

Austwick CE (VA) Primary School and Nursery

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Policy statement

At Austwick CE (VA) Primary School we are inspired by our school vision to let our light shine (Matthew 5:16) and nurtured by our Christian values of respect, love, forgiveness and resilience. We will step out into the world with courage and hope, as shining lights, illuminated by knowledge, skills and understanding. We will work hard together, knowing that all are valued and able to flourish in their own way.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that, *“in order to help their children succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.”*

We believe that looking after a child's wellbeing, not only comes before academic success, but also lays the foundation on which achievement can be built. At *Austwick School*, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all our pupils, their families, members of staff and governors. Wellbeing is placed at the centre of everything we do. It is embedded into lessons, all aspects of pupil life – and the school's values of SHINE – spiritually aware, healthy and safe, inspired by creation, neighbourly and loving and eager to learn.

Our open culture allows pupils' 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.

Our role in school is to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable at times, and anyone may need additional emotional support. We have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help or support. Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff and governors – outlining Austwick School's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding, Child protection, SEND and Behaviour policies – It is important to acknowledge that changes in behaviour whether it be disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or other, may be linked to an unmet mental health need.

Policy Aims

The World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing is, *“a state of wellbeing 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 make a contribution to her or his community.”*

At our school we:

- Enable pupils to understand their emotions and feelings better

- Provide an environment where pupils feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries including through the use of worry boxes
- Promote self-esteem and ensure children know they are valued
- Develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT 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.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

Reinforcing school values and encouraging a sense of belonging

Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making (for example, through our School Council, Wellbeing Champions, Librarians and Collective Worship Committee).

Celebrating academic and non-academic achievement (including during our weekly Achievers' Assembly)

Providing opportunities to reflect

Access to appropriate support that meets their needs

Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, however key members of staff have a specific role to play:

Designated Safeguard Lead (DSL): Beth McHardy

Deputy DSL: Lisa Allan, Claire Pearson, Alison McGregor

SendCo: Alison McGregor

Mental Health and PSHE Lead: Karen Bentley

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, in the first instance they should speak to the Mental Health Lead.

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.

Lead Governors

Safeguarding governors: Maria Farrer and Laura Richmond

Special Educational Needs governors: Sarah Brownlee and Sarah Williamson

Mental health and wellbeing governor: Keeley Crockett

Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our pupils need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and wellbeing champions programme. The school will adapt this based on the local needs of cohorts but follows the PSHE Association Thematic model guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing in a safe, sensitive, and age-appropriate manner. <https://pshe-association.org.uk/topics/mental-health>

Our PSHE lead teaches the subject to Year 4, 5 & 6, the Class 1 teacher teaches the subject to Year 1, 2 & 3 and the EYFS lead teaches Nursery and Reception with support from the PSHE lead. The PSHE lead has undertaken additional subject-based training on a regular cycle.

Through the PSHE curriculum, and other school approaches, pupils learn to:

- Recognise and manage their own feelings
- Become empathetic and understand other people's feelings
- Develop strategies for managing feelings
- Understand the impact of change, such as transitions, loss, separation, and bereavement
- Understand different types of teasing and bullying behaviours, including online and prejudice-based, and how to respond
- Develop resilience
- Recognise when they need to talk to someone and how to get help

In addition, the school has developed wellbeing links to the PSHE curriculum topics to collective worship – including topics to raise awareness of mental health - celebrating World Mental Health Day, Anti-bullying Week, Children's Mental Health Week and Safer Internet Day etc.

Mental health techniques and mindfulness are taught to pupils in activities such as mindfulness.

The school operates a 'Wellbeing Champions' system in which pupils are trained to support each other to:

- Promote a healthy lifestyle, wellbeing and resilience
- Monitor the playground (for example, looking for those who may need support) and around the school to help support pupils
- Help the school promote good behaviour and an anti-bullying culture

- Develop wellbeing ideas, activities and projects in school (including leading assemblies and raising awareness of events).
- Help others to know about where you can get help and support from
- Be a good role model and a good listener
- Talk about feelings and emotions

Signposting

We 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.

Within the school (noticeboards, classrooms etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure pupils understand:

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

Warning Signs

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular children protection training in order to keep pupils safe. This includes understanding potential risk factors that make some children more likely to experience problems (e.g. Adverse Childhood Experiences, traumatic experiences/incidents, family breakdowns, bullying, death and loss).

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 Mental Health Lead or SENDCo.

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
- 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

Managing disclosures

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount, and staff listen rather than advise.

Staff make it clear to pupils that a concern will be shared with the Mental Health Lead and Designated Safeguarding Lead and recorded confidentially. This may also be recorded on the school's safeguarding log, CPOMS.

This is in line with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Working with parents/carers

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:

- Sharing and allowing parents to access sources of further support e.g. through parent information sessions
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (school website, newsletters etc)
- Make our emotional health and wellbeing policy easily accessible
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health problems are common, and that help and advice are available.

In order to support parents, school will:

- Communicate regularly, consult and engage with parents/carers through newsletters, texts, Facebook, assemblies, daily updates, parents' evenings and teacher communications.
- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, if they have concerns about their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children.
- 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.

Appendix 1:

Staff mental health and wellbeing support:

Mind Helpline: Mind Helplines is an information service that is also able to offer signposting. They provide information on mental health problems, where to get help near you, treatment options and information on advocacy services.

Online at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/>

Tel: 0300 102 1234

Samaritan's Helpline: The Samaritans is a charity that is able to offer support if you're having a difficult time or if you are worried about someone else. They will provide a listening ear if you need someone to talk to, and they will not judge.

Online at: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Tel: 116123

Education Support Helpline: Education Support Partnership is a charity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of teachers and the entire education workforce. It offers a free, confidential helpline to all those working in education in the UK.

Online at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-you/helpline/>

Tel: 08000 562561

5 Ways to Wellbeing (NHS): Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

Online at: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

Mindful Teachers:

Online at: <https://www.mindfulteachers.org/>

Appendix 2:

Parent and Pupil mental health and wellbeing support:

Self-Harm

Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.

Online support includes:

www.selfharm.co.uk/National

www.nshn.co.uk

Depression

Ups and downs are a normal part of life for all of us, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months, and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

Online support includes:

www.mind.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/depression-alliance/

Anxiety, Panic Attacks and Phobias

Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed.

Online support include:

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Obsessions and Compulsions

Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter our minds which are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they don't turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms – it is not just about cleaning and checking.

Online support includes:

www.ocduk.org/ocd

Suicidal Feelings

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings though they may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide apparently out of the blue.

Online support include:

www.papyrus-uk.org

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/research-and-resources/on-the-edge-childline-spotlight/

Eating Problems

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people. This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

Online support includes:

www.b-eat.co.uk/about-eating-disorders

www.inourhands.com

