



# Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

## September 2023

Next Update: September 2024

Approved by: Chair of Trustees

Principal: Neil Bain

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## 1. Policy Statement

At **Wemms Education Centre** we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and Trustees. Our open culture allows students' 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.

## 2. Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and trustees – outlining Wemms Education Centre's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

## 3. Policy Aims

To promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students by:

- Increasing understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enabling staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enabling staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Providing the right support to students with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Developing resilience amongst students and raising awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and gaining recognition from SMT 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 student welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

## 4. Key Staff Members

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

- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Pastoral Staff
- SENCo
- Mental Health Lead
- PSHE Coordinator

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to the DSL, SENCo or Principal.

If there is a concern that the student 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.

## **5. Individual Care Plans**

When a student has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the student, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the student's situation/condition/diagnosis.
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions.
- Medication and any side effects.
- Who to contact in an emergency.
- The role the school and specific staff.

## **6. Teaching about Mental Health**

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

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

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing>.

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges. [See Supporting Peers](#)

## **7. Signposting**

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

We will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events, within the school on noticeboards, in common rooms, toilets etc. and through our communication channels, newsletters and website.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available.
- Who the support is for.
- How to access it.
- Why should they access it.
- What is likely to happen next

## **8. Sources or Support at School and in the Local Community.**

### **School Support**

- **Life Coaching (Counselling)**

Available to: Year 9 and above

Access through: EHCP, parental concern, school concern, SENCo & child request

Duration: according to need

- **Talk & Draw (Mental Health Lead)**

Students are encouraged to talk to the Mental Health Lead openly while exploring their feelings through art (colour, shapes & texture)

Available to: All students

Access through: SENCo

Duration: 12-14 sessions in a single block (review for further sessions)

- **Staff Mentor Programme**

Students are mentored by an appropriate member of staff

Available to: All students

Access through: SENCo, parental request, student request (student chooses staff mentor)

Duration: Ongoing

- **Pet Therapy**

Students are encouraged to connect with animals as part of a wider provision of support

Available to: Students who affiliate / bond with animals

Access through: EHCP, parental request, staff mentors

Duration: Timetabled as required

- **Student Ambassadors**

Students are encouraged to connect with Ambassadors as 'buddies'. These Ambassadors provide essential student to student support and advice, particularly for new students. They also provide anti-bullying advice. Mentors receive trainings through the Diana Award scheme.

Available to: All students

Access through: SENCo, Student Services, Pastoral Team

Duration: Ongoing

## Local Support

In Surrey and the surrounding counties, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the **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.

## 9. Warning Signs

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 alert the DSL.

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.
- Changes in personality.
- 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.

## 10. Targeted Support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with the outside agencies and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. We aim to identify issues early, determine potential risks and provide support for early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems.

- Working closely with relevant Children's Services, including CAMHS and other services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral.
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems.
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach.
- Providing a range of 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, including CAMHS, 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. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality.
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it.
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

## 11. Managing Disclosures

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or another young person, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on MyConcern and stored under the safekeeping of the DSL on the student's personal file if necessary, including:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Date.  | • Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation. |
| • Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made. | • Agreed next steps.  |

This information will only be shared with those persons necessary and those with a justifiable professional need to access this information in the course of helping the student. This information is strictly confidential and will not be shared with any other parties. Parents wishing to gain access to this information will have to request a subject access in line with GDPR.

## 12. Confidentiality

If a member of staff needs to pass on concerns about a student to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student. We will tell them:

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▪ Who we are going to tell.       | ▪ Why we need to tell them.      |
| ▪ What we are going to tell them. | ▪ When we're going to tell them. |

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student first. However, there may be instances when information must be shared. In this case, any staff member receiving a disclosure is required to pass information on to the DSL. If the information disclosed relates to another member of staff, the information **MUST** be passed directly to the Principal.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with an appropriate colleague this ensures one single member of staff is not solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed, but students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours is recommended to share this information before the school makes contact with the parents/carers.

If a student gives us reason to believe that they are at risk from parents / carers, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Privacy Policy

## **13. Whole School Approach and Guidance**

### **Working with parents/carers**

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents/carers there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

Wemms Education Centre is mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which the school should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.



Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agreed are added to the student's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

Meeting minutes (either in person, online or over the telephone) will be documented on a 'Contact with Parents / Carers' form and will be retained in the student's confidential pastoral file.

## **Supporting Parents**

We recognise that family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will 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.
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.).
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners, and
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare.

We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

## **Supporting Peers**

When a student 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 other children safe, we will consider on a case by case basis, which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided 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 / saying which may inadvertently cause upset.
- Warning signs that their friend needs 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.

## **14. 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. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal 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 CPD offer and will be supported throughout the year, when it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host inset and 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 the Principal who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.