



KING EDWARD VI HANDSWORTH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Suicide-Safer School Policy 2024-25

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King Edward VI Handsworth Mission Statement

We celebrate diversity and value fairness and equal treatment for everyone at the school regardless of their race, age, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation or disability. We promote equality through our rich and diverse curriculum, equipping students with the skills, knowledge and understanding to succeed in a diverse world outside and beyond school. We challenge discrimination in all its forms so that all members of the school community feel safe and valued.

Unconscious Bias Key definitions:

There are two types of biases:

Conscious bias (also known as **explicit** bias) is an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.

Unconscious bias (also known as **implicit** bias). It is unintended and subtle, based on unconscious thought. People may have unfair beliefs about others but not be aware of them. Typically unconscious bias happens involuntarily without any awareness or intentional control. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups.

Under the 2010 Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against people because of nine areas termed in the legislation as protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

How to overcome unconscious bias

- Be aware of unconscious bias.
- Don't rush decisions, rather take your time and consider issues properly.

- Justify decisions by evidence and record the reasons for your decisions
- Ensure that everyone knows what kind of behaviour is expected of them.
- Ensure that everyone knows how to report prejudice related incidents.
- Encourage people to work with a wider range of people and get to know them as individuals.
- Focus on the positive behaviour of people and not negative stereotypes.
- Employers should implement policies and procedures which limit the influence of individual characteristics and preferences.

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AIMS AND VALUES

King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls will endeavour to provide an environment where every student can feel:

- safe;
- healthy;
- able to enjoy and achieve;
- able to contribute to future economic well-being; and
- able to make a positive contribution.

This policy will contribute to the protection and safeguarding of our students and promote their welfare by:

- Adopting a whole school approach to suicide-safety;
- Ensuring that safeguarding underpins all aspects of this policy development in school;
- Suicide-safety will be addressed through the curriculum in an age-appropriate way;
- Alerting staff to the signs and indicators that all may not be well;
- Developing staff awareness of the risks and vulnerabilities our students face;
- Addressing concerns at the earliest possible stage.

This means that in our school we will:

- Identify and protect all pupils, especially those identified as vulnerable students;
- Identify individual needs as early as possible; gain the voice and lived experience of vulnerable students and design plans to address those needs; and

- Work in partnership with students, parents/carers and other agencies.

OUR VISION FOR WELLBEING

As a school, in order to prioritise and be committed to the wellbeing of all members of our school community, staff and students are committed to the development of resilience through connectedness, kindness and compassion.

Through the values, ethos and culture we advocate every day in line with our school vision, we aim to develop and nurture students and colleagues with sensitivity and mutual respect.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls is aware that suicide is the leading cause of death in young people and that we play a vital role in helping to prevent young suicide. We want to make sure that students at our school are as suicide-safe as possible and that our governors, parents and carers, teaching staff, support staff, students and other key stakeholders are aware of our commitment to be a Suicide-safer school.

School will therefore:

- Have conversations and listen to children and their families as early as possible.
- Understand the child's lived experience.
- Work collaboratively to improve children's life experience.
- Be open, honest and transparent with families in our approach.
- Empower families by working with them.
- Work in a way that builds on the families' strengths.
- Build resilience in families to overcome difficulties.

If school feels a multi-disciplinary approach is required, the DSL/Deputy, with parent/carer consent, must consider liaising with other agencies and complete an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. If required to, all staff will support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner.

SUICIDE AND CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

Emergency CAMHS referrals have increased by 53% in three years ([The Royal College of Psychiatrists](#)). The increase means more than 600 children with a mental illness a week are deteriorating to such a state that they have reached crisis point. We're seeing the highest suicide rate in 30 years for school aged children.

King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls acknowledges that:

- **Suicidal thoughts are common**
We acknowledge that thoughts of suicide are common among young people.
- **Suicide is complex**
We believe that every suicide is tragic. There are a number of contributory factors surrounding a suicide and the reasons are often complex and individual to that person. However, we believe that there are lessons that may be learned from each death that may help prevent future deaths.
- **Stigma inhibits learning – stigma can kill**
We recognise that the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness can be both a barrier to seeking help and a barrier to offering help. King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls is dedicated to tackling suicide stigma through our PSHCE curriculum, assemblies (where appropriate) and sharing information with parents. In our language and in our working relationships, we will promote open, sensitive talk that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos.

- **Suicide is everyone's business**
As a school, we recognise that students may seek out someone who they trust with their concerns and worries. We want to facilitate the reporting of any risks or concerns.
- **Safety is important**
We want to support our students, sometimes working in partnership with family, caregivers, external agencies and other professionals where this may enhance suicide-safety.
- **Suicide is a difficult thing to talk about**
We know that a student who is suicidal may find it very difficult to make their feelings known and speak openly about suicide. We have key adults in school who are specifically and regularly suicide-safety trained and who are able to identify when a pupil may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.
- **Talking about suicide does not create or increase risk**
We will provide our students with opportunities to speak openly about their worries with people who are ready, willing and able to support them.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Suicidal ideations (SI), often called suicidal thoughts or ideas, is a broad term used to describe a range of contemplations, wishes, and preoccupations with death and suicide. **Passive suicidal ideation** should not be taken lightly. It's impossible to predict who's likely to act on these thoughts. That's why anyone who expresses passive suicidal ideation should be considered at risk for suicide. While someone might admit to wishing to die, they may deny making plans to do so. Warning signs that suicidal ideation has become **active suicide ideation** include giving away possessions, getting affairs in order, and saying goodbye to loved ones.

Risk factors, whilst not exhaustive, may include:

- Offline and online bullying;
- Over emphasis on academic success (and fear of failure);
- Lack of access to professional mental health care;
- Addiction;
- Depression or other mood disorder;
- A history of suicide in the family;
- A history of trauma or abuse;
- People who are marginalised/discriminated against;
- Lack of support network;
- A chronic illness and/or chronic pain;
- Previous suicide attempt.

PAPYRUS' TEN MYTHS AND FACTS SURROUNDING SUICIDE

- **Myth one:** *If someone has a 'good' life, they can't feel suicidal.*
Anyone at any time in their life can experience thoughts of suicide, regardless of their situation.
- **Myth two:** *If you are having thoughts of suicide, you must be 'mentally ill.'*
Many people who experience thoughts of suicide do not have a diagnosed mental health condition.
- **Myth three:** *If I talk about suicide, it might put the idea in someone's head.*
Having safe conversations around suicide will not make someone suicidal, instead it lets them know you are a person they can reach out to for support.
- **Myth four:** *Men don't reach out for support with thoughts of suicide.*
We hear from lots of men who have bravely reached out for support.
- **Myth five:** *People bereaved by suicide don't want to talk about their loved one.*
Most bereaved people still want to share their memories of the loved one they have lost, and celebrate their lives.

- **Myth six:** *It's obvious when someone is experiencing thoughts of suicide.*
There are lots of different signs that someone may be suicidal, some are less easy to spot so it is always best to ask directly.
- **Myth seven:** *People who say they are suicidal are only 'attention seeking'.*
Telling someone you are experiencing suicidal thoughts takes a huge amount of courage and should always be taken seriously.
- **Myth eight:** *There's a set time on grieving a loved one lost to suicide.*
Bereavement is very personal to the individual and their journey is unique to them. This journey should be respected.
- **Myth nine:** *Suicide won't affect me.*
Suicide doesn't discriminate – it can affect anyone at any time.
- **Myth ten:** *Only the family or friends of someone who's died by suicide can be impacted by their death.*
No matter how close you were to the person who died – if you need support with your feelings, they are valid and you are deserving of that care.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Our Senior Leadership Team will lead procedures as outlined in the staff section of this policy, in the event of a suicide, with support from members of the Local Governing Body or Foundation where appropriate.
- The Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Senior Leader responsible for Staff CPD should be aware of who has received general suicide awareness education and those who have received Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).
- Relevant staff will work together where students have thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviours and will communicate the information with parents in order for them to keep their child safe.

Prevention

We know that early intervention can have a significant and lasting positive effect on the life of a young person and those around them. Beyond is a youth mental health charity tackling the growing mental health crisis affecting young people in the UK. They address the lack of access to support and create opportunities for early and personalised interventions using their expertise and resources to help those working with young people to access the right mental health support for those in their care.

[Beyond's national directory](#) offers comprehensive coverage of services, from 1:1 counselling to art therapy, ensuring individual needs are met. There are over 300 providers listed and each one is vetted by a dedicated clinician.

Suicide Intervention Team

King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls has a named individual, Miss J Glendenning, who is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of this policy.

We have a Suicide Intervention Team whose members understand this policy and are trained in Suicide Prevention. This team of people has undertaken [Suicide Intervention Training](#) and school will endeavour for at least one trained person to be on duty during our opening hours. The Suicide Intervention Team will be the point of escalation for any concerns about a student or young person. The Suicide Intervention Team will keep confidential records on CPOMS of students at risk of suicide to provide some continuity of care within the intervention model. These staff are:

- Miss Glendenning (DSL);
- Mr Heppel (Deputy DSL);
- Mrs Danks (First Aider).

Pastoral staff listed above and any Senior or Pastoral Leaders who have been trained will create a [Suicide-Safety Plan](#) with students who have been identified as being at risk of suicide. We will endeavour to ensure that all staff are suicide aware through staff training so that they know how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the DSL/Deputy DSLs.

We will endeavour to ensure all students are suicide aware through PSHCE lessons and where appropriate form time activities/assemblies. These opportunities should equip our students to know how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to staff. We want to create a community where suicide is no longer taboo and young people feel able to tell someone if they feel suicidal and ask for help.

King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls will support any Foundation reviews of Mental Health and Wellbeing, which may include Suicide-Safety. This will ensure our suicide prevention work is integral to that of our wider community. It can also help identify and address possible patterns of suicidal behaviours across the Foundation. We will however take into consideration advice from Papyrus which states that we should be aware that statistical anomalies may occur from one year to the next, especially when comparing different communities or geographic areas. We will look at timeframes of three or more years to identify significant patterns.

In conjunction with Martina Vosey, Health and Safety Officer, the yearly risk assessment considers the physical safety of our environment including the removal of potential ligature points, restricting access to places which facilitate jumping, and securely storing harmful substances.

We recognise that the need to protect someone's life must be balanced against the need to protect their confidentiality. We therefore routinely ask all students over 18 for permission to share any serious concerns for their welfare with an emergency contact of their choice. Should any student who is known to have suffered from suicidal thoughts leave school unexpectedly for whatever reason, we will endeavour to inform their emergency contact of their vulnerable state.

We recognise that students may experience periods of poor mental health while attending our school. We will endeavour to put in place mechanisms which allow staff (that have regular interaction with the student) to be able to flag or review any concerns about individual students including suicidal thoughts. Ideally this will be flagged immediately using CPOMS. Students that are flagged on CPOMS will be reviewed regularly and routinely by Pastoral Leaders so that patterns of concerning behaviour can be spotted and the necessary steps put in place to keep them safe, including meeting them face to face.

When we identify a student at risk of suicide and decide to engage external services, such as hospital A&E departments or crisis centres, we will create explicit guidelines on the pathways that apply. Any guidelines will be developed in cooperation with the external services, and will be reviewed regularly as the provision of such services change over time.

Suicide Postvention Team

In the event of a suicide, King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls will have a Suicide Postvention Team whose role it is to respond in the event of a suicide. Each member of the team will have a defined responsibility within our plan including leadership, family liaison and any communications with external agencies, including the media.

- Miss J Glendenning – liaison with external agencies;
- Mrs R Ubhi - support for other KS3 students;
- Dr M Perrins – support for other KS4 students;
- Mrs J Samuels – support for other KS5 students;
- Mrs C Toy - liaison with impacted family.

Where appropriate, the Headteacher in collaboration with the Schools of King Edward VI Foundation Birmingham Communications Lead, will oversee communication with the media, parents, and governors.

We will support authorities if there is an inquest after someone has died by suicide in our school but will be mindful of the distress an inquest causes to the bereaved people. We will also be mindful of the impact supporting an inquest can have on staff. Further details are available here: [Child death review: statutory and operational guidance \(England\) - GOV.UK](#)

We will record and monitor deaths by suicide and the impact on the community and share anonymised information at the Academy Trust review. This will include on-going monitoring of student deaths including suicides, suspected suicides and self-harm. Monitoring of self-harm is done through a collection of information from CPOMS, external services and information disclosed by students.

We will also

- Provide information about [services/sources of bereavement support](#) to students after a suicide.
- Assess the impact of any relevant intervention provided to staff or students.
- Reviewing lessons learned and any suggested changes to procedures and provisions of well-being services.
- Identification of multiple events, such as two suicides in a relatively short period of term (e.g. one term) which may indicate a possible suicide cluster, including investigating possible connections between individuals, their circumstances and their suicidal behaviour. Multiple suspected suicides may not be connected, but may contribute, in some vulnerable individuals, to thoughts of suicide as a way of dealing with problems. Where concerns arise regarding a possible suicide cluster we will immediately communicate with the local authority Public Health Suicide Prevention Lead and collaborate closely with them to develop a response plan.

Staff

All staff will do their best to support students whilst recognising that we are not experts. Our aim as a school is to keep students “safe for now” while that young person, their parents/carers and school work to secure specialist help for them. Staff will follow the [guidelines](#) provided by Papyrus, which includes: what to do if they have concerns about a student; how to support a student on return to school after they have engaged in suicidal behaviour and helpful/unhelpful language to use with a student.

Staff will also respond to students who are in immediate danger by following the steps below:

1. If a student discloses that they took steps to end their life, try to remain calm, even though you might be feeling scared, confused, upset or frustrated. An adult’s response to their actions will impact on any likely future disclosures.
2. If they have taken an overdose, staff must contact the Lead School First Aider on duty, immediately, using the emergency number, providing her with as much information as possible.
3. The Lead School First Aider on site will decide whether to contact the emergency services. She will then inform the DSL and Headteacher/Deputy Heads and the student's parents/carers.
4. If the parent/carer is unable to attend school immediately, and paramedics need to take the child to hospital, an appropriate member of staff will accompany the child to A&E and wait there with them until their parent/carer arrives.
5. If the staff member determines that the young person's behaviour has not put their life in danger, but there has been an injury, they will seek support from the Lead First Aider on duty

(either by taking the student immediately to her, or asking her to meet them where they are with the student) and inform the DSL on duty.

6. Staff must log any disclosures, including the catalyst and their actions immediately on CPOMS in the relevant 'safeguarding' sub-category. This will allow any other staff member supporting the student to have a complete understanding of the situation.
7. The DSL on duty, with support from the relevant Pastoral Leader, will contact parents/carers to ask them to come into school immediately for a meeting/to collect the students and take them to A&E to seek Crisis support.
8. Parents/carers will be asked to update school on the outcome of any hospital visit.
9. A relevant member of the Suicide Intervention Team will complete a Suicide Safety Plan with the student on their immediate return to school.

Staff can find information about mental health and wellbeing through resources provided by [Now and Beyond](#) and [NHS/Kooth resource hub for teachers and education staff](#)

Staff will be supported in the [event of the death of a student by suicide](#) or following a disclosure/intervention. Staff should contact Papyrus [debrief service](#) for immediate support but also speak to their line manager/senior leader if further support is needed. We know that this experience can be very challenging and want to support in any way we can. Staff can also access external agencies including Employee Assistance and [Education Support Helpline](#) in confidence on 08000 562 561.

If a student is bereaved by suicide we will endeavour to support them in school and use external agencies. See Cruse [how adults can support young people bereaved by suicide](#) for details.

Staff can also access information on [suicide, suicidal feelings and working in schools](#) from Education Support. This guide aims to support school staff discuss suicide safely, as well as to support staff who are affected by suicide and suicidal feelings. This resource does not offer guidance on supporting children and young people.

Parents

It can be difficult to find out that someone you care about has thoughts/intentions of suicide. As a parent/carer you may feel angry, shocked, guilty and upset. These reactions are normal, but what the person you care about really needs is support from you. They need you to stay calm and to listen to them.

Try to:

- Keep an open mind;
- Make the time to listen;
- Help them find different ways of coping;
- Go with them to get the right kind of help as quickly as possible.

Some people you can contact for help, advice and support are:

- Your family doctor;
- [Local/national services](#);
- [NHS supporting someone with suicidal thoughts](#).

If a parent is concerned about their child, please let school know immediately: email details for form tutors and Pastoral Leaders can be found on our school website [Pastoral Care – King Edward VI Handsworth School for Girls](#)

Pupils


There are lots of people you can talk to about what you are going through. It is important to tell someone you trust and feel comfortable with, as they will be able to help and support you. You could talk to:

- friends;
- family;
- someone at school, such as your Form Tutor or a member of the Pastoral Team;
- your GP or healthcare professionals such as a counsellor or nurse;
- [kooth](#) is a free, safe and easy to access mental health service for young people. They're commissioned primarily by the NHS and are the only digital mental health service to be accredited by the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy). ;
- [charities and helplines](#).

There are no rules about how you should tell someone. The most important thing is that you feel comfortable and trust the person you decide to tell. Set time aside to talk to them. Remember you can set the pace and it is up to you how much you want to tell them.

If you find speaking about it too difficult, you can tell someone in writing or in an email. You can even ask a friend to speak to a trusted adult on your behalf. Let them know you need help with how you are feeling.

If you're worried that when you tell someone they won't understand, or if you have experienced this, suggest they talk to an expert in the field to try to understand more about suicide ideation. Don't let the fear of a bad reaction put you off seeking the help you need and deserve. As hard as it is to tell someone, sharing will take the pressure off you and help you get the right support and help available.

If you have concerns about another student, please prioritise their wellbeing and safety over your friendship, hard as that may be. They may be angry for a while, but getting help and support for them is much more important and friendships can be rebuilt. You can seek support from Papyrus if you have been affected by someone you know's [suicide attempt](#) or ring  0800 068 4141.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The DSL will ensure this policy is reviewed annually and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and that processes are updated in line with best practice and that on-going training is undertaken when necessary.

The DSL will also ensure this policy is available to parents, pupils and staff.