

Ashwood Spencer Academy Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy



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1.0 Why mental health and wellbeing is important

At Ashwood Spencer Academy, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers), and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life events. We aim to equip them with skills that they can confidently use throughout their lives to deal with events that may impact upon their mental health and wellbeing.

In 2017, about 1 in 10 children aged 5 to 16 have a diagnosable mental health need and these can have an enormous impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. In many cases it is life-limiting. The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "in order to help their children succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy".

Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. For children, school acts as a safe place with positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a school where:

- All children are valued.
- Children have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma.
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued.
- Behaviours that can lead to negative mental health are not tolerated.

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing.

2.0 Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out:

- How we promote positive mental health.
- How we identify and support children with mental health needs.
- How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health problems
- Key information about some common mental health problems.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support.

3.0 Definition of mental health and wellbeing

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing "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".

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people to:

- feel confident in themselves.
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately.
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others.
- cope with the stresses of everyday life.
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change.
- learn and achieve.

4.0 How the policy was developed and who was consulted

The development of this policy was led by our Designated Senior Lead for Mental Health, Wellbeing, Family Support Lead, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team and SENDCo. This was in consultation with children, staff, parents and carers, the school nurse and local mental health professionals (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Educational Psychologists, through the form of questionnaires and conversations.

Ashwood Spencer has gathered the views of the stakeholders involved, including:

- School council gave their views on what to teach and the best ways to teach about mental health.
- Parents and carers views routinely sought via questionnaires and parental conversations.
- Staff's views routinely sought via questionnaires.
- In developing this policy we have taken account of:
 - o Children and Young People's Mental Health: State of the Nation 2016.
 - o Education, Education, Education, Mental Health 2016 (secondary).
 - o Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England 2015.
 - o Preparing to teach about mental health, PSHE Association 2015.
 - o Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE 2014.
 - o Supporting children with medical conditions, DfE 2014.

5.0 Links to other policies

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Links with these behaviours are especially important because they may be related to an unmet mental health needs.

6.0 A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

7.0 Staff roles and responsibilities, including those with specific responsibility

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need. All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, such as: physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown and bullying. They should also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging and emotional literacy.

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Team:

- Lead and work with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Lead on teaching about mental health.
- Provide advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.
- Are the first point of contact with mental health services, and makes individual referrals to them.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the School environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children with mental health needs and their families. Sources of relevant support include:

- Our Senior Leadership Team
- Our Inclusion Team
- Our Safeguarding Lead
- Our Teachers
- Our Family Support Lead
- School support staff employed to manage mental health needs of particular children
- Our SENDCO who helps staff understand their responsibilities to children with SEND, including children whose mental health problems mean they need special educational provision.
- Our School Nurse
- Our School Counsellors

8.0 Supporting children' positive mental health

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

- **Pupil-led activities**
 - o Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
 - o School Parliament reps with mental health and wellbeing on the agenda.
- **Transition**
 - o Transition to secondary schools is managed carefully, which includes all Year 6 children's relevant information being shared with their secondary school.

- Between classes at Ashwood, transition meetings are held to ensure that new teachers are aware of the needs of those in their class.
- When new pupils join Ashwood, as much information as possible is sought from our Pupil Support Officer who then shares relevant information with staff.
- **Class activities**
 - Positive praise – we always focus on praising children first and foremost.
 - Mental health teaching focuses e.g. Mental Health Week
 - Mindful approach to the week, themed around the ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’. Mindful Mondays are when PSHE is taught whole school, as are ‘Safeguarding Scenarios’. These focus on topical issues that can be impactful on mental health and wellbeing.
- **Specialist Provision**
 - **Nurture Group Provision:** Our Nurture Group provision focuses on various elements, some of which being Mental Health and Wellbeing, specific to meet their needs. We have staff trained in various Nurture-like interventions. Training is continually explored and accessed.
 - **Wellbeing Check-Ins:** Our Behaviour and Learning Mentors, as well as all members of staff, frequently ‘check-in’ with children who require additional support.
 - **External Counsellor:** Each Wednesday morning, we have a Counsellor from Relate Safe Speak come in to school. They work with 3 children each day for programmes that usually range from 6-8 sessions. As a school, we refer children and with parents’ permission, sessions with the Counsellor start due to a range of reasons relating to Mental Health. Children from across school access this service.
 - **External Counsellor:** We also have access to a Counsellor from Catharsis. They work in depth with 2 pupils weekly for a longer period of time than the Relate Safe Speak Counsellor. As a school, we refer children and with parents’ permission, sessions with the Counsellor start due to a range of reasons relating to Mental Health. Children from across school access this service.
 - **Referrals to wider services/inclusion of external support in school:** We refer to wider services should the need require, and also facilitate sessions with wider services taking place in school e.g. Freedom Programme for children.
- **Whole school**
 - Wellbeing Wednesday Breakfast – each Wednesday, breakfast is provided for staff to ensure that they have time to talk to colleagues and have time to themselves.
 - Wellbeing week – whole school focus on key events in the year to show our dedication to the positive wellbeing of our whole school community.
 - Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support.
 - Small group activities.
 - Worry box outside of the Safeguarding Office to allow for children to express themselves in a way that isn’t verbal.
 - Nurture groups.
 - Resilience focus in our DREAM ethos.
 - Restorative conversations so that children understand and reflect.

9.0 Identifying, referring and supporting children with mental health needs

Our approach:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.

- Involve children in the care and support they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

Early Identification:

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- Analysing behaviour e.g. becoming withdrawn, exclusions, visits to the medical room, attendance and sanctions.
- Class Teachers refer children to different interventions on offer each half term. Progress is measured using Boxall Profiles.
- Staff report concerns about individual children on CPOMS so that relevant people see it.
- Weekly Ashwood Aspire meetings within year group teams.
- Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns.
- Parental surveys on termly Parents Evenings.
- 'Open door policy' for staff and parents to share their views and concerns.
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer.
- Parents Evenings.
- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Use of CPOMS to keep a physical log of important issues.

Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff. All staff at Ashwood have had training into the approach within school with regards to mental health and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the Mental Health Lead or the SENDCO. These signs might include:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits.
- Falling academic achievement.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism.
- Not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE.
- Wearing long sleeves in hot weather.
- Drugs or alcohol misuse.
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

Staff are aware that mental health needs, such as anxiety, might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the School's child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency then the School's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

Disclosures by children and confidentiality

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the Mental Health Lead or the Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil. All disclosures are recorded onto the pupil's CPOMS with details added so that next steps can be decided and added.

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

Assessment, Interventions and Support

All concerns are reported to the Mental Health Lead and recorded. We then implement our assessment system, which is based on levels of need to ensure that children get the support they need, either from within the School or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

Support for friends/peers

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing mental health problems it can be challenging for their friends, who often want to help them but are not sure the best thing to do and can also be emotionally affected. In the case of eating disorders and self-harm, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping strategies from each other, and we will consider on a case by case basis what support might be appropriate including one to one and group support. We will involve the pupil who is suffering and their parents and consider what is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told, how they can best support, things they should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset and warning signs that their friend needs help. We will also make information available about where and how to access information and support for themselves and healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

Support for children after inpatient treatment

We recognise that some children will need ongoing support. We are careful not to "label" children with diagnoses – we are not medical professionals, but we do seek to support them as much as we can both in and out of school. This means that there needs to be a team approach with family/carers and other relevant professionals. We have a duty of care to support children and will seek advice from medical staff and mental health professionals on the best way to support children. We will carry out a risk assessment and produce an Individual Care Plan to support children to re-integrate successfully back to school. When a child leaves an inpatient provision and is transitioning back to school, we discuss what needs to happen so the transition will be smooth and positive.

10.0 Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment

In some case a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders. We have access to a range of specialist services and during the support will have regular contact with the service to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the child.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Mental Health Lead or the SENDCO following the assessment process and in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers. Referrals will only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs.

Specialist services include:

- School Health
- Educational Psychologists
- Behaviour support
- Paediatricians
- CAMHs
- Early Help Assessments
- Action For Children – Build Sound Minds

SEND and mental health needs

Persistent mental health problems may lead to children having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age. In some cases, the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN).

11.0 Involving parents and carers

Promoting mental health

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting children who do have mental health needs. On first entry to the School, our parent's meeting includes a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. We ask parents to inform us of any mental health needs their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing, based on a list of risk factors pertaining to the child or family (see appendix 1). It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the School so that we can better support their child from the outset. All information will be treated in confidence.

To support parents and carers:

- We are able to organise a range of activities such as workshops on protective and risk factors.
- We provide information and websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produced leaflets for parents on mental health and resilience, which can be accessed in school. The information includes who parents can talk to if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child and where parents can access support for themselves.
- We include the Relationships and Health Education Policy and PSHE Policy on the website so that parents are aware of what we are learning about.
- We refer to agencies for parents' own mental health through agencies such as the Family Hubs and other courses provided.
- We have an 'open-door policy' for them, allowing them to come in and meet with knowledgeable school staff to find ways to support their needs as well as their children's.

Supporting parents and carers with children with mental health needs

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health need and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health needs are common, that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that help and advice are available. When a concern has been raised, the School will:

- Contact parents and carers and meet with them (in almost all cases, parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as where child protection issues are identified.)
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information.
- Be available for follow up calls.
- Make a record of the meeting on CPOMS.
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support their child.
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions provided. Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger and children may choose to tell their parents and carers themselves.

Staff will meet with parents and carers and inform them of concerns in an appropriate way depending on the age/development of the child. Some children may want to talk about their mental health needs for themselves, some may like an adult accompanying and supporting them and some conversations may be more appropriate without the child there. We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. Our primary concern is the children, and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local

Authority. We also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs.

12.0 Involving children

Every year we train up a group of children as part of our School Parliament. On this Parliament, the MP's take on different leadership roles. Mental Health and Wellbeing is a priority for our school and will have a prevalent place on the Parliament. School Parliament have a vested interest in leading on whole school campaigns on health and wellbeing. We seek pupil's views about our approach, curriculum and in promoting whole school mental health activities. We always seek feedback from children who have had support to help improve that support and the services they received. We are also training children to become 'Wellbeing Captains' through Compass Changing Lives (an NHS commissioned service). This will allow for children to learn ways to support both themselves and their peers.

13.0 Supporting and training staff

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in children and know what to do and where to get help. Our Mental Health Lead, Family Support Lead and Health and Wellbeing Lead are now qualified 'mental health first aiders'. We have also built capacity and allowed for other members of staff with an interest in mental health to become senior leads in mental health.

Staff have also completed mental health awareness training with our training provider iHASCO. Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and wellbeing. An example of this includes our Wellbeing Wednesday Breakfast where school provide staff with breakfast, offering time to relax and converse with each other.

Each half term, we offer 'planning days' to support that work-life balance. This is when all teachers from the year group have a full day out of class where they can decide to prepare for next half term. Staff also have access to pastoral rooms in school that are occupied by members with a vested interest in mental health and wellbeing, offering informal supervision.

14.0 Our school community's Mental Health and Wellbeing

We recognise the importance of not only the children's mental health and wellbeing, but also that of our wider school community.

Parents and carers

The mental health and wellbeing of a parent or carer is a factor that is very likely to impact their child/children. We are aware that in order to support child development, school has a role to play in supporting parents and carers with needs they have. School aim to support as best possible, by being present and open with parents and carers, and signposting them to support services that they can access.

Staff

At Ashwood we recognise the importance of a member of staff's mental health in developing and nurturing our children. We recognise that without happy and healthy adults in school, children will not receive the best provision to help them develop.

Our staff are an extremely hard-working group, who show dedication to the job; going above and beyond for the benefit of our children, whilst caring for their own families and friends too. We

recognise that everyone is likely to experience periods of poorer mental health throughout their lives due to numerous factors, both personal and professional, and so we aim to ensure that staff wellbeing is priority. Measures taken to support wellbeing include:

- Wellbeing being a weekly item on the agenda for our whole-school briefing and SLT meetings
- Providing a breakfast each Wednesday for staff to enjoy before school starts.
- Access to a staff helpline through the Employee Assistance Programme that staff can contact and speak to a trained individual.
- Support for staff around busy times of the year e.g. a day out of class at the end of each half-term to plan for the term ahead.
- Offering staff a free school lunch each day.
- Pastoral spaces around school that can be used as and when staff feel the need.

15.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

The mental health and wellbeing policy is on the school website and hard copies are available to parents and carers from the school office. All mental health professionals are given a copy before they begin working with the school as well as external agencies involved in our mental health work. The policy is monitored at an annual review meeting led by the Mental Health Lead and involves staff with a responsibility for mental health, including specialist services supporting the school and Governors.