Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Our Mission

"Together we work as one family to ensure excellence for all."

Our Vision

To be an ambitious, inclusive, collaborative family of schools, ensuring fullness of life and excellence in education, whilst celebrating individuality.

Policy Reviewed and Adopted by Board of Directors:	Summer Term 2024
Date of Next Review:	Summer Term 2027
Responsible Officer:	Lindsey Vollans

Introduction
It is widely recognised that children's emotional health and wellbeing, influences their cognitive development and learning, as well as, their physical, social, health and mental wellbeing, into adulthood. At One Excellence Multi Academy Trust we are committed to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing amongst our pupils, their families, our staff members, directors and governors.

We understand that every one of us may experience challenges in life, which may make us feel vulnerable and impact on our mental health and wellbeing and where additional support to improve our mental health may be helpful.

We believe that all children, young people and adults have the right to be educated and work in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody.

This policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for 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 problems 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.

Mental Health – A definition
Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through to adulthood.

- Mental Health problems affect about 1 in 8 children and young people. They include anxiety, depression and conduct disorder and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives.
- 1 in 4 adults will experience mental health difficulties; at least half of these difficulties can be traced back to childhood

Staff
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. If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of pupil, in the first instance they should speak to the class teacher/key stage leader/Designated Lead.

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.

Policy Implementation

A Whole Approach to Mental Health & Wellbeing

We are committed to embedding a 'Whole School Approach' to improving positive mental health and wellbeing, based on evidence of what works alongside our experiences and knowledge and of how best we can support our children, families, staff and community. Such an approach moves beyond learning and teaching to pervade all aspects of our school life and has been found to be effective in bringing about and sustaining health benefits.

We believe that by promoting positive mental health in school we will:

- Have a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to mental health underpinned within all policies and practices
- Raise awareness as to how the whole school community can look after their own mental health and that of others
- Help to de-stigmatise mental health
- Support people and provide opportunities that enable everyone to reach their potential
- Strengthen relationships and provide opportunities for different ways of working
- Provide foundations for life-long learning
- Promote and strengthen resilience throughout the whole school community and empower everyone to face life's challenges

Our policy has been guided by 8 key principles in promoting emotional health and wellbeing that will support us in developing our whole school approach.

Source:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414908/Final_EHWB_draft_20_03_15.pdf

1. **Leadership & Management** – that supports and champions efforts that promotes emotional health and wellbeing?

We believe that mental health is everyone's business and we would hope to involve all staff, children and parents in the implementation of this policy.

There will be:

- A named lead for mental health promotion with the expectation that there is support and involvement and an ethos that 'mental health is everyone's business';
- A whole school approach to mental health which includes a self-assessment and baseline survey so we can measure impact ;
- A continued strong relationship with the Local Authority children's services and other local services;
- Clearly defined mental health links in school policies and therefore a commitment to review across key policy areas reflecting mental health and wellbeing including;

- Safeguarding,
- School Improvement Planning,
- Early Years,
- SEND,
- Behaviour,
- Anti-Bullying,
- Attendance,
- Teaching Policy,
- Equal Opportunities,
- Relationships, Sex, Health Education Policy.

We will follow both statutory guidance and good advice within.

- "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020" and
- "Promoting Health and Wellbeing of Looked after Children"
- "Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools" and
- "Counselling in Schools"

2. **School Ethos & Approach –** *one that promotes respect and values diversity*

We believe that the physical, social and emotional environment in which our staff and pupils spend a significant amount of time affects physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. We also believe that this environment may impact on attainment. Therefore, our relationships are critical in promoting wellbeing and in helping to engender a sense of belonging to and liking our school.

All schools within the Trust offer a learning environment that promotes and enhances positive mental health and where teaching staff and pupils can thrive. We will;

- Create an ethos and provide conditions that support positive behaviours for learning and for successful relationships;
- Provide an emotionally secure and safe environment that prevents any form of bullying or violence;
- Provide an environment where children feel empowered to talk about their feelings and concerns whether it be related to learning, school or home;

We believe that a mentally healthy environment is a place where the whole school community;

- Is involved in promoting positive mental health;
- Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health;
- Contributes towards the ethos of school;
- Fosters positive relationships across staff, pupils' parents/carers & community;
- Safe practice and safe culture,

- Emotional safe prevention of bullying and violence.

Understanding the link between mental health and behaviour
For some children, mental health problems manifest themselves in behaviour and we aim to fully support children so that emotional wellbeing is not impacted with our behaviour support strategies. Our strategies for behaviour will help schools to focus on creating an ethos and climate in schools to promote social and emotional skills. Our schools understand that mental health issues can bring about changes in a child's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, all of which could be an indication of an underlying problem. This can include for example being fearful or withdrawn; aggressive or oppositional; or excessive clinginess. Mental Health in Schools can help schools to identify children who might need additional support, and to put this support in place.

Our overall vison helps embeds a positive culture and ethos and aspirations for all our pupils to:
- Hold high self-esteem and be confident;
- Be actively involved in what happens in school;
- Have fewer disaffected pupils, disengaged from learning;
- Improve behaviour and attendance;
- Have fewer incidents of bullying;

3. Curriculum Teaching & Learning – *incorporating mental health into the curriculum and learning*

We believe a healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health through our bespoke curriculums and extended provision. Our school-based programmes of social and emotional learning have the potential to help our pupils, acquire the skills they need to make good academic progress as well as benefit pupil health and wellbeing. We are also committed to providing a curriculum that integrates the development of social and emotional skills within all subject areas (these skills include problem-solving, coping, conflict management / resolution and understanding and managing feelings, resilience, confidence, building self-esteem).

We have many ways of promoting positive mental health and wellbeing throughout our schools. We have specific aims of incorporating the area of mental health into our curriculum which will be supported through our commitment to work closely with the Mental Health Support Teams and wider offer within school.

- Enhancing school and classroom layout, facilities and resources;
- Recognising the background of individual pupils and their physical, social and emotional needs;
- Play and nurture groups;
- Individual timetables,
- Parents/carers groups;
- Differentiated learning activities,
- Establishing clear rules, routines and expectations about behaviour for learning and social cohesion;
- Encouraging positive, caring and supportive relationships;
- Consistent support for vulnerable children and those with SEND from teachers, teaching assistants, other external agencies when appropriate;
- An exciting and varied range of extra-curricular events, trips, visits, visitors;
- A bespoke curriculum with opportunities for intellectual, physical, creative and expressive development;
- Recognise a range of teaching and learning styles and how this may support children's progress and development;
- Encouraging independence, self-confidence and resilience in their learning;
- Using the SEAL materials to raise self-esteem and confidence levels;
- A bespoke curriculum;
- Information, advice and guidance on Understanding Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE);
- Opportunities for reflection and spiritual development through Art, Literature and the RE curriculum.

4. **Enabling Pupil Voice –** *We aim to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to express their views and influence decisions*

We believe that by involving pupils in decisions that impact on them can benefit their emotional health and wellbeing by helping them to feel part of the school and wider community and to have some control over their lives. We want our pupils to have a voice and gain beliefs in their own capabilities, making healthy lifestyle choices.

- Have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging;
- Have opportunities to participate in decision making;
- Have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements;
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified, developed and supported where possible;
- Have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others;
- Have opportunities to reflect;
- Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs;
- Have a right to be in an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well-cared for;
- Are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times.

5. **Staff Development in health and wellbeing –** *to support their own wellbeing and that of their pupils*

Staff are encouraged to think about and consider their own mental health and wellbeing, being role models for pupils and parents/carers and in promoting positive mental health. It is also important for our staff to access training to increase their knowledge of emotional wellbeing and to equip them to be able to identify mental health difficulties in our school community.

A mentally healthy environment is a place where staff:

- Have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way;
- Have a range of strategies that support their mental health e.g. a named person to speak to, signposting for support;
- Have recognition of their work life balance;
- Have the mental health and well-being of the staff reviewed regularly;
- Feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision making processes;
- Celebrate and recognise success;
- Are able to carry out roles and responsibilities effectively;
- Are provided with opportunities for CPD both personally and professionally;
- Have their unique talents and skills recognised and opportunities are provided for development;
- Can access proactive strategies and systems to support them at times of emotional needs in both the short term and the long term.

The school enhances staff motivation, learning and professional development through:

- Curriculum planning time within the school week (PPA) and to ensure it is bespoke to the needs of the children;
- Whole school training events, including Safeguarding, First Aid;
- Access to appropriate CPD;
- Involving all staff in decision making and proposed changes e.g. timing of the school day, frequency of reporting to parents, organisation of homework etc.
- Provision of non-contact time to allow for planning, delivery and evaluation of healthy school activities;
- Consultation on CPD and support needs through regular review;
- By providing opportunities for assessing the emotional health and wellbeing needs of staff, by providing support to enable staff to reflect on and to take actions to enhance their own wellbeing and by promoting a work-life balance for staff.

6. **Working with Parents/Carers - in supporting children's mental health –** *We will continue to work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing?*

We believe that the families of our pupils play a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. The school communities have established relationships with parents/carers – building trust and working effectively together. A mentally healthy environment is a place where parents/carers:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people's mental health;
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies;
- Are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed;
- Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support;
- Are clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working with partnerships with schools;
- Opinions are sought and valued and responded to;
- Strengths and difficulties are recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately.

We promote the involvement of parents/carers in the life and learning of our school and in supporting children's mental health through:

- Open policy across school to come and discuss any concerns/worries parents/carers may have regarding themselves, their children and or their families;
- Regular communication and involvement over pupil progress, behaviour and pastoral issues;
- Parent questionnaires which will include questions about their own and their child's emotional health and wellbeing;
- Invitations to consultation week to discuss their child's work as well as an open policy for visits outside of this time;
- Subject focus meetings e.g. reading, SATs, sports and theme weeks concerts, special events e.g. Book Week;
- Sharing information with parents regarding online bullying and signposting them to appropriate services.

We aim to focus support to parents and carers that actively support with parental mental health and wellbeing. As we aim to support all pupils and, where appropriate, their parents or carers (including adults with responsibility for looked after children). A range of support is on offer to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. School staff sometimes can support or it may be that external agencies are involved. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes through the offer of our Mental Health Support Teams or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners.

Parents have access to all school's policies on promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems through access to the school web-site.

7. **Targeted Support and Appropriate Referral** - *we aim to ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services*

As part of our overall approach to promoting positive mental health we are aware that for some young people more specific support will be helpful to enable improved mental health:

- We will provide specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional and behavioural problems;
- Schools and local authority children's services should work closely with child and adolescent mental health and other services to develop and agree local protocols;
- We will help to identify and assess with guidance from our colleagues, children and young people in line with the common assessment framework for children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress or behavioural problems;
- We will discuss options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an action plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach
- We will provide a range of evidence based interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs.

We are committed to working with external agencies, to develop clear guidelines for internal and external referrals

- Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information e.g. The Bungalow Project, CAMHS, EP, MAAT, Alliance;
- One Excellence Multi Academy Trust will play a significant role in supporting wellbeing alongside a wider support offer within the relevant Local Authorities;
- Links to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing 0-19 year-old service;
- Adopting a consultation type approach to discuss support needs for children and families so that they can get the right support at the right time;
- Transitional arrangements (as can be found in the Transition Guarantee) including days and events, sharing of information with secondary schools so that transitions will have reduced impact on mental health and wellbeing;
- For those children whose mental health has been impacted, we will ensure appropriate support is sought;
- Access to a range of services to support children identified with emotional and well-being issues e.g. Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language, TEWV (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley) which provides mental health and learning disabilities services across the above area, CAMHS, A Way Out, MHST's (Mental Health Support Teams).