

Eating Disorders Policy and Procedures

This policy applies to all pupils and staff of Abbot's Hill, including EYFS.

This document describes the school's approach to eating-disorders. This policy and procedure is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It forms part of the School's Safeguarding group of policies. It should be read in conjunction with these.

Aim

To ensure that staff are able to recognise and act swiftly and appropriately to pupils manifesting symptoms of eating-disorders by discussing concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the DSL is not available, one of the Deputy DSLs should be contacted.

To seek to address eating disorders by giving a pupil experiencing such difficulties access to the maximum support possible.

Objectives

- To increase understanding and awareness of eating-disorders
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with pupils who have eating-disorders
- To provide support to the pupils
- To help the pupil maintain healthy eating habits and make her/his own decisions about what she/he will eat.
- To identify those who have a problem and help them as well as support their friends.
- To work in partnership with parents to ensure a whole well-being is being addressed.
- To teach them about healthy eating in the PSHCEE programme, cookery activities and biology lessons which will be supported and encouraged by the School Nurse.
- To give the pupils the confidence to confide in an adult if they themselves, or a friend, have a problem.
- To encourage the pupil to talk to the School Counsellor
- To consider each pupil as an individual and take into account her age, culture and personal circumstances.

Strategies for achieving the aim and objectives

The school surgery will monitor the pupils' height and weight and follow up as necessary if we believe she needs this kind of support.

What is an eating disorder?

- A-pupil has an eating disorder if she/he eats in such a way that she/he puts her/his physical and/or mental health at risk.
- Eating disorders in young people are not about issues with food, but are a mechanism for coping with emotional distress.
- Although eating disorders affect both men and women, the school recognises that as a community of young people, eating disorders are an issue which the school must address.

- Any pupils who are stressed, unhappy or lacking in confidence may be at risk of developing an eating disorder. Triggers may include stress due to exams, problems at home or school.
- In some cases an eating disorder may be triggered in a vulnerable personality by a period of illness which is accompanied by a period of not eating.
- It is important for the school to act on any suspicions as soon as possible. Often by the time others recognise that there is an issue, patterns of behaviours are well established.

Manifestations

Severe weight loss	Concentration problems
Binge eating large amounts of food	Mood swings
Vomiting or purging	Black and white thinking
Excessive exercising	Avoidance of eating in public
Emotional or irritable behaviour or depression	Calorie counting
Secretive and ritual behaviour	irritability
Erratic or cessation of menstrual periods	Feeling out of control and lonely
Lethargy and difficulty sleeping	Self - hatred
Loss of self - confidence	Anxiety
Unbalanced / trendy eating habits	Pre-occupied with food
Food avoidance	Wearing baggy clothes
Social withdrawal	Downy hair on face arms

The school recognises some of its pupils will, from time to time, experience eating disorders as defined above. Abbot's Hill will seek to support the pupil as far as possible, to recover and establish healthy eating patterns.

Why do young people develop an eating disorder?

Eating-disorders can provide a way of trying to cope with painful and confusing feelings. Difficult things that people who have an eating-disorder talk about include

- Feeling sad or worried
- Not feeling very good or confident about themselves
- Being hurt by others: physically, sexually or emotionally
- Feeling under a lot of pressure at school or at home
- Losing someone close, such as someone dying or leaving

When difficult or stressful things happen in a person's life, these can trigger eating- disorders. Upsetting events that might lead to this include:

- Arguments with family or friends
- Break-up of a relationship
- Failing, or thinking you are going to fail, exams
- Being bullied

Often, these things can build up until the young person feels she/he cannot cope anymore. Eating disorders can be a way of trying to deal with or escaping from these difficult feelings. It can also be a way of the person showing other people that something is wrong in his or her life.

Eating Disorders

a) Anorexia nervosa – those suffering from this have lost the ability to allow themselves to satisfy their appetite by restricting the amount that they eat or drink. They focus on food in an attempt to cope with life.

b) Bulimia nervosa – A pupil will 'binge eat' a large quantity of food to satisfy their hunger, and they will then immediately get rid of the food by vomiting or taking laxatives (or both), or they will work off the calories with exercise.

c) Binge eating – this is similar to bulimia, but the person will not purge themselves after eating large quantities of food.

For an eating problem to be defined as an eating disorder, it must have a psychological basis. This does not include the problem of food allergies or disorders of the digestive system.

Within a school an eating disorder (there are many different types) is difficult to deal with. We will do all we can to support a pupil with any kind of minor eating disorder. If a member of staff notices that a pupil has persistently lost weight over a period of time the parents will be informed by the Nursery Manager, Class teacher, HOY or the DSL.

The School will recommend that the pupil is taken to the GP and weighed and the body mass index will be looked at. The average range for a BMI for girls between 11 and 16 is between 15 and 23. However, growing adolescents might have a different 'normal'. The School has a duty of care to inform the parents and pupil that there is a belief that they may be potentially harming themselves by not eating sensibly.

The School, in consultation with parents, the pupil and the School Nurse, would put into operation the best possible course of action for the student. The School reserves the right, as part of our duty of care, to insist that a student seeks help in confidence, for example from the school counsellor, or their GP.

The School will also, if necessary, ask a pupil to go home to complete any necessary work with a specialist if it is felt medically or socially, that the persistent weight loss demands such. If we feel we cannot adequately support a pupil with an eating disorder after putting in place all reasonable adjustments, we may require the pupil to leave the School. We would expect this to be quite exceptional and the decision would be made in consultation with the-pupil's parents and the-pupil, where appropriate, in accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions.

What should staff do?

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 seek further advice from one of the DSPs.

Advice to pupils who want to support their friends

- You can really help by just being there, listening and giving support

- Be open and honest. If you are worried about your friend’s safety you should tell her/him that someone needs to know about it.
- Get information from telephone helplines, websites, library etc. this can help you understand what your friend is experiencing.
- Your friendship may be changed by the problem. You may feel bad that you can’t help your friend enough or guilt if you have had to tell other people. These feelings are common and don’t mean you have done something wrong or not done enough.
- Your friend may get angry with you or tell you that you don’t understand. It is important to try not to take this personally. Often, when people are feeling bad about themselves, they get angry with the people they are closest to.
- It can be difficult to look after someone who is having difficulties. It is important for you to talk to an adult who can support you. You may not always be able to there for your friend and that’s okay.

All pupils are encouraged to talk with a member of staff over this and other pastoral issues. The School will of course do the same with parents, subject to the pupil’s rights to confidentiality. It is always a difficult time for a family when a child may have an eating disorder, but the chances of a complete recovery are much increased with an early diagnosis and the family accepting that there is a problem and working with the School and its pastoral support team.

Getting help

Young Minds	0808 802 5544	www.youngminds.org.uk
Information on a range of subjects relevant to young people		
The Site		www.thesite.org
There are many other projects out there traceable through phone directories, web searches etc.		
Samaritans	08457 90 90 90	www.samaritans.org
Confidential emotional support for anybody who is in a crisis. The Samaritans are piloting a project at KS3/4 in a number of schools which supports staff in working with young persons who self-harm/experience suicidal thoughts – www.smaratians.org/youremotionalhealth/workinschools . This site includes other ideas and support strategies.		
Childline	0800 11 11	www.childline.org
24hrs helpline for children and young people under 18 providing confidential counselling.		

Signed

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Elizabeth Thomas .

Elizabeth Thomas
Headmistress