

Mental Health Policy

Approved / reviewed by:	
The Governing Body	
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Date of next review:	October 2024 or as appropriate

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

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.

2 Scope

This document describes the school'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 health and safety, and safeguarding policies.

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
- Outline legal considerations pertaining to minors and mental health

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) have a responsibility.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student

should speak to the Headteacher in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm due to mental health, the mental health emergency protocol should be followed and can be found in section 5. If there is a safeguarding concern, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the DSL, or the headteacher. If the student presents a medical emergency, then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting first aid staff, and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

3 What is meant by 'mental health difficulty'?

A mental health difficulty is one in which a person is distracted or unable to engage with ordinary life due to upsetting, disturbing thoughts and/or feelings. These problems may distort or negatively impact a person's view of the world and produce a variety of symptoms and behaviour likely to cause distress and concern.

4 Legal Considerations

4.1 Under The Equality Act (2010) a person with a mental health difficulty is covered if their condition leads to an adverse impact on their ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities. This will include students and staff with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, self-harm, and disordered eating.

4.2 The Act also covers those who have had a mental illness or difficulty in the past, even if they have recovered, and those whose condition meets the definition but is successfully controlled by treatment (for example psychiatric medication such as anti-depressants) or therapy.

4.3 Under The Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against students with a diagnosed mental health condition, and 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made to ensure they can access education. The general principle of 'reasonable adjustments' is that wherever possible, schools should make practical adjustments to enable a student to continue their education. Mental health problems are often variable and students may only need adjustments for a limited period of time whilst they receive treatment or until they are better able to function.

4.4 Under the Data Protection Act (DPA), all information regarding students with mental health difficulties is regarded as sensitive and personal information. Any and all information about student mental health is shared on a 'need to know' basis and is aligned with defined procedures on sharing of information about students.

4.5 Duty of Care – All staff need to be aware of the concept of the 'Duty of Care'. This is a legal obligation which requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all our students, staff and visitors. If a school knows (or should know) that a student is experiencing mental health difficulties, the student should be advised to seek appropriate help and reasonable measures to support them need to be in place. This is particularly important in regard to passing on personal information where mental health difficulties occur.

5 Mental Health Emergencies or Crisis'

A Mental Health Emergency or Crisis is defined as:

'A mental health crisis often means that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. You may feel great emotional distress or anxiety, cannot cope with day-to-day life or work, think about suicide or self-harm, or experience hallucinations and hearing voices.' NHS, 2019.

5.1 There may be instances where a student's behaviour and mental state are concerning and may lead to immediate danger through harm to themselves or others. The following situations or symptoms classify as a mental health emergency:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal ideation
- Hearing voices
- Psychosis: Experiencing hallucinations and/or delusions.
- Extreme emotional distress

5.2 If a student presents with any of the above problems staff must report them immediately to the Headteacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The Headteacher/DSL will decide on the appropriate action to take to ensure the pupil, fellow students, and staff members are safe. Parents/carers will be informed, the student may be sent home, or advised to go to A&E.

5.3 Mental health crises or emergencies are often not spontaneous, and the student may have been experiencing symptoms for a length of time. Therefore, it is essential that student mental health concerns are communicated to the Headteacher to ensure the school is focusing on preventative strategies and is carefully monitoring and supporting vulnerable students.

6 Warning Signs

6.1 Students who are showing signs of mental distress do not always express problems directly or ask for help, even where there are clear signs that they are having difficulties, and which could be due to a number of reasons. Students may still feel stigma around mental health problems or may be concerned about the consequences of telling someone. They may be unaware that they have a problem, or be aware but feel that they have to cope with it on their own.

6.2 Adolescence can be a difficult developmental time and this period of change can result in the gradual onset of mental illness. It is important that warning signs are recognised and an appropriate, supportive response is put in place as soon as possible. School 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 Headteacher.

Possible warning signs include:

- The student has told you there is a problem, for example, they have been feeling low or anxious recently
- Significant changes in the student's appearance, for example: weight loss/gain, decline in personal hygiene, noticeable signs of self-harm
- Changes in mood, for example, their mood is very up and down; they may be miserable, tired, withdrawn
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating patterns or sleeping habits
- Concerns expressed from friends, family, other staff members

- Changes in behaviour, academic achievement, extracurricular activity engagement, or among peers. For example, doing too much work, not socialising as much as usual, withdrawn, not attending school, being late or, failure to meet deadlines
- Increased isolation from friends, family.
- 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
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

This is not an exhaustive list.

7 Internal Support

7.1 The parents/guardians of students requiring additional support will be contacted to discuss the how the student may be best supported

7.2 Where a referral to Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Headteacher in consultation with parents/carers.

Internal Interventions

7.3 The following list are examples of interventions currently used internally with students who are experiencing mental health difficulties:

- One-to-one intervention with Learning Mentor
- Group work
- Reduced timetable
- Stress ball/fiddle toy
- Relaxation space
- Health Link Worker

Individual Care Plans

7.4 It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for students experiencing mental health difficulties. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication (if any) and associated side effects
- Internal support and in-school interventions
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency

7.5 An Individual Care Plan can be an effective way of discussing, agreeing, and monitoring the support and study needs of a student with mental health difficulties. The Individual Care Plan will include information on any adjustments that have been agreed upon, for example on such things as changes to timetable.

7.6 The Individual Care Plan will be regularly reviewed and this will give both staff and the student the opportunity to discuss how things are going and to make any changes to the adjustments. Review dates of an Individuals Care Plan can be flexible and responsive to the needs of the student and the concerns of the staff member.

8 External Support & Signposting

8.1 Students experiencing mental health difficulties are often best supported with support both in and outside school. There are various mental health charities who provide helpful information for parents, and who offer tools to assist young people with their mental health outside school. The following resources can be helpful to review and are often signposted to students in school for support.

- GP – A student’s local GP is usually the first person to contact regarding concerns about a child’s mental health.
- Kooth – Online, free counselling for young people.
- Childline – Free counselling for young people via phone or online.
- Calm Harm – Free app for self-harm
- Clear Fear – Free app for anxiety
- Mind – General mental health support and knowledge.
- Young Minds – General mental health support and knowledge.
- Samaritans – Suicide phone-line (116 123)
- A&E – Young people can be taken to A&E during a mental health emergency or crisis.

What is likely to happen next

9 Support Parents and Staff

9.1 In order to support parents, we will:

- 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 reviews

9.2 Parents and staff members may also struggle with their mental health. Caregiving and teaching can both be emotionally demanding jobs and it is important to ensure that care is taken around personal wellbeing. The NHS offers a variety of therapeutic interventions to assist with mental health problems. Their GP should be their first contact; if they feel critical in anyway, they should be advised to visit A&E.

10 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 and Wellbeing curriculum.

10.1 The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are 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 Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

11 Managing disclosures

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

How to respond to a Mental Health 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.

11.1 Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than asking 'Why?'. Try to be sympathetic, understanding, and remember to be sensitive to issues relating to sexuality, race, religion, culture and gender or any physical or sensory impairment or condition that they might have.

11.2 Be prepared to listen and give the student time if you can. Listen to the student – the situation may only require empathetic listening. You can simply ask the student how they are as this may provide them with an opportunity to discuss their concerns with you.

11.3 Ensure that students are aware that you will need to pass the information onto the Headteacher/DSL, because of the school's responsibility to their safety and duty of care. Try to be clear about what you will communicate and for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

12.3 In addition to training sessions, improved awareness of mental health issues may be achieved through awareness raising campaigns or events. These are particularly effective if tied in with other events such as World Mental Health Day which provide opportunities for staff and students to work together. Campaigns that include practical activities such as workshops to promote mental well-being may be particularly effective in promoting the awareness of good mental health.

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.