

Supporting Mental Health & Well Being Advice

This policy is directly informed by the Advice for Schools and Framework Document ‘What works in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and responding to mental health problems in schools?’ (2015)

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1. Rationale

This advice is drawn up from evidence from international research, systematic reviews, trials of interventions and on national and local evaluations of recent work in schools. It is designed to support school leaders and their staff to deliver well designed and implemented interventions that will impact on:

- academic learning, motivation, and sense of commitment and connectedness to school;
- staff wellbeing, stress reduction and performance;
- student wellbeing and the development of social and emotional skills;
- the prevention and reduction of mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and stress;
- improving school behaviour and reductions in risky behaviour.

2. Definitions

This guidance deals with two overlapping areas of central importance in schools, which need to be integrated to be effective:

'Social and emotional wellbeing' - a state of positive mental health and wellness. It involves a sense of optimism, confidence, happiness, clarity, vitality, self-worth, achievement, having a meaning and purpose, engagement, having supportive and satisfying relationships with others and understanding oneself, and responding effectively to one's own emotions.

'Mental health problems' - the wide range of mental health, emotional and social challenges, difficulties, conditions and illnesses that can beset both students and staff, including stress and burnout, anxiety, depression, attachment difficulties and behavioural problems.

3. Structures within the academies

The Trust supports wellbeing and ensures that this is central to the school's ethos.

In secondary academies the House structure enables close monitoring of all students with senior tutors, student support assistant, form tutors, and in some academies the Family Liaison Officer and Inclusion Manager, being the most directly involved with the promotion of wellbeing and with early intervention when a need arises.

In primary academies the class teacher is most directly involved with the promotion of wellbeing for students, working closely with colleagues as needs are identified. A senior member of staff, often the Principal, will support the wellbeing of staff.

Each Academy should have a designated, named, Mental Health Champion to actively promote wellbeing in school.

4. Key ingredients to supporting wellbeing:

Start with a positive and universal focus on wellbeing which includes a promotion of:

- Proper sleep patterns
- Time for exercise
- Eating healthily at regular times
- Time to relax
- Emotional resilience
- Sense of humour
- Firm boundaries
- Acts of kindness
- A sense of perspective
- Feeling successful and supported

5. Adopting a whole school approach

Each academy should develop a supportive school and classroom climate and ethos. This should include:

- Teaching social and emotional skills –including the removal of stigma associated with mental health problems.

- Understanding risk and resilience to actively respond to problems and difficulties.
- Helping all students and staff with predictable change and transitions.
- Providing clear boundaries and robust policies which support wellbeing.
- Understanding the causes of behaviour and connect appropriately with approaches to behaviour management
- Engaging the whole community: promoting student voice and peer learning and involving parents, carers and families and staff
- Promoting the wellbeing of staff and tackling staff stress
- Prioritising professional learning and staff development so that all staff are aware of the factors relating to mental health and can identify issues.
- Training for all staff to ensure they are aware that the safety of students is paramount.

6. Staff training

Each Academy should ensure that at least one staff member receives more in-depth training and can act as the School's Mental Health Champion, liaising with the Cambridgeshire / Lincolnshire / Peterborough Mental Health Champion, Cambridgeshire / Lincolnshire Mental Health Service and the School Nursing Service to support better outcomes for our students.

There is a job description for this role devised by Cambridgeshire County Council with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS which can be utilised. Mental Health Champions should have a senior leader link in school to keep the focus on wellbeing and they should meet every half term to share best practice and develop their practice within their schools.

7. Identify and intervene early

Each Academy should identify and intervene early with students who are having difficulties:

- Implement targeted programmes and interventions (including curriculum and alternative / specialist pathways)
- Provide clear pathways of help and referral to other specialist services, employing the CAF process as needed or social care
- Provide more intense work on skills work for those with difficulties
- Liaise closely with School Nursing Service and with locality teams who can provide Family Workers, Family Intensive Workers, Young People's Workers, Youth Offending Prevention Workers.
- Liaise with specialist services, charities and other agencies to offer the best possible range of provision.
- Seek to develop provision to best address the needs of our students and families.
- Maintain confidentiality and retain the trust of students and families

8. Conclusion: The centrality of wellbeing to learning and school improvement

There is strong evidence on the links between wellbeing, learning and school improvement, evidence which has recently been brought together by Public Health England. This confirms that children with greater wellbeing, lower levels of mental health problems and greater emotional attachment to school achieve higher grade scores, better examination results, better attendance and drop out less often.

Social and emotional skills are a more significant determinant of academic attainment than IQ. There is a strong correlation between the quality of PSHE in a school and the school's overall effectiveness.

Schools can be confident that a focus on wellbeing and mental health not only enables them to provide healthy and happy school environments for students and staff and prepare the citizens of tomorrow with sound character and values, but also directly supports their more immediate mission: the promotion of effective learning.