

Eating Disorder Policy

RATIONALE

Eating disorders are illnesses with a biological basis modified and influenced by emotional and cultural factors. They are emotionally and physically damaging. Eating disorders are serious, potentially life-threatening illnesses, but there is help available and recovery is possible.

While eating disorders may begin with preoccupations with food and weight, they are most often about much more than food. Eating disorders are complex conditions that arise from a combination of long-standing behavioural, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors. People with eating disorders often use food and the control of food in an attempt to compensate for feelings and emotions that may otherwise seem over-whelming. For some, dieting, bingeing and purging may begin as a way to cope with painful emotions and to feel in control of one's life, but ultimately, these behaviours will damage a person's physical and emotional health, self-esteem, and sense of competence and control.

PROCEDURES

- If a pupil presents with an eating disorder or, if a member of staff is concerned that a pupil has an eating disorder, this knowledge should be reported to the pupil's Year Head and the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. Parents/Guardians are informed of this concern and advised and informed of the following:
 1. To seek medical attention* as the family G.P. can refer the matter to the Community Mental Health Team.
 2. The Well Woman Clinic provides specialist counselling for people with eating disorders and also have an Eating Disorder Support Group which meet every fortnight.
 3. Parents/Guardians receive a standard letter of notification (Appendix 1)
 4. A copy of this letter is stored in a confidential file.
- If the school is notified by a parent/guardian that their daughter has an eating disorder the school follows procedures 1 and 2 only.
- The school counselling service is available to pupils with an eating disorder concern; however this is only used as a "listening ear" service. This is because pupils with eating disorders must receive specialist counselling specific to their problem and appropriate to their needs.

* If it is discovered that medical attention is not sought for a pupil under seventeen the matter will be treated as a child protection concern on the grounds of neglect as the pupil's needs are not being met.

Dear [Parent(s)/Guardian(s)]

Further to our telephone conversation regarding [Name of pupil] I have enclosed a copy of our "Eating Disorder" policy as promised.

It is important that you make an appointment for [Name of pupil] with her G.P. and contact me to keep me informed. Failure to do so may mean that Social Services have to be informed.

Yours sincerely

Miss O'Sullivan
Designated Teacher for Child Protection