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Special sessions, buddy systems in city schools for mental well-being of students

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Kolkata: From engaging student counsellors to forming student peer groups and holding special sessions, city schools are stepping up measures to spot behavioural changes in students, especially those in adolescence. Most schools in and around the city are focusing on the mental well-being of their students, particularly those in distress.

Taking mental well-being seriously, almost all schools have a school counsellor and conduct special sessions and one-to-one interactions. This allows students to voice issues that disturb them mentally—concerns they feel unable to share with anyone else, including their parents. Additionally, some schools check pupils' bags to remain vigilant about their day-to-day activities.

National English School principal Mousumi Saha said, "We have a council-recognised counsellor and council-trained senior teachers. We conduct a weekly one-hour interactive session on a regular basis. We also reserve time during parent-teacher meetings for interaction regarding mental health awareness. We are getting a great re-

'COLLECTIVE EFFORT NEEDED'



Posters on display at various locations at South City International School for awareness building

sponse—students reveal concerns when conversing with experts"

South City International School principal Vishal Bhandari said daily bag checking is a standard practice at their school. They closely monitor children's behavioural patterns and take action accordingly. "In case any unusual or concerning behaviour is observed, the matter is addressed promptly. Wherever required, the student is re-

ferred to the school counsellor, and the parents are informed so that the school and family can work together towards the student's well-being."

It's truly an unprecedented incident. As far as I know, the context of the incident was a normal dispute, so how it escalated needs to be analysed first. Mental well-being is something that needs a collective effort and cannot be improved overnight. In this matter, everyone has a significant role to play if we actually want to see change

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St. Augustine's Day School, Shyambagar principal Rodney Borneo said, "Bag checking is the responsibility of peer leadership in the school. Parents are crucial partners because students spend six hours at school and 18 hours at home. We must balance the influence

of both environments."

Silverpoint School principal Su-charita Roychowdhury said they have introduced a 'buddy system' to monitor students' mental health. "This buddy system comprises small teams of boys and girls who discuss their problems. If they identify an issue, they guide their friends or alert us so we can intervene. Times have changed, and to resolve their issues, we must address the root cause."

Newtown School principal Satabdi Bhattacharya said they prioritise awareness-building among students, supported by peer groups that identify issues and refer students to the school counsellor as needed. Biology and geometry boxes are stored in school labs to minimise safety risks, she said.

Shovona Mukherji, a school counsellor, said, "Mental well-being must be discussed without stigma. Parents need to come forward and collaborate with educators and psychologists for their ward's mental well-being. Prevention is better than cure, and even minor behavioural changes must be addressed promptly and properly for assessment."