

A Message from Caroline Spender

Founder, Inclusive Minds Network

At Inclusive Minds Network, we believe that *inclusion and mental health are everyone's responsibility*. This isn't just about policy, it's about people. Every conversation, every act of listening, and every small adjustment we make can help someone feel seen, valued, and supported.

When we share responsibility for wellbeing, we create schools and educational settings that are safer, stronger, and more connected. We help children learn that emotions are not barriers to success but part of being human and that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

This policy template was created to support schools and settings in building environments where wellbeing, inclusion and belonging are at the heart of everything they do. It's designed to be adapted, discussed, and lived, not as a standalone document to add to your websites.

If your school or setting would like support to bring this policy to life, Inclusive Minds Network offers:

- **Consultancy** to help review and embed wellbeing and inclusion within existing systems.
- **INSET day and staff training** to build shared understanding and confidence across teams.
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)** and **MH Champion training** to equip colleagues with practical, compassionate tools to support young people's wellbeing.

Together, we can move beyond awareness and create a culture where inclusion and mental health are part of everyday practice.

With care,



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Add to school policy template

Policy title	Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy
Written by	
Policy owner	

Status	Draft template
Summary of change	New policy

Approval date	
Approval authority	
Review date	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 *“We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. It’s about how we think, feel and act. Sometimes we feel well, and sometimes we don’t. When our mental health is good, we feel motivated and able to take on challenges and new experiences. But when our mental health is not so good, we can find it much harder to cope”. (www.youngminds.org.uk)*

At [school name] we recognise that children’s mental health is everyone’s responsibility. Working together we will support and empower the children to be mentally healthy children who, through continued support, are provided with the tools to support their own emotional wellbeing now and in their future lives.

We recognise the powerful impact that mental health and emotional wellbeing has on children’s academic achievements and that unmet needs will impact considerably on children’s learning. If children feel adequately supported and successful in school, this improves their self-esteem and emotional health. By developing and implementing a practical, relevant and effective mental health policy and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for the children colleagues affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

At our school, in line with our School’s / Trust’s Mission Vision and Values, we are committed to working together to protect and promote a mentally healthy school for all children and colleagues. We will continuously endeavour to nurture and improve mental health by utilising our whole school approach. We will implement practice that incorporates the Department for Education Mental Health Guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory legislation.

This document describes the school’s approach to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for our school community. The policy and procedures will also be made available for the perusal of children and their parents and carers.

2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1 Implement effective practice and policies relevant to our school community that have been developed in conjunction with children, parents and carers. Promote a safe and supportive environment and culture which is conducive to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the whole school community.

We will support the school community to:

- Understand how they feel and why
- Develop language that enables us to talk about our bodies, health and emotions
- Seek support as early as possible when a worry arises and to share concerns
- Build a toolkit of healthy strategies to navigate change and adversity
- Use a consistent approach for managing feelings, emotions and behaviours

2.2 By creating this framework our objective is to:

- **Adopt a whole school approach:** promoting a culture of awareness to mental health and emotional wellbeing across our school community.
- **Reduce discrimination and stigma:** Increased awareness and understanding of the signs and symptoms of mental health among our school community. Provide training and support to colleagues to work effectively with children who have mental health issues fostering a compassionate and inclusive environment.
- **Provide support to pupils and their families:** Offer guidance and assistance to children experiencing emerging mental health challenges. Provide information on referral options and partner agencies for families seeking advice and support.
- **Promote a culture of understanding and positive mental health:** Fostering a whole school approach that celebrates equality and diversity, embracing the importance of mental well-being. Encourage an atmosphere where individuals feel accepted, safe and supported.
- **Encourage self-care strategies:** Create opportunities for colleagues and children to explore and identify individual, positive self-care strategies that effectively support their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Empower individuals to take an active role in their own mental health.

3. School Senior Leaders

3.1 All colleagues share a responsibility for promoting children's mental health, colleagues listed below are there to support you: **(adapt to your own school setting)**

- **[XXXX]** – Principal
- **[XXXX]** – Designated Safeguarding Lead
- **[XXXX]** – Senior Mental Health Lead
- **[XXXX]** – Lead First Aider
- **[XXXX]** – Pastoral Lead
- **[XXXX]** – CPD Lead
- **[XXXX]** – Head of RSHE

Any colleague who is concerned about the mental health or emotional wellbeing of a child should speak to the **Senior Mental Health Lead** in the first instance.

In the event of any concerns that a child may be at risk of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed, with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL in their absence.

If the child presents as a medical emergency, then the school's procedures for medical emergencies and the **school Medical and First Aid Policy** should be followed, including the involvement of first aiders, and contacting the emergency services.

Where a referral to Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Services (CYPMHS, also sometimes known as CAMHS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by [add the appropriate information for your school setting]

4. Individual Health Care Plans (IHCP)

- 4.1 Where there is concern about potential mental ill health or in instances where a child has received a diagnosis of a mental health condition, following statutory guidance within Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) may be appropriate. Care plan development should be a collaborative process, involving the child, the parents and carers and any relevant professionals. For further information please refer to our School / Trust Policy (insert link to your policy relating to supporting pupils with medical conditions, if available)
- 4.2 Other applicable resources supporting children at our school with potential mental health challenges or following the diagnosis of a mental health condition for our school are listed below: (please provide further details of resources available in your setting)
- (For example, safeguarding risk assessment plan, safety plans etc)

5. Teaching about Mental Health

- 5.1 The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves and others physically and mentally safe are included as part of our personal development provision through the RSHE / PSHE/ Citizenship / Health and Social Care curriculum. (To be adapted to your individual school)
- 5.2 The content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching, but there will always be an emphasis on empowering children to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to identify any mental health changes and to seek support when needed, for themselves or others.

6. Early Indicators

- 6.1 Colleagues may become aware of warning signs which may indicate a child is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. The school Senior Mental Health Lead is responsible for ensuring that colleagues have received the relevant training and are aware of the signs and symptoms. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and colleagues observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to [XXXXX, our Senior Mental Health Lead/ DSL / member of the SLT, please amend as appropriate for your school setting]. We all differ in outward manifestations of distress, so it is important to consider any signs of change, for example someone who is normally outgoing and communicative becoming less talkative and more withdrawn. It is important to emphasise that for some children experiencing distress, there may not be any apparent warning signs, or the child may actively be trying to hide their distress.

Potential warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Evidence of any changes to 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
- Evidence of use of non-prescribed drugs or alcohol
- Expressing thoughts or feelings of failure, hopelessness or worthlessness
- Unsuitable clothing (for example, long sleeves in warm weather), considering cultural observance
- Secretive or unusual behaviour
- Avoiding attendance at PE or getting changed secretly
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Expressing unusual ideas or beliefs

7. Supporting children's mental wellbeing

- 7.1 If a child chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to an school colleague, their response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgmental.
- 7.2 Colleagues should focus on listening in the first instance, rather than thinking about giving advice or offering solutions. Our first intent should be on the provision of a safe and secure space to discuss the child's concerns and promoting their emotional and physical safety.
- 7.3 All disclosures need to be recorded on the school's Child Protection Online System (CPOMs)

8. Children's Voice

- 8.1 *"Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously"* (NICEF UK, 1990)

We recognise the unique perspective of our pupils, and the inclusion of children's voices in developing a mentally healthy school. By involving them in decision-making, we continue to create and implement effective support systems, so that children can emotionally develop and achieve academically.

In designing this policy, representatives from each school across our **School / Trust** joined an online Grand Virtual Pupil Parliament and provided the following response to our question:

'What does feeling good in your mind and emotions mean to you?'

The below responses **(provided as an example & to be adapted to your individual trust/ school)** were received and provided an insight into how pupils across our **School / Trust** perceive mental and emotional well-being:

- **Feeling Happy and Purposeful:** They expressed that this emotional state motivates them to engage more actively in their school lives.
- **Sense of Peace:** Pupils mentioned that a sense of peace is essential to feeling good emotionally. It contributes to a feeling of calm and tranquillity, allowing them to focus and develop.
- **Confidence:** The children described how confidence positively impacts their ability to tackle challenges and interact with others.
- **Motivation:** Several pupils stated that when they feel good, they are more motivated and enthusiastic. This emotional state drives them to help others and engage in various activities with enthusiasm.
- **Positive Mood:** Pupils informed us that feeling happy and light-hearted empowers them to overcome obstacles and achieve.
- **Safety and Understanding:** Feeling good was linked to feelings of safety, understanding of upcoming situations, and being prepared for what lies ahead. Pupils informed us that these elements contribute to an overall sense of well-being.
- **Impact on Others:** Childrens emphasised that their emotional well-being not only affects them but also influences the well-being of those around them. Feeling good can make their day better and have a positive ripple effect on their peers.
- **Social Connection:** Feeling good is often intertwined with being with friends, having fun, and engaging in healthy activities, elements are which are vital for emotional well-being and support the development of a positive mindset.

To encourage pupil voices at **[school name]**, we provide a breadth of opportunities for children to participate such as:

- **(Please include further information of the opportunities for children to express their voices within your school)**

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 We recognise that all matters relating to safeguarding and child protection are confidential.
- 9.2 The Principal or the DSL will disclose information about a child to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis, and in the best interests of the child.
- 9.3 All colleagues are aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.
- 9.4 All colleagues have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.
- 9.5 Colleagues receive training on information sharing to safeguard and promote children's welfare. This includes understanding the purpose of sharing information, obtaining consent and knowing

when information can be shared without consent. For further details, please refer to appendix A of our School Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedure.

10. Support and Signposting

- 10.1 We will ensure that colleagues, children, parents and carers are aware of sources of support within our **School / Trust**, school and the local community, including what support is available, who it is aimed at and how to access it.

We will display relevant sources of information via our school website **[add link]** and in communal areas such as **[please include areas where information is displayed in your school]** and will regularly highlight sources of support to children within the relevant parts of the curriculum.

11. Working with Families

- 11.1 Effective communication is key to addressing mental health concerns. It's important to include all stakeholders, particularly parents and carers. If you, as parents and carers, have concerns about your child, our school maintains an open-door policy and is ready to help. We will offer further resources and guidance to access professional support and information. There is lots of support on offer, regardless of the nature of the issue, please do get in touch with your child's **[XXXX teacher / form tutor, etc]** if they have any concerns.
- 11.2 We will highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away, where possible, as they may find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that we're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents and carers can also be helpful too, e.g., parent helplines and forums. **We provide useful information for parents on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing via parent information events/workshops/information sent home/our website. [to be adapted for your school setting]**
- 11.3 We understand that, when a child is experiencing mental ill health, it can be a difficult time for their friends and family and we recognise the vital role they play in a child's wellbeing and academic success. We signpost information and resources through our school website and offer open lines of communication to ensure that families and friends feel supported and can access the help they need. Together, we strive to create a strong partnership between the school and the child's broader support network, fostering a nurturing environment for our children.

12. Sources of support at the school and in the local community

- 12.1 Mental illness is a legitimate medical condition that requires appropriate attention and support. Just as physical health concerns warrant medical intervention, it is equally essential to recognise and address mental health with the same level of importance. Seeking professional medical advice is crucial for accurate diagnosis, treatment planning and accessing appropriate support services. We

strongly encourage individuals experiencing mental health challenges to reach out to qualified healthcare professionals who can provide expert guidance and care.

- 12.2 Considering the above, support will be unique to your school. Take time to collate a thorough list of support available at school and within the local community. This information could be detailed below or signposted via your school website.

School Based Support

List the full range of support available to children. For each include:

- What it is
- Who it is suitable for
- How it is accessed
- How this information is communicated to children

This is likely to include information about pastoral staff including behaviour and learning support and school counsellors.

You should also include details of any specific groups or interventions run at the school.

Local Support

List any local support services or charities that might be accessed by children or their families. Often there is a range of charities and other local services that can be accessed freely or at very low cost. There may be pockets of knowledge on such topics amongst staff and parents. It is well worth going to the effort of trying to gather this information in your policy so that it is easy to access centrally when most needed.

13. Training

- 13.1 As a minimum, all colleagues 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 children safe.
- 13.2 Training opportunities for colleagues who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of the professional development process. Additional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more children.
- 13.3 **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)** training is available as a professional development opportunity for all colleagues. As trusted adults in children's lives, school colleagues are often best placed to notice when a child is struggling, offer reassurance, and signpost appropriate help. YMHFA training builds the knowledge and confidence to provide early support, promote recovery, and respond effectively in a crisis.

While it is not a therapeutic qualification, the course equips colleagues to listen, reassure, and respond appropriately, potentially preventing escalation and helping children access the right support at the right time.

Colleagues who have completed this training in our school are: [include the names of colleagues who have completed YMHFA training]

14. Policy review

14.1 This policy will be reviewed annually as a minimum.

14.2 Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to [XXXXX our Senior Mental Health Lead or email xxxxxx@xxxx.org.uk]

15. Legislation and associated policies

15.1 Legislation

- The Mental Health Act 2007
- Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper
- Children's Act 2004
- Mental Capacity 2005
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001
- Equality Act 2010

15.2 This policy links with several other policies, practices and action plans including [Suggested policy links below, to be adapted for your setting]:

- School Attendance policy
- School Behaviour policy
- School Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- School Online Safety policy
- Curriculum policies, such as: Computing, Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE)
- Citizenship and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
- Staff Code of conduct
- Equality and Diversity policy
- Accessibility policy
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing policy.

- Social media policy
- Complaints policy
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school
- First Aid and Medical Policy
- Supporting students and pupils with medical conditions policy

Appendix A

Sources of support about common mental health issues

Apps, Online Support and Further Reading – School provision maps to be added to individual school websites and signposted

A range of apps, online support and further reading covering mental health challenges most seen in school-aged children and young people. Some resources are aimed at children and/or young people experiencing mental health, whilst others are suited to parents/carers and school staff supporting a child or young person. Some of the apps and other resources may be helpful for more than one specific issue. Please visit your school's website for further information. [Please provide a link to further information of provision available in your school's individual setting via school's website]

For further e-learning opportunities **MindEd** is a free educational resource hub on children, young people and adult mental health.

Appendix B: Guidance and advice documents

[Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school or college approach.](#)

Guidance for headteachers and college principals on the 8 principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

Public Health England and Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition (2021)

[Mental health and behaviour in schools.](#)

Departmental advice for school staff.

Department for Education (2018)

[Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future](#)

Departmental advice for school staff and counsellors.

Department for Education (2016)

[Teacher Guidance: teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing](#)

PSHE Association.

Funded by the Department for Education 2021

[Keeping children safe in education](#)

Statutory guidance for schools and colleges.

Department for Education (2025)

[Supporting children at school with medical conditions](#)

Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of schools in England.

Department for Education (2015)

[Healthy child programme from 5 to 19 years old](#)

A recommended framework of universal and progressive services for children and young people to promote optimal health and wellbeing.

Department of Health (2009)

[Future in mind – promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing](#)

A report produced by the Children and Young People's Mental health and emotional wellbeing Taskforce to examine how to improve mental health services for children and young people.

Department of Health (2015)

[NICE guidance on social and emotional wellbeing in primary education](#)

[NICE guidance on social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education](#)

[What works in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and responding to mental health in schools?](#)
Advice for schools and framework document written by Professor Katherine Weare. National Children's Bureau (2015)

Appendix C: Data Sources

[Children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing profiling tool](#) collates and analyses a wide range of publicly available data on risk, prevalence and detail (including cost data) on those services that support children with, or vulnerable to, mental illness. It enables benchmarking of data between areas.

[Health behaviour of school age children](#)

An international cross-sectional study that takes place in 43 countries and is concerned with the determinants of young people's health and wellbeing.