



Placing children's rights at the heart of all we undertake.

· respect · integrity · humility · equality · care towards all

Fierté Multi Academy Trust Policy for Children on Mental Health and Well-being

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)

Children's perceptions and responses to wellbeing:

As a Trust we wanted to capture pupil deliberations regarding their wellbeing and integrate their thoughts to help shape this policy; an area that the Trust champions.

A Wellbeing Workshop generated in-depth discussions to capture responses to:

What makes children happy at school?

What is meant by 'wellbeing'?

This is what children told us:

- *You're happy and haven't got any worries in your mind"*
- *"I think it's when you're not worried about anything and you can just get on"*
- *"Wellbeing can be making friends"*

The Policy Aims to:

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

Across our Trust, we aim to promote positive mental health for every pupil 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, research has identified, that at least 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.

Rationale

Schools have a central role to play in enabling their pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and wellbeing. It is important that schools promote good mental wellbeing for all pupils. Education about relationships, sex and health can be important vehicles through which schools can teach pupils about mental health and wellbeing. (DfE)

Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, by developing approaches tailored to the particular needs of their pupils. All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes: preventing impairment of children's health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. Full details are set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) statutory guidance 2018.

Early intervention to identify issues and provide effective support is crucial. The school role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing can be summarised as:

Prevention: creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This will include teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos;

Identification: recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible;

Early support: helping pupils to access evidence based early support and interventions;

Access to specialist support: working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment;

Our Trust approach to mental health and well-being for children

The culture, ethos and environment of each school in our Trust can have a profound influence on pupil mental wellbeing. Environments that are hostile, aggressive, chaotic or unpredictable can be harmful to mental health, and can lead to stressful learning conditions. Our schools are in a unique position, as they are able to help prevent mental health problems by promoting resilience as part of an integrated, whole school approach that is tailored to the needs of our pupils. Our whole school and Trust approach is one that goes beyond the teaching in the classroom to pervade all aspects of school life, including:

- culture, ethos and environment: the health and wellbeing of pupils is promoted through the 'hidden' or 'informal' curriculum, including leadership practice, the school's policies, values and attitudes, together with the social and physical environment;
- teaching: using the curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge about health and wellbeing;
- partnerships with families and the community: proactive engagement with families, outside agencies, and the wider community to promote consistent support for children's health and wellbeing;
- Being 'fair' is not about everyone getting the same (equality) but about everyone getting what they need (equity);
- Behaviour is a form of communication. The change in terminology in the 2014 Code of Practice of Special Educational Needs (SEND) - which replaces the Behaviour and Social Difficulties (BESD) with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties – helps to promote a shift towards viewing behaviour as a communication of an emotional need (whether conscious or unconscious), and responding accordingly.
- Taking a non-judgmental, curious and empathic attitude towards behaviour. We encourage all adults in schools to respond in a way that focuses on the feelings and emotions that might drive certain behaviour, rather than the behaviour itself. Children with behavioural difficulties need to be regarded as vulnerable rather than troublesome, and we all have a duty to explore this vulnerability and provide appropriate support.
- Putting relationships first. This requires a school ethos that promotes strong relationships between staff, children and their parents/carers. It also relies on creating a positive school culture and climate that fosters connection, inclusion, respect and value for all members of the school community.

- Not all behaviours are a matter of ‘choice’ and not all factors linked to the behaviour of children are within their control. Therefore, the language of choice (e.g. ‘good choice/bad choice’) is not always helpful.
- Behaviour must always be viewed systemically and within the context of important relationships (i.e. a relational communication pattern rather than an internal problem).
- Encouraging parental engagement and involvement is absolutely crucial when addressing and planning support for children’s SEMH needs.

Leadership of Mental Wellbeing

An important element of our school leadership at all levels is to create a culture where calm, dignity and structure encompass every space and activity. This approach is one of the most effective ways of encouraging good mental health, in order to avoid circumstances where poor mental health is exacerbated. This model, in conjunction with an efficient system to identify common symptoms of mental health, followed by precise and targeted care by appropriate health care professionals, remains the aspiration for every school in our Trust.

To create the culture, the leadership teams across our Trust have set out their vision for the school and this has been developed through children’s voice across the MAT. This means setting clear behaviour expectations, that embody high expectations from all, conveyed consistently throughout the whole school community. The vision has been underpinned by a clear system of rewards, self-awareness, self-regulation and an accountability system that sets expectations for all staff, parents and pupils to play their part as much as they are able; and is aimed at all times to the mutual benefit of every member of the school community.

Scope

This policy describes the Trust’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.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Designated child protection / Safeguarding Officer- Maria Hamblin

- Mental Health Lead- Samantha Lewis
- CPD lead- Tony Hand
- Head of PSHE and Curriculum –Tony Hand

Potential behaviours of concern

School Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil 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 Samantha Lewis, our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead. 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
- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Attention needing behaviour

Managing disclosures and response

A pupil 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 held on the student's confidential file or logged on My Concern. (GDPR compliant)

The disclosure 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 and actions

This information should be shared with the Mental Health Lead, Samantha Lewis, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Trust wide support mechanisms

Each school within the Trust has their own referral process and support plan. Offers Trust wide include:

- One to one sessions
- Nurture groups
- Parent Workshops
- PSHE
- Check In sessions by the Mental Health Lead (attachment)
- John Muir Award
- Outdoor Learning and Wild Wellbeing
- General care and guidance available to all learners
- Staff training
- Inset

Children told us that:

"It makes me feel happy that we do our learning outside. Sometimes I get a bit stressed when I'm inside"

"We have afterschool clubs. It helps us because if you're new it's a good way to get to know people"

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 school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it. We will display

relevant sources of support in communal areas 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?

Confidentiality

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

- 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, if appropriate. 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 Mental Health Lead. 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. 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 school, 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. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school 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 PSHE 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

Professional 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 support relevant information for staff who wish to learn more about mental health and this will be signposted in each staffroom. The MindEd learning portal² 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 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 our Mental Health Lead who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy review date: December 2018

Policy review date: December 2019

Reviewed by: Samantha Lewis (Trust Mental Health Lead) and Maria Hamblin