Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Deputy Head (Senior School) Junior School Leadership Team	September 2025
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit	September 2025
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Introduction

At the Abbey School, we recognise that positive mental health and wellbeing are essential to the development of thriving and successful students. It is therefore vital to our aims as an organisation that we provide high quality mental health and wellbeing support.

This policy sets out our commitment to monitoring and improving the wellbeing of our students. It sets out some of the ways in which key members of staff take responsibility for the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. It also describes our process for identifying and responding to mental ill health, and the support we make available to all students.

Policies for additional reference include:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Suicide Prevention Policy
- Bereavement and Loss Policy

Aims

We aim to ensure that our school:

- promotes positive mental health and wellbeing in all students
- provides a secure environment that encourages openness and trust
- helps students feel comfortable about sharing any concerns or worries
- help students to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks with a sense of perspective
- embeds the skills students need to make good decisions about their own mental health and wellbeing
- responds effectively to concerns about students' mental health
- offers comprehensive pastoral and medical support that is accessible to all students
- encourages students to seek support or assistance and report concerns about others
- provides guidance and training to staff to support and care for students.

Roles and Responsibilities

Junior School Leadership and Senior School Management Teams (JLT and SMT)

- Review this policy on a regular basis, ensuring that it is developed in consultation with students, parents and members of staff.
- Ensure that staff are equipped with the appropriate training to support students in mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensure that there is adequate staffing provision to support students suffering with poor mental health.
- Listen to the views of students and make sure that they have opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process.
- Ensure that the school shares information on mental health with all students.

Pastoral teams

- Coordinate the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide all members of staff with the knowledge and skills they need to identify signs of mental ill health in students and to report these signs effectively and promptly.
- Develop working relationships with child adolescent mental health services and other external partners when necessary.
- Report to the governing body, via the JLT and SMT, on the school's wellbeing policy and programmes.
- Work with the JLT and SMT, governing body, school staff, parents and students to create an environment where everyone feels safe, supported and motivated.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs and DDSLs)

- Keep detailed records of any significant mental health concerns.
- Liaise with external services where there are any significant mental health concerns.
- Act as a source of support and expertise to the school community.
- Report to the Governing Body on safeguarding and welfare matters.

All members of school staff

- Treat all students with empathy, respect and kindness.
- Encourage students to disclose concerns or seek help when necessary.
- Report any wellbeing or mental health concerns to the pastoral teams or DSLs as appropriate, recognising that mental health issues may be a safeguarding concern.

Good Practice

A mentally healthy school environment is promoted through:

- in-class teaching, including timetabled wellbeing lessons
- mindfulness classes and clubs in both the Junior and Senior Schools
- openly discussing our school values of courage, honesty and kindness
- encouraging students to develop their own value system
- encouraging a strong sense of belonging to the Abbey community, where everyone's part is valued
- promoting opportunities for student voice and opportunities for students to participate in decision-making
- celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
- providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- providing opportunities for self-reflection
- providing access to appropriate support to meet individual needs.

Examples of good practice may include:

- organising whole-school or year group assemblies to discuss specific mental health and wellbeing issues
- arranging for external speakers to visit and discuss topical issues such as the use of social media or the impact of body image
- using key dates such as Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day as opportunities to raise the profile of mental health

- holding designated health and wellbeing days, organising activities across the curriculum
- dedicating time to celebrate students' academic and extracurricular achievements
- using displays and bulletins to signpost students to sources of support
- having dedicated safe spaces for students to access
- providing an accessible and effective counselling service
- organising parent talks on child and adolescent wellbeing
- providing training for staff, Sixth Form students and parents to become qualified mental health first aiders
- directing students and staff towards age-appropriate support/apps (e.g. Tellmi app or the Samaritans)

Supporting individual students

All members of staff are responsible for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students. At the beginning of the school year, and at further regular intervals, students are reminded who they can go to if they have a specific need or concern.

Daily, sustained contact with form teachers and tutors in the Junior and Senior Schools helps to create an open channel of communication between staff and students. Each form teacher will offer tools for facilitating discussions such as a 'worry box' or similar in the classroom.

A listening tree is on the noticeboard in Senior School classrooms, social areas and toilets. Students are asked to create their own listening tree so they reflect in advance who they would like to talk to should they need some support.

Open communication between members of staff will help to create a 'first line' in supporting individual students and responding to disclosures. When appropriate, discussions may be shared through our 'News of students/Pastoral' or 'Safeguarding' agenda items in weekly staff briefings if students require additional supervision or support, though the purpose and/ or individual would not always be disclosed.

CPOMS is used throughout the school to record and track the wellbeing of individual students. Form staff, Assistant Directors/Directors of sections meet regularly to keep an overview of the students in their care. Senior Staff meet at least weekly to review individual needs and safeguarding concerns.

Staff are encouraged to look out for:

- erratic, unaccountable behaviour
- changes in sleeping or eating habits or dramatic changes in appearance
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- disengagement from work or extracurricular activities
- aggressive or compulsive behaviour
- changes in cleanliness/hygiene levels
- a drop-in attendance or academic achievement
- isolation from peers
- dysfunctionality in family life
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- reports of alcohol or drug abuse

All staff receive regular safeguarding training and are aware of the importance of passing on pastoral concerns.

Support Networks

In addition to supporting individual students with mental health and wellbeing concerns, the school will ensure that all students can access a cohesive network of pastoral and medical services. These include:

- Regular assemblies promoting the value of good wellbeing and mental health.
- A wellbeing curriculum programme with timetabled lessons as well as lunchtime clubs to support students.
- The listening ear service at the Junior School - a drop in and bookable service.
- ELSA provision at the Junior School – staff can refer with parental consent.
- At the Senior School, the school nurses' room is available each day to provide support for students who are struggling with wellbeing. The nurses can refer students for wellbeing or counselling appointments.
- The School employs a counsellor to support students, both through wellbeing conversations and for up to ten-week counselling programmes.

The school also works with local services to ensure a cohesive program of support for students with particular needs, for example Daisy's Dream, a local child bereavement charity, or CAMHS, as appropriate.

The Heads and DSLs will work closely together to identify opportunities for staff training, so that all members of staff feel confident in supporting students.

Useful links

- Young Minds is one of the UK's leading charities for children and young people's mental health.
- Place2Be is one of the UK's leading children's mental health charities.
- Mind is the UK's leading mental health charity, offering a great deal of useful information on children's mental health.
- Children's Mental Health Week is an annual opportunity to encourage children, young people and adults to celebrate their uniqueness.
- Children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS; sometimes also known by its older name Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)) are funded by the NHS to provide support to children and young people with a wide range of behavioural and emotional issues.
- NHS children's mental health provides ways to support young people with mental health problems.
- The Children's Commissioner provides advice and government reports on mental health and wellbeing.
- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/ provides resources and advice to support children's and young people's mental health.