



# Wallington High School for Girls

## Suicide Safety Policy

### CONTENTS

1. Aims of this Policy.....	2
2. Roles and Responsibilities .....	2
3. Statement of Purpose.....	3
4. Our beliefs about suicide and contributory factors .....	3
5. How we help ensure an active person-centred suicide prevention and intervention policy.....	4
6. How we help ensure a sensitive and safe suicide postvention provision.....	6
7. Ongoing support and development of our policy and practice .....	7

### Appendices

1. Helpers in the Community
2. Papyrus 'Building Suicide-Safer School and Colleges' (2018)
3. DfE 'Suicide prevention strategy for England' (2023)
4. Sutton LSCP 'Child Death Guidance for Education Providers' (2023)
5. Useful Organisations and Helplines

<b>MONITORING AND EVALUATION BY</b>	Senior Leadership Team and Headteacher
<b>APPROVED BY</b>	Local Governing Body
<b>APPROVAL DATE</b>	April 2024
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b>	April 2024
<b>PERIOD OF REVIEW</b>	3 years
<b>DATE OF NEXT REVIEW</b>	April 2027

### Policy Notes

Policy may be subject to review and revision at any time by the Wallington Local Governing Body notwithstanding that the next review date has not been reached.

Review dates are for guidance only and whilst the intention is always to arrange reviews within the stated time frame all Policy Notes will remain in force until this has taken place and been formally approved by the Wallington Local Governing Body.

# Wallington High School for Girls: Suicide Safety Policy

## 1. Aims of this Policy

‘Suicide is a difficult topic and one that hopefully never impacts your school community. The reality, however, is that it does cross the minds of many young people, including school children and young people. In fact, suicide is the leading cause of death among young people and the numbers are alarmingly high. In recent years, up to 200 school children were lost to suicide every year in the UK’ – Papyrus National Charity.

Education and awareness are key to this prevention activity. Papyrus recommends creating a ‘suicide safer school or college’ to guide suicide prevention work in your school or college. This includes guidelines on how to prevent suicides, how to intervene with someone who is actively suicidal and how to handle a situation where someone has taken their life, commonly called postvention. It also recommends engaging stakeholders outside the immediate school or college community to help keep a young person safe from suicide.

This school community 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. We want to make sure that students at WHSG 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.

This policy has been written with reference to the Government guidance ‘Suicide prevention strategy for England’ (2023) and Papyrus’ guidance ‘Building Suicide-Safer School and Colleges’ (2018).

The policy should remain a live document which is reviewed at least every three years so that it can be continually improved in light of experience.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the GLT Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the school’s Mental Health Policy.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone’s business and therefore the whole school community and wider services should be involved in building a suicide safer school. This includes:

- Governors
- Senior Leadership Team
- DSLs/ DDSLs
- Mental Health Lead
- Parents and Carers
- Counsellors
- School Nurse
- All teaching staff
- All non-teaching staff
- External professionals
- Young people as peer supporters/mentors

### Group 1

People who have explicit responsibility for the mental and emotional well-being of students. These people will ideally have taken part in the development of the school's Suicide-Safer Policy, will be familiar with it and be trained in suicide intervention (for example Applied Suicide Intervention Skills ASIST or Cognus EP training).

As a group we can call them the Suicide Intervention Team.

They include:

- SLT
- DSL
- Heads of Year
- Student Support Officers
- School Counsellor
- School Nurse

### Group 2

People who are an integral part of the school community and can therefore be expected to notice and be compassionate towards students who are struggling with thoughts of suicide. This group will be exposed to suicide awareness events and practice. This would increase their willingness and ability to spot the signs that someone is struggling and to signpost them to people in Group 1 for further support.

They include:

- Form Tutors
- Teaching Staff
- Non-teaching Staff
- Students
- Parents and Carers

### Group 3

People who are not school staff but have an inherent interest in the wellbeing of the students. These people will normally and ideally want to be considered and included in their care/safety plan.

They could include:

- The student's family/ carers/ nominated emergency contact
- Medical Services - NHS or private
- Local Authority Suicide Prevention Boards and Safeguarding Boards as well as local, and in some cases, national Public Health Teams
- External professional e.g. social workers, virtual school

## 3. Statement of Purpose

This school community 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. We want to make sure that students at WHSG 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.

## 4. Our beliefs about suicide and contributory factors

- Suicidal thoughts are common:** We acknowledge that thoughts of suicide are common 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. This school is dedicated to tackling suicide stigma. In our language and in our working relationships, we will promote open, sensitive talk that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos.
- Suicide is everyone's business:** As a school community, we recognise that students may seek out someone who they trust with their concerns and worries. We want to facilitate the reporting of any risks or concerns.
- Safety is very important:** We know that students who are having thoughts of suicide may or may not also be behaving in a way that puts their life in danger (suicide behaviours). Schoolchildren experiencing suicidal thoughts are potentially at risk of acting on these thoughts. Those who are already engaging in suicide behaviours are also clearly at risk of death or harm. This school wants to work with our students who may be thinking about suicide, or acting on their thoughts of suicide. We want to support them, sometimes working in partnership with family, caregivers and other professionals where this may enhance suicide safety.

- f) **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.
- g) **Talking about suicide does not create or increase risk.** We will provide our students with opportunities to speak openly about their worries with people who are ready, willing and able to support them. We want to make it possible for schoolchildren and young people, and those who support them at WHSG to do so safely. This will be in a way that leads to support and help where this is needed. We will do all we can to refrain from acting in a way that stops a student seeking the help they need when they are struggling with thoughts of suicide.
- h) **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.

## 5. How we help ensure an active person-centred suicide prevention and intervention policy

### Warning signs

**Talking about:**

- Wanting to die
- Guilt or shame
- Being a burden

**Feeling:**

- Empty, hopeless or trapped
- Sad, anxious or angry
- Unbearable pain

**Behavioural changes:**

- Withdrawing from friends
- Risky behaviours
- Eating / sleeping less
- Using drugs or alcohol more

### Risk and protective factors

## Risk & protective factors

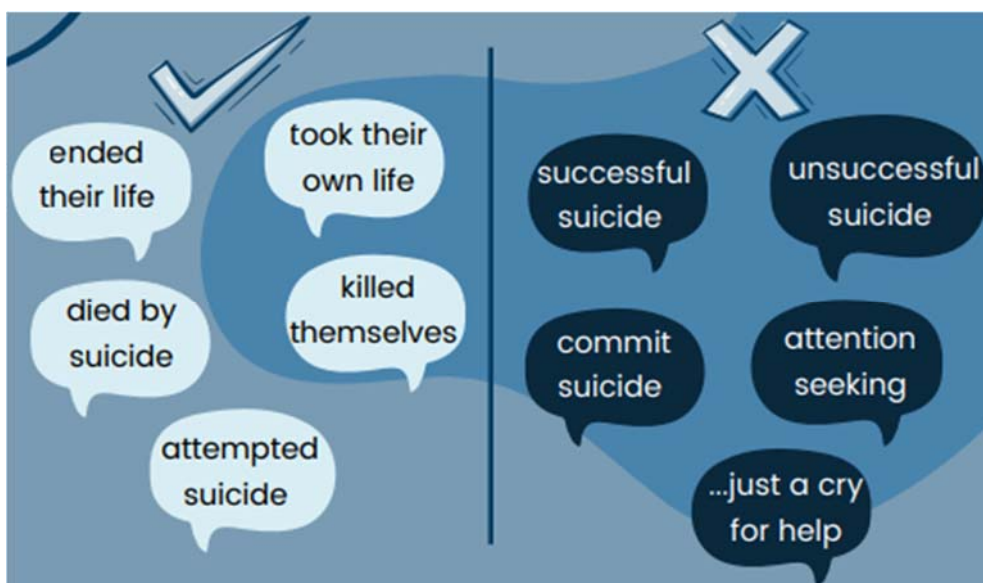
Suicide rarely occurs as a reaction to a one-off event and is more likely to follow a cumulative series of events or factors, this is known as stacking. A single event may act as a final straw. The following risk factors were identified in a recent study that looked at children and young people who had died by suicide...

- Abuse and neglect
- Bereavement
- Bullying
- Suicide-related internet use
- Family mental illness
- Academic pressures
- Social isolation
- Physical health
- Alcohol and illicit drugs
- Self-harm

- a) Our school has a named individual who is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of this policy: the Assistant Headteacher for Student Support.
- b) Our school has a Suicide Intervention Team whose members understand this policy and are trained in Suicide Intervention. The Suicide Intervention Team will be the point of escalation for any concerns about a student or young person. The Suicide Intervention Team will keep confidential records of students at risk of suicide to ensure some continuity of care within the intervention model. The team consists of the Assistant Headteacher for Student Support, Heads of Year, Student Support Officers, the School Nurse and the School Counsellor.
- c) We will endeavour to ensure that all our staff are suicide aware. This means that staff CPD will include suicide awareness, i.e. how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the Suicide Intervention Team.
- d) We will ensure that all students are suicide aware. This means that we will ensure there is an annual programme of awareness-raising events and campaigns that equip our students to know how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the Suicide Intervention Team. For example:
  - i. Workshops
  - ii. PSHCE curriculum
  - iii. Assemblies
- e) Confidentiality - whenever we have serious concerns for the welfare of a student we will break confidentiality and share information with the necessary services, including the emergency services.
- f) We recognise that students may experience periods of poor mental health while attending our school. Staff will be able to flag or review any concerns about individual students including suspected suicidal thoughts via our electronic reporting system, CPOMS. 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 be put in place to keep them safe.
- g) When we identify a student at risk of suicide and decide to engage external services, such as a hospital A&E department or a crisis centre, we will follow explicit guidelines as set out by the external services.
- h) We will develop a 'Helpers in the Community' document (see Appendix 1). This will inform and equip our community about the help that is available locally and nationally to support someone who is experiencing poor mental health and emotional wellbeing.

### Helpful language

Using sensitive language can help to build understanding and increase empathy. Helpful language also avoids judgement.



## 6. How we help ensure a sensitive and safe suicide postvention provision

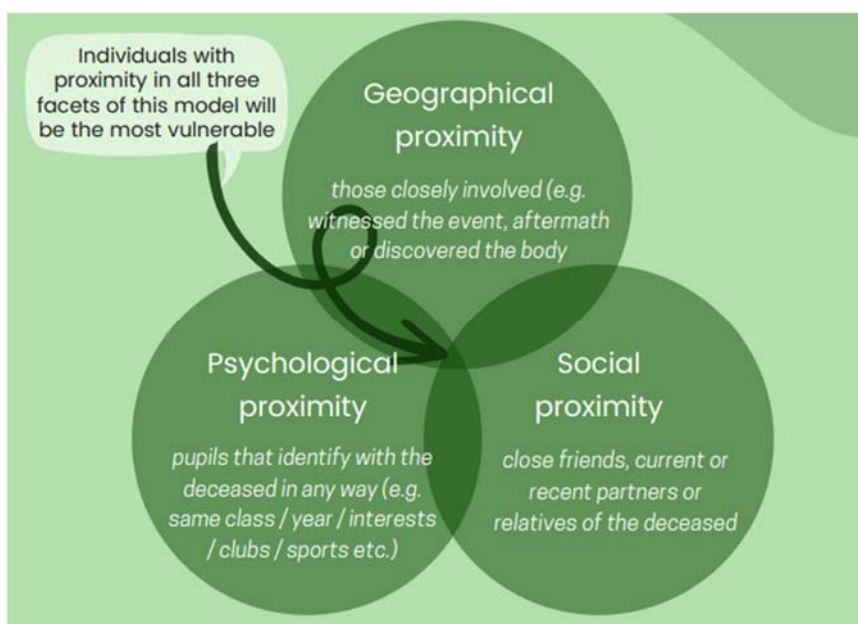
- a) Our school has a Suicide Postvention Team whose role it is to respond in the event of a suicide. The team consists of the Assistant Headteacher for Student Support, Heads of Year, Student Support Officers, the School Nurse and the School Counsellor. Each member of our Suicide Postvention Team will have a defined responsibility within our plan including leadership, family liaison and any communications with external agencies, including the media.
- b) We 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.
- c) 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 consider:

- Recording and monitoring the uptake of bereavement support services by students after a suicide
- Surveying students regarding how supported they feel
- Assessing the impact of interventions on staff
- Reviewing lessons learned and any suggested changes to procedures and provision of well-being services
- Identification of multiple events, such as two suicides in a relatively short period of time (e.g. one term) which may indicate a possible suicide cluster, including investigating possible connections between individuals, their circumstances and their suicidal behaviour. Multiple suspected suicides may not be connected, but their occurrence can nonetheless have consequences. For example, in some vulnerable individuals it may contribute to thoughts of suicide as a way of dealing with problems. Where concerns arise regarding a possible suicide cluster we will immediately communicate with the local authority Public Health Suicide Prevention Lead\* and collaborate closely with them to develop a response plan.

### Suicide contagion

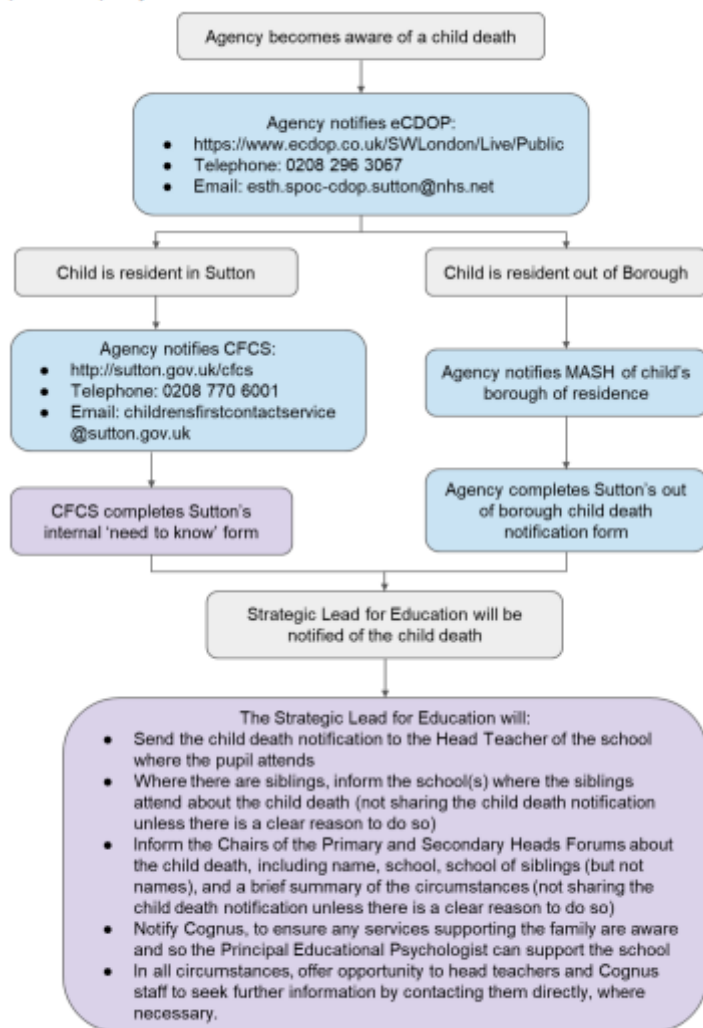
People who have lost someone to suicide are at a greater risk of suicide. This is sometimes called suicide contagion. The vulnerability model might be helpful in identifying those students that are particularly at-risk.





## Notification of a child death

The below flowchart has been taken from Sutton LSCP's 'Child Death Guidance for Education Providers' (2023) and will be followed in conjunction with the GLT Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the school's Mental Health Policy.



## 7. Ongoing support and development of our policy and practice

- a) Our Senior 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.
- b) 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.

## Helpers in the Community

### Urgent mental health support - 24/7 crisis lines

Every mental health trust in London has put in place a **24/7 crisis line** for people of all ages - children, young people and adults. The lines which are free to call can provide advice to those in a crisis. These crisis lines are supported by trained mental health advisors 365 days a year.

You can find the 24/7 crisis line numbers using the NHS Service Finder (link below) but the table provides all of the telephone numbers in London.

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline>



Area	Boroughs covered	24/7 crisis line number
North West London	Brent, Hillingdon, Harrow, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster	0800 0234 650
	Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith & Fulham	0800 328 4444
North Central London	Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington	0800 151 0023
North East London	City & Hackney	0800 073 0006
	Newham	0800 073 0066
	Tower Hamlets	0800 073 0003
	Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest	0300 555 1000
South West London	Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth	0800 028 8000
South East London	Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	0800 731 2864
	Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich	0800 330 8590





## Appendix 2

Papyrus 'Building Suicide-Safer School and Colleges' (2018): <https://papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/400734-Schools-guide-PAPYRUS.pdf>

## Appendix 3

DfE 'Suicide prevention strategy for England' (2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-strategy-for-england-2023-to-2028>

## Appendix 4

Sutton LSCP 'Child Death Guidance for Education Providers' (2023): <https://www.suttonlscp.org.uk/lscp-protocols>

# Useful Organisations and Helplines

## Organisations

*Papyrus: Prevention of young suicide*

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

*Suicide Prevention UK*

[SPUK - Suicide Prevention UK Charity 1187866](#)

*Samaritans*

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

## Helplines

**Samaritans.** To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact [Samaritans](#) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call [116 123](#) (free from any phone), email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [visit some branches in person](#).

**SANeline.** If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can call [SANeline](#) on [0300 304 7000](#) (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).

**National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK.** Offers a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide. You can call the [National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK](#) on [0800 689 5652](#) (6pm to midnight every day).

**Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).** You can call the [CALM](#) on [0800 58 58 58](#) (5pm–midnight every day) if you are struggling and need to talk. Or if you prefer not to speak on the phone, you could try the [CALM webchat service](#).

**Shout.** If you would prefer not to talk but want some mental health support, you could text SHOUT to [85258](#). [Shout](#) offers a confidential 24/7 text service providing support if you are in crisis and need immediate help.

**The Mix.** If you're under 25, you can call The Mix on [0808 808 4994](#) (3pm–midnight every day), request support by email [using this form on The Mix website](#) or [use their crisis text messenger service](#).

**Papyrus HOPELINEUK.** If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call [Papyrus HOPELINEUK](#) on [0800 068 4141](#) (24 hours, 7 days a week), email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org) or text [07786 209 697](#).

**Nightline.** If you're a student, you can look on the [Nightline website](#) to see if your university or college offers a night-time listening service. Nightline phone operators are all students too.

**Switchboard.** If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can call [Switchboard](#) on [0300 330 0630](#) (10am–10pm every day), email [chris@switchboard.lgbt](mailto:chris@switchboard.lgbt) or use their webchat service. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+.