

ASTON FENCE J & I SCHOOL



MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

May 2020

Statement of Intent

At Aston Fence, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all our pupils, their families, staff members and governors.

This policy is aimed as a guide for all adults who are part of our school and outlines Aston Fence's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

Policy Aims

- *Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all pupils and staff.
- *Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- *Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils.
- *Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- *Provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- *Develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- *Raise awareness amongst staff that adults within school may have mental health issues and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and pupil welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

Key Staff Members

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| *Child Counsellor | *Headteacher |
| *Designated Safeguarding Lead | *SENDCo |
| *PSHE Lead | *Mental Health Lead |

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

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

Individual Plans

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, a meeting with the class teacher, child counsellor, headteacher and parents is held to determine whether internal or external provision is required.

Where internal provision is provided, an Individual Pastoral Plan is drawn up involving pupils, parents, the child counsellor, class teacher and headteacher.

External referrals are made if required and an Individual Pastoral Plan is drawn up involving pupils, parents and other relevant professionals.

Curriculum

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 RSE curriculums.

We follow current Government legislation and the Christopher Winter Project in order to prepare us to safely and sensitively teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing. We incorporate this into all stages of our curriculum and promote the development of healthy minds, coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions and those of others.

Additionally, we use specific lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with support. We also ensure that pupils have access to our own school counsellor for planned and unplanned sessions where appropriate.

Signposting

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

We share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events. We do this via displays, noticeboards, newsletters, our website and our Twitter feed.

The aim of this is to ensure that our school community understands:

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

Sources of Support At School

- *Children, staff and parents have access to the school's child counsellor.
- *The school's child counsellor is also a fully trained play therapist.
- *Both directive and non-directive techniques are used, depending on the needs of the individual child.
- *Techniques used may incorporate:
 - Talking therapies
 - Sand tray therapies
 - Art and drawing
 - Puppets and masks
 - Clay
 - Creative Visualisations
 - Music
 - Storytelling and therapeutic stories
 - Dance and creative movement
 - Wishes and feelings work
- *Bonding Through Play can also be used for children and their family.

In addition, the school has a fully trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) to support the emotional development of our children when needed, either as a 1:1 session or in small groups.

This support incorporates techniques such as Socially Speaking and Lego Therapy.

Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student, member of staff or parent 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 the school SENDCo or Mental Health Lead. Concerns about staff should be addressed to the headteacher.

Possible warning signs (not exclusive), 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.
- *Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.
- *An increase in lateness or absenteeism from school.

Targeted Support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health e.g. those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness, those living in households experiencing domestic violence, looked after and post looked after children.

We work closely with school nurses, Early Help and other available professionals 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 students who would benefit from targeted support whether internally through school provision or from external agencies. We do this by:

- *Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional and behavioural problems.

- *Working closely with Rotherham Borough Council Children's Services, including Early Help, Rotherham CAMHS and other agency services to follow various protocols including assessment and review referral.

- *Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Plan, children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress or behavioural problems.

- *Liaising with Rotherham Learning Support Services.

- *Discussing the options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers and agreeing an Individual Care Plan as the first step.

- *Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective.

- *Ensuring that people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur.

- *Providing 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.

- *Providing young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it.

- *Performing our statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014 regarding the identification, assessment and support of young carers.

Managing Disclosures

If a student 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 on the student's personal file, including:

*Date

*Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made

*Nature of the disclosure and main points from the conversation

This information will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, School SENDCo and Mental Health Lead.

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

Parents must always be informed, but students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours is recommended to share this information before the school makes contact with the parents/carers.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Supporting Parents

We recognise the fact that families play a key role in influencing children and we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

We will do this by:

*Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to support promoting social and emotional wellbeing.

*Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, Twitter, newsletters, notice boards).

*Offering support to parents or carers to develop their parenting skills.

*Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given support they need to

participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing.

*Being available to parents at all times should they need to discuss any concerns.

Peer Support

When a student is experiencing mental health issues, 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. Support will be provided in 1:1 or small group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents 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 highlight with peers:

*Where and how to access support for themselves.

*Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition.

*Healthy ways of coping with difficult emotions they may be experiencing.

Training

Where appropriate, staff will have access to training linked to recognising and responding to mental health issues. Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more students.

The school's Mental Health Lead will keep up to date with relevant CPD and clinical supervision as required by BACP.

*This policy will be updated and revised as necessary and in line with developments in school and in mental health provision for education nationally.