Ripon Grammar School

Suicide Ideation Policy

1. Introduction

Ripon Grammar 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. Our school want to ensure that students and staff 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.

Ripon Grammar School acknowledges that:

Suicidal thoughts are common: We acknowledge that thoughts of suicide are common, especially among young people.

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.

Stigma inhibits learning – stigma can kill: We recognise that the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness can be both a barrier to seeking help and a barrier to offering help. Ripon Grammar School is dedicated to tackling suicide stigma. We will promote open, sensitive talk in our language and in our working relationships that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business: We recognise that students and staff may seek out someone who they trust with their concerns and worries. We will endeavour to facilitate the reporting of any risks or concerns.

Safety is very important: We will seek to support our students and staff, working in partnership with family, caregivers, external agencies and other professionals as appropriate to enhance suicide-safety and reduce the risk of suicide in students and staff.

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.

Talking about suicide does not create or increase risk: We recognise that talking to someone about suicide does not put them at additional risk. One of the only ways to really know if a person is contemplating suicide it to ask. We recognise that asking someone if they are feeling suicidal may seem difficult but it is important to ensure that you can take the right actions to reduce the risk of suicide.

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.

2. Policy

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

- Ripon Grammar School has a named individual who is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of this policy.
- Ripon Grammar School has staff trained that understand this policy and are trained in Suicide Intervention. We will ensure that all relevant staff have undertaken Suicide Intervention Training and where appropriate to the role additional training is undertaken. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be the point of escalation for any concerns about a student or young person. We will keep confidential records of students at risk of suicide to ensure some continuity of care within the intervention model.
- We will endeavour to ensure that all our staff are suicide aware. This means that all staff inductions will include suicide awareness, i.e. how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns whether this is in relation to a student or member of staff.
- We will ensure that all students are suicide aware. This means that we will ensure that as part of the planned Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) curriculum there is age appropriate learning which equips our students to know how to spot signs of deteriorating mental health, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to a member of school staff.
- We will be clear about how we enhance the physical safety of our environment including the removal of potential ligature points, restricting access to places which facilitate jumping, and securely storing harmful substances.
- 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 students over 18 and members of staff for permission to share any serious concerns for their welfare with an emergency contact of their choice. Should any student or member of staff who is known to have suffered from suicidal thoughts and is presently believed to be at risk, leave Ripon Grammar School unexpectedly for whatever reason, we will endeavour to inform their emergency contacts of their vulnerable state and the police as appropriate.
- We recognise that anyone may experience periods of poor mental health while attending our school. We will endeavour to put in place mechanisms which allow staff that have regular interaction and be able to flag or review any concerns about individuals including suspected suicidal thoughts. Ideally this flagging will be electronic and immediate e.g. alerting DSL/DDSL (contact details on the school website). 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.
- We recognise that whilst rare, young people can be particularly susceptible to suicide contagion where one such loss can lead to or be linked to further links deaths within a particular community or establishment. We acknowledge that early identification of such a situation or an emerging cluster requires vigilance and effective communication from all relevant partners. In such circumstances a coordinated, multi-agency response led by Public Health teams is essential and Ripon Grammar School will cooperate in any multi-agency activity.
- If a child moves schools and there are concerns that they may be at risk of self-harm or suicide, Ripon Grammar School will share their concerns with the child's new school/college to ensure

that they can be supported. Information will be shared promptly and will be proportionate to the level of identified risk.

- When we identify a student or member of staff at risk of suicide and external services are engaged, such as a hospital A&E department or a crisis centre, 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.

3. Procedures

How we help ensure a sensitive and safe postvention provision

- RGS will have trained staff whose role it is to respond in the event of a suicide. Each member of our trained staff will have a defined responsibility within our plan including leadership, family liaison and any communications with external agencies, including the media.
- RGS will be clear about how we deal with an inquest after someone has died by suicide in our school. We will support the authorities in their work but will be mindful of the distress an inquest causes to the bereaved people. We will also be mindful of the impact supporting an inquest can have on staff.
- We will record and monitor deaths by suicide and the impact on the community. This will include on-going monitoring of student deaths including suicides, suspected suicides and, if possible, self-harm. Monitoring of self-harm might be done through the collection of information from student support services and student health services.

We will also:

- Record and monitor the uptake of bereavement support services by students after a suicide
- Survey students regarding how supported they feel
- Assess the impact of interventions on staff
- Review lessons learned and any suggested changes to procedures and provision of well-being services
- Monitor multiple events, such as two suicides in a relatively short period of time (e.g. one term) which may or may not be connected and could indicate a possible suicide cluster, including investigating possible connections between individuals, their circumstances and their suicidal behaviour.

Ongoing support and development of our policy and practice:

- Our Leadership Team 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.
- 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.

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