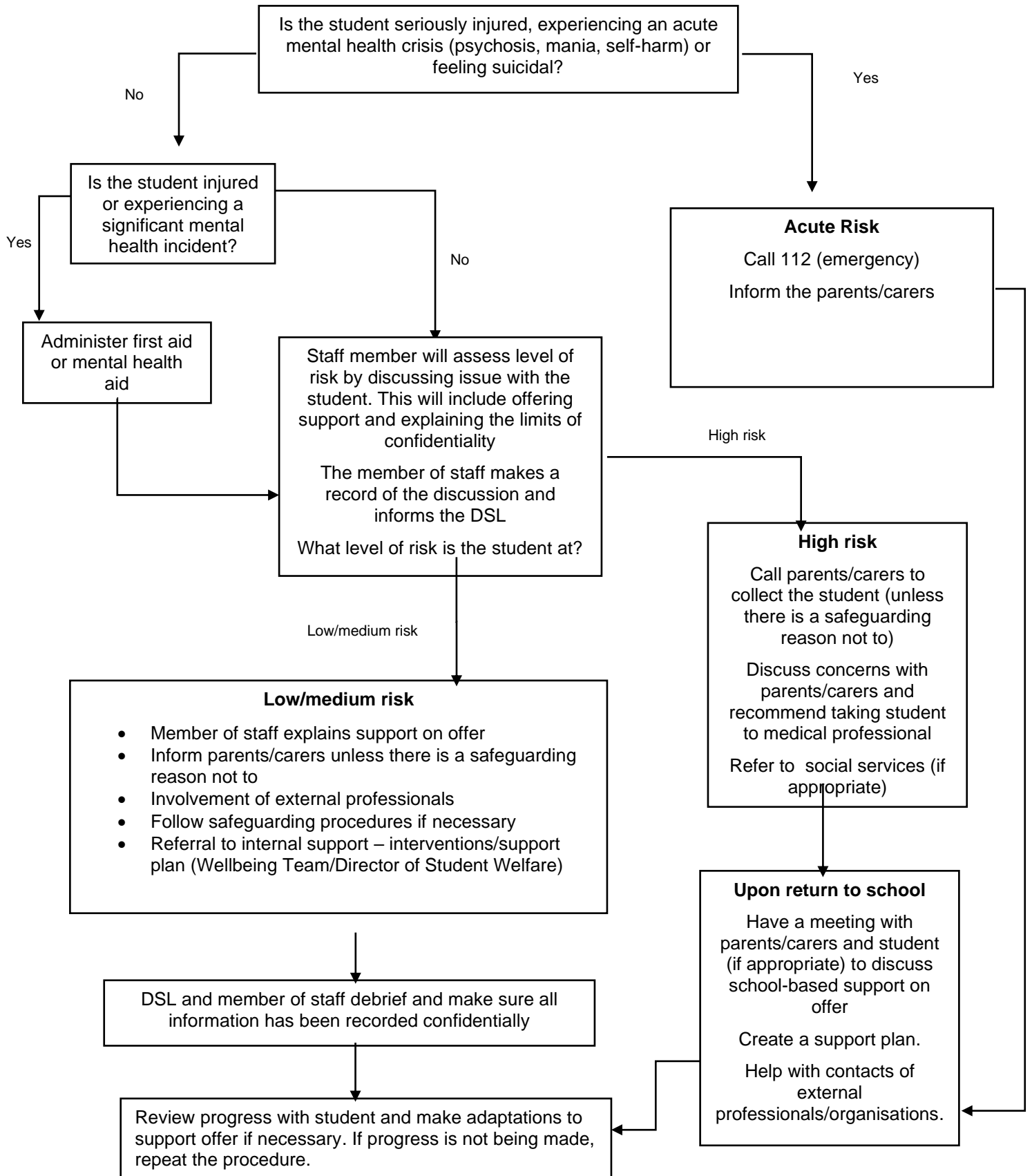
All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across our school and for understanding risk factors. If any members of staff are concerned about a student's mental health or wellbeing, they should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Director of Student Welfare.

Certain members of staff have extra duties to lead on mental health and wellbeing in school. These members of staff include:

- Principal
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL
- Director of Student Welfare
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)
- Mental Health First Aid trained staff (BISL Wellbeing Team)
- The school nurse

All concerns will be communicated and shared with the Principal during weekly SLT meetings. If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed, and the DSL (or Deputy DSL) must be informed immediately. If the child presents a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary. All concerns and action points are recorded and monitored by the Principal/DSL/Wellbeing Team member via iSAMS Wellbeing module.

4. Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis



5. Warning signs

All staff will be on the lookout for warning signs which indicate a student **or colleague** 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 one of the Key Staff Members. Some warning signs may include:

➤ Changes in:

- Changes in mood or energy/activity level
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Attitude in lessons or academic attainment
- Level of personal hygiene
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Poor attendance or punctuality
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Secretive behaviour
- Covering parts of the body that they would not have previously.
- Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes.
- Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental (to be self-inflicted)
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

6. Managing disclosures

If a student makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgmental and reassuring.

Staff will focus on the student's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow our school's safeguarding policy and pass on all concerns to the DSL/Director of Student Welfare. All disclosures are recorded and stored in the student's confidential child protection file.

When making a record of a disclosure, staff will include:

- The full name of the member of staff who is making the record.
- The full name of the student(s) involved.

- The date, time and location of the disclosure
- The context in which the disclosure was made.
- Any questions asked or support offered by the member of staff.

7. Confidentiality

Staff will not promise a student that they will keep a disclosure secret – instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

A disclosure cannot be kept secret because:

- Being the sole person responsible for a student's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing.
- The support put in place for the student will be dependent on the member of staff being at school.
- Other staff members can share ideas on how to best support the student in question.

Staff should always share disclosures with at least one appropriate colleague. This will usually be the DSL/ Director of Student Welfare. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Before sharing information disclosed by a student with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the student and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will share
- Why they need to share that information.

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the student to share their information, but the safety of the student comes first.

Parents/carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern. In this case the BISL Child Protection and Safeguarding policy will be followed.

7.1 Process for managing confidentiality around disclosures

1. Student makes a disclosure.
2. Member of staff offers support.
3. Member of staff explains the issues around confidentiality and rationale for sharing a disclosure with DSL/ Director of Student Welfare.
4. Member of staff will attempt to get the student's consent to share – if no consent is given, explain to the student who the information will be shared with and why.
5. Member of staff will record the disclosure and share the information with the chosen elected member of staff.
6. The DSL/ Director of Student Welfare will inform the parent/carer (if appropriate)

7. Any other relevant members of staff or external professionals will be informed on a need-to-know basis.

8. Supporting students

8.1 Baseline support for all students

As part of our school's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all students, our school offers support to all students by:

- Raising awareness of mental health during assemblies, tutor time, PSHE and mental health awareness day/week, student wellbeing prefect involvement in presentations, projects and activities to promote wellbeing.
- Signposting all students to sources of support in school- posters of the BISL Wellbeing Team and Safeguarding Team.
- Having open discussions about mental health during lessons.
- Providing students with avenues to provide feedback/voice concerns on any elements of our school that is negatively impacting their mental health, such as Student Council and Student Leaders (including wellbeing prefects), and annual student survey.
- Appointing a Director of Student Welfare with a strategic oversight of our whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Offering pastoral support and monitoring of students through a network of Form Tutors, KS Leads and members of the Wellbeing Team with training in Mental Health First Aid.
- Making classrooms a safe space to discuss mental health and wellbeing through interventions such as:
 - Worry boxes.
 - Circle time/Form time (articles and discussions).
 - Activities, stories/literature and discussions promoting the importance of mental health and wellbeing; goal-setting for future aspirations/careers.
 - Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
 - A whole school House System to promote positive relationships and a sense of belonging.

8.2 Assessing what further support is needed

If a student is identified as having a mental health need, the Director of Student Welfare will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to assessing the support our school can provide, further to the baseline support detailed above in section 8.1.

Our school will offer support in cycles of:

- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems and assessing the student's mental health needs.

- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the student and their parents/carers. Agree on a Support Plan/individual educational plan (IEP), as required.
- Provide a range of interventions that have shown to be effective according to the student's needs.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered and adapting as needed.
- Ensure students have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, so that emotional, social, and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur.

Targeted Support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness, living in households experiencing domestic violence or those under the care of the social services. In such cases and where required, the Director of Student Welfare will liaise with the social services and families to ensure appropriate support for the student. Our Key Staff, as identified earlier in the policy, work hard to identify issues early, determine potential risks and provide early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

8.3 Internal mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a student will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our school includes:

- Flexible learning options e.g. reduced/adapted timetable; self-study arrangements.
- Guided study or learning support during lessons and examinations/assessments (individual access arrangements).
- Time-out pass – supported by a Key Staff member
- Individual sessions with a Key Staff member to support and monitor the student (daily/weekly), as required.
- Meetings with parents and students for further guidance/advice or referral for therapy/counselling with external agencies.

8.4 Support Plan/Individual Educational Plan (IEPs)

A student will be offered an individual educational plan (IEP) if they are identified as requiring intensive tailored mental health support to engage positively in education. IEPs are written in collaboration with the student (if appropriate), their parent/carer, and any other relevant professionals.

The student's IEP will contain the following details:

- The mental health issue (and its triggers, signs, symptoms and treatments).
- The student's needs resulting from the condition.
- Specific support for the student's educational, social and emotional needs.
- The level of support needed.
- Who will provide the support i.e. internal and external interventions required.
- What to do in an emergency .

The IEP is shared with the relevant staff in the school who need to be aware of the student condition.

8.5 Making external referrals

If a student's needs cannot be met by the internal offer our school provides, our school will make, or encourage parents/carers to make, a referral for external support.

A student could be referred to:

- Their doctor/paediatrician or other medical services.
- Local public and private counselling/therapy services.
- Voluntary public organisations/helplines.

9. Supporting and collaborating with parents/carers

We will work with parents/carers to support students' mental health by:

- Asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support.
- Informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child.
- Engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child.
- **Publishing the** Mental Health and Wellbeing policy on our website and providing access to online resources, if requested.
- Liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child.
- Providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g., voluntary organisations/helplines)
- Keeping parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE, and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

When informing parents/carers about any mental health concerns we have about their child, we will endeavour to do this face-to-face.

These meetings can be difficult, so our school will ensure that parents/carers are given time to reflect on what has been discussed, and that lines of communication are kept open at the end of the meeting.

A record of what was discussed, and action plans agreed upon in the meeting will be recorded and added to the student's confidential record.

If appropriate, an individual educational plan (IEP) will be created in collaboration with parents/carers (see section 8.4)

10. Supporting peers

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be very challenging for students. Students may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

We will offer support to all students impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- Strategies they can use to support their friends and safe sources of further information.
- Things they should avoid doing/saying, which may inadvertently cause upset.
- Warning signs to look out for.
- Signposting to sources of internal and external support, including how to access support for themselves.

11. Signposting

Sources of support are displayed around our school and linked to on our school website, so students and parents/carers are aware of how they can get help.

The Director of Student Welfare will be available to provide further information to students and parents/carers if they want to learn more about what support is available.

Within the school (noticeboards, classroom displays and posters around the school etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters) we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events. The aim of this is to ensure students and parents/carers understand:

- What help is available (in school and externally)
- Who it is aimed for
- How to access it
- Why it is important to ask for help or to report concerns about another student

12. Whole school approach to promoting mental health awareness

At BISL, we take a wholistic approach to mental health and well-being that endeavors to provide students with skills and knowledge for when difficulties arise through:

- Emphasis on the importance of the core school values.

- encouraging students to learn from their mistakes, to evaluate if it is increasing the wellbeing of students and giving them the resilience and the ability to successfully cope and manage with life's challenges.
- Peer educators programme (including wellbeing prefects, older yeargroups/students), which promotes the importance of mental health and wellbeing e.g. assembly presentations, organising wellbeing activities and events.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing events (World Mental Health Day in October and Mental Health Awareness week in May)

12.1 Mental health and wellbeing is part of the PSHE curriculum

- We follow the [PSHE Association Guidance teaching mental health and emotional wellbeing](#). The PSHE curriculum across the school includes knowledge, skills, language and attributes needed to promote positive mental health. Mental health and emotional wellbeing is also part of the statutory relationships (Primary) and RSE (Secondary), child protection and safeguarding education. In addition, discrete lessons focus specifically on mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Students learn:

- about factors that may impact their emotional wellbeing (e.g. fear of failure, body image, online environment, sexual pressures and other environmental/social/biological factors)
- simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests.
- strategies to challenge stigma, myths and misconceptions associated with help-seeking and mental health concerns.
- to recognise and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others' feelings.
- the importance of positive friendships and healthy relationships; about the impact of bullying, including offline and online, and the consequences of hurtful behaviour.
- to recognise positive things about themselves and their achievements; set goals to help achieve personal outcomes.
- strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as equipping them to support others who are facing challenges.
- where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including whom in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing (including issues arising online).

For more information, see our PSHE [curriculum plans](#) on the school website.

12.2 Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:

- Discussing mental health with students in order to break down stigma.
- Encouraging students to disclose when their mental health is deteriorating.

13. Training

All staff will be offered training so they:

- Have a good understanding of what students' mental health needs are.
- Know how to recognise warning signs of mental ill health.
- Know a clear process to follow if they identify a student in need of help.

All staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe. (Educare course: *Childrens' Mental Wellbeing for International Schools*). All staff are encouraged to visit <https://www.minded.org.uk/> learning portal which provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Additional training (FAA Level 1 award in awareness of First Aid for Mental Health) is undertaken by staff involved in the Wellbeing Team to better equip them with identifying and supporting students with mental health issues.

14. Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a student experiencing poor mental health can affect that staff member's own mental health and wellbeing. To help with this we will:

- Take seriously any mental health concerns.
- Help staff experiencing poor mental health themselves with any support/adjustments they may need, including how to seek further professional help.
- Create a pleasant and supportive work environment, which enables staff to raise concerns about their or colleague's wellbeing.
- Develop a support plan with the member of staff to identify the signs/triggers which suggest they may be struggling and highlight things that may help.

All staff are encouraged to seek advice or support in looking after and caring for themselves. Support and further information can be accessed on Young Minds(www.youngminds.org.uk) and Minded (www.minded.org.uk).

A list of support sources in Slovenia (including for mental health) can be found here:

<https://nisiokejpovejnaprej.si/kam-po-pomoc/seznam-virov-pomoci/>

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Principal, DSL/Director of Student Welfare every three years. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Regional Head of Schools on behalf of the School Board.

Prepared by: Katarina Zelezinger, Director of Student Welfare
January 2024.

Approved by: Mel Hitchcocks, Principal
January 2024.