

Oakfield School

34. Homesickness Policy



To be Reviewed:	November 2019
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GUIDANCE FOR STAFF: RE HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MANAGE HOMESICKNESS

Introduction

Homesickness is common in adults, teenagers and young children. However, the intensity to which it affects each group varies and as teenagers and young people are obviously less mature than the adults, the anxiety levels can be much higher. Homesickness is psychological, a feeling of loneliness experience through on parting with favourite objects, parents, friends, familiar environment and moving to a new one.

Why do people feel homesick?

Familiar surroundings, people and routines provide people with a sense of security and comfort. In a new place people may find themselves missing the comforts of home and loved ones. Some people may only feel a little sadness, loneliness and anxiety. Others may feel physical symptoms like stomach aches or headaches or even become truly depressed. Most of the time, once the surroundings and people become more familiar feelings of homesickness usually go away.

If people have additional stress in their lives such as break-ups, feuds or a death in the family, then homesickness can become more intense. When coping with loss or change, children and young people can feel especially attached to things that bring comfort and will miss them more when not around them.

How do we manage the issue?

When children are going to experience a new environment, every effort should be made to ensure they are prepared for the event. At Oakfield School this is accomplished through visits to the school prior to the admission process where parents/carers and the child are given a further insight into life at Oakfield School. These visits will allow everyone to familiarise themselves with the surroundings and also give the children a chance to meet with staff. Parents are often very anxious about their children coming to Oakfield, particularly as boarders, so care should be given to parents as well, as children can very often pick up on parent's anxieties.

Parents and staff should make sure the child knows when they will go home and who will be caring for them. Accentuate the positive aspects but also let them know it is okay to have mixed feelings, ie, you can be excited about something but also scared and apprehensive at the same time.

Night time is often the hardest time for children to be away from home. A favourite stuffed animal (teddy), blanket, pillow or radio can be comforting.

Ensure children are fully aware they can contact parents by telephone or even email. Parents should be encouraged to visit their child during the week, particularly if they are a weekly boarder.

When children come to Oakfield School they should be made fully aware who is available to listen and help with any problem whatsoever.

During the initial admission process the school can be made fully aware if the young person is susceptible to homesickness. This can be recorded in the young person's file/Individual Behaviour Education Care Plan (IBEC) and monitored accordingly. All efforts should be made to make the young person welcome and quickly feel part of the school.

Almost everyone has felt homesick at some time. It's worth remembering that there's a good side to homesickness too. It shows that you have family and friends worth missing and a place you want to return to!

This Policy was reviewed November 2017

Signed:

Lee Morfitt (Chair of Governors)