

Therapy Policy

West Heath School



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Copies of this policy are available on the School Website - <http://www.westheathschool.com/> Staff matters - Policies or as a hard copy on request from the School Office.

1. Aims

At West Heath School, we pride ourselves on our highly specialized and vast therapeutic offer. Our Therapy department plays a major part in the social, emotional, mental health, behavioural and physical wellbeing of our students. In our Therapeutic Community, we believe that all interactions can be therapeutic, and our whole approach is underpinned by a trauma informed practice.

This way of working permeates everything from the way we structure our curriculum to our behaviour management. As a therapeutic community, we know that every child brings unique needs which need close and bespoke attention. As a Therapeutic Community, we appreciate that progress can look many different ways, however it is always driven by safe and secure relationships. As a Therapy Team, we therefore deliver not only individual and group direct work, but we work very closely with the rest of the West Heath School Team to ensure a holistic and consistent approach to the student's difficulties. Collaboration between different roles and departments is a critical part of how we approach our work and how we create holding and safe environments for the students in our care. We run training and workshops for our wider team and offer supervision and reflective spaces when needed.

Whilst many of our students have a specified therapeutic requirement on their Education, Health and Care Plans, most of our students will access our therapeutic department at some point during their time with us. We offer traditional individual and group psychotherapy or more creative ways of supporting the way our students process their feelings (i.e. play, art). We support our students' learning about the way in which they relate to others through social skills and friendship groups. We help those struggling with sensory and motor issues. We also pay attention to the way in which our bodies react to stress and trauma and offer massage, relaxation and mindfulness techniques.

Our approach to therapy is flexible and adaptable yet always relational. We believe in the helpfulness of traditional work in a confidential space, however we know that a lot of students find such spaces exposing or intimidating. As a team, we would therefore adapt our approach to suit the need of the students and engage them during activities such as walking, gardening, playing sports or making art and crafting.

Our therapeutic offer consists of:

- Clinical Psychology Services (Cognitive and Psychological Assessments, psychological formulation and psychotherapy)
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Talking Therapy (Integrative, CBT, Counselling)
- Play Therapy

- Holistic Therapy (massage, relaxation)

2. Therapy Management

The overall management of the Therapy Department is the responsibility of the Head of HEART and Therapy, whose task is to lead and co-ordinate the work of the therapists as a whole, supporting and guiding the work of its component parts to ensure a consistently high quality, specialist therapeutic service. By acting as a liaison between therapists, SMT, other members of staff, and external agencies (e.g. CAMHS, Local Authorities) this ensures that therapeutic insights can be more widely understood and applied consistently for the benefit of the individual student.

As well as ongoing informal meetings and formal supervision, the multi-disciplinary therapy team meet every week to discuss concerns, provide feedback, and share information on individual student's therapeutic needs. Therapists keep records, including attendance and engagement, and basic details of sessions; they also contribute to Annual Reviews if appropriate by submitting a written report. The Head of HEART and Therapy always attends Parent Evenings and can feedback any information to/from therapists; however, parents/carers are able to have direct telephone/email contact if they wish.

All referrals for psychological therapy are directed through the Head of HEART and Therapy. Following a multi-disciplinary discussion, the team allocate the student to the most appropriate therapist, depending on the individual's needs and availability of therapists. However, therapists reserve the right to make a clinical judgement as to whether a student is ready and capable of engaging in therapy at any time; they also reserve the right to terminate therapy when they feel appropriate. For Occupational and Speech and Language Therapy, the therapists reserve the right to take a student off their caseload if they feel there is no longer a need for direct input. Many EHCPs are very out of date and still specify requirements which are no longer age appropriate. When this happens, our Review Co-Ordinator, SENCo, and relevant Head of School are advised so that parents and Local Authorities are made aware.

Whilst therapists will endeavour to see a student soon after referral, there may be a waiting list at times; because of this, it should be noted that therapists cannot keep slots open if the student consistently refuses to engage for 6 weeks, and a re-referral will need to be made if required. However, before this, every effort will be made to engage with the young person, and therapists will be in ongoing communication with Pastoral Leads/Tutors and parents/carers if appropriate to discuss strategies and alternative ways of trying to engage with the young person. It will also be discussed at the student's Annual Review so the local authority is aware. Therapy is not open-ended, and provision and progress is reviewed at the end of each term.

The psychological Therapy Team works as an adjunct to external mental health providers and, where appropriate, therapists will liaise with external mental health providers. It is important to note, however, that they are not a substitute for CAMHS, and some presentations and difficulties are not appropriate to 'treat' in school. All therapists are aware of the school's Lone Worker Risk Assessment and Guidance, and other relevant safeguarding policies.

3. Confidentiality

In line with all counselling/therapy provision, a confidentiality statement applies whereby students are made aware of before commencing their sessions. This states that whilst counselling/therapy is a confidential process, and therefore parents/carers cannot be told specific details of sessions by the therapist, there are certain exceptions:

- 1) If a student tells a therapist, or a therapist becomes aware that the student is involved in or planning to commit a crime then the therapist has a duty to inform the relevant authorities
- 2) Therapists may provide information to certain people and professionals involved with the student regarding attendance
- 3) If a therapist is worried about a student's safety or the safety of others, then he/she will share this information with the relevant people. Normal safeguarding procedures will be followed if the student is in immediate danger of self-harm/suicidal ideation.

- 4) The therapy staff works as a team. Therapists may consult with other members of the team to provide the best possible care. These consultations are for professional and training purposes.