



MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING POLICY

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 Organisation).

At Aspire North East Multi Academy Trust, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all pupils, their families and members of staff and Trustees / Governors. Our open culture allows pupil voices to be heard, using effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

This policy is a guide to all staff – including support staff and Trustees / Governors – outlining the Trust’s approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

Policy Aims:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst all staff – all staff are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing.

Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of all pupils. However, key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Pastoral Team - Year 7 to 11 and Sixth Form
- Designated Safeguarding Team
- SENCDO
- Mental Health Lead and Mental Health Team

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, in the first instance they should speak to the relevant Year Leader and/or the safeguarding team. If this is a general query or the staff member would like further advice/support they can also speak directly to the Mental Health Lead. If there is a concern that the pupil is high risk or in danger of immediate harm the Academy’s safeguarding procedures are followed. 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.

Links with other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the E-Safety Policy; Accessibility Plan; Anti-Bullying Policy; Child Protection Policy; RSE, Health & PSHCE Policy; SMSC & British Values Policy; Special Education & Inclusion Policy and Data Protection policies.

What is meant by 'mental health difficulty'?

The term 'mental health' describes 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. 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.

Legal Considerations

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 with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, self-harm and disordered eating.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Identification of pupils needing support

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either internally or through another organisation, necessary staff are notified and given the relevant information needed to support the pupils.

Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our pupils need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our Personal Development / SMSC curriculum and our peer mentoring programme. We will follow the statutory DFE guidance for RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education), 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 pupils' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions as well as those of other people. Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing pupils who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting pupils to support any of

their friends who are facing challenges. We will also use the lessons to signpost students to relevant sources of support.

Signposting

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

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

The aim of this is to ensure pupils understand:

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

Sources or support at school and in the local community

School Based Support:

- Mentoring – Suitable for all pupils. Accessed via a referral system.
- Peer2Peer / peer mentoring – Suitable for all pupils. Accessed via self-referral and drop-in.
- Access, via referral to the Pathway and Gateway alternative provisions
- NHS Mental Health Support Team practitioner and Emotional Resilience Nurse, works with a dedicated caseload of identified pupils.
- School Nursing Team visit on a weekly basis, operating a drop-in service, open to all students.

Local Support

In our local area there are a range of organisations and groups offering support.

- CAMHS partnership, a group of providers specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.
- Sunderland MIND - Mind offers information and advice to people with mental health problems.
- Kooth – Kooth is a free on-line mental wellbeing community offering information and advice to people with mental health problems. Kooth regularly delivers information and reminders about their service to our children and young people.

Warning Signs

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 alert the year leader and/or safeguarding 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

Targeted support

We work closely with the external organisations, in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children. We ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working with external agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Providing interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs;
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns.
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

Managing disclosures

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be recorded via the CPOMs reporting system where the safeguarding team will be alerted of the concern. The disclosure is stored securely on the pupil's personal file. Where the Peer Mentoring Programme is in place, any disclosures made will also map with this process – the peer mentors are aware of who to report disclosures to.

Working with parents/carers

Signposting parents to sources of information and support is helpful in these instances. Meetings are held (when necessary and appropriate) and lines of communication are kept open, should the parent/carer have further questions or concerns. Minutes of any meetings that take place are stored securely on the pupil's file.

Supporting parents

We recognise that family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems (blog, website and Class Charts electronic communication platform).
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (blog, website Class Charts electronic communication platform).
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in Personal Development / SMSC and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we offer a Peer2Peer / peer mentoring service where pupils have somebody to talk to – pupils can self-refer to this intervention.

Staff

We acknowledge that staff who are working closely with distressed students exhibiting mental health problems like self-harm, eating disorders and depression can themselves be placed under emotional strain. Support will be provided to all staff who request it, through discussion with any senior leader in the school. The Trust will

provide a range of training in dealing with students with mental health problems. The training will be undertaken during directed time but may also be requested on a voluntary basis. The CPD calendar will be updated accordingly. Staff receive regular updates as and when necessary of individual pupil needs. We share relevant information on staff mental health and wellbeing in meetings, during training and through email communication

Last review date: 25.06.25

Next review due: Summer 2027

Person responsible: Anthony Blake (Senior Mental Health Lead – Sandhill View Academy)
Lisa Mellefont (Senior Mental Health Lead – Southmoor Academy)