



ABERCORN SCHOOL

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

This policy also applies to the EYFS

Updated	Review Date	Version
September 2023	September 2024	2023.02

Signed: Mr John Clarke (Chair of Board)

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant School policies, including the Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, PSHE Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and also Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023).

This policy was written with regard to: The Equality Act 2010, The Data Protection Act 2018, Articles 3 and 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

At Abercorn School we are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole community of children, staff, parents and carers. Our ethos is supportive, caring and respectful. We understand how important positive mental health and wellbeing is to our lives. We recognise that children's mental health is a vital factor in their overall wellbeing and how it can affect their learning and achievements. Our School encourages children to be open and we support all children to have their voice heard through a variety of avenues, including lessons, assemblies, School Council and Form time.

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". Our school is a place for children to experience a nurturing and supportive environment. We support the children to develop their self-esteem and build resilience. We understand all children and their families go through ups and downs, and some face significant life events.

Our culture of nurturing children and building resilience to mental health problems means Abercorn is a safe place where:

- Every child feels valued;
- Every child has a sense of belonging;
- Every child feels able to talk openly with trusted members of staff about their problems;
- Positive mental health is promoted;
- Bullying and general unkindness is not tolerated.

We recognise the importance of supporting positive mental health and wellbeing within the whole School community recognising that positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. This is supported by a staff body who are caring and have trusted professional relationships with our pupils.

This Policy is a guide for all teaching and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach and commitment to promoting and supporting positive mental health and wellbeing in the whole Abercorn community.

This Policy sets out:

- How we promote and support positive mental health in the whole School community
- How we identify and support children with mental health, wellbeing needs
- How we prevent mental health and wellbeing problems
- How we support whole families in dealing with children's mental health problems;
- How we support staff in spotting early warning signs in children and addressing poor mental health.

The World Health Organisation defines Mental Health as "a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the natural stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community" with Young Minds say that "We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. Sometimes we feel well, and sometimes we don't."

Abercorn recognises that positive mental health and wellbeing is not simply the absence of mental health problems, but that we need to be proactive in promoting good mental health for all members of the Abercorn community.

We know building children's confidence and self-esteem in a safe environment is vital to positive mental health and successful learning outcomes. At Abercorn, we want all children to:

- Understand their emotions and experiences;
- Form and maintain friendships and relationships;
- Be able to express a range of emotions appropriately;
- Develop resilience and cope with setbacks;
- Manage the stresses of everyday life and be able to deal with change;
- Learn and achieve.

We maintain a positive mental health environment for pupils and staff by:

- Promoting our School ethos and values, and encouraging a sense of belonging and community;
- Providing opportunities to develop self-worth;
- Valuing each pupil for who they are;
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements;
- Supporting our children to have their say and participate in decision-making;
- Raising awareness amongst staff about early warning signs and symptoms of poor mental health;
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their own mental health.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- Head, Designated Safeguarding Lead – Christopher Hammond
- Deputy Heads, Deputy Designated Child Protection Leads – Rebecca Stewart, Maria Casey and Laurence Séguier
- PSHE and Wellbeing Co-ordinator – Lindsay Wrottesley
- SEND Coordinator – Tracey Martin

All teaching and non-teaching staff have a responsibility and important role in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and each other. We understand some children will need additional help and we know all staff have a responsibility to look out for early warning signs to ensure children get the early intervention and support they need.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the School environment, or with guidance from external professionals. We are developing improved links with mental health professionals and organisations that provide support with mental health needs to children and their families.

A mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern indicates that immediate action should be taken following procedures in the Safeguarding Policy. A member of the Safeguarding Team should also be spoken to, or the DSL.

All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Promoting and Supporting Children's Positive Mental Health

Abercorn promotes positive mental health and we aim to prevent mental health problems through our developed range of activities and strategies including:

- Class/Form activities – certificates and house points/awards; circle time; worry monster for younger children;
- House meetings and School Council Meetings;
- Whole School initiatives – Wellbeing Week, wellbeing charity days, displays.

Through our whole-School PSHE programme, we teach social and emotional skills to develop the children's confidence and resilience. Throughout we explore simple strategies for managing feelings and who to go to if children are feeling worried or upset. We help children to develop positive coping strategies and build their understanding of how to motivate themselves, be supportive of others, and the importance of talking to someone and how to get help.

Identifying and Supporting Children with Mental Health needs

Our approach is to encourage and support children to express themselves and be listened to, in a safe environment. All staff have a responsibility to facilitate and support positive mental health. We aim to spot the early warning signs of poor mental health and to identify appropriate support for the children based on their needs. We involve parents and carers wherever possible and the children themselves in the care and support they need in School.

We take a whole-community approach towards the mental health of our pupils. Our aim is to support the whole family if possible, but we recognise that school staff are not mental health professionals. This means regular communication with parents explaining our concerns if appropriate and giving parents guidance about who they can talk to about their children's mental health problems. We involve parents and carers, advise parents to engage the services of mental health professionals if required, and work with professional partners and agencies where necessary.

Disclosures by Children of Mental Health Concerns

Abercorn recognises the importance of staff remaining calm, supportive and non-judgemental with children who disclose a concern. Staff should make it clear to the children that the concern will be shared with the Wellbeing Coordinator or a member of the SLT to help them and get the support they need. Staff understand they need to listen, not advise and that a mental health disclosure has the potential to become a safeguarding disclosure. If this is the case, the School Safeguarding Policy and Procedures should be followed.

Interventions and Support

All concerns are reported to the PSHE Coordinator or a member of SLT and are recorded on the pastoral system on CPOMS. The level of need is assessed to ensure the child gets the appropriate support from within School or from an external health professional. We aim to put early interventions in place wherever possible and to prevent problems escalating.

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the DSL or Wellbeing Coordinator will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to making an assessment and providing tailored support, further to the general support we offer to all pupils.

The School will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the pupil's mental health needs are
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

Where appropriate, a pupil will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our school includes:

- Talking to a trusted member of staff;
- Reduced timetable;
- Allowing them to leave lessons;

A pupil will be offered an individual healthcare plan (IHP) if their needs are not met by our usual support. IHPs are written in collaboration with the pupil (if appropriate), their parent/carer, and any other relevant professionals.

The pupil's IHP will contain the following details:

- The mental health issue (and its triggers, signs, symptoms and treatments);
- The pupil's needs resulting from the condition;
- Specific support for the pupil's educational, social and emotional needs;
- The level of support needed;
- Who will provide the support;
- Who in the School needs to be aware of the child's condition;
- What to do in an emergency.

If a pupil's needs cannot be met by the internal offer the School provides, the School will make, or encourage parents to make, a referral for external support. We have access to a range of specialist services, including GPs, CAMHS, mental health charities such as Samaritans and Young Minds. We involve the children themselves and their parents or carers, and if appropriate put in place support for their friends/peers in school. We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate.

Supporting and collaborating with parents and carers

We will work with parents and carers to support pupils' mental health by:

- Asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support;
- Informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child;
- Engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on our School website, including the mental health and wellbeing policy;
- Liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child;
- Providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g. parent forums);
- Keeping parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE, and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home;

When informing parents about any mental health concerns we have about their child, we will endeavour to do this face to face. These meetings can be difficult, so the School will ensure that parents are given time to reflect on what has been discussed, and that lines of communication are kept open at the end of the meeting. A record of what was discussed, and action plans agreed upon in the meeting will be recorded and added to the pupil's confidential record. If appropriate, an individual healthcare plan (IHP) will be created in collaboration with parents/carers.

Supporting peers

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be extremely challenging for pupils. Pupils may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

We will offer support to all pupils impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- Strategies they can use to support their friends
- Things they should avoid doing/saying
- Warning signs to look out for
- Signposting to sources of external support

Whole school approach to promoting mental health awareness

Mental health is taught in PSHE and whenever it is appropriate to do so in any lesson or activity. Pupils will be taught to:

- Develop healthy coping strategies
- Challenge misconceptions around mental health
- Understand their own emotional state
- Keep themselves safe

For more information, see our PSHE curriculum.

Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:

- Discussing mental health with pupils in order to break down stigma
- Encouraging pupils to disclose when they think their mental health is deteriorating

Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a pupil experiencing poor mental health can be distressing for staff. To combat this we will offer appropriate support to staff, by:

- Treating mental health concerns seriously;
- Offering staff supervision sessions'
- Supporting staff experiencing poor mental health themselves;
- Creating a pleasant and supportive work environment.