



# 7Hills International School

ADVENTURE IN LEARNING

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING POLICY

<b>Reviewed:</b>	December 2025
<b>Next Review Due:</b>	July 2026
<b>Applies To:</b>	Whole School
<b>Owner:</b>	Head of School
<b>Approved By:</b>	Board of Directors

### Mission, Vision and Values

#### Mission

To inspire our children to reach their full potential by fostering curiosity and an interest in learning, awakening their minds and illuminating their world.

#### Vision

To create an affordable international secondary school with a high standard of education where children learn through practical and project-based work. To develop our students' moral and intellectual capacity, and to encourage creativity and adaptability.

#### Aim

An education that is broad, balanced and challenging, with an emphasis on developing strong connections to our host country, Uganda.

#### Values

Desire for lifelong learning; an ability to adapt; be innovative and reflective thinkers; open minded, and empathetic while achieving high academic success according to individual potential.



Proud to deliver



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## 1. Policy Statement

At 7Hills International School (7Hills), we recognise that positive mental health and emotional well-being are essential foundations for learning, safeguarding, healthy relationships and personal growth. Well-being influences how students think, feel, learn, communicate and respond to challenge. It also affects how staff work, collaborate and contribute to the wider life of the school.

As an international school community, we are committed to creating an environment in which students and staff feel safe, respected, supported and valued. We believe that strong relationships, a sense of belonging and a culture of care are central to promoting resilience, confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing at 7Hills are supported not only through specialist intervention, but through the daily experiences of school life including pastoral care, positive relationships, physical activity, student voice, inclusive classroom practice and a strong community culture.

This policy outlines the school's approach to promoting positive mental health, responding to concerns appropriately and ensuring that students and staff can access support where needed.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the 7Hills International School community, including:

- students in Years 7–13
- teaching and non-teaching staff
- pastoral and safeguarding teams
- counsellors and external support professionals
- volunteers and visiting staff
- parents and carers where appropriate

The policy applies to mental health and emotional wellbeing concerns arising both within and beyond the school environment where these may affect student welfare, safeguarding or participation in school life. This policy should be read alongside the following school documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Behaviour and Conduct Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND and Inclusion Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Medical Needs and Health Care Policy
- Attendance Policy

## 3. Aims of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing that is proactive, supportive and aligned with safeguarding responsibilities. The school aims to:

- promote a culture where mental health can be discussed openly and respectfully

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- support early identification of students who may be struggling emotionally or psychologically
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities and referral pathways
- provide appropriate levels of support and intervention
- maintain clear safeguarding and confidentiality procedures
- work collaboratively with families and external professionals
- promote resilience, self-awareness and healthy coping strategies
- support staff wellbeing and professional sustainability
- ensure that wellbeing remains central to the culture and daily life of the school

## 4. Guiding Principles

At 7Hills, we recognise that mental health exists on a continuum and that students and staff may experience periods of emotional difficulty at different stages of life. Our approach is guided by the following principles:

**Early Identification** - Concerns should be recognised and addressed as early as possible before difficulties escalate.

**Compassion and Dignity** - Students and staff experiencing mental health difficulties should be treated with empathy, respect and sensitivity.

**Safeguarding** - Mental health concerns may become safeguarding concerns where there is risk of harm to self or others. Safeguarding responsibilities will always take priority.

**Inclusion** - All students should feel safe, included and supported regardless of background, learning need or personal circumstance.

**Partnership** - Effective support relies upon strong collaboration between school, families and external professionals where appropriate.

**Professional Boundaries** - Support should always remain appropriate, ethical and professionally managed.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

Supporting mental health and wellbeing is a shared responsibility across the school community. However, some members of staff have particular responsibilities within the school's wellbeing and safeguarding systems.

### 5.1 Head of School

The Head of School provides strategic oversight of the school's whole-school wellbeing approach and ensures appropriate systems, staffing and resources are in place to support implementation of this policy.

### 5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

- assessing safeguarding thresholds
- overseeing safeguarding referrals and risk management
- maintaining confidential safeguarding records
- supporting staff where safeguarding concerns overlap with mental health concerns

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## 5.3 Wellbeing and Mental Health Lead

The Wellbeing and Mental Health Lead coordinates the school's pastoral and wellbeing support systems and may:

- oversee internal interventions
- coordinate referrals and support plans
- support staff managing vulnerable students
- monitor wellbeing trends and emerging concerns

## 5.4 SEN / Inclusion Coordinator

The SEN and Inclusion Coordinator supports students where mental health concerns overlap with learning needs, neurodiversity, inclusion or additional support requirements.

## 5.5 School Counsellor and Pastoral Staff

Pastoral and counselling staff provide emotional support, mentoring, guidance and intervention where appropriate. They may also contribute to care planning, reintegration support and external referral processes.

## 5.6 All Staff

All staff are expected to:

- promote a positive and respectful classroom environment
- remain alert to signs of distress or emotional difficulty
- respond calmly and appropriately to concerns
- maintain professional boundaries
- report concerns through the appropriate safeguarding or pastoral channels

## 6. Promoting Positive Mental Health and Well-Being

At 7Hills, wellbeing is promoted through the wider culture and daily life of the school rather than through isolated programmes alone. The school seeks to promote positive wellbeing through:

- positive and respectful relationships
- strong pastoral systems
- opportunities for student voice and participation
- physical activity and active lifestyles
- PSHE and wellbeing education
- inclusive classroom environments
- opportunities for creativity, leadership and collaboration
- supportive behaviour systems
- celebration of achievement and personal growth

The school recognises the importance of balance between academic challenge, wellbeing and personal development.

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## 7. Early Warning Signs

Staff should remain alert to changes in behaviour, presentation or functioning that may indicate a student is struggling emotionally or psychologically. Possible indicators may include:

- withdrawal or social isolation
- changes in attendance or punctuality
- decline in academic engagement
- persistent anxiety, sadness or irritability
- emotional numbness or lack of motivation
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- unexplained physical complaints
- self-harm indicators or injuries
- risk-taking behaviour
- substance misuse concerns
- talking about hopelessness, self-harm or suicide

These signs do not automatically indicate a mental health condition, however all concerns should be taken seriously and reported appropriately.

## 8. Graduated Support Pathway

7Hills follows a graduated and proportionate approach to mental health support.

### 8.1 Stage 1 – Universal Support

All students benefit from the school's universal wellbeing provision, including:

- pastoral mentoring
- wellbeing education
- tutor and homeroom support
- positive classroom culture
- wellbeing check-ins
- opportunities for student voice
- co-curricular participation and physical activity

### 8.2 Stage 2 – Targeted Internal Support

Where concerns become more persistent or noticeable, additional support may include:

- short-term mentoring or counselling
- pastoral monitoring
- temporary adjustments to workload
- wellbeing support plans
- restorative conversations
- targeted emotional support

## 8.3 Stage 3 – Individual Support and Care Planning

Where concerns are more significant or ongoing, the school may implement an Individual Care or Support Plan. These plans may include:

- identified needs and triggers
- agreed support strategies
- safeguarding considerations
- communication arrangements
- responsibilities of staff involved
- review dates and monitoring procedures

Plans are developed collaboratively with families and external professionals where appropriate.

## 8.4 Stage 4 – External Referral

Where school-based support is insufficient or risk escalates, the school may recommend or facilitate referral to external support services. This may include:

- counselling providers
- psychologists or therapists
- paediatric or medical services
- safeguarding agencies
- specialist NGOs or wellbeing organisations
- emergency medical services where appropriate

The school will work supportively with families throughout referral processes.

## 9. Acute Mental Health Crisis Response

A mental health crisis may include:

- suicidal ideation or intent
- serious self-harm
- psychosis or hallucinations
- severe emotional distress
- behaviour presenting immediate risk to self or others

In such situations, the priority will always be immediate safety and safeguarding.

Staff must:

- Ensure the student is supervised and safe.
- Contact the DSL, Wellbeing Lead or senior leader immediately.
- Seek medical assistance where required.
- Inform parents or carers unless safeguarding concerns prevent this.
- Record the concern factually and confidentially.
- Follow safeguarding procedures and external advice where appropriate.

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Following any crisis, the school will provide reintegration and follow-up support to help the student return safely and successfully to school life.

## 10. Managing Disclosures

Students may choose to disclose concerns relating to mental health, emotional wellbeing, self-harm or personal difficulties to trusted adults within school. When receiving a disclosure, staff should:

- remain calm and non-judgemental
- listen carefully and respectfully
- avoid excessive questioning
- reassure the student appropriately
- explain the limits of confidentiality
- record concerns factually
- report concerns promptly through safeguarding or pastoral systems

Staff must never promise secrecy where there are concerns relating to safety or wellbeing.

## 11. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The school recognises the importance of dignity, privacy and confidentiality when managing wellbeing concerns. Information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis and in line with safeguarding responsibilities and professional judgement.

Parents and carers will normally be informed where concerns arise. However, information may be withheld temporarily where doing so is necessary to protect a student from harm or where safeguarding advice indicates otherwise.

## 12. Working with Parents and Carers

7Hills believes that strong partnerships between school and home are essential in supporting student wellbeing. The school will aim to:

- communicate concerns sensitively and professionally
- involve parents appropriately in support planning
- provide guidance and signposting where appropriate
- maintain open and respectful communication
- recognise cultural and family contexts

Where concerns are significant, meetings may be arranged to discuss support strategies, referrals or reintegration planning.

## 13. Supporting Peers

The school recognises that mental health difficulties may also affect peers, friendship groups and the wider student community. Where appropriate, the school may provide:

- guidance on how to support friends safely
- reassurance and pastoral support

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- opportunities for discussion and reflection
- reminders about help-seeking and reporting concerns

Students will be encouraged to support one another appropriately while recognising that serious concerns must always be shared with trusted adults.

## 14. Staff Well-Being

7Hills recognises that staff wellbeing is essential to maintaining a healthy, effective and sustainable school community. The school is committed to fostering a professional culture characterised by:

- respectful communication
- supportive leadership
- professional trust
- collaboration and collegiality
- manageable systems and expectations where possible
- recognition of workload and wellbeing balance

Supporting students experiencing emotional distress can sometimes affect the wellbeing of staff. Staff are therefore encouraged to seek support where needed and to speak openly with line managers or senior leaders if wellbeing concerns begin to affect their professional or personal functioning.

The school may provide:

- wellbeing conversations and support
- safeguarding or pastoral supervision where appropriate
- professional development relating to wellbeing
- opportunities for reflection and collaboration
- referral or signposting to external support where appropriate

## 15. Staff Training and Professional Development

The school will provide appropriate training to ensure staff:

- understand their safeguarding responsibilities
- can recognise early warning signs
- understand referral pathways and procedures
- feel confident responding appropriately to concerns
- understand professional boundaries relating to wellbeing support

Training may form part of induction, safeguarding updates, professional development days and pastoral briefings.

## 16. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of School, safeguarding team and relevant pastoral leaders. Review processes may consider:

- safeguarding and wellbeing trends

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- referral and intervention data
- student, parent and staff feedback
- changes in safeguarding guidance or legislation
- CIS accreditation expectations
- school improvement priorities

The school reserves the right to amend this policy in response to emerging needs or operational developments.

## **17. Distribution and Access**

This policy is available to staff and families through the school website and internal systems. Printed copies may be requested from reception.