



Suicide Intervention Policy

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Blackfen School for Girls

Blackfen School for Girls: A Suicide-Safer School

Blackfen School for Girls is committed to the provision of an exceptional personal development curriculum that supports young people to be safe and healthy into their adult lives. We aim to support our students to be resilient, responsible and respectful. Our commitment to being a 'Suicide Safer School' recognises that suicide is a leading cause of death for young people and that an experience of poor mental health and suicidal thoughts in a young person's life (either experiencing them themselves or experiencing the poor mental health, self-harm or suicide of a family member) has a profound impact on life chances as an adult.

1. Statement of purpose

Blackfen School 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.

2. Our beliefs about suicide and contributory factors

As a school, we recognise that:

- a) Suicidal thoughts are common among young people.
- b) Suicide is complex. We believe that every suicide is a tragedy. 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.
- c) Stigma inhibits learning. We recognise that the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness can be both a barrier to seeking help and a barrier to offering help. We must therefore commit to tackling suicide stigma. In our language and in our working relationships, we will promote open, sensitive talk that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos.
- d) Suicide is everyone's business. As a school community, 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.
- e) Safety is very important. We want to support our students, working in partnership with family, caregivers, external agencies and other professionals where this may enhance suicide-safety.

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f) 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 will provide trained adults who are able to identify when a student may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

g) Talking about suicide does not create or increase risk.

h) Those with personal experience have a unique role to play in the development and refinement of this Suicide-Safer Policy. We will endeavour to involve anyone from our community who has personal experience of suicide, either having struggled themselves or supported someone with thoughts of suicide.

3. How we help ensure an active person-centred suicide prevention and intervention policy

a) The headteacher is the named individual who is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of this policy.

b) Blackfen School will develop a Suicide Intervention Team whose members understand this policy and are trained in Suicide Intervention. This team will be drawn from the current safeguarding team of designated safeguarding leads, and deputy designated safeguarding leads. We will ensure that a team of people have undertaken Suicide Intervention Training so that at least two trained staff are on duty during our school opening hours.

c) We will endeavour to ensure that all our staff are suicide aware. This means that all staff inductions and safeguarding training will include suicide awareness, i.e. how to spot signs of suicidal ideation, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the safeguarding team.

d) We will ensure that students are suicide aware. This means that we will ensure there is an annual programme of awareness-raising events and campaigns that equip our students to know how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to safe adults at home and to the safeguarding team. This programme of education will be age-appropriate.

e) The headteacher sits on the Bexley child safeguarding panel (namely SHIELD) and is part of the local network of secondary headteachers (BASL) and the head teacher forum. This ensures that our suicide prevention work is integral to that in our wider community. It can also help identify and address possible patterns of imitative suicidal behaviours across the wider community.

f) We will be clear about how we enhance the physical safety of our environment to ensure student safety and supervision by considering our site in the light of suicide risk.

g) 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 pupils over 18 for permission to share any 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

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for whatever reason, we will endeavour to inform their emergency contact of their vulnerable state.

h) We recognise that students may experience periods of poor mental health while attending 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 suspected suicidal thoughts. This flagging will be electronic and immediate via the school's safeguarding MIS, CPOMS. Students that are flagged in this way will be reviewed regularly and routinely by nominated staff so that patterns of concerning behaviour can be spotted and the necessary steps can be put in place to keep them safe, including meeting them face to face.

i) When we identify a student at risk of suicide (or we are informed of such a risk by external agencies, or families), we will inform the necessary contacts and create a safety plan with the student, family and a member of our safeguarding team. This safety plan will also take into account the safety planning of external agencies, for example, CAMHS. The safety plan will be reviewed regularly to take account of any change in risk.

j) When we identify a student at risk of suicide and decide to engage external services, such as a hospital A&E department or a crisis service, we will have explicit guidelines on the pathways that apply. Those guidelines will be developed in co-operation with the external services and will be reviewed regularly as the provision of such services change over time.

k) We will regularly provide all students with a sources of support sheet and information on 'The Advice Hub' on the school website. This will inform and equip our community about help that is available locally and nationally to support someone who is experiencing poor mental health and emotional wellbeing. We will ensure all students have a means of reporting safeguarding concerns, about themselves or others, via Sharepoint, Room 2, the safeguarding team or by contacting the safeguarding email. All staff must report any concern, however small, that is shared with them from a student via CPOMS.

4. How we help ensure a sensitive and safe suicide postvention provision

a) Blackfen School has a Suicide Postvention Team, led by the Headteacher, whose role it is to respond in the event of a suicide. Each member of our Suicide Postvention Team will have a defined responsibility within our plan including leadership, family liaison and any communications with external agencies, including the media.

b) Blackfen School recognises that a suicide in the school community has a significant impact on the whole community of students, parents, carers, staff and their wider families. As such, the school commits to providing short term emergency support in the form of additional counselling provision, safe spaces for staff and pupils, and additional access to support from safeguarding trained staff, such as the student support officers. Signposting to external services for support will always be available via The Advice Hub on the school website.

c) We will be clear about how we deal with an inquest after someone has died by suicide in our school community. We will support the authorities in their work but will be mindful of

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the distress an inquest causes to the bereaved people. We will also be mindful of the impact supporting an inquest can have on staff.

d) We will record and monitor deaths by suicide and the impact on the community. This will include on-going monitoring of pupil deaths including suicides, suspected suicides and self-harm. Monitoring of self-harm might be done through the collection of information from CPOMS, other student support services, students and their families and public health services.

We will also consider

- Recording and monitoring the uptake of bereavement support services by students after a suicide
- Surveying students regarding how supported they feel
- Assessing the impact of interventions on staff
- Reviewing lessons learned and any suggested changes to procedures and provision of well-being and other school services or systems
- Identification of multiple events, such as two suicides or serious attempts in a relatively short period of time (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 their occurrence can nonetheless have consequences. For example, in some vulnerable individuals it may contribute 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 South London Health Protection Team, the local authority (Bexley) and local health and children's services and collaborate closely with them to develop a response plan.

Ongoing support and development of our policy and practice

- a) Our Leadership Team and Lead Governor for Safeguarding will ensure that ongoing reviews take place, that processes are updated in line with best practice and that on-going training is undertaken when necessary.
- b) Where possible we will include or consult with members of our community who have personal experience of suicidal ideation, either their own or as a concerned other, in the design, development and continuous refinement of this policy.
- c) We will refresh and update our 'Advice Hub' on an annual basis and we will share it across our community as part of our regular suicide awareness raising campaigns.