



ALEC REED ACADEMY
PROUD TO LEARN

DRAFT

Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Last updated: April 2022
In the process of being approved by Governors

Policy Statement

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 our academy we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. The purpose of this policy is to lay out our response to our student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at those who may become vulnerable due either to a change in long term or short term circumstances.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the academy's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and staff, those with a specific relevant remit in the academy for this area include:

- Anne Franklin – Associate Principal (Head of Primary Phase and Cross Phase Links) and Designated Child Protection/ Safeguarding Lead
- Diane Jacobs – Deputy Designated Child protection/Deputy Safeguarding Lead
- Julie Porter - Deputy Designated Child protection/Deputy Safeguarding Lead and Primary SaFE Worker
- Julie Bockling – Academy Counsellor
- Nav Soor - Assistant Headteacher (Primary)
- Amanda Wingfield - Assistant Headteacher (Primary)
- Sheba Rafe - Assistant Headteacher (Primary)
- Trudy Puddle – Lead Behaviour Practitioner (Secondary)
- Helen Tinsley – Assistant Principal: KS3 (Secondary)
- Danielle Browne – Assistant Principal: KS4 (Secondary)
- Jonathan Souch – Assistant Principal: KS5 (Secondary)
- Ann Colgan – Assistant Principal: Inclusion and Line Manager of Citizenship and Guidance (Secondary)
- Fiona Gill - Primary SaFE Worker
- Jackie Larner – Secondary SaFE Worker and Mental Health First Aider
- Zoe Fleming – Secondary SaFE Worker
- Pam Hartnett – Secondary SaFE Worker
- Emma Guthrie – Secondary SaFE Worker
- Wendy Noble – Secondary SaFE Worker
- Jamie Dwaine – Post-16 SaFE Worker

Note: SaFE Worker = Student and Family Educational Worker

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the child's SaFE Worker in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officers or the head teacher/Principal. If the student 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.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the student's SaFE Worker.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for students causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents/carers and relevant health professionals. This can include but not limited to:

- Details of a student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side 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 students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum. To support this, students may also take part in bespoke workshops, form group activities and assemblies focused on positive mental health and wellbeing.

The specific emphasis is enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

In our teaching, we will follow the [PSHE Association Guidance](#)¹ to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Signposting

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

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as, corridors, year team offices, common rooms and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within assemblies, newsletters and relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of students seeking help by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who the help is aimed at
- How to access help
- When to access help
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

Academy staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 communicate their concerns with the student's SaFE Worker and, if the student is at risk of immediate harm, the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Possible warning signs include but not limited to:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or 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
- Truancy 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
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Managing disclosures

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend 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 our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and sent to the student's SaFE Worker and, if the student is at risk of immediate harm, the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

The SaFE Worker and/or Designated Safeguarding Leads, will make a decision on the next steps, recording the information appropriately and offering support and advice about next steps. If this group of staff, feel further wider discussion and action is needed, the student will be referred to the weekly in-house Children and Young People panel. This panel consists of the DSL, Academy Counsellor, Lead Behaviour Practitioner, SaFE Workers and Assistant Principal: Inclusion. The cases and actions put in place by this panel are recorded and reviewed regularly.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- The student will be included at all times – Nothing about me, without me.

We should never share information about a student 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.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Children and Young People panel. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them with whom it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents/Carers should always be informed of a disclosure. Students may choose to tell their parents/carers themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the academy contacts parents/carers. We should always give students the option of us informing parents/carers for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, there may be cases where parents/carers should not be informed. If this is the case, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents/Carers

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

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable to a phone call if this is possible.
- Where should the meeting happen? At the academy, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents/carers, the student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents/carers 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/carer time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them information 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/carer 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/carers often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Working with All Parents/Carers

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

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our academy website, newsletters and social media sites
- Ensure that all parents/carers are aware of who to talk to, and how to go 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/carers can support positive mental health in their children during regular parents meetings, emails, newsletters and social media posts
- Keep parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHCE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers and friends. They often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that their friends and peers may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep all students involved safe, we will consider on a case by case basis who may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents/carers with whom we will discuss:

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

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers/friends:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their peer's/friend'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 as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe.

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 students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host training sessions for 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 our CPD Co-ordinator Erika Theron, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum.

It is next due for review in March 2025.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to Anne Franklin.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.