

Alt Bridge School



Mental Health Policy

	Date	Signature	Website	Teacher Shared Drive
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Governors	03.06.20			

Mental Health Policy

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Policy Statement

At Alt Bridge School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff. Our ethos statement reflects this commitment.

Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage students to be open and we want each student to have their voice heard.

At our school, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our school, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

Policy Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers, governors, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting student mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside our other relevant school policies.

Policy Aims

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students. At our school, we will always;

- Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better and develop self-regulation skills.
- Ensure our students feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.
- Help children to form and maintain meaningful relationships with others.
- Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.
- Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks.
- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
- Celebrate both academic and non-academic achievements.
- Promote our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Provide opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting our students' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Celebrating each student for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected.
- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any student that needs it.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in students.
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

Key Roles

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

- Our Designated Safeguarding Officers: Natalie Menagh (head teacher), Steve Farrimond (deputy head teacher), Naomi Richards (assistant head teacher) and Geraldine Pritchard (Pupil Welfare Coordinator)
- Mental Health Lead: Geraldine Pritchard
- Learning Mentors: Karen Townson, Kim Stockton and Faye Freeman
- Mental Health First Aiders: Karen Townson, Faye Freeman, Corey Harbinson and Kim Stockton

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, then in the first instance they should speak to the student's form teacher. Concerns should be escalated to the DSLs if there is a risk of harm to the student.

Pastoral meetings which are held every two weeks by the assistant head teachers will be an opportunity to raise concerns and discuss provision for individuals. The learning mentors also attend these meetings and are able to offer suggestions for support.

If a child presents a medical emergency then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

The Wellbeing Hub

We are very fortunate at Alt Bridge to have a wellbeing hub as our main offer of mental health support for our students. The wellbeing hub is a newly developed area in school where our three learning mentors work, led by our Pupil Welfare Coordinator Geraldine Pritchard.

The wellbeing hub includes two therapy rooms, a comfortable foyer, kitchen area and offices for the mentors. There is also a new meeting room to enable MDT meetings to take place.

The mentors continue to update their training and develop our holistic offer of support to our students. The wellbeing hub offers a menu of therapeutic interventions and is a source of support for students and their families.

Bullying and mental health

We recognise that bullying can have a huge impact on the mental health and wellbeing of the victim. There are also significant concerns around the mental health and wellbeing of students who frequently engage in bullying and both parties require different forms of support and a robust response from the school. All reported incidents of bullying will be fully investigated and resolved using appropriate approaches such as restorative practices and/or necessary sanctions to the perpetrators of bullying. Support directed from the wellbeing hub can assist students with longer term issues regarding bullying and parents/carers will be involved in agreeing the best approaches moving forward.

Online bullying can have a considerable impact and is a prolific form of bullying amongst young people. Whilst this form of bullying often takes place off-site, school reserve the right to address all forms of bullying through our behaviour and discipline policy. It is a key priority of the school to teach our students to recognise online bullying, act swiftly to report the behaviour and take immediate measures to protect themselves. Online safety and cyber-bullying feature strongly in our computing and PSHCE curriculums as well as our ongoing safeguarding messages and support directed to all students.

Mental health in the curriculum

Our PSHCE curriculum is developed to give students the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training.

We will regularly review our PSHCE curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they're meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We'll also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide students with strategies to help keep them mentally well.

All students are also taught the Zones of Regulation programme by their form tutors to support the development of self-regulation skills. This is a whole school approach which all members of staff are expected to engage with.

Available support

Mental health needs can arise for anyone at any time due to specific triggers in life. The support we offer may be long term or may be quickly put into place in response to an arising need. All of our students have Education, Health and Care Plans due to special educational needs. Some have mental health outcomes specified in their EHCPs. The provision in school

will be designed specifically to meet the individual EHCP outcomes. Provision will be discussed regularly and also reviewed annually or when required through EHCP reviews.

We have a range of support available in school for any students struggling, as listed below:

- Learning mentor support
- Therapeutic interventions as appropriate inc. counselling, LEGO therapy, pet therapy, horse-riding, drama therapy and mindfulness techniques
- Access to KOOTH counselling
- Team around the family approaches and EHATs

There is also a lot of support networks available for children in the local community. This includes places such as:

- Knowsley Youth Mutual
- Knowsley CAMHS
- Early Help Hub
- Knowsley Parent Carers Voice
- North West Boroughs Health

Signposting

We will ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the support that's available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

Counselling is available to staff via commissioned support.

COVID-19

As a school, we are mindful of the significant disruption caused by the recent national COVID-19 pandemic measures. Lockdown, extended absence from school, limited social engagement, increased risk of family pressures and safeguarding issues, possible bereavements and the loss of routines and sources of support will have caused wide-ranging issues for our students.

All of our students have risk assessments in place and all have been offered sources of support for mental health and wellbeing throughout this extended period of absence from school. School staff have remained in close contact with families and interventions such as counselling, learning mentor support, mindfulness and drama therapy have continued remotely. Wellbeing packs and resources have also been sent out to students to use at home.

Risk assessments will continue to be updated in line with national guidance to ensure that when students return, they receive the support they require in order to adjust to new arrangements. All students will need to adjust to a vast array of changes to their usual

routines and the physical environment of the school. This will require a lot of additional support and careful planning.

Upon returning, there will be a focus on rebuilding relationships and supporting students to adjust to new arrangements within a communication friendly environment. The impact of trauma, bereavements, losses and exacerbated mental health difficulties will need to be assessed upon return and in collaboration with parents/carers and appropriate action taken.

Identifying needs and warning signs

All of our staff will be trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to students who need it, when they need it.

These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer as appropriate. Some of these signs include;

- Physical signs of harm
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Changes in mood
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- Secretive behaviour
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption
- Attendance and absenteeism
- Punctuality and lateness
- Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education
- Family and relationship problems

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

Managing Disclosures

If a student discloses concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially using the CPOMS system. DSLs should be alerted via CPOMS and also in person. Information will only be shared with the appropriate authorities if it's necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff thinks it's necessary to pass on concerns about a student, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then the student should be informed that support will be sought from others and the reason why i.e. to keep everyone safe.

Staff members must never promise to keep any information secret. Students should be fully aware that if they report something that makes a member of staff concerned about them then the information will be passed on. Protecting a student's safety is our main priority so we would always share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

Whole school ethos and approach

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our students and it is included as a significant part of our school ethos statement. All of our students have SEND and many are diagnosed with neurodevelopment conditions which increase their risk of experiencing mental health difficulties.

All members of staff must support the school-wide priority in their approach to supporting students, their colleagues and parents/carers. Our school values of care, courtesy, resilience and determination are promoted widely in school and students are regularly rewarded for their efforts and achievements.

Working with parents/carers

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health training our school staff receive and how mental health is covered in our school curriculum.

Working with other agencies

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our students' emotional health and wellbeing. This may include the following agencies;

- The school nurse
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS
- KOOH counselling service
- Educational psychologists

- Therapists
- Family support workers

Supporting peers

We understand that, when a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

We will provide support in a one-on-one or group setting. These sessions will be guided by the student, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

Training

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe.

Specific members of staff will access enhanced training due to the specific requirements of their individual roles.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our school website so staff can learn more about child mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with pupils.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every year. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.