



Victory Park Academy

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

LAST REVIEW DATE		REVIEW PERIOD	
NEXT REVIEW DATE		OWNER	
TYPE OF POLICY		APPROVAL LEVEL	

1.0 Introduction

‘Mental health’ is a ‘state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a positive contribution to society.’

Whilst awareness of issues relating to mental health are now more widely publicised, documented and discussed, there is a need in schools (and society in general) to ensure that the issues are clearly understood and managed in a proactive and sustainable way. To this end, the Academy’s broad approach to mental health centres around three key areas:

- Clearly defining ‘mental health’ to dispel myths, misunderstandings or misconceptions which could inadvertently act as barriers to progress.
- Promoting and establishing a culture of resilience.
- Supporting pupils in managing issues relating to mental health.

2.0 Pupils at Risk

All pupils (indeed all people) are likely to encounter times in their lives when their mental health is challenged. However, some pupils are more at risk of developing mental health problems than others e.g. looked after children (LAC), children with SEND and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These risks can relate to the child themselves, to their family, or to their community or life events outlined in Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools.

3.0 Resilience

In very simple terms, ‘resilience’ is the ‘ability to successfully adapt to the challenges in life’. The Academy is committed to promoting and establishing a culture of resilience which focuses on developing the following in pupils:

- Self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Social skills and positive relationships.
- Emotional intelligence.
- Adaptability.
- Self-reflection and self-appraisal.
- Risk taking and problem solving.

4.0 Identifying Mental Health Issues

Mental health issues may be:

- Short-term, issue based, e.g. exam anxiety, or based around a specific, temporary circumstance.
- Long-term, issue based, e.g. bereavement, the effects of physical health problems or disability or bullying.
- Long-term, deep rooted, e.g. complex psychological disorders that need professional intervention. The main mental health symptoms identified by or disclosed to a member of staff are:
 - Anxiety.
 - Self-harm.
 - Eating disorders.
 - Depression.

These often interlink or overlap and may be serious or moderate, short- or long-term. Any or all of these may be noticed by staff or may be disclosed directly by pupils, or their parents, to a member of staff.

4.1 Self-harm

Harm to oneself in order to cope.

Symptoms include: cutting, burning, consuming poison, scratching, banging, punching, hitting, biting, eating disorders and substance abuse. It is usually a coping mechanism rather than a precursor to suicide.

4.2 Eating Disorders

Diagnosable eating disorders include Anorexia Nervosa (limiting eating excessively); Bulimia Nervosa (a cycle of binge-purge - the purge may be vomiting, laxatives or overuse of exercise); Binge Eating Disorder (binging without purging) or Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorders (OSFED).

Eating Disorder	Symptoms
Anorexia	Low weight, fear of weight gain; very ordered, controlling or rule-based eating;

	skipping lunch or being involved in other activities at lunchtime.
Bulimia	Frequent visits to the toilet, especially after eating; obsessive attitude to exercise.
Binge Eating Disorder	Weight increases despite publicly healthy choices (binging in secret); shame and guilt.

4.3 Anxiety

Anxiety ranges from ‘generalised anxiety disorder’, which causes general, non-specific anxiety, to panic disorder, social phobia and other phobias, OCD and separation anxiety disorder.

Symptoms include: withdrawal or reluctance to be involved in unexpected or unplanned activities; shaking and high levels of hyperactivity; difficulties in social situations.

4.4 Depression

Feeling low or sad is a common feeling for children and adults, and a normal reaction to experiences that are stressful or upsetting. When these feelings dominate and interfere with a person’s life, it can become an illness.

Symptoms include: withdrawal from social groups, isolation and a reluctance to engage; apathy and/or excessive tiredness.

5.0 Referral

Any staff member who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should, in the first instance, speak to the pupil’s Mental Health Champion / Designated Safeguarding Lead. If a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed – refer to the Academy’s Safeguarding Policy.

If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

6.0 Supporting Pupils with Mental Health Issues

The Academy offers a range of support and services (both preventative and designed to offer support) with referral to other agencies as appropriate. These include:

- Education in resilience through PSHEE, assemblies and ‘drop-down’ sessions.
- Mental Health page on the Academy website.
- Resilience-based quotes placed around the Academy site.
- Staff mentoring.
- Peer mentoring.
- Referral to the School Nurse.
- Referral to the in-house BACP qualified counsellor.
- Details of external organisations – refer to section 6.1.

Other outside agencies that may also be involved include the pupil’s GP, CAMHS, as well as independent organisations and charities such as BEAT.

On occasions, support of a pupil with mental health issues may require an adjustment to their academic timetable. In such cases, the Academy will respond to the need of each child within the legal and school-set academic requirements that need to be met.

6.1 Organisations

- Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk self-help and contacts for those with anxiety disorders.
- B-eat: b-eat.co.uk The UK's leading charity supporting those affected by eating disorders and campaigning on their behalf.
- Campaign against Men Living Miserably (CALM): www.thecalmzone.net. Targeted at men aged 15-35 – Helpline: 0800 585858 Saturday-Tuesday 5.00 pm-midnight.
- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust: www.cwmt.org Awareness, information and resources for those who are depressed.
- <http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx> 24-hour Helpline: 0800 1111. Information, advice and emotional support for young people
- Cruse: www.cruse.org.uk. Bereavement care. They have a specific website for young people; www.rd4u.org.uk.

- Marie Collins Foundation: www.mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk UK charity enabling children who suffer sexual abuse and exploitation via internet and mobile technologies to recover and live safe, fulfilling lives.
- <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>
- [http://www.mind.org.uk/mental health a-z/8071 children and young people](http://www.mind.org.uk/mental_health_a-z/8071_children_and_young_people)
- Offering a range of material on all aspects of depression. Helpline Monday-Friday, 9.00 am-5.00 pm: 0300 123 3393.
- Mindfull: www.mindfull.org. An online service for people aged 11-17 providing support, information and advice about mental health and wellbeing.
- No Panic: www.nopanic.org.uk. Helpline for anxiety disorders and panic attacks: 10.00 am-10.00 pm every day: 0808 138 8889.
- OCD Action: www.ocdaction.org.uk. Information and support for OCD and related disorders such as Body Dysmorphic Disorder.
- Papyrus: www.papyrus-uk.org. Organisation looking at the prevention of young suicides.
- <http://www.rethink.org/>
- Samaritans: www.samaritans.org. Telephone 116123 for emotional support.
- <http://www.sane.org.uk/>
- SelfHarm UK: www.selfharm.co.uk A national project to support young people impacted by self-harm.
- Stamp Out Suicide: www.stampoutsuicide.co.uk Points of contact for those feeling emotionally vulnerable.
- Stem 4: www.stem4.org.uk Teenage mental health charity aimed at stemming commonly occurring mental health issues at an early stage.
- Students against Depression: www.studentsagainstdepression.org. Information and help for anyone feeling depressed, aimed particularly at students.
- www.depressioninteenagers.co.uk. Self-help strategies for those with depression and/or their friends.

- <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/>
- Youth Health Talk: www.youthhealthtalk.org. video interviews with young people's experiences of depression