



# **BALLYMENA ACADEMY**

**EST. 1828**

## **Emotional Health and Wellbeing Policy**

Policy ratified by Board of Governors: November 2024  
Date of next Review: November 2027

## **Rationale**

“ We all have a responsibility to promote the Emotional Health and Wellbeing of our children and young people. Increasing concern has been raised around the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly among those working with them in Education and other organisations and settings, their parents and carers, and children and young people themselves. The “Elephant in the Room” report has indicated that 91% of participants in the research felt that mental health was a “huge issue” for children and young people in Northern Ireland, with 86% stating that large numbers of young people do not know how to talk about their mental health.”

(Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework February 2021)

## **Aims and Ethos**

Ballymena Academy recognises that, in order to ensure a thriving and dynamic learning community, the wellbeing of both pupils and staff should be at the heart of policy and practice.

The school is committed to maintaining a working environment which actively supports and promotes positive emotional health and wellbeing to its pupils, their families, members of staff and governors, as far as reasonably practicable.

Ballymena Academy has attained Take 5 accreditation at level 3 and is currently working towards Platinum status and was presented by Aware NI with the Investors in Mental Health Award.

This policy, based on Educational Authority guidance and the Department of Education's joint framework with Department of Health, 2021 'Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework', outlines Ballymena Academy's approach to promoting Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHW). It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies, for example :- Safeguarding & Child Protection, RSE, Addressing Bullying, Positive Behaviour.

## **Key Personnel : Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

- Senior Teacher : Mrs Gillian Douglas
- Mental Health First Aiders : Mrs Janina Gurney, Mrs Nuala Kerr
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Designated Teachers : Mr Richard Ross ( Deputy Principal ), Dr Catherine Donnelly ( Senior Teacher)
- SENCo : Mrs Cherith McNeilly
- PSHE Co-ordinator : Mrs Nuala Kerr
- Governor : Mrs Ann Laughlin

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

While the responsibility to promote positive emotional health and wellbeing rests with every member of the whole school community, key staff have specific roles and responsibilities which include:

### **The Board of Governors:-**

- support the promotion of EHW within the school.

### **The Principal and Senior Leaders :-**

- promote the highest standards in relation to strengthening the school's culture of promoting emotional health and wellbeing;
- promote the use of industry standard frameworks as a means of baselining and informing action plans in relation to health and wellbeing;
- prioritise health and wellbeing within the School Development Plan;
- develop an open culture in which wellbeing is taken seriously and staff and pupils are encouraged to seek support as required;
- collate information which will enable the school to measure its performance in relation to staff and pupil wellbeing, for example, attendance data, retention rates.

### **Senior Leader with responsibility for Emotional Health and Wellbeing :-**

A member of the senior leadership team has responsibility for leading, promoting and co-ordinating the area of Emotional Health and Wellbeing. Responsibilities include :-

- chairing the Health and Wellbeing Committee;
- liaising with the senior and middle leadership teams;
- overseeing, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing EHW provision including policies, teaching, learning and pastoral programmes.

### **The Health and Wellbeing Committee**

- This committee regularly reviews the school's EHW provision & policy, monitoring the effectiveness of its content and implementation. It develops strategies for the promotion of EHW throughout the school and contributes to the development of programmes, training and resources .

### **Mental Health First aiders**

This group of key staff is trained to :-

- identify the signs and symptoms of early onset mental ill-health in others.
- sign-post pupils and staff, to appropriate support, both internal and external.
- manage mental health emergencies e.g. depressive episodes, psychosis, and suicidal ideation.
- ensure this support is available and can be accessed during school hours.

# Promoting Emotional Health and Wellbeing

## Pupils

The school recognises the importance of promoting health and wellbeing through curricular and co-curricular activities. Through these activities pupils should develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes necessary for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.

Ballymena Academy provides a wide variety of resources and services to support pupils' EHW, including curricular and co-curricular provision, pastoral care, SEN provision, early intervention and targeted support.

### Examples of EHW provision for pupils :

- Counselling provision via School Counsellor and Occupational Therapist;
- Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Curricular activities – within subjects, PSHE programme, and tutor groups
- Extensive co-curricular programme;
- Year 14 Health and Wellbeing Team;
- School Councils - promote pupil voice which informs school decision making.
- Rewards System;
- Organisation of a themed Wellbeing week with relevant activities e.g. Fun days;
- External speakers at assemblies/workshops e.g. Aware NI, Love for Life;
- Organisation of specialist sessions e.g. mindfulness;
- Aware NI programme for Year 11 pupils;
- Mentoring programme;
- Pupil questionnaires i.e. Being Well, Doing Well;
- Pastoral Care Google Classroom;
- Enhancement of school site i.e. library and school garden;
- Effective lines of communication for pastoral, academic, SEN, Child Protection and Safeguarding issues;
- Wellbeing boxes as part of the Period Dignity Scheme;
- Signposting – information relating to emotional health and wellbeing and support channels;
- School nurse;
- Charity collections;
- Pupil achievement recognised at Year Assemblies and on social media; both academic and non-academic;
- Level 3 Take 5 accreditation, integrating the model throughout the emotional wellbeing culture of the school;
- A progressive, preventive curriculum for all year groups throughout the school.

## **Staff**

The Board of Governors takes very seriously its duty of care as an employer to all members of staff and a number of policies and procedures have been developed in relation to this duty, which can be accessed by staff on Google Drive. Provision is made for strong channels of communication with members of staff and an 'open-door' policy provides access to members of the senior leadership team.

The Health and Wellbeing Committee provides a formal mechanism for promoting staff wellbeing . It is chaired by the Senior Teacher responsible for EHW and includes representatives from the teaching and non-teaching staff. It meets at least once per term and is informed by wider consultation with staff. The Health and Wellbeing Committee seeks to provide a forum for identifying and sharing best practice and raising concerns as well as taking a lead on organising initiatives and strategies to promote the physical and mental wellbeing of staff.

### **Examples of EHW provision for staff :**

- calendar for the school year is produced in consultation with staff regarding the scheduling of holidays, parent consultations, events etc.;
- EHW components feature in a number of school development days throughout the year;
- Influenza vaccinations provided;
- Break and lunch subsidy;
- After school fitness and mindfulness sessions available;
- Ballymena Academy Staff Association (BASA) meets regularly;
- Special catering is provided on Baker days and Staff Development days;
- Health and wellbeing challenges are organised throughout the year;
- Staff discount has been sourced through local business sponsorship e.g. Galgorm Resort;
- End of year staff BBQ;
- Annual Staff Health and Wellbeing questionnaire e.g. Being Well Doing Well;
- Staff counselling services provided by Inspire Workplaces, Occupational Therapist, Mental Health First Aiders and the school nurse;
- 'Open door' policy providing access to members of SLT;
- School policies are designed to contribute to staff wellbeing by providing certainty, fairness and consistency;
- Cycle to work scheme;
- Level 3 Take 5 accreditation, integrating the model throughout the emotional wellbeing culture of the school.

## **Parents / Carers**

Partnership with parents is a priority. A Parents and Friends Group has been established, which is chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership team .

Examples of EHW provision for parents and carers :

- Parent events e.g. information evenings, consultations;
- Regular meetings of the Parents and Friends Group – and annual information evening and fundraising events;
- Regular home-school communication via Parentmail including information about aspects of school development, events, curricular, co-curricular provision etc.;
- Consultation with parents through surveys e.g. Being Well Doing Well, Kirkland Rowell;
- Clear pathways of support and links to support networks, counselling services etc via school website and correspondence from Principal;
- An interactive PDF document provides links to trusted sites, e.g. CYPSP, Youth Wellness Web, Local Calms, Solihull, Parentline, Family Support Hub.

## **Protocol for Dealing with Concerns**

The school has agreed procedures which should be implemented when there is a concern about a person's emotional health and wellbeing. See proforma Appendix 1

## **Training**

As a minimum, all staff will receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training. Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of the school's continuing professional development programme.

## **External support**

Depending on a person's identified needs, external support may be suitable, e.g., counselling, GP, community and voluntary support, CAMHS, Educational Psychology Service etc.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

## **Appendix 1            Protocol for Dealing with Concerns**

### **Early Identification and Warning Signs**

All staff will be vigilant in identifying a range of possible difficulties that may be contributing to a pupil's poor mental health, including:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning
- Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns
- Family circumstance
- Recent bereavement
- Health indicators

School staff may also become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil 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 the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Safeguarding or the Emotional Wellbeing lead, as appropriate.

Possible warning signs may include:

- sleeping habits e.g. lack of engagement (particularly after lunchtime), irritability, negativity, increase in energy drink consumption;
- changes in eating e.g. eating lunch in private, not eating, increase in high calorie foods;
- secretive behaviours;
- clothing not matching environment e.g. wearing long sleeves when others are wearing short sleeves, wearing tights all year round, bulky coats/extra layers, hoods up;
- increased use of toilet facilities;
- becoming socially withdrawn;
- changes in activity and mood, positive or negative;
- talking about self-harm or suicide, "Joking" or not;
- substance use concerns;
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope;
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause;
- an increase in lateness or absenteeism;
- physical changes or signs of harm, included but not limited to, noticing skin picking, hair loss, weight loss or gain, decline/increase in self-care.

## **Protocol for Dealing with Concerns & Managing Disclosures**

### **Pupil:**

- A pupil disclosing about themselves;
- A pupil disclosing about a peer;
- A pupil disclosing about an adult, staff or parent carer.

Follow one of the following pathways.

Medical emergency – refer to Pupil Medical Policy

or

Complete a note of concern (see proforma Appendix 2)

### **Staff:**

- Concern about a pupil;
- Concern about a parent;
- Self-disclosure;
- Concern about a peer.

### **Parents:**

- Concern about self;
- Concern about their child;
- Concern about staff.

Follow one of the following pathways.

Medical emergency – see School Nurse

or

Complete a note of concern (see proforma Appendix 3). Make contact with Senior Leader with responsibility for Emotional Health and Wellbeing or mental health first aider who will liaise with the Designated Teacher to agree a pathway and/ or action plan.

## **Confidentiality**

Whilst this school endeavours to respect the right to privacy, there can be no guarantee of confidentiality in matters relating to a person's health and wellbeing, beyond the obligation to ensure that sensitive information is shared only with those who have a right to know. Sharing confidential and sensitive information with those who do not have a right to know and who do not need to know is unprofessional and a breach of the Code of Conduct.



## Appendix 2

### EHW Proforma for Dealing with Concerns and Managing Disclosures (Pupils)

Name of pupil affected \_\_\_\_\_ Reg. Group \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (or Age) \_\_\_\_\_

Any special factors \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/Contact No. \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of concern/disclosure (include dates, times)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signs/symptoms of possible concern/disclosure (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The above information was referred to the designated Senior teacher/Deputy Principal\*

at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Name of person making report \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* Delete as appropriate.

P.T.O.

## **OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

Details of advice sought (from whom, when)

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### **Referral details**

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Case not referred

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### **Reasons for referral/non-referral**

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☐

Designated Senior Teacher informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

☐

Deputy Principal informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

☐

Designated Governor informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

☐

Parent/Guardian of affected pupil informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3

### EHW Proforma for Dealing with Concerns and Managing Disclosures (Staff/Parents or Carers)

Name of individual affected \_\_\_\_\_

Any special factors \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/Contact No. \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of concern/disclosure (include dates, times)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signs/symptoms of possible concern/disclosure (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The above information was referred to the designated Senior Teacher/Deputy Principal\*

at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Name of person making report \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* Delete as appropriate.

P.T.O.

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Details of advice sought (from whom, when)

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### **Referral details**

☐ Case not referred

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### **Reasons for referral/non-referral**

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☐ Designated Senior Teacher informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

☐ Deputy Principal informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

☐ Principal informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

☐ Designated Governor informed

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_