



Mental Health POLICY

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1.0 Policy statement

At Easterside Academy, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all pupils, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows pupils' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

2.0 Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining Easterside Academy’s approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

3.0 Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and pupil welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

4.0 Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Mental Health Designated Lead/s
 - SENCO
- Pastoral Staff (Care Team)
 - Mental Health First Aid Champions
- Designated Safeguarding Leads
 - PSHE Coordinator

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of pupil, in the first instance they should speak to a member of the academy’s Care Team.

If there is a concern that the pupil is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school’s child protection procedures should be followed.

If the child presents a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

5.0 Individual Care Plans

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff.

6.0 Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our pupils need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and our peer mentoring programme.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing> Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote pupils' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing pupils who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting pupils to support any of their friends who are facing challenges. **See Section 14 for Supporting Peers**

7.0 Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

8.0 Sources or support at school and in the local community

School Based Support

- **1 to 1 mentoring support from a member of the Care Team.**

This can be accessed through either a parent or pupil request linked to a specific need. E.g. The child may be coping with the loss of a family member, the breakdown of their parents' relationship or concerns around attending school.

The member of the Care Team will spend quality time at least once a week with the pupil on individualised activities to meet the pupil's needs.

Who is it for? Any child usually from Year 1 to Year 6.

- **THRIVE intervention with a qualified THRIVE practitioner.**

The Thrive Approach supports pupils emotional and social development and helps them feel happy and secure, able to enjoy friendships, relate well to others and be ready and able to learn. Thrive is a special way of working with all children that helps to develop their social and emotional wellbeing, enabling them to engage with life and learning. It supports them in becoming more self-assured, capable and adaptable. It can also address any troubling behaviours providing a firm foundation for academic attainment.

Who is it for? The Thrive Approach is used throughout the whole school however can be accessed for 1 to 1 support with a THRIVE practitioner. This is usually identified by the class teachers through THRIVE 'screening which happens each term. Parents must be informed and give consent before THRIVE sessions on a 1 to 1 can commence.

- **Being Outside Makes Us Happy Inside.**

The wellbeing intervention run by the academy's Care Team explores the therapeutic properties of natural environments and how emotional literacy and mental wellbeing can be explored in the outdoors.

The intervention works with children to reduce stress and anxiety in the outdoors and helps to find out about how working in nature makes us feel inside.

Who is it for? It is for all children in school but can also be used to support children who have been experiencing friendship issues. The sessions can be tailored for each group to explore any problems they may have regarding friends and their peers.

- **Happy to Be Us**

Who is it for? This is a 6 week programme that aims to develop children's confidence, social skills and how they communicate. Children in KS1 and KS2 can attend. The programme gives them a better understanding of what is meant by social skills and helps them to develop them further.

The sessions are delivered in a small group of children of varying ages exploring respect, making friends, teamwork, supporting each other, problem solving, goal setting, turn taking, creativity, self-awareness and self-expression.

- **Play Therapy from ‘Playing for Real Ltd’.**

Play therapy for children aged 3-11 who may have or be suffering with emotional distress.

The service which is bought in by the academy offers:

One to one individual play therapy sessions, Structured play therapy sessions with integrated techniques for children displaying concerning or harmful behaviours.

Joint play therapy sessions with siblings and parents/carers.

Consultation and assessment to mums, dads, carers and professionals with regards to children's development, trauma, understanding children's emotions, managing challenging behaviour, and attachment issues.

Who is it for? Any child/young person or family who may have experienced bereavement/loss of relationships, parental separation, anger management, children who are ill/disabled and/or their siblings, children who have witnessed or been subject to domestic violence, children of parents with mental health difficulties, children/young people who may or have experienced any form of abuse or neglect.

- **InsideOut MH**

The InsideOut team works with, and in, school, delivering the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing and will support children and young people experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues.

Voluntary and community sector providers have formed a partnership to create the InsideOut Mental Health Support Team. The partnership members include.

- The Link
- Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind
- The Junction Foundation
- A Time 4 you
- ABC Counselling
- Changing Futures North East

The partnership is fully supported and working in collaboration with NHS TEWV and will work directly into schools alongside existing provision, to support with mild to moderate mental health and wellbeing needs. This partnership approach will help embed a culture of openness around mental health, forge stronger links between education settings and the wider Mental Health offer in South Tees and ensure children and young people can access appropriate support and stay in education.

Local Support

In Middlesbrough, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the **CAMHS partnership**, a group of providers specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

<https://fis.middlesbrough.gov.uk/kb5/middlesbrough/fsd/service.page?id=B15SAr6HAk>

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9.0 Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should alert (insert name of mental health first aider).

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to, or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

10.0 Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school nurses and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working closely with Middlesbrough Council Children's Services, Middlesbrough CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach;
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs;
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Middlesbrough CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

11.0 Managing disclosures

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on the pupil's CPOMS record, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made

- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

12.0 Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a pupil to either someone within or outside of the school, then if appropriate this will be first discussed with the pupil. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

It is important to safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the pupil. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

13.0 Whole school approach

13.1 Working with parents/carers

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place?
- Who should be present – pupils, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record on CPOMS and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

13.2 Supporting parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

14.0 Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse)

15.0 Headstart

HeadStart – giving all Middlesbrough’s children and young people the necessary support to build resilience to achieve good emotional health.

The aim of the HeadStart school programme is to make sure that children and young people are happy and enjoy their time at school. There are many things that impact on the emotional well-being of children; falling out with friends, the pressures of social media, keeping up with studies. We want all our pupils to have good emotional health, to have the skills and confidence to cope, solve problems, achieve well and be happy.

HeadStart is a whole school approach where everyone feels safe and comfortable to be themselves, learn and develop in a positive environment and access support when needed.

HeadStart services within school are:

Staff development – our staff have access to training that enables them to be able to better respond to the emotional needs of pupils.

Headstart Reach partnership – delivering support to pupils who may be struggling at an early stage to stop issues from escalating.

Transition – support offered for young people to make the move from primary to secondary as easy as possible.

HeadStarters – a training pathway for young people to develop school based projects and support the delivery of HeadStart. Easterside Academy have trained ‘Headstarters’ within school to support peers and promote wellbeing.

Our school is committed to the HeadStart principles to allow every young person to have the best possible experience and outcomes throughout their school journey.

16.0 Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep pupils safe. At least one nominated member of staff has received professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more pupils.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Principal who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

17.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is Spring Term 2026.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. This is the responsibility of the Principal.

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.