

Mental health policy

1. FOREWORD

Children spend much of their time at school. Learning works best when you feel good, and conversely, good education helps pupils feel better about themselves. It is therefore crucial that EEB2 be a safe environment that prioritises mental health in addition to learning.

In line with the framework of the European Schools and the school website, mental health is worked on preventively, but obviously also curatively. In each phase, attention is placed on involving the pupil's environment, such as parents/carers, teachers, other caregivers around the pupil, etc. Below are the organisation, the different phases of the pathway and the communication channels in these phases.

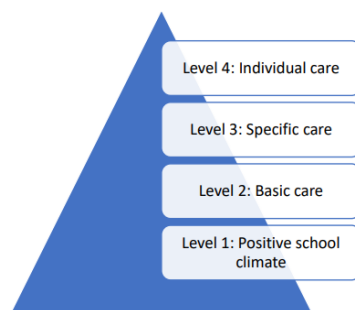
2. PREVENTION

Prevention is better than cure and it represents therefore level 1 and 2 of the care continuum. Mental health issues have been somewhat of a taboo for many years. This is even more so when it comes to children and adolescents. Schools have a role to play in the prevention of the development of mental health issues and also the promotion of improving pupil wellbeing. While parents/legal representatives remain the people responsible for the upbringing of a child, and are the ones who are responsible for seeing what is best for that child, schools have an educational role in creating awareness about mental health issues.

2.1. For the students and the staff

Prevention of mental health problems is part of the wellbeing program of the EEB2. The school is working for wellbeing at four different levels:

1. Positive school climate
2. General prevention (pedagogical projects, workshops...)
3. Guidance and care on group level (class interventions, crisis interventions...)
4. Guidance and care on individual level (individual coaching, meetings with school psychologists...)



Level 1: Positive school climate

The basis for good mental health for students and staff lies in creating a positive and inclusive school environment. The school guides its members to a polite, respectful, non-discriminatory and tolerant behavior

towards each other. The focus shall be on positive goals, problem solving and wellbeing. The school has clear and transparent rules available to all community members.

Effective surveillance and the vigilance of each community member towards potential problems are necessary to detect if someone is not feeling well. Our educational advisers, class teachers and subject teachers are very reachable. Every class has a class representative for the students and for the parents, to make the communication easier. Open sessions with management are organised for the teachers and the students.

Immediate intervention and guidance can prevent problems from becoming bigger.

Level 2: Basic care

EEB2, in accordance with its needs and realities, has several awareness-raising, age-appropriate mental health programmes on Level 2 of the care continuum. During these activities, experienced professionals or school staff meet the pupils and give an overview of mental health issues in children and adolescents. During these sessions, information is also included on how to strengthen one's capacity to regulate emotions, enhance alternatives to risk-taking behaviour, build resilience when managing difficult situations and promote social support networks.

A pupil may trust any member of staff with a psychological or emotional difficulty. It is important for all staff to know how to deal with such situations in terms of what to say, what not to say and who to refer to.

- ✓ For the students
 - 8 Life Skills as a pedagogical project, integrated to learning
 - Regular Class Time to each year group, including social skill training to pupils in years S1-S2
 - School trips, subject excursions, Footfest, etc.
 - Age-related workshops for internet safety on different themes
 - Framework and campaigns for accepting diversity and difference
 - Workshops for students on wellbeing subjects
 - Pupils may contact their class representatives or the Pupils' Committee for specific issues
 - Clubs and Groups

- ✓ For the staff
 - Trainings for staff on wellbeing subjects
 - Staff members can contact their staff representatives in the CDP
 - Cohézio is the external service for prevention and protection at work for staff

2.2. For the parents

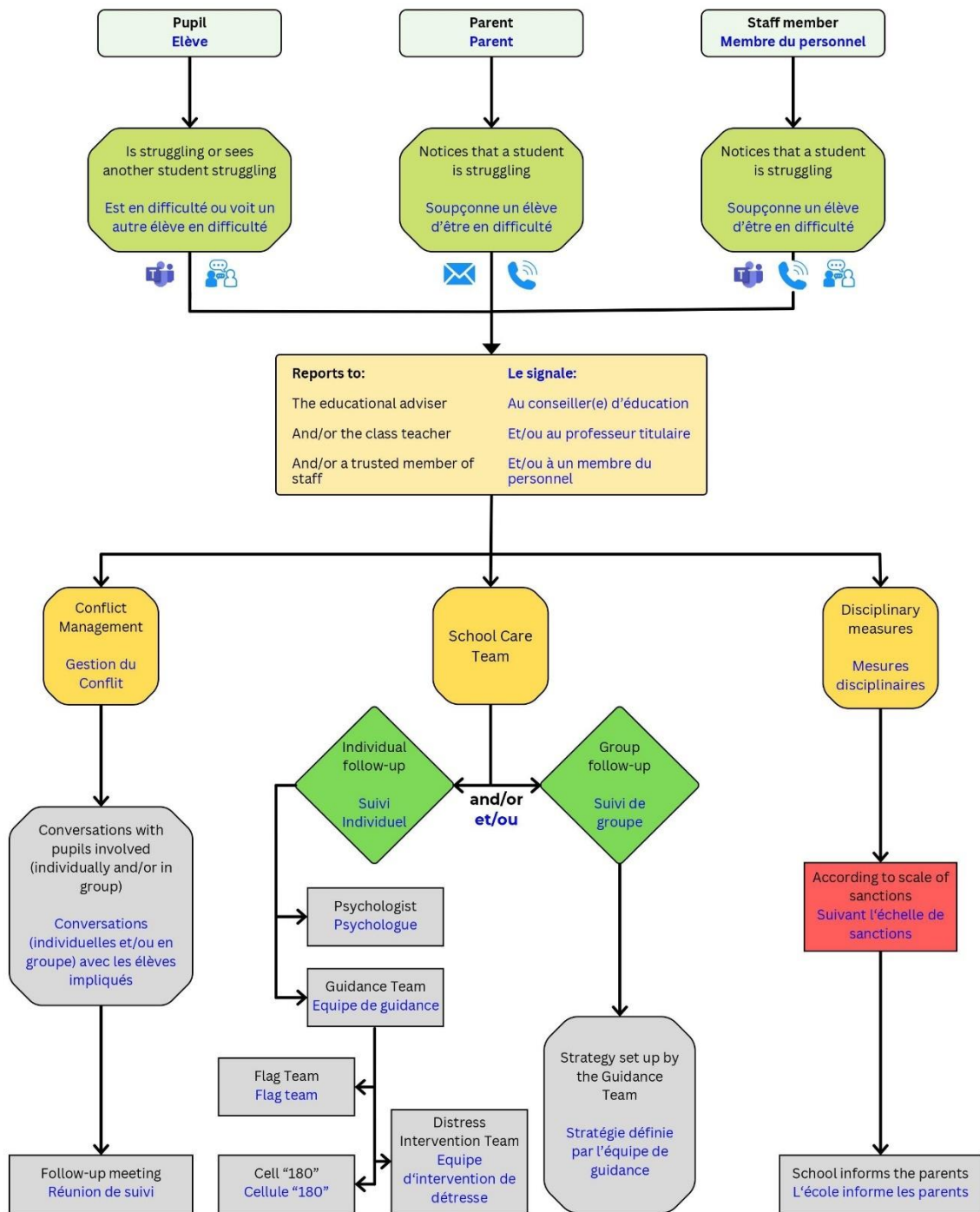
Parents/legal representatives have the main role in ensuring their child develops a healthy mental state. Just as much as parents are responsible for feeding, clothing, housing and caring for their child, it is also their responsibility to ensure that their child's life, both within the family and out, is serene and peaceful, two conducive elements to developing a sense of wellbeing. Having said this, parents may at times not be aware of developing issues related to their children's mental health. Therefore, EEB2 also works on an awareness programme concerning mental health issues specifically for parents/legal representatives. The aims of these sessions are information sharing, recognition of symptoms, initial first aid and where to seek help:

- Information sessions with parents
- The School Planner

We also want to emphasize that the school encourages building bridges between the school and private help for the students, in order to be able to help the student as well and as consistently as possible.

3. INTERVENTION AT SCHOOL

The intervention at school starts at Level 3 and can go to Level 4, depending on the case. In the following flowchart you can find the ways to contact the school for students, parents and staff members and the way the intervention takes place in school.



If the situation is urgent, the parents/legal representatives must be informed immediately. If there is a possible medical urgency, the nursing staff should also be informed. In high-pressure and very serious cases, the Assistant Deputy Director and the Deputy Director are immediately informed. It is the Deputy Director's duty to inform the Director.

Our school also has teams of professionals who work together to manage these situations:

- The Care Team consists of members from the Management and educational environment staff members. They meet every week in order to establish long-term support and ensure the harmonious development of the pupils. During these meetings, each member reviews the socio-emotional, psychological or learning situations of students with specific needs. The group analyses and then defines points of action as well as the people in charge for each case.
The members of the Care Team are the Deputy Director of the Secondary School, the Assistant Deputy Director of the Secondary School, one of the nurses, the psychologists and the Guidance Team Coordinator. If need be, an Educational Support coordinator can also be added to the team.
- The Guidance Team is a group of voluntary teachers and educational advisers who are skilled to coach and listen to our students. They cover all language sections across the Secondary cycle. They intervene on an individual level and on a class level covering all kinds of topics whenever that seems necessary. They work closely with the advisers, the Care Team and the school psychologists. They respect professional secrecy, which means they only talk about their student coaching inside a professional context. This is different from the school psychologists, whose work implies confidentiality.

You can find the [members of our Guidance Team](#) on the posters in school or on the Teams group of your year.

- The Flag Team is our anti-sexual harassment group. If someone is the witness or the victim of transgressive behaviour in our school, they can fill out an online form, that can be found all over the school and in the school agenda. This form is confidential but not anonymous. It is also available on the Teams of every student's year group (S1 to S7).

The information transmitted via this form is of course confidential and only the members of the FLAG Team have access to this data.

- The Cell 180° is a group of staff members trained to help struggling students using the techniques and principles of the Palo Alto School. The Care Team can decide to ask a member of this team to do a follow-up of a case, but staff members can also ask the advice of the team members to help them guide a student with a less serious problem.

The 180° turn applied to the phenomenon of bullying by Emmanuelle Piquet¹ is drawn from the thinking of the Palo Alto school, according to which there are never any instructions for use in the field of human relations, the boundaries of which are fluid and therefore difficult to define. The principles of this school enable us to shed light on what we repeatedly try in our relationships and what doesn't work, and from there to think about how to do exactly the opposite, which can give access to new resources, new possibilities not previously considered:

- 1. It's not so much the problem itself as the actions taken to solve it that maintain or amplify it.*
- 2. Successfully halting these futile attempts is the key to solving the problem.*

A group of teachers and educators from our school received a four-day training course on the theoretical foundations of the Palo Alto School and their application to the field of relationships in the school environment, and more specifically to bullying.

Through a series of rigorous interviews, the proposal is to work with them to identify the vicious circles that imprison a bullied pupil, to create a tailor-made response strategy with them and to train them to use it.

For this to work, the adults helping must be able to benefit from regular supervision.

- The Distress Intervention Team is a group of staff members trained by the Centre du Prévention du Suicide in dealing with suicidal thoughts and self-harm. They know how to assess the urgency of a case and are able to have conversations with the students concerned to guide them to the right helplines.
- Our school psychologists also have a crucial role in dealing with mental health realities both in terms of supporting individuals, but also in working with entire classes and/or groups of pupils who are affected by such realities.

Why see a psychologist ?

Many pupils still think that seeing a psychologist is for crazy or sick people only. They do not want to be considered as such by their peers and thus prefer to say that they do not need it. Others are afraid because they do not know what an interview with a psychologist might entail. Others simply feel ashamed because they are not able to manage a (stressful) situation and prefer to hide and keep their distress to themselves. Nevertheless, we are all – whether you are a child, a teenager, a young person, an adult or older – confronted with events that might feel painful, that we cannot accept, that we cannot serenely overcome and for which we need help. Discussing the situation with a third party, and in particular with a psychologist, mostly enables one to view it from another perspective, to find solutions and to overcome what we previously felt as unbearable. Stress linked to exams but also to any conflict with friends, school mates, parents; grief or separation (parental couple or other), fear of the future, of going to university, of leaving the family environment, of starting a new life project are

¹ *Emmanuelle Piquet is a psycho-practitioner. She sees patients for consultations, particularly on issues of child and adolescent suffering, and trains professionals in these areas in Europe. She also founded the Chagrin Scolaire centre, which specialises in interventions to alleviate suffering at school*

all situations which might provoke anxiety, anguish or even powerlessness. Contacting a psychologist might not be so obvious as it is difficult to recognize that we feel lost and helpless in a painful situation and that we need help to overcome it.

What about the confidentiality of what is discussed ?

There are no such things as «small» or «great» sorrow. Any suffering is real since it is felt. Any suffering can be shared and heard as part of an interview with a psychologist because they guarantee neutrality and confidentiality which, in turn, enable one to express the most painful words in all safety. Neutrality means that there is never any judgement on what is being said; confidentiality ensures that the content of what is discussed will never be shared without the person's approval. The goal of psychotherapy but also of interviews with school psychologists is to increase one's freedom. This process enables to gradually break free from one's beliefs, fears and judgment from others to finally learn, through life events, to trust oneself and to find, within and with oneself, the freedom to be who we are and do what we enjoy doing.

Why are there psychologists at school and how do their work differ from external psychologists?

Contrary to the Belgian school system, for example, where schools work in collaboration with a psycho-medical-social service (PMS) attached to their commune, the European school system chose to hire psychologists for each of their schools (one part-time in the Primary cycle, another part-time in the Secondary cycle). Our school is an exception as we actually have an additional part-time post for the Secondary cycle.

It is therefore a political will to view children and teenagers not only in terms of educational skills and competences but also and mainly as people who have their own personal affective and emotional realities which are not always easy to manage in order to grow serenely. The aim of having psychologists at school is to take care of these emotional realities so that they do not hinder the healthy evolution of our pupils when confronted to painful or anxiety-provoking events. If, at school, psychologists never perform therapeutic work, they make sure, through successive interviews, that the painful situation for which they are consulted does calm down. If these interviews are not sufficient and the pupil continues to suffer, the school psychologist will help the pupil to understand that they need to start therapeutic work outside of school in order to find (back) the serenity necessary for the freedom of being and doing. When the pupil is underage, this therapeutic work outside of school is started with the approval and follow-up of the legal representatives. The role of the school psychologists is therefore to ensure the wellbeing of the pupils, whether it be educational or personal (psychological, relational or family support) because when someone feels right in their life and in what they do, they do it well, with pleasure and they take pride in it.

What is the relation between learning and wellbeing?

Finally, the school is a place to learn (in terms of knowledge but also of relationships). Learning is a nonlinear process. There are moments of success and moments of failure. When a child learns to walk, they must fall in order to learn to get up, and it is because they keep the will to get up after each fall that they finally gain the necessary balance, and thus the confidence and the ability to go forward. The school psychologists are there to accompany the pupils throughout these steps. Everyone is welcome and will be treated with respect and benevolence.

What about pupil's consent?

According to the reality that is brought to us, we discuss together the possible actions to implement (at school or personally) but we never act without the pupil's consent. The only exception to this rule is when the psychologists consider that the pupil is in (physical, emotional, relational or psychological) danger, in which case they have the duty to inform both the school management in charge of the safety of the pupils at school, and the parents or legal representatives who are legally in charge of the children's safety until their majority. In this case, the pupils concerned will of course be notified.

Which are the psychologists' qualifications?

Psychologists must have a university degree in psychological and educational sciences and must have taken many legally recognized and validated specialization courses before they can practice. Their registration to the Psychologists' Commission, accessible to everyone, guarantees the validity of their qualifications and experience. The school psychologists are no exception to this rule.

How can someone contact the psychologists and who can contact them?

As previously said, every member of the school community and the pupils in particular are welcome to their office. Everyone has the right and thus the legitimacy to feel in pain at a given moment and to ask the psychologists for help. All appointment requests are met in a timely manner according to the psychologists' and the help seeker's schedule. It is of course possible to come to the appointment once classes have started to ensure full discretion. Please cancel your appointments if you cannot attend so as to enable other pupils waiting for an appointment to benefit from it. To make an appointment with the psychologists, you can find all the necessary data in the school planner.

4. INTERVENTION OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

EEB2 also puts at the disposal of students and parents a number of contacts outside the school, in case someone prefers to look for help outside the school.

Personal problems	
pms.1060@stgilles.brussels 02/ 563 11 00	A place where young people and/or their families can be welcomed, listened to and talked to. Free of charge.
https://psybru.be/fr_or/nl	Local psychological care in the Brussels region
https://kooth.com	Online anonymous free help platform
https://www.tele-onthaal.be	24h/24. Telephone helpline and chat on various topics 106: Nederlands 107: Français 108: Deutsch 02 648 40 14: English

www.chsbelgium.org 02 648 40 14	Community help service
http://www.promojeunes-amo.be/ 02 218 27 86	Support in all types of situations: school problems, change of school or orientation, family or relationship difficulties, ...
www.abaka.be 02 640 07 11 0472 752 755 (also WhatsApp !)	Non-mandated crisis and support centre for teenagers aged 12 to 18
www.psychologytoday.com	To find a therapist in your neighborhood
https://emdr-belgium.be/	To find a trauma therapist in your neighborhood
www.caw.be 0800 13500	Social services Is life not going the way you want it to? CAW can help you move forward. Free, professional and confidential.
Negative thoughts and self-harm	
https://www.suicidestop.com Preventionsuicide.be	Prevention - in your language
www.113.nl	Prevention (NL, EN)
https://www.zelfmoord1813.be/ 1813	Looking for help? (NL, EN, FR)
103ecoute.be 103	Free and anonymous call number available 7/7 from 10 AM to 2 PM
112	Emergency number
Alcohol, drugs, medicine & gambling	
www.Druglijn.be 078 15 10 20	For all questions about alcohol, drugs, pills, gaming and gambling
https://www.drugrehab.com/addiction/	Helplines and information about drugs
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/quitting-smoking-under-18s-guide/	Quit smoking
Cannabis Clinic https://www.chu-brugmann.be/fr/med/psy/cannabis.asp 02 477 35 20	Information, assessment and referral clinic for cannabis users
Sexual harassment	
https://www.violencessexuelles.be (NL, FR, DE)	If you need help after having been the victim of sexual violence
http://www.320ruehaute.be 02/535.47.14	Multidisciplinary Center for Family Planning and Sexual Health in Woluwe-St-Pierre

www.sosviol.be 0800 98 100	An anonymous phone line (FR/EN)
https://www.brook.org.uk/	Information on sexual health
www.police.be/5343/fr/contact 101	Local police station
1712	Helpline for questions about any form of violence or abuse

All this information can also be found in the school agenda.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

If pupils or parents share personal information with an EEB2 staff member, this information will be treated in a confidential way. In the following 2 cases (danger to the pupil himself/herself and danger to others, including the staff members themselves), the staff members have the obligation to contact the Director and the medical and/or psychological services of our school. Depending on the needs but also taking into account the wishes of the pupils and parents concerned, they will decide on the follow-up and possibly contact the parents, the responsible adults or the emergencies.

The EEB2 staff members have a duty of discretion, i.e. the information needed to support the pupil is shared with the educational advisers and teachers concerned; other information is not. Psychologists are bound by professional confidentiality, as you can read above.

6. LEARN TO LIVE @EEB2: RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

A separate policy has been issued for some specific special problem cases. You can consult them on our [website](#).

- 8 Life Skills Program
- Anti-bullying policy
- [FLAG-policy](#) (policy against sexually transgressive behaviour)
- Suicide prevention policy
- Substance abuse policy
- Guidelines for coping with self-harm
- Child Protection Policy
- LGBTQIA+ Charter

7. SOURCES

- <https://eeb2.be/en/our-school-plans-regulations-policies/>