

##### BRYMORE ACADEMY

**HOMESICKNESS POLICY**

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| **Created by:** Kirsty Tatum | |
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| **Approved by:** | |
| **Review date:** Autumn 2018 | |
| **Signature of Chair of Governors** | **Signature of Headteacher** |

Homesickness is the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home. It can be one of the most distressing parts of boarding school life, becoming physically and emotional taxing for all of those involved. It must be remembered that homesickness, in a vast majority of cases, will be temporary while a child adapts to new routines and environments; it is normal. The reward for overcoming levels of homesickness can help build a child’s confidence and ability to cope in new situations and life, gaining new experiences.

**Preparation**

Boarding at Brymore is firmly based on the core principles of family living. We strive for an open, inclusive and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils are encouraged to fulfill their academic and personal potential; where individual needs are addressed and achievements within all areas of the school are celebrated. Homesickness can affect any pupil at any time in their boarding school life; and is not always limited to new pupils or just the younger pupils joining boarding for the first time. However, there are certain factors that can may make some boys more susceptible than others.

**Symptoms**

When any new boy starts at Brymore, the boarding team will be looking out for signs of homesickness. Where some symptoms may be more obvious, such as crying and wanting to return home, others may not be as obvious as the child tries to cover up their unhappiness.

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| **Quick & Clear Symptoms** | **Other symptoms that are not always obvious** |
| Lengthy phone calls home during times of unstructured activities, before breakfast, lunch time or after prep | Focusing solely on their school work, without taking a break, an almost obsessional devotion |
| Tiredness | Lack of concentration in class from extreme tiredness |
| Exhaustion | Behaviour is hyperactive, almost over the top |
| Lack of eating | Attempt to dominate friendship groups |
| Frequent and repeated bouts tearfulness | Over attachment to house parent, gap tutors, teachers or other adults |
| Isolation - not willing to join in activities |  |
| Repeated stomach ache or headaches |  |
| Walking around school in a withdrawn fashion |  |

This list is not exhaustive and homesickness can be displayed very differently in different children, and symptoms may not always be visible in the first few weeks so it’s important to discuss any concerns you may have around a child’s change in behaviour with boarding team, parents and the pastoral manager.

**Staff Actions**

Dealing with homesickness is not a quick fix and can be very time consuming for all those involved. However, staff need to be prepared for the long haul, especially for those students who may take weeks or even months to reduce the feeling of homesickness which will be physically and emotional tiring for all those involved.

**Take time** - It’s important that the child feels that you have understood their homesickness is a real and a normal feeling as well as you needing to show sympathy for how they are feeling. However there will be times when you will need to be firm.

**Be positive** - Ask them about what has gone well in their day. Take an interest in any work they have completed, activities they have taken part in, what’s coming up that evening and don’t dwell on the negatives.

**Buddies & Dorms** – A buddy is assigned to dorms from older year groups and you need to ensure the buddy checks in with the student on a regular basis and shares their own experiences of when they have been feeling homesick or wanting to go home. Friends in their dorm can help by getting them involved and walking to prep, meals and activities together.

**Keep them busy** - Brymore offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities right the way through from the end of school until registration. Encourage them to join in and become involved in as many clubs, team sports or general house activities and even ask them for suggestions of future sports they may be interested in.

**Communication** - Contact with parents/carers is important as a boy will often call when feeling homesick and exaggerate the situation or how they are feeling, even if they have just taken part in an activity and enjoyed themselves. Work with the child and parents and establish a good time to call and keep it regular so they don’t find themselves calling home every time they have spare, unstructured time such as before breakfast or evening registration.

**Parent Involvement**

**Preparation** - Parents will have a greater knowledge on how to deal with their own child and solutions that may have worked in the past that could be implemented with the boarding house. If parents are expecting an emotional call from their son, they will be better equipped to deal with it and move the conversation onto more positive questions about their son’s day. Preparing by visiting on the open days, interviews, tour of the school and attending the transition days will help the child and parents understand the routines of daily life at Brymore.

**Home comforts** - Night time will be the hardest for the boys as they may be sharing for the first time, mum is not there to say goodnight and experiencing different sounds. A favourite stuffed animal or blanket from home can be comforting, along with personalising their own spaces with pictures of family members, pets, and fun times together.

**Communications** - Encourage parents to set a phone call time or limit the phone calls. The child may be able to hear anxiety in the parents’ voices, so encourage conversations via email, social media or letters about positive school events or classes they have enjoyed. These will help stop the child from realising the parents are missing them just as much as they are them. It is good practise for our house parents to phone home to put parents’ minds at rest that the homesickness is being monitored and that ignoring a call first thing in the morning when they will expect an upset child is acceptable as the child learns that life at home will not stop for them and will slowly learn to move forward. Parents should be discouraged from making escape clause deals including “see how it goes until half term”, as the child will use these deals to exploit the situations to make the parents feel guilty and focus on that point in time rather than allowing themselves to become fully involved in boarding life.

NEEDS A FINAL PARAGRAPH Could be a quick fire guide/checklist to summarise above “what to do”.

Flow chart to follow if child is homesick.