

Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy



Ercall Wood Academy

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Ercall Wood Academy

Positive Mental Health Policy Ercall Wood Academy

Last Updated October 2021

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 school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

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, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Darren Andrews – Assistant Headteacher -Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Karen Athawes - Vice Principal - Designated Mental Health Lead
- Alison Warrington - Lead Mental Health first aider
- Linda Moore - Deputy DSL / Safeguarding Lead
- Amanda Weaving - SENDCO
- Jane Leese – Deputy DSL / Deputy SENDCO

- Lynn Kelly – Deputy DSL Pastoral Year Lead
- Fay Daniel – School Counsellor
- Clair Stevens – Pastoral Year Lead
- Kate Porter – Pastoral Year Lead
- Lucy Dungey – pastoral Year Lead
- Kate Steven – Pastoral Year Lead
- Virginia Ritchie - Head of Lifeskills

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the mental health lead 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 officer, the Principal or the designated governor. 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 / BEEU is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Amanda Weaving SENDCO through the MHWB Panel.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the academy 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 Lifeskills curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching 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 [PSHE Association Guidance](#) 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 are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our academy and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined on our website.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as common rooms and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students 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

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 our mental health and emotional wellbeing lead Alison Warrington via the Pastoral Year Lead and the referral system that is in place. If the concern is immediate contact a DSL immediately, and if the child is in immediate harm or at risk call 999.

Possible warning signs include:

- 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
- 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

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?'. For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively see appendix E.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the student's confidential file recorded on CPOMs. 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 the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

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

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 if the individual is in danger of harm or at risk of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health Lead, - this can be via CPOMs or in person. 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 who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the academy contacts parents. We should always give students the option of us informing parents 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 Lead 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 the academy, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, 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 steps 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. To support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our academy website
- Ensure that all parents 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 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 Lifeskills 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 friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends 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 with whom we will discuss:

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

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their 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.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The [MindEd learning portal](#)¹ 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 students.

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 Ryan McCluskey (Assistant Principal), our CPD Coordinator, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Supporting staff who are working with students with mental health issues

Ercall Wood Academy acknowledges that staff who are working closely with distressed students can themselves be placed under emotional strain.

Ercall Wood aims to increase the level of awareness and understanding among staff of issues involving the mental health of young people and will provide a range of opportunities for staff to access training in dealing with students with mental health problems, including opportunities to talk during supervision with other specialist professionals working with students with recognised mental health issues.

Staff Wellbeing

The biggest asset our academy has is its staff; the biggest asset they have is their health and wellbeing. This policy is intended to outline the ways in which we can work together to make sure our academy is a safe, caring, and happy place to work, which, if we get it right, can help to enhance individual wellbeing, through personal fulfilment and professional identity. This in turn will benefit our students and our community.

We spend more daylight hours in work than at home, so it is important that we can have ownership of many of the decisions that affect us and that we have agency in our working lives. We can do this by taking responsibility for these actions and approaching the tasks in our own way. All our work should be healthy, safe and supportive and we have a responsibility to ensure our practices contribute to staff wellbeing.

To support the wellbeing of our staff, our priorities are reflected in our **academy values**:

- **Aspire** to allow for our staff to grow and develop both professionally and personally through supportive and reflective approaches to mental health and wellbeing

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- **Empower** to have the confidence and resilience to deal with situations that may challenge us and be able to promote the importance of treating people as we would want to be treated ourselves and to encourage individuals to communicate their needs and concerns.
- **Respect** for how a staff member may want to manage their own mental health, providing this doesn't impact on the safeguarding of our pupils, and being mindful of the language we use to talk about mental health and wellbeing at all times.

Linked Policies

Anti-Bullying Policy

Bereavement Policy

PSHE Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Safeguarding and Supervision Policy

RSE Policy

Suicide Intervention Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in October 2024.

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 Vice Principal and Mental Health Lead and reported as requested by Governors

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