



Emotional, Mental Health, and Wellbeing Policy

'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 fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'

(World Health Organization)

At Wisbech St Mary C of E Academy, we aim to promote positive mental health for our whole school community. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches. In addition to promoting positive mental health and well-being, we aim to both recognise and respond to mental health concerns or issues. Through developing and implementing a practical, relevant and effective emotional, mental health and wellbeing awareness policy, we can promote a safe and stable environment for members of our school community affected both directly, and indirectly by mental health concerns or issues.

Our policy describes our whole school approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. Our policy is intended as guidance for all staff, children and our wider school community. This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a child's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue, the SEND policy where a child has an identified special educational need and the behaviour policy where a child, again, has an identified behavioural need.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and well-being in all staff, children and the wider school community.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Alert staff and the wider school community to early warning signs of mental health concerns/issues.
- Provide support to staff and the wider school community who are working with children, and their families, with potential mental health issues /concerns.
- Provide support to staff, the wider school community, children, their peers and parents/carers, who are suffering from mental health issues.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all our staff, and wider school community, have a responsibility to promote the positive mental health and well-being, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Jaynie Lynch- Designated Safeguard Lead
- Vicki Bradshaw - Designated Safeguard Lead
- Amy Mistry - Mental Health/Well-being Lead and PSHCE Lead
- Beth Freeburn – SENDCO & Designated Safeguard Lead
- Jane Albutt - Well-being Team
- Audrey Embling - Well-being Team
- Julie Oliver – Well-being Team
- Sally Windsor - Well-being Team

In the first instance any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child, or colleague, should speak to the Mental Health / Well-being Lead. If there is a fear that a child is in imminent danger then the normal child protection procedures should be followed. If the child presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed. Where a referral to The Mental Health and well-being service is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Mental Health / Well-being Lead in collaboration with Beth Freeburn SENDCO.

Individual Well-being Plans

Where a well-being plan, pertaining to mental health is required for an individual, this should be drawn up involving the individual, the parents (where applicable) and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of the condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects or time effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHCE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort being taught but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We will follow the PSHCE Cambridgeshire Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner.

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our staff and wider school community to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our whole school training and safer schools ethos.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, the wider school community, children and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.

The support that is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the school reception, staff room, cloakroom and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support for all.

We will increase the chance of help-seeking by ensuring all understand:

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

Warning Signs

Anyone may become aware of warning signs which indicate an individual is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and anyone observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to Dawn Freeburn, our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing lead.

Possible warning signs include but are not limited to:

- 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.

Managing disclosures

Anyone may choose to disclose a concern about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, so all staff and the wider school community need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure. If an individual chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend/colleague to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. Staff should listen, rather than advise and the first thoughts should be of the individual's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures will be recorded in writing and held on the individual's confidential file. This should be done as soon as possible.

This written record should include:

- Date.
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made.
- Main points from the conversation.
- Agreed next steps.

This information should be shared with a DSL and the mental health lead, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. We should never promise to keep anything a secret. If we feel it is necessary for us to pass our concerns on about an individual then we should discuss with the individual:

- Who we are going to talk to.
- What we are going to tell them.
- Why we need to tell them.

We should never share information about an individual without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and/or a parent, (e.g. students up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm). It is always advisable to share disclosures, with a DSL. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the individual.

It ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the individual and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Where a child is the source of a concern, parents/carers must always be informed. We should always give children the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

Where an adult is the source of concern, we should give the adult an option of us informing e.g. a spouse, parent or other family member, for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Designated Safeguarding Leads, Miss Jaynie Lynch, Mrs Vicki Bradshaw, Mrs Sarah Hunt, Miss Beth Freeburn, Mrs Sarah Leuty or Mrs Audrey Embling must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student and other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect. We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing.

Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g., parent helplines and forums. We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many

questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

Supporting our peers

When an individual is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends/colleagues. Friends/colleagues often want to support but do not know how. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friend/colleagues may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the individual who is suffering and their parents (where applicable) with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends/colleagues to know and what they should not be told.
- How friends/colleagues can best support.
- Things friends/colleagues should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset.
- Where and how to access support for themselves?
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's/colleague's condition.
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues/concerns as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep an individual safe. We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal² provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

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 to developing situations with one or more individual.

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 mental health lead, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

This policy will be reviewed in November 2024.

Further notes or ideas