



# Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Dated revised: July 2022

Review Date: July 2025

## Principle Academy Vision

We put children first, pioneering excellence and championing each and every child.

## Statement of Intent

At The Pioneer Academy we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all children, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows children's 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.

**Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual recognises 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 his or her own community.**

*World Health Organisation, August 2014*

## Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining The Pioneer Academy's approach to promoting good mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies

## Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and children
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in children
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide the right support to children with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support
- Develop resilience amongst children and raise awareness of resilience building techniques
- 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 child welfare where everyone is aware of the signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school

### **Mental Health Problems in Children**

Where children experience a range of emotional and behavioural problems that are outside the normal range for their age, they might be described as experiencing mental health problems or disorders. Mental health professionals have classified these as:

- Emotional disorders, for example phobias, anxiety states and depression
- Conduct disorders, for example stealing, defiance, fire-setting, aggression and anti-social behaviour
- Hyperkinetic disorders, for example disturbance of activity and attention
- Developmental disorders, for example delay in acquiring certain skills such as speech, social ability or bladder control, primarily affecting children with autism and those with pervasive developmental disorders
- Attachment disorders, for example children who are markedly distressed or socially impaired as a result of an extremely abnormal pattern of attachment to parents or major care givers
- Trauma disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of traumatic experiences or persistent periods of abuse and neglect; and other mental health problems including eating disorders, habit disorders, somatic disorders; and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive disorder

Schools are well-placed to observe children on a day to day basis and to identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

### **Key staff members**

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of children, however key members of staff have specific roles to play as part of an inclusion team in each school:

- Headteacher
- SENCO/ Inclusion Lead
- Nurture Lead
- Family Worker
- Mental Health First Aid Champion

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child, in the first instance they should speak to a member of the inclusion team.

If there is a concern that the child 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 child protection procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

## **Individual Support Plans**

When a child has been identified as being cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue or is receiving support through either CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that clear support plans should be drawn up and recorded under the usual SEND process. The development of such plans should involve the pupil, the parents/carers and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role of the school and specific staff

## **Teaching about mental health**

The skills, knowledge and understanding our children need to keep themselves – and others – physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association and other mental health groups to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively.

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote children's wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of children's own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing children who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting them to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

## **Signposting**

We will ensure that staff, children and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (displays, posters in toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites and social media accounts), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure that families, pupils and staff understand:

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

## Sources or support at school

There is comprehensive support available for children

- School Family Workers
- Trained Counsellors
- Mentors
- Music Therapy
- Play Therapy
- Equine Therapy
- Nurture Groups
- Place To Be

Each school setting is different and provision is made according to need

At The Pioneer Academy we also have access to a range of local organisations and groups offering support, including CAMHS, providers specialising in children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. These organisations are able to deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a child 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 a member of the inclusion team and raise concerns using the safeguarding and child protection procedures if appropriate

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

## Targeted support

We recognise that some children are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those

living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work with local community services in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of children who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional and behavioural problems
- Working closely with local authorities and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment, children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress or behavioural problems
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parent/carers. Agreeing a support plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs
- Ensuring children have access to pastoral care and support, as well as referring to specialist services, including CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur
- Providing children with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality
- Providing children with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it
- The identification, assessment and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014

## **Managing disclosures**

If a child chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be recorded using the agreed safeguarding procedures.

This information may be shared with the school Mental Health Champion if appropriate

## **Confidentiality**

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a child to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the child and their family/carers. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell

- Why we need to tell them
- What we are going to tell them
- When we are going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the family/carers first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared especially when a child is felt to be in danger.

It is also important to safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a designated colleague in the inclusion team, this ensures one single member of staff is not solely responsible for the child. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents/carers must always be informed. If this is the case, it will be on the same day as the disclosure. However, if a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk or there are child protection issues, parents/carers should not be informed and the child protection procedures should be followed.

## **Whole school approach**

### **Working with parents/carers**

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – pupil, staff, parents etc?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent/carer, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent/carer to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents/carers to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents/carers have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed and agreed are added to the child's SEND record.

### **Supporting parents**

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents/carers are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and mental health problems
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our usual communication channels

- Offering support to help parents or carers to develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community providers or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

## **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 children safe. At least one nominated member of staff in each school will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our school websites for staff who wish to learn more about mental health.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported where it becomes appropriate.

## **Employee Wellbeing**

We at 'The Pioneer Academy' recognise that the staff are our most important resource and are to be valued, supported and encouraged to develop personally and professionally within a safe, learning and caring community. We believe that everyone should positively contribute to their own sense of well-being and security.

### **What is Employee Wellbeing?**

It's about feeling that your job contributes positively to your life rather than being a source of illness, harmful stress or other dissatisfaction. Feeling respected, valued and that the work that you do really matters and makes a difference.

Clear and regular communication between staff and their line manager is integral to personal well-being and managers are responsible for providing the necessary resources i.e. support structure.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Individual Responsibility:**

- Respect the diversity of staff and ensure that the nine characteristics, as outlined in the Equality Act (2010), are protected: age, disability, gender, gender identity, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, race & nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation.
- Respectful and thoughtful when interacting with colleagues;
- Follow school procedure regarding sickness, absences, special leave – Contact your line manager
- Being aware criticism should be constructive and then developed upon positively

- Learning from each other ie: observations, feedback, coaching, mentors
- Punctuality / Timekeeping (safeguarding) ie: playground duty, meetings, ringing the bell
- Follow the schools' procedures and policies at all times including trips
- Adaptability to be able to work around directed time
- Keep your working environment and shared areas clean, tidy and organised
- Communication ie: Check emails daily
- Time management...
- Check the staff board daily
- Arranging own cover for duties or planned absence
- No use of mobile phones when with children/classes

#### **Team Responsibilities:**

- Supportive environment e.g.: covering for other members of staff when someone is absent
- Having fun with each other
- Building good relationships with colleagues
- Treating everyone equally
- Time for each other
- Take responsibility for the tasks given and completed by the deadline
- Showing awareness of others workloads and time and make sure that you speak to the correct person directly not via a third party
- Fair distribution / contribution of work load
- Promoting your area of knowledge, expertise, leadership
- Giving people sufficient time to complete tasks
- Don't be offended if a member of staff cannot drop everything to assist you

#### **Whole School Responsibilities:**

- Respect for beliefs, ideas, values, skills and differences
- Staff need to feel valued
- Encouraging a positive morale
- Direct communication with all people involved
- Treating people equally
- Monitoring workloads to ensure that people have reasonable deadlines
- Monitor and review the staff feedback on the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress
- Consistency
- Professional honesty and good manners

#### **Support available:**

Senior Leaders / line managers will be expected to continually assess the working environment for significant sources of stress and to be aware of, and alert to, the symptoms of stress in the people that they manage. They must also monitor through team meetings, supervision sessions and appraisals the levels of employee well-being.



Having said this, Managers' diligence cannot be expected to be failsafe and all employees must be responsible for bringing attention, at the earliest opportunity, to any situation or factor that may be a source of stress or poor well-being either to themselves or to others.

All issues will be treated with sensitivity and, if necessary, confidentiality in seeking to reduce or eliminate the source of the concern and in providing support to the employee to minimise any adverse effect and hasten their recovery.

All leaders need to be visible, accessible, approachable, sympathetic and listen to others.

### **Work Life Balance**

'The Pioneer Academy' expects everyone to be able to enjoy a comfortable balance between the time spent at work and the time devoted to the other parts of employee's life.

Everybody at 'The Pioneer Academy' should follow the well-being Policy which is supported through Performance Management or other professional meetings.

Well-being is paramount to a healthy working environment and it is imperative that staff at all levels follow this policy to ensure their own well-being and that of others. Any behaviour that affects your well-being should be reported to the appropriate line manager.

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years as a minimum.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes.