

WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH POLICY 2026

Approved by:	Mel Hitchcocks	Last reviewed on:	August 2026
Date:	August 2026	Next review due by:	August 2029

1. Policy Statement

At BISL we are committed to promoting and protecting the **mental health, emotional wellbeing, and resilience** of all students and staff (whole-school wellbeing approach as best practice). We recognise that wellbeing is fundamental to **academic success, safeguarding, and personal development**.

This policy reflects:

- UK statutory and best practice guidance (e.g., *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, DfE mental health guidance)
- International frameworks (WHO)
- Slovenian systems of healthcare, counselling, and child protection

2. Aims

We aim to:

- Create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment
- Promote **positive mental health and resilience**
- Identify and support **early signs of mental distress**
- Provide **clear pathways to support**, internally and externally
- Ensure all staff understand their role in **pastoral care and safeguarding**
- Work effectively with **families and local services in Slovenia**

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Students (Primary and Secondary)
- Staff
- Parents/carers

It should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding C Child Protection Policy (aligned with KCSIE)
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- SEND / Inclusion Policy

4. Definitions

- **Mental health:** Emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing
- **Wellbeing:** A broader concept including happiness, resilience, and life satisfaction
- **Mental health difficulty:** Any concern affecting functioning (from mild anxiety to diagnosed conditions)

5. Whole-School Approach

We adopt a **tiered model**:

5.1 Universal - wellbeing is embedded through:

- **Curriculum and Prevention:** PSHE/Citizenship / Life Skills education (PSHE Association and ACT-Association for Citizenship Teaching programmes of study)
- Digital wellbeing and online safety
- Student leadership initiatives: Wellbeing Ambassadors programme and Student Council.
- Positive relationships and inclusive ethos
- Mental Health Awareness days/weeks, assemblies and events to promote wellbeing; Anti-bullying education, assemblies and events.
- Enrichment activities: the after-school programme including variety of areas such as sports, creative arts and community service; residential trips to promote social interaction and teamwork; and additional events (sustainability day, sports day)

5.2 Targeted (early intervention)

- Small group support or intervention (e.g. Mediation, conflict-resolution etc.)-
- Individual wellbeing sessions with Wellbeing Team of staff (including a school nurse, school psychologist, SEN support staff and staff trained to deliver early intervention sessions).
- Academic and pastoral mentoring (including Phase Leads, form-tutors/class teachers).

5.3 Specialist (high need)

- Referral to external services in Slovenia:
 - Centres for Social Work (CSD)
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (psychiatry units)
 - Private psychologists, therapists or counsellors
- Collaboration with medical professionals and safeguarding authorities

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Ensure compliance with UK and Slovene safeguarding frameworks
- Allocate resources for wellbeing provision
- Monitor impact and policy implementation

6.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Lead on safeguarding concerns involving mental health
- Liaise with Slovenian authorities (CSD, health services)
- Ensure staff training and reporting procedures

6.3 Wellbeing Lead / PSHE Lead/Director of Student Welfare

- Coordinate provision/delivery of support – student wellbeing team of staff and resources
- Maintain confidential records (Wellbeing Manager on iSAMS/CPOMS)
- Advise staff on support strategies; online courses, external workshops/events)
- Organise events to promote mental health and wellbeing (assemblies, fundraising, speakers from external organisations)
- Plan PSHE curriculum across the school, which includes areas on mental health and wellbeing.

6.4 Student Wellbeing Team of staff

- Allocated to support across the school
- Support organisation of *early intervention* through first contact-support and direction to further help or resources
- Organise and lead events to promote mental health and wellbeing;
- Support delivery of PSHE in their field of expertise.
- Liaise with the KS Phase Leaders and Form Tutors regarding students of concern via monthly meetings and tracking of students.

6.5 Teachers and Staff

- Promote positive classroom environments
- Identify early warning signs
- Record/log concerns and follow referral procedures
- Support students using adaptive teaching strategies

6.6 Students

- Encouraged to:

- Seek help when needed
- Support peers responsibly
- Participate in wellbeing initiatives

6.7 Parents/Carers

- Work in partnership with the school
- Engage in meetings and support plans
- Access local services where needed

7. Identification of Needs

Staff are trained to recognise indicators such as:

- Changes in mood, behaviour, or attendance
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Academic decline
- Physical symptoms (e.g., fatigue, headaches)
- Risk-taking or self-harm indicators

See Appendix for

- A. **Student Wellbeing Warning Signs Checklist** to help identify concerns early and respond appropriately.
- B. [Guidance \(Staff and Parents\): How to Talk to a Student You Are Concerned About](#)

All concerns are recorded using the school system: CPOMS

8. Support Pathways

8.1 Internal Support

- Form tutor / Class Teacher; KS Coordinators
- School Wellbeing Team (staff volunteers and the school nurse)
- SENCo / Inclusion team;
- Director of Student Welfare and Safeguarding team

8.2 External (Slovenia)

We work with:

- **Social Services** -Centri za socialno delo (CSD) – safeguarding and family support
- Primary healthcare centres (Zdravstveni domovi)
- Child and adolescent psychiatry services: [Centre for Mental Health of Children and Adolescents](#)
- Private specialist e.g. psychologist, therapists (where appropriate)
- Help organisations such as [Tom](#) (a free, anonymous and confidential helpline to support children and adolescents).

Emergency support:

- Slovenian emergency number: **112**

G. Safeguarding and Risk Management

Mental health concerns are treated within the school's safeguarding framework.

- Any disclosure of **self-harm, suicidal ideation, abuse, or neglect** is immediately referred to the DSL
- The school follows **UK safeguarding principles** while complying with **Slovene legal requirements**
- Risk assessments and safety plans are implemented where necessary

10. Pastoral Care and Monitoring of Wellbeing

Pastoral care is central to safeguarding, wellbeing, and student development. The school operates a structured and proactive pastoral system involving all staff.

10.1 Role of Form Tutors (Secondary) and Class Teachers (Primary)

- Build strong relationships with students
 - Support student resilience and routines
 - Monitor student attendance and wellbeing daily
 - Deliver parts of the PSHE curriculum
 - Identify early concerns and liaise with teachers, KS Coordinators or other key staff
 - Record concerns as per the school wellbeing/safeguarding procedures
 - Communicate with parents regularly.

10.2 Role of Phase Leaders

- Track and monitor behaviour and attendance daily

- Analyse trends and identify risks using the step-system
- Lead interventions and communicate with parents
- Support Form tutors/Class teacher and other staff
- Liaise with safeguarding/wellbeing/SEN/Inclusion teams as necessary
- Lead Pastoral meetings with Form tutors/Class Teachers

10.3 Whole Staff Role

- Record concerns as per school procedures and log via the school system
- Share information with relevant key staff involved in interventions
- Attend wellbeing team meetings – where appropriate.
- Support interventions
- Maintain vigilance
- Promote inclusive environment

11. Online Safety (E-Safety) and Digital Wellbeing

The school is committed to promoting a safe and positive digital environment for all members of its community. Online safety (e-safety) forms an integral part of the

school's safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. The increasing use of digital technologies, social media, and online platforms presents both educational benefits

and potential risks to children and young people, including exposure to harmful

content, cyberbullying, exploitation, excessive screen use, and other forms of unsafe or unhealthy online behaviour.

11.1 Aims

The school aims to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of students in both physical and digital environments.
- Educate students in the safe, responsible, and balanced use of digital technologies.
- Raise awareness of the risks associated with online activity and how to respond to concerns.
- Support students, families, and staff in developing healthy digital habits and wellbeing.

11.2 Preventive Education and Awareness

The school will:

- Deliver age-appropriate online safety education through the curriculum,

including topics such as privacy, consent, cyberbullying, digital footprints, misinformation, and responsible communication.

- Provide regular guidance and updates to students, staff, and parents regarding emerging online risks and trends.
- Encourage open dialogue so that students feel confident reporting concerns or seeking help.

11.3. Responding to Concerns – see Online Safety Policy

Any concerns relating to online safety or digital behaviour will be treated in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate under the school's behaviour policy. This includes:

- Prompt reporting and recording of concerns.
- Appropriate support for students affected by online incidents.
- Engagement with parents/carers where necessary.
- Referral to external agencies or services when additional support is required.

11.4 External Support and Guidance

Recognising that some online behaviours—such as excessive screen use, gaming dependence, or harmful digital habits—may require specialised support, the school will provide direction to trusted external organisations. These may include:

- **LogOut Centre for Digital Wellbeing** (About us » Logout.org / Internet Addiction Treatment Help Centre), the first specialised help centre focusing on various risky online behaviours. The centre offers treatment, support, assistance, information, education, and awareness aimed at promoting balanced and healthy use of digital media and screen technology, particularly for children and adolescents.

The school will actively signpost students and parents/carers to such organisations where appropriate, to ensure access to expert advice and intervention beyond the school setting.

11. 5 Partnership with Parents and Carers

The school recognises that effective online safety depends on strong collaboration with parents and carers. The school will:

- Provide guidance on parental controls, monitoring tools, and safe online practices at home.
- Offer workshops, resources, or communications to support families in managing digital wellbeing.
- Encourage parents to seek support early if they have concerns about their child's online activity.

11. 6 Promoting Digital Wellbeing

The school encourages a balanced approach to technology use, promoting:

- Healthy screen time habits.
- Positive online engagement.
- Awareness of the impact of digital technology on mental health and wellbeing.

12. Staff Wellbeing

We prioritise staff mental health through:

- Workload management and flexible practices (scheduled wellbeing time)
- Professional development (including Peer-Coaching, access to Leadership Matters for middle and senior leaders, National College and TES Develop)
- Staff activities to promote wellbeing (e.g. TRE-Inset; socials for staff);
- A comprehensive middle leader structure to provide support for school related issues such as workload management and the behaviour and wellbeing of students.

13. Cultural and International Considerations

As an international school:

- We respect diverse cultural attitudes toward mental health
- Provide multilingual support where possible
- Ensure culturally sensitive communication with families

14. Confidentiality

- Information is shared on a **need-to-know basis**
- Students are informed when confidentiality cannot be maintained (e.g., safeguarding risk)

15. Training

All staff receive:

- Safeguarding training (aligned with KCSIE)
- Mental health awareness training- how to recognise signs/indicators and identify needs.
- Guidance on referral procedures

Wellbeing Team staff have received training in:

- First-Aid Mental Health Training
- Strategies for early intervention and targeted support

Specialist staff (Director of Student Welfare/DSL) receive advanced training in:

- Counselling approaches
- Child Protection and Safeguarding

16. Monitoring and Review

The policy is reviewed annually and informed by:

- Student voice and
- Staff feedback
- Safeguarding data and other assessment data (e.g. PASS)
- UK and Slovene regulatory updates

17. Key References

UK:

- Department for Education: *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*
- NHS C Public Health England guidance

Slovenia:

- Ministry of Health (Ministrstvo za zdravje)
- Centres for Social Work (CSD)
- National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ)- [Improving mental health in school-](#)
Guidance for teachers and others working with children and young people.

Appendices

A. Student Wellbeing Warning Signs Checklist

Purpose: Early identification of students who may need support

Use: Teachers, pastoral staff, and parents

Approach: Look for *patterns*, *sudden changes*, and *clusters of signs* rather than isolated incidents

Early Years (Ages 3–5)

Emotional & Behavioural Signs

- Frequent, intense tantrums beyond typical age expectations
- Sudden clinginess or separation distress (especially if new)
- Withdrawn play (avoids interaction, prefers being alone consistently)
- Regression (e.g., toileting accidents, baby talk after being independent)

Social Signs

- Difficulty engaging in play with peers
- Limited eye contact or response to name (when previously present)
- Aggressive play or repeated conflicts

Communication & Expression

- Limited ability to express basic needs/emotions verbally
- Repetitive fears (e.g., fear of school, specific people, or routine activities)

Physical Indicators

- Frequent unexplained stomach aches or fatigue
- Changes in sleep patterns reported by parents

Cultural/Context Notes

- Adjustment challenges common for children new to language or culture
- Temporary quietness or reluctance may be normal during transition periods

Concern arises when behaviour persists or worsens over time

Primary (Ages 6–11)

Emotional Signs

- Persistent sadness, irritability, or mood swings
- Excessive worries (school, friendships, performance)
- Low confidence (“I can’t do anything right”)

Behavioural Signs

- Avoidance of school or specific activities
- Sudden drop in participation or motivation
- Increased dependency on adults beyond developmental expectations

Social Signs

- Loss of friendships or ongoing conflict with peers
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Being frequently excluded or targeted (possible bullying indicator)

Learning & Engagement

- Noticeable decline in academic performance
- Difficulty concentrating or completing tasks
- Perfectionism or distress over mistakes

Physical Indicators

- Regular complaints of headaches or stomach aches
- Noticeable changes in eating or sleeping patterns

Cultural/Context Notes

- Students from high-achievement cultures may hide stress or overwork themselves
- Language barriers may appear as disengagement rather than difficulty

Look for mismatch between ability and performance/engagement

Secondary (Ages 11–16)

Emotional Signs

- Ongoing low mood, irritability, or emotional numbness
- Heightened sensitivity to criticism
- Expressions of hopelessness or feeling “stuck”

Behavioural Signs

- Risk-taking behaviour (e.g., rule-breaking, impulsivity)
- Sudden change in routines, habits, or personality
- Increased secrecy or withdrawal from family/school life

Social Signs

- Shifts in friendship groups (especially sudden or isolating)
- Social withdrawal or excessive time alone
- Conflict with peers or teachers

Academic Indicators

- Sharp decline in performance or attendance
- Lack of motivation or disengagement
- Missing assignments or avoiding responsibilities

Physical & Lifestyle Signs

- Changes in sleep (insomnia or excessive sleeping)
- Changes in appetite or noticeable weight fluctuation
- Signs of self-neglect (hygiene, appearance)

Digital Behaviour

- Excessive online activity or withdrawal into gaming/social media
- Distress linked to online interactions

Cultural/Context Notes

- Stigma around mental health may lead to suppression of emotions
- Pressure related to exams, expectations, or relocation
- Students may express distress through behaviour rather than words

Key red flag: significant change from the student's baseline functioning

Sixth Form (Ages 16–18)

Emotional Signs

- Persistent anxiety (future, exams, university)
- Feelings of overwhelm or burnout
- Expressions of hopelessness or lack of purpose

Behavioural Signs

- Withdrawal from previously valued activities
- Lack of organisation or inability to manage responsibilities
- Increased absenteeism or lateness

Social Signs

- Isolation from peers or support networks
- Relationship difficulties or conflicts

Academic Indicators

- Sudden underperformance despite past capability
- Avoidance of deadlines or giving up on tasks
- Perfectionism leading to paralysis

Risk Indicators (Require Immediate Attention)

- Talking about wanting to give up or disappear
- Self-harm behaviours or references
- Substance misuse (alcohol, drugs)

Physical Signs

- Chronic fatigue, sleep problems
- Noticeable stress-related symptoms (panic, headaches)

Cultural/Context Notes

- Transition stress (university, moving countries)
- Cultural expectations (family pressure, career pathways)
- Reluctance to seek help due to stigma or independence expectations

Older students may mask distress—listen to subtle cues

Cross-Age “High Concern” Indicators

Immediate follow-up required

- Talks about self-harm or suicide
- Significant personality change
- Sudden withdrawal from all social contact

- Ongoing bullying (victim or aggressor)
- Signs of abuse or neglect
- Persistent refusal to attend

school In diverse settings:

- Behaviour may reflect **cultural adjustment**, not difficulty
- Emotional expression varies across cultures (some students internalise distress)
- Major transitions (relocation, language changes) increase vulnerability

Consistency, relationship-building, and early communication are key to effective support.

B. Guidance (Staff and Parents): How to Talk to a Student You Are Concerned About

Supporting a student begins with how you approach them. The goal is to help them feel safe, respected, and understood, not pressured or judged.

When to Act

- Notice **changes** in behaviour, mood, or engagement
- Concerns lasting **2+ weeks** or escalating
- Trust your professional judgement

1. Prepare the Conversation

Before you speak to the

student:

- Choose a **private, quiet space** (not in front of peers)
- Ensure you have **enough time** (don't rush or fit it between tasks)
- Be calm and emotionally neutral
- Be clear on what you've observed (specific behaviours, not assumptions)

Think: "I'm here to understand, not to fix immediately."

2. How to Approach the student:

Start with **observations**, not accusations or interpretations.

Helpful language

- "I've noticed you've been quieter than usual recently..."
- "You don't seem like yourself lately—how are things going?"
- "I've seen you finding it hard to focus in class—what's been going on?"

- “I just wanted to check in with you.”

Avoid

- “What’s wrong with you?”
- “Why are you behaving like this?”
- “You need to explain this.”

3. Listen Actively (More Than You Speak)

The most powerful support is **feeling heard**.

- Use silence and patience
- Show you are listening (nod, calm tone)

Say:

- “That sounds really difficult.”
- “Tell me more about that.”

Reflect what you hear

- “It sounds like you’ve been feeling overwhelmed.”
- “So, you’re finding it hard to keep up with everything?”

This shows understanding without judgement

4. Validate Feelings (Without Judging or

Fixing) You don’t need to agree—you need to

acknowledge. **Helpful language**

- “That makes sense given what you’re dealing with.”
- “I can see why that would be upsetting.”
- “Thanks for telling me—that’s not always easy.”

Avoid

- “It’s not that bad.”
- “You’ll be fine.”
- “Others have it worse.”

Validation builds trust and reduces defensiveness

5. Go at the Student’s Pace

Some students will open immediately; others won't.

If they are hesitant:

- "That's okay—you don't have to share everything right now."
- "We can talk another time if you prefer."
- "I'm here whenever you're ready."

Respecting boundaries increases likelihood of future openness

6. Ask Open, Low-Pressure

Questions Encourage sharing without

interrogation. **Examples**

- “What’s been the hardest part recently?”
- “When did you start noticing this?”
- “What usually helps when things feel like this?”
- “Who do you feel comfortable talking to?”

Avoid rapid-fire or “why” questions

- “Why did you do that?” (can feel accusing)

Keep tone curious, not investigative

7. Reassure Safety and Support

Students need to know they are not alone—but also understand limits of confidentiality.

Say

- “You’re not in trouble—I just want to support you.”
- “We’ll figure this out together.”
- “I may need to share this with someone who can help us support you—but I’ll explain that to you.”

Be transparent: **never promise to keep serious concerns secret**

8. Use Supportive Non-Verbal Communication

Your body language matters as much as your

words. **Helpful gestures**

- Sit at the same level (not standing over them)
- Open posture (uncrossed arms)
- Calm tone and pace of speech
- Give appropriate personal space

Cultural awareness

- Eye contact norms differ across cultures
- Some students may prefer less direct emotional expression
- Adapt your approach to the student's comfort

9. Be Culturally Sensitive

In international contexts:

- Some students may not have language to express emotions
- Mental health may carry stigma in their family/culture
- Emotional expression styles vary (e.g., indirect, reserved)

Helpful strategies

- Use simple, clear language
- Allow alternative expression: “Would it help to write it down or draw it?”
- Avoid assumptions about family or culture

10. End the Conversation Supportively

Even if nothing is fully resolved, **how you close matters.**

Helpful closing language

- “Thank you for talking to me today.”
- “Let’s check in again soon.”
- “If things feel difficult, you can come and find me.”
- “We’ll make sure you get the support you need.”

Follow up—this builds trust and consistency

RED FLAGS (Immediate Action)

If a Student Says Something Concerning, stay calm and respond directly:

- “I’m really glad you told me.”
- “This sounds important—I want to make sure you’re safe.”
- “Let’s get you some support.”

Do not leave the student alone if you believe there is risk
Follow **safeguarding procedures** immediately

Key Principles to Remember

- Connection before correction
- Listening over solving
- Curiosity over assumption
- Consistency builds trust

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

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Approved by: Mel Hitchcocks, Principal, August 2026.

Review: August 2029.

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