

Wargrave House School

The Autism Specialists

Learner Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

December 2024

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:	
1	Anti-bullying Policy
2	Behaviour Support Policy
3	Child on Child Abuse Policy
4	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
5	Medication, medicals and illness Policy
6	Therapy Policy
7	LGBTQ+ Policy
8	Managing Stress and Wellbeing Policy
9	SEND Policy
10	First Aid Policy

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Introduction

At Wargrave House School we are committed to promoting a whole school approach to positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for all learners, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows learners' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

Policy aims:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and Learners.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in learner.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to learners with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst learners 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 learner welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

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 well-being 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

Policy

A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health

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

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience that everyone understands
2. helping learners to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to
3. helping learners to be resilient learners
4. teaching learners social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
5. early identification of learners 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 resilience

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues and aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of mental health issues. We aim to be a 'talking school' with an 'Open Door Policy'.

Key staff members

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 learners with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need. There are

Key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Whole School Approach Strategic Mental Health Lead
- Designated Mental Health Lead/Team (Operational)
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- SENCO
- ROAR/MHFA trained staff

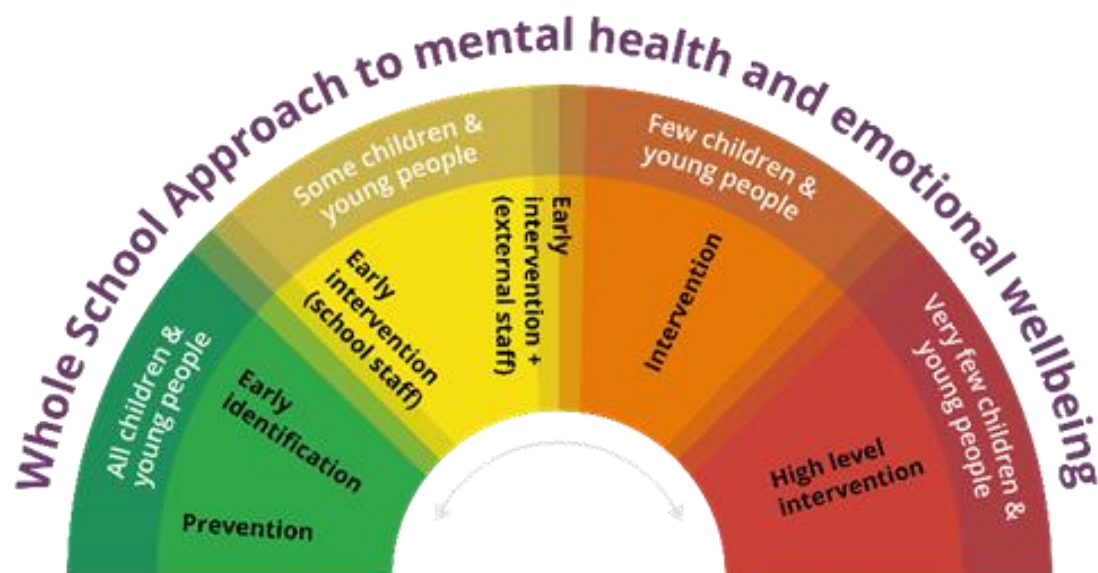
If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of learner, in the first instance they should speak to the Deputy Head or a member of the SENSE team.

If there is a concern that the learner 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.

Levels of Need

Levels of need are used to help education providers and services to determine the type of support that might be needed for children/young people.



There are 4 levels:

Green = Prevention and early identification. This level is for all children and young people and represents the basic level of mental health awareness and support strategies that all children and young people need for positive emotional wellbeing.

Yellow = Early Intervention. At this level of need children/young people will be showing early signs of distress that may be the start of an emerging mental health issue. Short-term interventions that build coping strategies are given to prevent these issues from developing – small changes to prevent bigger challenges.

Orange = Intervention. At this level children and young people will need more specific support as their mental health problem will be more developed and significantly impacting their day-to-day life. There may also be other complexities such as trauma or neurodevelopmental conditions. Interventions are chosen to suit the needs of each child/young person and will vary in modality, and intensity.

Red = High Level Intervention. At this level children and young people will need high-level support for mental health conditions that require support from the appropriate local authority CAMHS. Children may be at crisis point, require medication, or several different types of specialist support.

Individual Care Plans

When a learner has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation (orange/red level), it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the learner, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the learner's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- For learners who self-harm or have had suicidal ideation it is helpful to draw up a safety plan with them.
- The role of the school and specific staff

Mental Health Promotion

Mental Health is everyone's business in our school, and we promote and environment that fosters inclusion, diversity and respect.

The skills, knowledge and understanding our learners need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote learners' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping

strategies and an understanding of learners' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing learners who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting learners to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, learners and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

What help is available:

- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it

The aim of this is to ensure learners understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it

Recognising signs and symptoms of mental distress

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a learner 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 alert a member of the Safeguarding/ SENSE team.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- 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

Supporting Learners' Positive Mental Health

We believe we have a key role in promoting learners' positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including;

Learner-led Activities

- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health
- Participate in World Mental Health Day
- School council discuss wellbeing and mental health at meetings and run campaigns around it.

Transition Support

- Transition meetings with parent/carers, learners and relevant staff
- Visual support and therapy advice if needed for learner to prepare for Transition.
- Talking MAT's session to get learners thoughts and feelings

Class Activities

- Mindfulness box/trays
- Mindfulness and breathing/meditation in class
- Sensory diet

Whole School

- Emotional regulation resources
- Assembly theme
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support both within the school and outside the school.
- PROACTSCIPr/Therapy and Positive behaviour plan all link up to support the learner's individual and class group needs.

Small Group Activities

- Small friendship, social skills groups
- Wellbeing Groups
- Quiet spaces for those children who are finding the classroom overwhelming – Soft Play, Sensory room on lower school corridor, quiet room near Base classrooms lower floor and learner's common room near Base classes on upper floor. All classrooms have a quiet area in the classroom or a quiet room attached to the classroom.

Teaching about Mental Health and Emotional Well-being

- Through PSHE lessons and whole school assemblies as well as therapy led lesson or 1:1 sessions, we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help learners to be more resilient, understand about mental health and help reduce the stigma of mental health problems.

Our approach is to:

- provide a safe environment to enable learners to express themselves and be listened to
- ensure the welfare and safety of learners as paramount
- identify appropriate support for learners based on their needs
- involve parents and carers when their child needs support
- involve learners in the care and support they have
- monitor, review and evaluate the support with learners 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:

- identify individuals that might need support
- being an Attachment Aware School
- completing a welfare log and if required a cause for concern form that is discussed and a course of action decided by school safeguarding team who also liaise with parents/ carers, therapy team and class teacher as well as any professionals who are involved with supporting the learner.
- analysing information gathered on CPOMS (school safeguarding and behaviour data system)

- Staff report concerns about individual learners to the Designated Safeguarding Team.
- weekly staff briefing for staff to raise concerns about individual children
- gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
- parental meetings
- enabling learners to raise concerns to class teacher and support staff
- enabling parents and carers to raise concerns through the school class teacher or to any member of staff - we have an 'Open Door Policy'

Verbal Disclosures by Learners

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgmental to learners who verbally disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of learners is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff are clear to learners that the concern will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Team and recorded in order to provide appropriate support to the learner.

Non-Verbal Disclosures by Learners

Staff also recognise persistent and unusual non-verbal disclosures in behaviours in line with PROACTSCIPr training "all behaviour is communication".

Confidentiality

All disclosures are recorded and held on the learner's individual file, including date, name of learner and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps. If the disclosure is about the learner, another learner or a family member being at risk of harm from self or others then safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Assessment, Interventions and Support

All concerns are reported to the Safeguarding Team and recorded. We then implement our assessment system based on levels of need to ensure that learners 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.

We recognise that just like physical health, mental health and emotional well-being can vary at any given time and is fluid and changes, there are no absolutes.

Need The level of need is based on discussions at the regular Inclusion meetings/panel with key members of staff	Evidence-based Intervention and Support - the kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents and learners. <i>For example:</i>	Monitoring
Highest need	Referral through therapy team to children's mental health services 1:1 or family support or treatment, consultation with school staff and other agencies	All learners needing targeted individualised support will have an Individual Care Plan drawn up setting out - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of the learners • How the learner will be supported • Actions to provide that support • Any special requirements learners and parents/carers will be involved in the plan. The plan and interventions are monitored and reviewed Multi-agency meetings and regular reviews and feedback with parents/carers Early Help Referral and Children's Services if appropriate
	External agency support If the school, professionals and/or parents conclude that a statutory education, health and care assessment is required, we refer to the SEND policy and SEN School Information Report.	
Some need	Group work: social skills intervention, Lego therapy run by or in consultation with therapy staff in school.	
	1:1 intervention, small group intervention, skills for life/wellbeing programmes	Discussion, advice from therapy team/ SENSE team An electronic log is kept and there are monthly safeguarding team meetings Weekly staff briefing
Low need	General support e.g. HRE/PSHE lessons, wellbeing workshops, class teacher/SENSE/ therapy team 'Check-in'	

In some case a learner's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, school refusal and other complex needs.

We make links with a range of specialist services and have regular contact with the services to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the learners' provision.

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

Specialist Service	Referral process
Children's Mental Health Services	Accessed through school, GP or self-referral
Therapy (in house)	Accessed through consultation therapy team following on from referral by parents/carers or class staff
Wellbeing activities	Accessed through class discussion/ school council/ therapy team
Lego Therapy	Accessed through consultation in house therapy team
Therapy dog	Accessed through consultation therapy team following on from referral by parents/carers or class staff
Early Help Referral	Accessed through the Safeguarding Team

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 their children with mental health needs.

To support parents and carers:

- We organise a range of coffee mornings for parents to help build relationships and answer any questions parents may have around transitions, learner wellbeing etc.
- We provide information and signposting to organisations on our websites and in the School Newsletters on mental health issues and local wellbeing activities/ programmes.
- We make parents aware of who the school SENSE team is
- Have an Open Door policy

- We support parents and carers with children with mental health needs through sensitive and supportive regular meetings and signposting.

When a concern has been raised the school will:

- Contact parents and carers and meet with them
- In most case parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as child protection issues.
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- Be available for follow up calls
- Make a record of the meeting
- Agree an Action Plan
- 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.

Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger.

We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. Learners are our primary concern, 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.

Involving Learners

- We seek learners' views and feedback about our approach and whole school mental health activities through learner voice, class questions and suggestion boxes
- We will discuss mental health and wellbeing at school council meetings.

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 learners and know what to do and where to get help (see [Appendix 3](#)).

Those staff with a specific responsibility have more specialised training.

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.

Staff have access to EAP- employee assistance programme

Legal Context

There is no requirement on schools to have a stand-alone mental health policy. However, schools are required to produce (and in some cases publish online) a range of policies which can be used to promote and support mental health and wellbeing, either as a statutory requirement or good practice as recommended by DfE. These policies need to be consistent with schools 'duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Policy Impact

We have a rolling programme for reviewing our Company policies. We regularly review the impact of our policies on the needs, entitlements and outcomes for learners, service users, staff and parents.

Appendix 1 - Protective and Risk factors (adapted from Mental Health and Behaviour DfE

March 2016).

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic influences • Specific development delay • Communication difficulties • Physical illness • Academic failure • Low self-esteem • SEND 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being female (in younger children) • Secure attachment experience • Outgoing temperament as an infant • Good communication skills, sociability • Being a planner and having a belief in control • Humour • Problem solving skills and a positive attitude • Experiences of success and achievement • Faith or spirituality • Capacity to reflect
In the Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) • Affection • Clear, consistent discipline • Support for education • Supportive long-term relationship or the absence of severe discord

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Negative peer influences • Peer pressure • Poor learner to teacher relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policies on behaviour and bullying • 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems • A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging • Positive peer influences
In the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic disadvantage • Homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider supportive network • Good housing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events • Discrimination • Other significant life events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standard of living • High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying • Opportunities for valued social roles • Range of sport/leisure activities

Appendix 2 - Specific mental health needs most commonly seen in school-aged children

For information see Annex C Main Types of Mental Health Needs Mental Health and Behaviour in School DfE March 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

Annex C includes definitions, signs and symptoms and suggested interventions for Anxiety (including panic attacks, phobias and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder OCD) Depression, Eating Disorders, Substance Misuse, and Self Harm.

The DfE guide does not include specific information on suicidal thought.

Suicidal Thoughts

Young people may experience thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their lives. Some young people never act on these feelings but may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide without any apparent warning signs.

Appendix 3 - Where to get information and support

For support on specific mental health needs

- Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- OCD UK www.ocduk.org
- Depression Alliance www.depressionalliance.org
- Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com
- National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk
- Self-Harm www.selfharm.co.uk
- Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS:
www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support

- www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and wellbeing
- www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems
www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)
- www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health
- www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health