St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Peer Mentoring Policy

This policy is the responsibility of the Deputy Head: Pastoral and Boarding and Head of Boarding.

Last review: February 26

Next review: February 28

Overview

Mary Ward said, 'I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much.' She established schools for girls so that they could be sufficiently free to make choices which might lead to the discernment of their vocation in life and to become more fully human and fully alive. Peer mentoring at St Mary's School, Cambridge (the School) is intended to contribute to the development of freedom in pupils, enabling them to make the most of their education, socially, academically, and spiritually. Mary Ward believed discernment was achieved in community and the peer mentoring programme aims to enable pupils to feel comfortable within the 'open circle' of the school community.

Advantages for the mentees

Peer mentoring can assist pupils in easing transitions through school. Inevitably as pupils progress, their friendship groups change and the difficulties which can sometimes be associated with this can be effectively eased by peer mentoring. Sometimes, when a pupil is a little uncomfortable, they think that talking to a teacher might make it seem of greater importance so having a peer mentor means that smaller issues can be addressed without embarrassment. Ultimately, it allows each pupil the opportunity to talk to, gain friendship and support from, an older pupil.

Advantages for the mentors

Similarly, from the other perspective, it allows further opportunities for responsibility and personal growth for the pupils in the older years who act as mentors. Peer mentors should be excellent role models for younger pupils, encouraging them to think about the needs of others and being prepared to give some of their time and friendship. They see the enjoyment the mentors experience thorough community service. It also encourages the mentors to behave responsibly as they are aware of their function as role models through the training. It can be a rewarding experience boosting feelings of confidence, self-worth and self-esteem by increasing responsibility and involvement in school life. It promotes caring and support networks, which are cornerstones of our pastoral care.

Peer mentoring aids the development of each pupil involved, whether as a mentor or as a mentee. This in turn encourages the pupils to be more independent, confident, responsible, and prepared to meet the challenges they will find outside of school as well as within.

Academic Advantages

Pupils gain the most out of the educative process if they feel comfortable within the groups with which they study. Discussion within lessons and outside helps in the development of understanding and analysis. Peer mentoring enables pupils to develop their relationships with friends and encourages discussion of work. Work is a topic which often arises with the mentors and engaging in such conversations then becomes viewed as a mature thing to do. The peer mentoring scheme increases the security, confidence, and happiness of the pupil which, in turn, enhances their academic successes.

Objectives

It fosters:

- an atmosphere conducive to effective learning
- respect and consideration towards others, tolerance, friendliness
- self-esteem, self-confidence, a sense of personal responsibility, independence and personal worth and dignity
- development of healthy lifestyles
- responsibility for their physical well being
- positive relationships with others

It provides:

- opportunity for personal and social development within individuals
- additional support and encouragement with aspects of schoolwork
- positive participation in school life
- a forum in which pupils from different year groups can forge friendships

Procedure and Structure of the mentoring programme

In the summer term, pupils in Years 10,11 and Sixth Form are invited to apply to be a mentor by completing an application form and then selected for interview where the expectations of such an important role are explained. A training day is held in September allowing for training to take place. Mentors sign a 'Confidentiality Contract' with the aim of protecting both the mentees and mentors as well as demonstrating the importance of the role they are undertaking.

Peer Mentors are assigned mentees by the Head of Year 7. Formal sessions are set up between Year 7 pupils and their mentors every Thursday morning break unless there are examinations in Wigmore Hall. These are supervised by the Head of Year and the Peer Mentoring Co-ordinator. After the pupils have been introduced, they can gain access to their mentor/mentees whenever they feel that it is necessary or desirable in addition to the formal sessions.

Peer mentors may also be required to mentor pupils on a one-to-one basis. Heads of Year identify pupils whom they feel might benefit from peer mentoring. The Heads of Year contact the Peer Mentoring Co-ordinator who In turn identifies appropriate mentors. The mentor(s) meet with the Heads of Year who explains the issue(s) and the mentor then arranges to meet the pupil at a mutually convenient time. The number of one-to-one sessions will differ depending on the pupil and the issue.

The mentors themselves are supported by the Peer Mentoring Co-ordinator, form tutors and Heads of Year.

Training

A training day is held in September for all new peer mentors and delivered jointly by the Peer Mentoring Co-ordinator and Wellbeing Co-ordinator. All mentors are provided with a training manual to take away and keep. In addition, on-going training and support is provided every half term, when the peer mentors come together as a group to share ideas and support each other. The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator is present at these meetings to offer support and guidance as well as via email, outside of these meetings.