

## Eating Disorders policy

- Introduction

Tring Park School endeavours to always encourage a positive body image and healthy relationship with food and eating. This policy aims to enable students to seek help when needed, rather than to punish pupils affected by eating disorders, to protect sufferers and provide support where health is at risk. School staff play an essential role in preventing eating disorders and in supporting pupils, peers and parents of pupils currently suffering from or recovering from eating disorders. EDs are the result of a myriad of factors. Current research shows clearly that early detection and intervention in eating disorders results in a better outcome for sufferers. This policy will enable concerned parties to identify affected pupils and offers procedures to follow if further steps are necessary. The immediate and long-term health of the pupil remains the primary goal for the school. This is understood to include physical as well as psychological wellbeing.

- Scope

This document describes the school's approach to eating disorders. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It is available to all staff in the Policies folder on staff resources, as part of the staff handbook and on the school's website. As part of inset training any new staff will be introduced to the policy. This policy is also included in the Parent/Pupil Handbook and is in each departmental Handbook.

- Aims

- To increase understanding and awareness of eating disorders
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide a structure and defined roles for staff dealing with pupils suffering from eating disorders.
- To provide support to pupils currently suffering from or recovering from eating disorders and their peers, parents and carers.
- To allow pupils suspected of suffering from an ED quick access to appropriate help and support both inside school and through counselling and GP contact. This aims to minimise both short and long-term effects of the disorders.

The School nurses in the Medical Centre aim to measure weights and heights for all pupils at least once a year, and then as required throughout the year. They will

use BMI and weight for height centiles as a guide to indicate intervention, but will at all times use previous history and background of each individual when preparing a care plan (see appendix 1). Every individual will be treated and discussed as an individual and each Care Plan will be tailor made to the needs of that pupil.

At no time will anyone other than the designated School nurse or school appointed professional discuss details with the pupil directly and all matters relating to this must be dealt with by the medical professional.

If staff or pupils observe any behaviour of concern, they should report that to their course director, houseparent, the DSL team or directly to the Medical Centre staff. No one should approach the individual directly and it is essential that this area is dealt with sensitively and by a trained person. Concerns should be noted and passed on to the school nurses. Feedback is very important in identifying pupils of concern. At all times, the individual will be cared for and the primary goal is about supporting and facilitating recovery. For this reason, the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all concerned.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 enshrines the principle of self-determination. The school nurses should treat any information in confidence, unless the student consents to it being disclosed. However, the nurse also needs to consider the interests of the pupil and where there is significant risk the information will need to be disclosed.

Examples of such situations include:

- Abuse
- If the young person is likely to harm themselves, or others are at risk from harm (this includes severe restriction of food/starvation)
- If the young person may be involved in serious criminal activity.

Confidentiality should not be a barrier to effective communication with families and staff involved with the student. Often, staff can be given information in general terms, without breaching confidentiality. Similarly, the concerns of staff and families can be heard whilst maintaining the privacy of the student. Where confidentiality is an issue, every effort should be made to negotiate with the pupil about what information can and cannot be shared. If a decision is made to share information, the young person should be told.

Where there is a concern that a pupil has either gained weight or lost weight, they will be asked to come to the Medical Centre to be weighed and measured. As part of this appointment, the school nurse will discuss the concerns with the pupil. Should the pupil disclose any sort of disordered eating behaviour, the school nurse will either:

For Boarders:

Arrange a GP appointment to discuss next steps.

For Day Pupils:

Advise the pupil that they need to be seen by their GP. The School Nurse

will explain the need to share information with parents. Where the pupil is under 18, the school nurse will contact parents to discuss next steps and to ask that they arrange a GP appointment.

Where the pupil is 18 or over the school nurse will contact parents, as long as the pupil gives consent. The school nurse will advise parents to support the pupil in arranging a GP appointment.

Where the pupil is 18 or over and states that they do not want their parents to be informed, the school nurse will assist the pupil in making the GP appointment. The school nurse will endeavour to encourage the pupil to inform their parents, but cannot breach patient-nurse confidentiality.

***If the school nurse considers that there is a significant safeguarding risk, she will alert The Principal, DSL, relevant course Director and parents (regardless of breaching confidentiality).***

The GP will usually arrange for blood tests and an ECG, as well as a range of baseline observations including:

- Sitting and Standing Blood Pressure
- Sitting and Standing Pulse
- Temperature
- Blood Glucose
- Height
- Weight

The GP will also make a referral to the Eating Disorders Team who usually arrange assessment within 2-3 weeks.

The School Nurse will then follow guidance from the Eating Disorders Team.

If a pupil's height for weight drops below 80% he/she will be signed off all physical activity – dance, fitness and physical theatre.

In cases where the pupil is not able to engage with the care plan, set by the Eating Disorders team, he or she may be asked to go home for their own safety.

Those pupils who have private medical insurance may be able to claim the cost of referral to a specialist clinic dependent on the policy.

Regular training with regard to eating disorders will be offered to staff, students and parents. Additional nutrition training will be offered to pupils by a specialist dietician as needed.

This policy will be reviewed by senior staff annually and by medical staff as often as necessary. The policy and any updates or revisions are to be available in Staff Resources, Department Handbooks, and Parent and Pupil Handbooks and will be highlighted to all new staff.

## Appendix to Eating Disorders Policy

### 1. Information about Eating Disorders:

Anyone can get an eating disorder regardless of their age, sex or cultural background.

People with eating disorders are preoccupied with food and/or their weight and body shape, and are usually highly dissatisfied with their appearance. The majority of eating disorders involve low self-esteem, shame, secrecy and denial.

#### Risk Factors:

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person particularly vulnerable to developing an eating disorder:

#### Individual Factors:

- Difficulty expressing feelings and emotions
- A tendency to comply with others' demands
- Very high expectations of achievement

#### Family Factors:

- A home environment where food, eating, weight or appearance have a disproportionate significance
- An over-protective or over-controlling home environment
- Poor parental relationships and arguments
- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Overly high family expectations of achievement

#### Social Factors:

- Being bullied, teased or ridiculed owing to weight or appearance
- Pressure to maintain a high level of fitness / low body weight (e.g. sport or dancing)

#### Warning Signs:

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing difficulties that may lead to an eating disorder. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should refer immediately to the named Medical Sister with responsibility in this area.

#### Physical Signs:

- Weight loss EDs are not only present in those with low BMIs, any change in weight should be noted and tracked over a period of time.
- Dizziness, tiredness, fainting
- Feeling Cold
- Hair becomes dull or lifeless
- Swollen cheeks
- Calloused knuckles
- Tension headaches

- Sore throats / mouth ulcers
- Tooth decay
- Amenorrhoea
- Swollen stomach, constipation

#### Behavioural Signs:

- Restricted eating – excluding food groups; changing dietary habits i.e. becoming vegetarian or vegan; refusing to eat specific food groups. Any changes should be noted and tracked over time to distinguish between fads and more serious underlying conditions.
- Skipping meals
- Scheduling activities during lunch
- Strange behaviour around food
- Wearing baggy clothes
- Wearing several layers of clothing
- Excessive chewing of gum/drinking of water
- Increased conscientiousness
- Increasing isolation / loss of friends
- Believes s/he is fat when s/he is not
- Secretive behaviour
- Visits the toilet immediately after meals
- Disproportionate use of laxatives and /or diuretics
- Excessive exercise
- Self-harm

#### Psychological Signs:

- Preoccupation with food
- Sensitivity about eating
- Denial of hunger despite lack of food
- Feeling distressed or guilty after eating
- Self-dislike: fear about their shape, fear of gaining weight
- Paranoia: thinking everyone is staring because of size; thinking everyone knows what is really going on.
- Fear of gaining weight: self-worth is equated to having a low weight.
- Constantly changing what the “ideal” weight would be. A sufferer could decide to lose a stone only to lose another and continually move the ideal weight to a level which is unobtainable, showing (wrongly) in their minds how worthless the person is if they can't even attain this ideal.
- Moodiness: mood swings /depression. The overall temperament of the student is very important as adolescents often have severe mood swings anyhow. Changes from the norm over a prolonged period are perhaps better indicators of an underlying problem.
- Excessive perfectionism
- When challenged, refusal to accept there is a food issue
- Panic attacks

#### Staff Roles:

The most important role school staff can play is to familiarise themselves

with the risk factors and warning signs outlined above and ensure that the designated school nurse is aware of any child causing concern.

Pupils may choose to confide in a member of school staff if they are concerned about their own welfare, or that of a peer. Pupils need to be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality, as sharing of information might be required to protect the person in question. If you consider a pupil is at serious risk of causing themselves harm then confidentiality cannot be maintained. It is important not to make promises of confidentiality that cannot be kept even if a pupil puts pressure on you to do so. Pupils should be assured that information will only be shared with professionals who would need to know in order to provide them with treatment, support and maintain safety. It is necessary to explain procedures and steps to be taken and to reassure the sufferer that they are believed, taken seriously and will be helped.

The reintegration of a pupil into school following a period of absence should be handled sensitively and carefully and, again, the pupil, their parents, school staff and members of the multi-disciplinary team treating the pupil should be consulted during both the planning and reintegration phase.

This information should be stored in the pupil's child protection file.

Direct email for anyone who has concerns about an individual is:  
[medical@tringpark.com](mailto:medical@tringpark.com)

## 2. NICE Guidelines

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng69/chapter/Recommendations#identification-and-assessment>

3. Signposting: <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>