



**WEST VALE**  
ACADEMY

# Wellbeing Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	LGB		
<b>Responsible department:</b>	West Vale Academy		
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<b>Last updated:</b>	September 2024	<b>Last updated by:</b>	J Vincent
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## Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

*“Mental health is a state of well-being 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.” (World Health Organization 2014)*

### Policy Statement

At West Vale Academy, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. Our aim is to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. It is our vision that all children are entitled to develop to their best selves academically, socially and emotionally thus enabling each child to grow in confidence and be able to fully participate in everything that goes on in the wider community with confidence. At West Vale Academy, we recognise that a child’s emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development along with their physical wellbeing therefore we provide the best support possible so our children can have a positive start in life with skills that can help into adulthood.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

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”. Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. We believe that for some, our school is a place of respite from difficult home lives. We offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children’s wellbeing and can help create a sense of belonging and community. We offer pastoral sessions and have strong links with the local mental health team.

### Our School Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers
- Promote our school values creating a sense of belonging
- Create opportunities for pupil voice and decision – making
- Celebrate academic and non-academic achievements
- Provide appropriate support that meets children’s needs

## Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors – outlining West Vale Academy's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies such as: PSHCE and RSHE, SEND, Behaviour, Anti-bullying and our medical policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue.

## Policy Aims

- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and students.
  - 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.
  - Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
  - Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SMT 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.

## Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Designated Safeguarding Leads (Mrs Akroyd, Miss Vincent, Mrs Crowther and Miss Burgin)
- Parent Support Worker (Mrs Burgin)
- SENCO (Mrs Akroyd)
- PSHE and RSHE Lead (Miss Vincent)
- Senior Mental Health Lead (Miss Vincent)
- First Aiders (Mrs Akroyd, Mrs Clarke, Mrs Lynch, Mrs Hemsworth and Mrs Barnes)

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of student, in the first instance they should speak to the DSL. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officer, the head teacher or the

designated governor. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Mrs Akroyd, SENCO.

### Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE and RSHE curriculum, delivered through our KAPOW scheme.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively, which helps rather than harms.

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing> Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

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

### Identifying needs and Warning Signs

School 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 communicate their concerns with our key staff outlined in the key staff section. If these concerns link to safeguarding, reporting a concern needs to be addressed with Mrs Akroyd (Lead Safeguarding Officer).

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 and confidentiality

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgmental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the student's confidential file on CPOMS. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the appropriate key members of staff, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

### Confidentiality

We, as staff, are honest in regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:

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

We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. Occasions when this would happen are when we believe a student may be in danger of immediate harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the mental health lead (Miss Vincent) or the DSLs (Mrs Akroyd, Miss Vincent, Mrs Crowther and Miss Burgin). This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and

support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the lead DSL (Mrs Akroyd) must be informed immediately.

### Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people 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 ensure timely and effective identification of students 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 **Open Minds Partnership (CAMHS)** and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Identifying and assessing in line with the **Early Intervention Single Assessment (EISA)**, children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care 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;
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including **Open Minds Partnership (CAMHS)**, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people 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;
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

### Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them within our school and how they can access further support services.

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

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

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

### Local Support

In Halifax, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the **Open Minds Partnership (CAMHS)**, a group of providers specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. These partners 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.

<http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/>

<https://calderdalecamhs.org.uk/>

### Working with All Parents and Carers

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- 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, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- 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

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

## [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 in order to enable them to keep students safe.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The [MindEd learning portal](#)<sup>2</sup> provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

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 throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupils.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with Mrs Akroyd, our CPD Coordinator, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

The [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust](#) provides funded training to schools on a variety of topics related to mental health including twilight, half day and full day INSET sessions

## [Policy Review](#)

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is September 2026. In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. This is the responsibility of Miss Vincent.

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.



## Eight principles

The following diagram presents eight principles to promote emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.



## Appendix 2

Specific mental health needs most commonly seen in school-aged children -

For information see Annex C Main Types of Mental Health Needs Mental Health and Behaviour in School DfE March 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

Annex C includes definitions, signs and symptoms and suggested interventions for:

- Anxiety (including panic attacks, phobias and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder OCD)
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Substance Misuse
- Self Harm

## Appendix 3

### Where to get information and support

For support on specific mental health needs:

Anxiety UK

[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

OCD UK

[www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

Depression Alliance [www.depressoinalliance.org](http://www.depressoinalliance.org)

Eating Disorders [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk) and

[www.inourhands.com](http://www.inourhands.com) National Self-Harm Network

[www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk) [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – POPYRUS: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

For general information and support:

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) advice and support on mental health problems

[www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk) (e-learning) [www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk) tackles the stigma of mental health

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org) challenges attitudes towards mental health