



Extend Learning
Academies Network

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy - Children

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1. Why mental health and wellbeing is important

At the Extend Learning Academies Network (ELAN) we strive to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school communities and recognise the importance both play in our lives in exactly the same way as physical health.

We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement as well as having an enormous impact on their quality of life and their relationships.

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'.

Within ELAN we aspire to provide an extraordinary education that empowers our children and staff to achieve their best, part of which is providing a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience.

For some, school will be a place of respite from difficult home lives and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children's wellbeing and can help foster a sense of belonging and community.

Within ELAN we all have a part to play to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or to access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support. We will continue to work together to build and develop mental resilience in a caring and supportive environment where:

- individuality is embraced
- all children are valued
- children have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- children can talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without fear
- positive mental health and wellbeing is promoted and valued
- bullying is not tolerated

2. Definition of mental health and wellbeing

We endorse the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing:

"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"

We understand that mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of poor mental health and we want our children to:

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve

- enjoy learning in a safe, open and supportive environment that supports mental health, overall wellbeing and prevents discrimination

3. Links to other policies

This policy is not intended to stand alone and links to our policies on Safeguarding, Medical needs, Anti-bullying, SEND and Equal opportunities and equality.

Links with the school's Behaviour policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need.

4. A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health

ELAN takes a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise by:

- creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands
- helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it
- helping children to be resilient learners
- teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
- early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services
- effectively working with parents and carers
- supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Within ELAN we recognise that we all have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand and recognise the risk factors. Some children will require additional help and all staff should look out for any early warning signs of poor mental health and ensure that children with such needs get the support they need. Examples of possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems are:

- physical long-term illness
- having a parent who has a mental health problem
- death and loss, including loss of friendships
- family breakdown
- bullying.

Staff should also demonstrate an understanding the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging and emotional literacy.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the school environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children with mental health needs and their families.

Sources of possible support:

- Senior leadership teams
- ELAN's SEND advisory teacher

- School designated safeguarding leads
- Senior leaders
- SENCOs
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Some schools also have EMHP (Educational Mental Health Practitioners)

6. Supporting children's positive mental health and wellbeing

We believe that all of our schools have a key role to play in promoting children's positive mental health and wellbeing, by supporting such things as:

- assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
- peer mediation and peer mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child
- a lunchtime group supporting younger children at lunchtime
- transition programmes to help smooth the transfer to secondary schools for Year 6 children
- reward programmes e.g. praise boxes or similar - a mechanism where children can be praised for certain duties, tasks or things they have done and have them celebrated in class
- worry boxes - a similar mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class
- small group activities
- nurture groups

Knowledge along with good social and emotional skills that will help children to be more resilient and understand mental health and wellbeing, are taught through PSHE, starting in EYFS and developing and building through key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2). For example:

In EYFS and KS1 children learn such things as:

- how to recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings
- simple strategies for managing feelings
- how their behaviour affects other people
- how to cooperate and problem solve
- how to motivate themselves and persevere.
- how to calm down
- change and loss and the associated feelings e.g. moving home, losing toys, pets or friends
- who to go to if they are worried
- the types of bullying and teasing, how to resist it and how to get help

In KS2 children learn such things as:

- the things that can positively and negatively affect their wellbeing, including the media
- positive and healthy coping strategies.
- how to describe the range and intensity of their feelings to others, both good and bad
- how to recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of feelings in others
- understanding that they may experience conflicting emotions and when they might need to listen to their emotions or overcome them
- resilience: how to motivate themselves and bounce back if they fail at something
- how to empathise and be supportive of others

- managing personal change, including transitions (between key stages and schools), loss, separation, divorce and bereavement
- the consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including online bullying, prejudice-based language), as well as how to respond and ask for help if they are victims of this themselves
- the importance of talking to someone and how to get help.

7. Identifying children with mental health needs

ELAN is committed to identifying as early as possible children with mental health needs.

This may be identified in a number of ways including:

- analysis of behaviour and exclusions
- attendance and punctuality patterns
- progress reviews
- information from a previous school for children transferring in
- reported concerns from a member of staff
- reported concerns from parents/ carers

Children with poor mental health may exhibit some of the following:

- fear of change
- perfectionism
- sensory issues
- isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- falling academic achievement
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- secretive behaviour
- an increase in lateness or absenteeism
- reluctance to do PE or get changed for PE
- wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- drugs or alcohol misuse
- physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the headteacher, the safeguarding lead or the SENDCO

Staff are aware that mental health needs, such as anxiety, might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the school's child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency, then the school's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

8. Responding to disclosure

In the event that a child discloses a mental health concern either about themselves or a friend, the emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount.

The role of the member of staff is to remain calm, offer support in a non-judgmental way. They should listen to the child rather than provide advice and make it clear that the concern will be shared with the Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

All current ELAN schools use CPOMS to confidentially record all disclosures including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

9. Providing the right level of support when it's needed

All concerns related to mental health are reported to the SENDCo and recorded so that the level of need can be assessed in order to provide the necessary support either from within ELAN or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the SENDCO following the assessment process, and in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers.

Referrals will only go ahead if it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs, and only with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer.

ELAN recognises that some children will need ongoing support and the pastoral team will meet with children on a regular basis. We are careful not to "label" children with diagnoses without prior and sensitive consultation with family/carers and other relevant professionals.

We have a duty of care to support children and will seek advice from medical staff and mental health professionals on the best way to support children.

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing poor mental health it can be challenging for their friends, who often want to help them but are not sure the best thing to do and can also be emotionally affected. In the case of eating disorders and self-harm, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping strategies from each other, and we will consider on a case by case basis what support might be appropriate including one to one and group support.

We understand that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that poor mental health is common, that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that help and advice are available.

10. SEND and mental health

Persistent poor mental health may lead to children having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age. In some cases, the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN).

11. Involving children

Every year we appoint and train a group of children as our Junior Wellbeing Champions, who actively participate in whole school campaigns on health and wellbeing. They gather pupils' views about our approach, our curriculum and how children are feeling and feed this back during termly meetings, to help us evaluate our practice.

12. Supporting and training staff

We are committed to ensuring that staff receive appropriate training to support children with their mental health.

13. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and may be revised in line with feedback from staff and in response to statutory updates.

14. Additional sources of information or support

The following may be useful sources of information or support:

Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk

OCD UK www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk www.selfharm.co.uk

Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

www.mind.org.uk advice and support on poor mental health

www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)

www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health

www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health