



Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children Policy



Document and Version Control

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Policy Statement

As a Trust we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, knowing that having a positive state of wellbeing will enable our children to achieve their full potential, as learners, citizens of their settings and wider.

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 contribute to her or his community. (World Health Organisation)

Scope

This policy describes the Trust's approach to promoting positive mental health and well-being. 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 pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.

A Trust Approach to Wellbeing

Professionals across all settings met and agreed shared approaches and best practice in order to impact on pupil wellbeing. This policy has been informed by Trust Senior Well-being Leads who consider in their individual settings:

- the impact that poor mental health and wellbeing can have on children and young people's readiness to learn – and other indicators, such as attendance, attention, behaviour, and attainment.
- the importance of measuring needs across individual settings and wider and monitoring the impact of interventions to measure progress and adapt approach.
- the range of mental health issues encountered in individual settings and beyond, and the risk factors associated with specific groups, including those who have suffered from trauma, vulnerable groups such as children who have or have had a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children, young carers and those identified as otherwise vulnerable, those with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- how life experiences can lead to mental health fluctuations.
- how to differentiate when the need of the child or young person would be better met by an education or health intervention, specifically in relation to SEND.
- the tools used by mental health professionals to baseline and measure outcomes of interventions.
- how they can monitor the impact of interventions in their setting.

The Policy Aims to

- Promote positive mental health in all pupils across all academies and settings;
- Create and cultivate a culture of wellbeing and inclusion;

- Foster a positive atmosphere in every setting, where pupils feel able to discuss and reflect on their own experiences with mental health openly;
- Celebrate all the ways pupils achieve in each setting, both inside and outside the classroom;
- Allow pupils to participate in forming an approach to mental health by promoting pupil voice;
- Give pupils opportunities to develop their self-esteem by taking responsibility for themselves and others;
- 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; identifying and responding to early warning signs of mental health issues;
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers.
- Provide support and access to resources to pupils experiencing mental ill health alongside their peers, their families and the staff who work alongside them.

Legal Basis

This policy was written with regard to:

- [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Data protection: The Data Protection Act - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Roles and Responsibilities

Across our Trust, we strive to promote positive mental health for every pupil. We pursue this aim using universal, whole academy approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. 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 pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Rationale

Academies and settings have a central role to play in enabling their pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and well-being. It is important that academies promote good mental well-being for all pupils.

Education about relationships, sex and health can be important vehicles through which academies can teach pupils about mental health and well-being. (DfE) The Education Endowment Foundation also cites current and relevant research relating to Social and Emotional Learning and how this is underpinned by mental well-being.

Academies and Early Year providers have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, by developing approaches tailored to the needs of their pupils. All academies 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 the latest [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) statutory guidance 2024.

It cannot be over-emphasised, the role that all staff have within their individual roles in supporting and promoting mental health and well-being. This can be summarised as:

- **Prevention:** creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and well-being of the whole academy 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 well-being through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through academy 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 academy in our Trust can have a profound influence on pupil mental well-being. Environments that are hostile, aggressive, chaotic, or unpredictable can be harmful to mental health, and can lead to stressful learning conditions. Our academies are in a unique position, as they can help prevent mental health problems by promoting resilience as part of an integrated, whole academy approach that is tailored to the needs of our pupils. Our whole academy and Trust approach are one that goes beyond the teaching in the classroom and pervades all aspects of academy life, including:

- culture, ethos, and environment: the health and well-being of pupils is promoted through the 'hidden' or 'informal' curriculum, including leadership practice, the academy's policies, values, and attitudes, together with the social and physical environment
- teaching: using the curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge about health and well-being;
- 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 well-being
- 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 academies 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 an academy ethos that promotes strong relationships between staff, children, and their parents/carers. It also relies on creating a positive academy culture and climate that fosters connection, inclusion, respect, and value for all members of the academy 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 crucial when addressing and planning support for children's SEMH needs and taking into account newly adopted policies e.g., Child-on-Child Abuse 2022.

Leadership of Mental Well-being

An important element of our Trust 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, 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 academy in our Trust. Our trust Senior Mental Health Leads in tandem with our Academy Well-being Champions exemplify this and are the Trust Ambassadors to influence the culture of calm and dignity in line with our Trust values.

Every Senior Mental Health Leads learning needs are unique, and influenced by a range of factors, for example: their prior knowledge and skills, experience, phase of education & type of setting, as well as personal learning preferences. They maximise the cultural capital of being part of a Trust to influence the wellbeing culture and have set out their vision for their settings: with clear behaviour expectations, that embody high expectations from all, conveyed consistently throughout the whole academy community. An aligned 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 academy community.

Early intervention to identify issues and provide effective support is crucial. The Senior Mental Health Lead through professional development will be able to:

- use (and be able to adapt as required) relevant tools to assess need, and monitor
- interventions to support pupil and student progress.
- implement a process to identify those who may need additional support, working with other staff across the academy to use pre-existing documents, such as Education Health Care Plans.

Where appropriate:

- decide about whether a health or education intervention is more appropriate and access this support with reference to the Local Offer including Hubs.
- seek feedback from and give feedback to staff, pupils, and parents, to ensure experiencing poor mental health get the support they need to be able to engage in all
- aspects of academy/college life and participating in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- work with staff, families, and local services to understand the mental health and wellbeing issues that could be impacting on behaviour and attendance to improve outcomes for pupils/students and ensure that all academy policies reflect this.
- monitor the impact of interventions provided to individuals or small groups and adapt the approach as needed

Lead Members of Staff

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

- Designated Trust Child Protection / Safeguarding Officer - Maria Hamblin; CEO@fierte.org
- CPD lead - Tony Hand; ViceCEO@fierte.org ViceCeo@fierte.org

Potential behaviours of concern

Academy staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional well-being issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with Mental Health, and Emotional Wellbeing Lead and DSLs. 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;
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause;
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism;
- Neglecting personal hygiene;
- Attention seeking 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 pupil 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 pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the pupil's confidential file or logged on My Concern. (UK GDPR compliant)

The disclosure record should include:

- Date;
- Time;
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made; main points from the conversation;
- The context in which the disclosure was made;
- Any questions asked or support offered by members of staff;
- Agreed next steps and actions.

This information should be shared with the Mental Health Lead, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. In addition, before sharing information disclosed by a pupil with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the pupil and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will need to share
- Why they will need to share that information

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the pupil to share the information, but the safety of the pupil is paramount. Parents will be informed unless there is a child protection concern, in which case the child protection / reporting procedures will be followed.

Trust wide support mechanisms

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

- One to one session;
- Nurture groups;
- Parent Workshops;
- Art Therapy
- Regulation stations or Zones of Regulation (Internal)
- PSHE;
- Outdoor Learning and Wild Well-being;
- General care and guidance available to all learners;
- Staff training e.g., Hope; CAMHS
- Inset.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils, and parents are aware of sources of support within academy and in the 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 pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

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

As part of every settings commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for pupils, academies will offer support to all pupils through:

- Raising of mental health during assemblies, class time, PSHE and Mental awareness weeks;
- Signposting all pupils to sources of online support on academy websites;
- Having open discussions about mental health during lessons.
- Providing pupils with avenues to provide feedback on any aspect of academy that is affecting them negatively e.g., Worry Boxes or other age-appropriate support tools
- Monitoring of pupil's mental health through assessments e.g., through Safeguarding Forum monitoring or Pupil Progress Meetings.
- Appointment of a Senior Mental Health Lead to support strategic oversight of whole academy approaches to mental health and wellbeing.
- Making classrooms a safe space to discuss mental health and wellbeing e.g., calm corners, Circle Time, or Regulation Stations.

Assessing what further support is needed

If a pupil is identified as possessing a mental health need, the DSL will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to making an assessment and providing tailored support, further to the provision of the baseline support as detailed in this document. The academy will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the pupil's mental health needs are
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

Internal mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a pupil will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our academy includes:

- Nurture groups
- Reduced timetable

- Time out/ Calm Corners
- One to one support

Individual healthcare plans (IHPs)

A pupil will be offered an individual healthcare plan (IHP) if they require further support than their setting is able to provide in supporting their mental health and wellbeing needs.

IHPs are written in collaboration with the pupil (where appropriate), their parent/carer, and any other relevant professionals.

The pupil's IHP will contain the following details:

- The mental health issue (and its triggers, signs, symptoms, and treatments)
- The pupil's needs resulting from the condition
- Specific support for the pupil's educational, social, and emotional needs
- The level of support needed
- Who will provide the support
- Who in the academy needs to be aware of the child's condition
- What to do in an emergency

Making external referrals

If a pupil's needs cannot be met by the internal offer the academy provides, the academy will make, or encourage parents to make, a referral for external support.

A pupil could be referred to:

- GP or pediatricians
- CAMHS
- Mental health charities (e.g. [Samaritans](#), [Mind](#), [Young Minds](#), [Kooth](#))
- Local counselling services

Assessing what further support is needed

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to making an assessment and providing tailored support, further to the provision of the baseline support. The school will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the pupil's mental health needs are
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

Whole academy approach to promoting mental health awareness

We will follow the [PSHE Association Guidance teaching mental health and emotional wellbeing](#).

Pupils will be taught to:

- Develop healthy coping strategies
- Challenge misconceptions around mental health
- Understand their own emotional state
- Keep themselves safe

For more information, see our PSHE curriculum.

Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

- Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:
- Discussing mental health with pupils in order to break down stigma
- Encouraging pupils to disclose when they think their mental health is deteriorating

Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a pupil experiencing poor mental health can be distressing for staff. To combat this, we will:

- Treat mental health concerns seriously
- Offer staff supervision sessions
- Support staff experiencing poor mental health themselves
- Create a pleasant and supportive work environment

Confidentiality

We should be honest regarding 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 pupil 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 at least one appropriate colleague, usually a Designated Safeguarding Lead. This helps to safeguard our own emotional well-being as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil 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 academy, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, 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 are 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 academy 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;
- 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 pupil 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. 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 pupil 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 pupils 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.

This policy has been equality impact assessed, and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any individual and it helps to promote equality across Fierté Multi-Academy Trust.

Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis

