

Pupil Wellbeing Policy

Policy statement

At My Online Schooling, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing to all young people, their families and our members of staff. Our open and accepting culture allows young people's voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all.

This policy is a guide to all staff outlining My Online Schooling's approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

Aims

This policy aims to provide a framework of procedures and responsibilities to support the mental health and wellbeing of all young people. It will ensure that all young people have access to appropriate support and are treated with dignity and respect.

We offer an individualised, inclusive and internationally accessible British education where our pupils are respected as individuals, enjoy learning and are empowered to thrive in the 21st Century.

It is the aim of this policy to ensure that children develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.

This policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all young people.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health challenges.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in young people.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health challenges.
- Provide the right support to young people with mental health challenges, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.

- Develop resilience amongst young people and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Provide information on how staff can readily report wellbeing concerns to the Head of Wellbeing, and school leaders, where appropriate

We will promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all young people and staff.
- Celebrating the achievements and success of children and young people.
- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities for self-reflection and personal growth
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth
- Promoting our young people's voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Celebrating diversity, celebrating each young person for who they are and ensuring every young person feels valued and respected.
- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing or signposting support to any young person who needs it.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and young people about mental health challenges, and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in young people.

Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take a responsibility to promote the mental health and wellbeing of young people, however, key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing: Euan MacLean
- Head of Wellbeing: Vanessa Baker
- SENDCo: Laura Hendry
- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Euan MacLean
- Deputy Safeguarding Leads: Laura Hendry & Scarlett Campbell

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a young person, in the first instance they should log a wellbeing concern on iSAMS which will be followed up by the Head of Wellbeing.

If there is a concern that the young person is at high risk or in danger or immediate harm, the school's child protection and safeguarding procedures should be followed. (Please see the safeguarding policy for more information).

If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services i.e. the police, if necessary.

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

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

We also cover a wide range of topics and awareness days during assemblies to ensure young people have an understanding of diversity, wellbeing and mental health. By sharing this information and inviting young people to ask questions and share their feelings, we aim to create an inclusive and supportive school community, while raising awareness to reduce the stigma attached to mental health and wellbeing differences. We would like to encourage pupils to feel confident to speak to their peers, or a trusted adult, about their mental health and wellbeing.

Information about mental health and wellbeing is posted on our Common Room and social media pages. Pupils are regularly invited to get involved by sharing submissions for a range of different awareness days. With permission from the young person and their parents/carers, we often share these submissions on the Common Room announcements page and on our social media pages. We hope that this provides a sense of community, and recognition that mental health is important to, and affects, every person in our school community.

Signposting

We make every effort to support parents/carers to access services where appropriate. Our primary concern is the children and young people, and in the rare event that parents/carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from their local authority in their area, or services in their country of residence. Where it is not possible to contact their immediate local authority, the school will follow best practice and national guidance (from the UK).

Sources of support at My Online Schooling

- **The Inclusion Team**

At My Online Schooling, we have a dedicated Inclusion Team who are committed to ensuring that all pupils at My Online Schooling are supported to access, enjoy, and get the most out of their lessons. The Inclusion Team is overseen by our Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing, Euan MacLean. Also part of the Inclusion Team is our Head of Wellbeing, Vanessa Baker, and our SENDco, Laura Hendry. We also have an Inclusion Specialist and Educational Support Assistant who supports our pupils and teachers in the school community.

- **Head of Wellbeing**

Our Head of Wellbeing is dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all our young people. Pupils and families can contact our Head of Wellbeing for support and advice via email, Canvas message, or phone call. Our Head of Wellbeing can provide support and advice on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing concerns and will liaise with families and teachers to ensure young people are fully supported in class.

When a child with a mental health challenge joins My Online Schooling, our Head of Wellbeing will reach out to their parents/carers. If the parents/carers feel it is beneficial, a call will be arranged to discuss any support that their child may need and anything that they would like the teachers to be aware of.

If a teacher has a concern about a young person's mental health or wellbeing, our Head of Wellbeing will reach out to young people to offer support and advice. Where necessary and appropriate, our Head of Wellbeing will also contact the young person's parents/carers to make them aware of this. However, where there are any safeguarding concerns, the school will use its discretion on whether to contact the parent/carer. School safeguarding protocols should be followed.

- **Special Education Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo)**

This is a member of staff who is committed to supporting young people with additional needs. Our SENDCo will liaise with families and teachers to ensure that young people with additional needs are fully supported in lessons.

When a child with additional needs joins My Online Schooling, our SENDCo will reach out to their parents/carers. If the parent/carer feels it is beneficial,

a call will be arranged to discuss any support that their child may need and anything that they would like the teachers to be aware of.

Our SENDCo will also support teacher development to ensure that teachers are aware of the best ways to support young people with additional needs.

Please see the ASN policy for more information on how My Online Schooling supports pupils with additional needs.

- **Wellbeing Support**

Through our Wellbeing Support, we offer a range of classes that aim to support young people's learning as well as their mental health and wellbeing. These classes are run by our autism specialist and our experienced and qualified school counsellor. The school offers classes such as Social Skills and Anxiety Management. 1-1 sessions with our school counsellor are also available (subject to availability).

Information about these classes can be found on our website and our Admissions team and Success Coordinators are able to recommend these classes to families who may find them beneficial.

- **1-1 Counselling Sessions**

My Online Schooling offers 1-1 counselling sessions with an experienced and qualified counsellor. These sessions provide young people with the opportunity to speak openly with someone who is neutral, calm and compassionate. Information about these sessions and how to book can be found on our website. In taking up these services, there is a separate service agreement to be reviewed and signed by the child and parent/carer.

- **1-1 Drop In Sessions**

We offer 1-1 Drop In sessions with the Head of Wellbeing for pupils to come along to for support, advice, or just a friendly chat. Information about the Drop In sessions can be found on the 'Mental Health and Wellbeing' page which is available to pupils on Canvas. This page also contains information and support on a range of wellbeing and mental health challenges.

- **Support for Young Carers**

At My Online Schooling we are committed to supporting and meeting the needs of young carers so that they are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school. We offer the following sessions to young carers:

- ILA Support Group: A weekly session which offers a dedicated time and space for young carers to complete ILA and receive support with this, if needed.
- Peer Support Group: A weekly session to allow young carers at MOS to socialise and get to know each other.
- 1-1 Drop In Sessions: Weekly drop in sessions with the Head of Wellbeing to allow young carers to discuss anything they may need support with.

Please see the Young Carers Policy for more information about how My Online Schooling supports pupils who are young carers.

- **External Partnerships**

My Online Schooling partners with different external bodies in support of our pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Classes such as Laughterise and Role Models are additional sessions which aim to support wellbeing, and also to build resilience in the young people who attend our school. These sessions are available at an additional cost. More information can be found on the 'partnerships' page of our website.

Warning signs

Staff may become aware of some warning signs which indicate a young person is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing challenges. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should alert the Head of Wellbeing and, where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff should also submit a wellbeing concern on iSAMS. Additional warning signs can also be found in our school's Safeguarding policy.

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 family friends, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Suicidal ideation
- 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

- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Managing disclosures

If a young person 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 confidentially in the Wellbeing Concern module on iSAMS including:

- Date (and time) of disclosure
- Location i.e. email, Canvas, Zoom
- Name of member of staff whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure and main points from the conversation

This information will be shared with the Wellbeing and Education teams (including Designated Safeguarding Leads, where required) and the necessary next steps will be taken and recorded. The Head of Wellbeing is initially responsible for responding to wellbeing concerns submitted to iSAMS.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on a disclosure made by a young person which causes concern, then this will first be discussed with the young person.

We will tell them:

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

Ideally, consent should be gained from the young person first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as a young person of any age who is in danger of harm. Staff members should be clear that they must never promise to keep information regarding wellbeing and safeguarding a secret or not to tell another person.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff is not solely responsible for the young person. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support. Teachers of pupils of whom a wellbeing concern has been raised will be informed as required.

Parents must always be informed, with the exception of the existence of known safeguarding concerns, but young people may wish to tell their parents/carers themselves. If no known safeguarding concerns are present, the Wellbeing Team will permit a timescale of 24 hours for a child or young person to share information with their parent/carer. After 24 hours, the Wellbeing Team will contact the family directly. On the occasion where we have a pupil who is age 18 or over, the choice of contacting the pupil's parent/carer will lie with the pupil.

If a young person gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, our Safeguarding Policy will be followed. Where there are concerns of immediate danger, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, parents/carers, and, where required, the police and/or local authority will be informed immediately.

Whole School Approach

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our young people. This means working with parents/carers, and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

Working with parents/carers

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

- Can we phone parents/carers? This is preferable, however, if this is not an option or there is no answer, an email will be sent to the family.
- If a Zoom meeting is arranged to discuss support strategies, who should be present - young people, staff, parents/carers?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's challenges can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent 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 discussion, 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.

It is important to ensure that a record of the meeting and points discussed/agreed are added to the young person's record. This should be added to the child or young person's iSAMS record.

Supporting parents/carers

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

- Posting information and advice about mental health and wellbeing on our social media pages and in the school newsletter;
- Offering support and advice to parents/carers whose children may be struggling with their mental health and/or wellbeing;
- Hosting live sessions on social media, about various topics surrounding mental health and wellbeing;
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents/carers;
- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school

Supporting Peers

When a young person is experiencing mental health challenges, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support them but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Where appropriate, support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the young person who is suffering and their parents/carers with whom we will discuss:

- What is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friends condition
- Healthy ways of dealing with difficult emotions that they may be feeling

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 young people safe. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid Training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our staff intranet for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. Online mental health and wellbeing training suitable for staff to learn about these issues is available on the TES Develop platform.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our appraisal process and additional continued professional development will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to the developing situations with one or more young people.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is August 2023.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. This is the responsibility of the Head of Wellbeing.

Version 2 - August 2022

End of Policy