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RESOURCE PACK

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH



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# HOW CAN SCHOOLS PROMOTE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH?



## THE CURRENT STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN UK SCHOOLS

Young people's mental health is something we all must take seriously. Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people in the UK, so promoting mental health in schools isn't just desirable – it's essential. [Statistics](#) reveal:

- 75% of mental illnesses start before a child reaches their 18th birthday.
- 50% of mental health problems in adult life start before the age of 15.
- 10% of school children have a diagnosable mental illness.
- 75% of young people with a mental health problem aren't receiving treatment.
- 51% of young people feel embarrassed about mental illness.

Furthermore, the children's charity NSPCC report that they delivered more than 3,000 counselling sessions on exam stress in 2017. Of this number, 22% called in May – the month when deadlines and exams are looming.

## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN 2019?

A number of factors contribute to poor mental health in young people, including:

### • EXAM PRESSURES

The overwhelming pressure and number of exams can have a significant effect on students' mental health. The old modular style of GCSEs has been scrapped to make way for more tough and challenging GCSEs, where testing is almost exclusively through end of course exams. Students are stressed by the amount of information they need to know and the pressure to succeed. Most are also fearful that a poor grade will ruin their future.

### • THE MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

Young people now spend much more time indoors online rather than outside. A game of football in the park is being replaced by online games. Furthermore, young people are at a number of risks online, including exposure to upsetting content and cyberbullying, that will all affect their mental health.

### • GROWING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms are evolving and growing in popularity daily. Sites such as Instagram produce feelings of inadequacy as teens compare themselves and their lives to those of their peers. Social media also leads to reduced communication skills and reduced human interaction with friends.

### • LGBTQ+

Students who identify as being LGBTQ+ often find it difficult to tell their friends and family about themselves. This could lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and worry as they try to remain true to themselves.

### • DEMANDS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

As well as the heavy pressure of exams, students often have further responsibilities that contribute to a growing amount of stress and worry. For example, there are around 700,000 young carers in the UK and 80% of this number miss out on childhood experiences. This commonly leads to exhaustion and puts these children at risk of various mental health difficulties.

## HOW CAN WE PROMOTE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS?

Teachers and school staff have a responsibility to promote mental health in schools. Often, even small changes can go a long way in helping somebody feel better.

### ENCOURAGE SOCIAL TIME

Schedule in 30 minutes or an hour every week where students can be social and focus on something other than the curriculum. Encourage them to chat with their peers and complete a task together, like a difficult problem or a challenge.

### RUN LUNCHTIME CLUBS

Give students the opportunity to take their mind off things at lunch by running lunchtime clubs. These clubs could be for any activity – arts and crafts, baking, drama clubs, book clubs, film clubs, etc. The sense of community will help students feel included and will relieve the pressure of work for a while.

### HAVE AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY

It's essential that students know they can come and talk to you about any issues or concerns they have. Communicate this to your students so they know you're always there to listen. You could even appoint a designated teacher for each year group who can support any students struggling. This person should ideally have training in mental health and know how to help.

### MAKE MENTAL HEALTH KNOWN

Sadly, mental health is still seen as a bit of a taboo subject and something that sufferers feel embarrassed to talk about. Many also feel judged if they explain their problems. As a result, you should make mental health a focus in your school. Discuss it in PHSCE lessons, address it in assemblies, and celebrate awareness days, like world mental health day, to let students know they're not alone.

You could also invite charities, such as Mind and Rethink, into school to give talks about their work and address the topic of mental health. Invite both students and parents to attend.

### ORGANISE A WELLNESS WEEK

To really put wellbeing at the heart of your school, arrange a wellness week in your school. This will benefit both staff and students alike. For your wellness week, you could:

- **Encourage connections** – get students to talk to each other and interact with people they wouldn't usually.
- **Host a sports/activities day** – exercise is known to boost endorphins, so make use of this and get students and staff involved in a range of activities. Encourage students to set themselves goals (nothing too major) so they get a great self-esteem boost when they achieve it.
- **Give to others** – organise charity events, such as a bake sale or a fancy-dress day, and donate the proceeds to mental health charities. Giving to others is known to reduce stress and improve emotional wellbeing.
- **Be mindful** – host mindfulness sessions and create a calming environment.

Promoting mental health in schools is something we must all prioritise. Mental health issues could affect anyone at any time, so it's important we get it right and help our students as much as possible.

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# PROMOTING STAFF WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS



## INTRODUCTION

Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. Mental health issues can affect any one of us, at any time, no matter our profession, age, or gender.

One environment where mental health issues are particularly prominent is our education sector. Deadlines, heavy workloads, and exam pressures all contribute to student mental health difficulties. However, these factors also have a significant impact on our nation's teachers. [A recent study by Leeds Beckett University](#) revealed that a whopping 52% of teachers surveyed had a mental health illness identified by a GP.

Clearly, teacher mental health is something we can't choose to ignore. Therefore, this guide explains the signs of teacher burnout and how to ensure wellbeing in schools for staff.

## WHAT IS TEACHER BURNOUT AND WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

Teacher burnout arises from emotional exhaustion, stress, feeling overworked, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout happens when these feelings increase and your energy decreases.

Teacher burnout is a widespread problem. Every teacher will report knowing someone who left the profession due to it, someone who had a breakdown because of it, or someone who was signed off work because of stress and other mental health difficulties. In 2016, just under 40,000 teachers quit the profession, which represents about 9% of the workforce. The causes of teacher burnout include:

- **Pressure for students to achieve top grades.** The education system places a strong importance on high grades, and teachers are seen as the main drive for achieving them. Teachers feel responsible for how their students perform and so put an intense amount of pressure on themselves.
- **Taking work home.** Teacher work life balance is often poor. No teacher can leave school at 3pm and forget about it until 8am the following day. Lesson planning and marking takes hours of work that teachers simply don't have within school hours.
- **Large classes.** As a growing number of teachers leave the profession, and the number of new teachers continues to decline, classes are getting larger. With this comes more marking, more students to control, and a greater amount of responsibility.
- **Teaching challenging students.** Trying to teach students who misbehave is difficult for teachers, especially if they feel under immense amounts of pressure already. Furthermore, large classes are particularly hard to control if a number of students misbehave.
- **Constant change.** Changes in curriculum, setting systems, school policies, and staff can all make teachers feel stressed and contribute to burnout.
- **Low morale.** Stressed teachers and stressed students both lower the school's morale.

- **School environment.** If the building and amenities are poor, such as old and cramped classrooms and staff rooms, teachers may feel undervalued and underappreciated. Furthermore, a lack of resources and money to spend on materials can also create stress.
- **High emotions.** In environments with such high pressure and demand, emotions also run high. Stressed and upset students can create similar effects in teachers. Likewise, sometimes parents' behaviour can make a teacher's job especially difficult.

## SIGNS A TEACHER MAY BE SUFFERING FROM BURNOUT

All members of a school community should be able to recognise when a teacher is suffering from burnout or other mental health difficulties. Similarly, if you are a teacher, you should learn to recognise these in yourself. Some common signs to look out for are:

- Irritability, frustration, and quick to anger.
- A decrease in desire to attend social events or activities outside work.
- Increased complaints.
- Fatigue and exhaustion.
- Insomnia.
- Change in appetite.
- Forgetfulness.
- Physical symptoms, like headache, stomach ache, dizziness, chest pain, and heart palpitations.

## TIPS FOR IMPROVING STAFF WELLBEING IN YOUR SCHOOL

Staff wellbeing should be a priority in all schools. This will make staff feel more valued and reduce the pressures and stresses they face, which in turn promotes staff wellbeing and reduces burnout. Here are some tips you can use to help relieve the pressure.

### CREATE AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Your school should have a culture in which staff feel confident to openly talk about any difficulties they're facing. Establish an open-door policy where teachers can ask other teachers for help and speak to senior members of staff about any concerns. Consider also launching a buddy system where teachers can pair up and help each other. Support networks are vital in reducing the risk of burnout.

### CONDUCT A WELLBEING AUDIT

A great step to improve wellbeing in schools for staff is to conduct a wellbeing audit. This will tell you their current level of wellbeing, which you can use to help them work out where they want to be and how they'll get there. Conduct a survey across all members of staff. Include a series of open and closed questions so they have an opportunity to expand on their points. Use the results to decide any changes you need to make and communicate these to staff. You should also conduct the audit regularly, such as every half term, to maintain open lines of communication and address any new issues that may have arisen.



## ENCOURAGE TEACHER WORK LIFE BALANCE

Feeling snowed under by work is a problem for all teachers, and this affords little time for life outside school. Some tips for creating a more equal work life balance are:

- Ensure staff have time to eat their lunches, and preferably in a location that isn't their classroom.
- Allow teachers to share lesson plans (if they're teaching classes of the same year group) and adapt them slightly. This saves extensive time planning lessons.
- Reduce the amount of marking teachers have to do. For example, set word limits on pieces of written work so there's less to mark.
- Encourage teachers to work for a set amount of hours each day. For example, they could get to school for 7am and leave around 4:30pm and only work within these hours. You should also suggest they make a to-do list ordered by priority and not feel guilty if they don't complete the tasks at the bottom of their list.

## SHOW THEM THEIR VALUE

Teachers may think that their efforts are in vain if they feel undervalued. Therefore, you should always try to show teachers that they're valued. Reward their achievements and always thank them for all their hard work. Where possible, you could offer a few little luxuries, such as fresh fruit in the staff room, and treat them to things like meals out.

## ENCOURAGE CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Schools are learning cultures by nature, but usually for students. You could create a culture where your staff are always learning, too. Give staff a chance to learn a new skill or improve their current skills, such as through resilience training or mindfulness training. Continuous learning helps you to feel more optimistic about life and also helps you build confidence. Using a [professional development plan](#) is great for deciding what they'd like to work on and organising it.

Teacher mental health is incredibly important and something we should all protect and support. Teacher burnout is too common and will continue to be a problem if it isn't rectified. Use the tips in this article and improve the mental health of teachers in your school.

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# HOW TO WRITE A SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH POLICY



## INTRODUCTION

Statistics tell us that three in four mental illnesses start in childhood, before the child reaches their 18th birthday. This means that, if you work in a school, you are likely to spend a lot of time with children who are struggling with their mental health.

A school mental health policy is a document that explains the school's commitment to its students' mental health. It outlines how the school will support its students, its ongoing commitment to staff training, and how it will work with the wider community to promote student wellbeing. It's a fundamental aspect of achieving a mentally healthy school and something that all schools should develop.

## WHY DO WE NEED A SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH POLICY?

Many mental health problems begin at a young age. Young Minds charity report that one in five young adults, and one in ten children, have a diagnosable mental health disorder. That translates to roughly three children in every classroom.

Mental health issues can affect a student's emotional wellbeing as well as their educational attainment. The schooling environment has multiple pressures that provide a catalyst for mental health issues, including the pressure of exams and deadlines as well as the desire to make friendships and maintain them.

As such, addressing mental health in schools is essential and developing a school mental health policy is a key starting point in this. This policy should address student mental health and show both students and their parents that the school is committed to the wellbeing of its students. Additionally, it signals to students that the school is understanding of mental health issues and encourages them to come forward with their difficulties.

A mentally healthy school is one that has a whole-school approach to mental health and sees the mental health of its students, staff, and parents as everybody's responsibility. Developing a school mental health policy is an essential part of this and an important step towards making a change in your school.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Your school mental health policy should include the following sections:

- Policy Statement
- The Policy Scope
- The Policy Aims
- Key Staff Members
- Teaching about Mental Health
- Support at School and in the Local Community
- Signposting
- Identifying Needs and Warning Signs
- Managing Disclosures
- Confidentiality
- Whole School Approach
  - Working with Parents
  - Working with Other Agencies and Partners
- Supporting Peers
- Training
- Policy Review

## HOW TO WRITE YOUR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

How you write your policy is just as important as what you include in it. You need to develop a policy that's useful and that everyone can understand. Your policy should be:

### **PRACTICAL.**

Your policy needs to be comprehensive and give parents and staff a thorough understanding of your commitment to student mental health. It should provide a detailed explanation of how your school will approach mental health issues and how it will ensure the mental wellbeing of its students.

### **CLEAR.**

Your policy should be simple to use. It should have a logical structure, be easy to understand, and be written in clear, direct language.

### **RELEVANT.**

Make sure that your policy is relevant to your school and environment. Include details that are specific for your school, such as relevant staff names, other relevant policies, and certain procedures that you have in place.

### **CURRENT.**

You must ensure that your policy remains current. This means that you should update it whenever something changes. For example, if a relevant staff member leaves or if something happens that proves your policy needs revising.

### **WELL CONSIDERED.**

Your policy shouldn't be rushed or written quickly without consideration. You need to carefully consider what needs to go into it, what practical information you need to include, and how to structure it in a clear and logical format.

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EXAMPLE USE ONLY

# SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH POLICY



We've written a template to show you how to structure your school mental health policy and what you should include. You must develop a child mental policy that's relevant to your own school or organisation. Our template is designed for example use only and is simply a guide to help you create your own policy.

## POLICY STATEMENT

At our school, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff.

Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage students to be open and we want each student to have their voice heard.

At our school, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our school, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

## POLICY SCOPE

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers, governors, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting student mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside our other relevant school policies.

## POLICY AIMS

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students.

### **At our school, we will always:**

- Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better.
- Ensure our students feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.
- Help children to form and maintain relationships.
- Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.
- Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks.

### **We will always promote a healthy environment by:**

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
- Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.
- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
- Promoting our students' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Celebrating each student for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected.
- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any student that needs it.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in students.
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

## KEY STAFF MEMBERS

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

- Our Designated Safeguarding Officers: staff name(s)
- Pastoral Staff: staff name(s)
- SENCO: staff name(s)

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, then in the first instance they should speak to: staff name(s).

If a child presents a medical emergency then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

## TEACHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Our PHSCE curriculum is developed to give students the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training.

We will regularly review our PHSCE curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they're meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We'll also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide students with strategies to help keep them mentally well.

## SUPPORT AT SCHOOL AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

**We have a range of support available in school for any students struggling, as listed below:**

*In this section, you should add a list of the support you have available to students, such as a counselling service. For each support service, include: what it is, how it can be accessed, its aims and purpose, and how students are made aware of the service.*

*You should also include here any targeted support that you have in your school, for both individual pupils and groups of pupils. For example, circle time or similar peer discussion and support activities, therapeutic activities like mindfulness sessions, and pupil wellbeing groups.*

**There are also a lot of support networks available for children in the local community, such as:**

*Here, list the support that's available for students in your local community. For example, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). List who these organisations are, what their aims/purpose are, and how they can be accessed/contacted.*

## SIGNPOSTING

We will ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the support that's available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

## IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS

All of our staff will be trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to students who need it, when they need it. These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer as appropriate.

**Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:**

- Physical signs of harm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in mood.
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer.
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.

**Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:**

- Attendance and absenteeism.
- Punctuality and lateness.
- Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

## MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a student discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner. All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it's necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

**The disclosure record will contain:**

- The date of the disclosure.
- The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.
- The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.
- Agreed next steps.



## CONFIDENTIALITY

If a member of staff thinks it's necessary to pass on concerns about a student, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the student. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell.
- What the staff member is going to disclose.
- Why it's necessary for somebody else to be told.
- When the contact will be.

However, it may not be possible to gain the student's consent first, such as in the case of students who are at immediate risk. Protecting a student's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

## WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

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

### WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.
- Share and allow parents to access further support.
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health training our school staff receive and how mental health is covered in our school curriculum.
- Working with Other Agencies and Partners

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our students' emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with the school nurse, Paediatricians, CAMHS, counselling services, therapists, family support workers and/or behavioural support workers.

## SUPPORTING PEERS

We understand that, when a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

We will provide support in a one-on-one or group setting. These sessions will be guided by the student, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

## TRAINING

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. Training records will be held in staff files.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our school website so staff can learn more about child mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with pupils.

## POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every year. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.

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# CHILD MENTAL HEALTH QUIZ



## QUESTIONS

1. What mental health condition might cause frequent flashbacks and nightmares?

- A Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- B ADHD
- C Conduct Disorder
- D Schizophrenia

2. What type of therapy teaches you to examine and change the way you think, feel, and act?

- A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- B Emotion Focused Therapy
- C Calm Therapy
- D Mindfulness Therapy

3. How many traits from Inattentive ADHD and Hyperactive-Impulsive ADHD must a child display to be diagnosed with Combined ADHD?

- A Two traits from each
- B Four traits from each
- C Six traits from each
- D Eight traits from each

4. What is a hallucination?

- A Where someone hears, sees, feels, smells, or tastes things that aren't there
- B Where a person has strong beliefs that are untrue
- C Where someone talks very rapidly
- D Where someone feels empty and despairing

5. Which of the following is a myth about child mental health?

- A A mental health difficulty is an illness
- B Most mental health problems left untreated in childhood can worsen by the time they reach adulthood
- C Children from any background can suffer with mental health difficulties
- D Children will just grow out of mental health issues

## ANSWERS

1.  A   2.  A   3.  C   4.  A   5.  D

