

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Freemantle Church of England Community Academy Trust



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"Mental health...is not a destination, but a process. It's about how you drive, not where you're going." — Noam Shpancer, PhD

1. Definition of Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health is 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 contribute to her or his community (World Health Organisation).

At Freemantle Academy we aim to promote positive mental health for every child and member of staff. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. One in six children are identified as having probable a mental health problem, that's five in every classroom (Young Minds, 2021). By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

We pursue this aim using both universal whole school approaches, and through specialised, targeted approaches where necessary. This policy helps aid consistency of approach and equality of provision for all. We aim to promote a safe and stable environment for our whole community including staff, children, parents and families to take a proactive approach towards looking after their health and wellbeing. This said we also outline ways in which we may need to explore a reactive approach only for those children affected both directly, and indirectly, by mental ill health.

This policy outlines our academy's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing and is intended as guidance for all staff and directors. This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical needs policy in cases where a pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue, and with the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need. In addition to this, this policy should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection and Safeguarding, and Behaviour Policies.

2. Policy Aims

For children and families, this policy aims to:

- Support our 'Freemantle Family' to be successful and grow through taking shared responsibility and accountability for our actions.
- Keep lines of communication open and ensure that our vision of 'Everyone is welcome' and everyone is listened to is embraced
- Support the wellbeing of pupils and their families to avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health by providing a supportive environment for all and embracing the need to compromise
- Promote positive mental health in all staff and pupils and teach children how they can be proactive in managing their own mental health and wellbeing

For staff, this policy aims to:

- Support the wellbeing of all staff to avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health
- Provide a supportive work environment for all staff
- Acknowledge the needs of staff, and how these change over time
- Allow staff to balance their working lives with their personal needs and responsibilities
- Help staff with any specific wellbeing issues they experience
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues through our CPD programme and ensure staff are aware of early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Ensure that staff understand their role in working towards the above aims

3. Promoting Wellbeing

Role of all staff

All staff are expected to:

- Take responsibility for their own personal mental health and physical wellbeing needs, acknowledging that wellbeing is personal to them
- Understand that we all have different needs, views and opinions, however in order to embrace a 'culture of openness' we must respectfully appreciate that compromise, flexibility and trust is essential in creating a harmonious working environment
- Treat each other with empathy and respect
- Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff across the whole Academy
- Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Report honestly about their wellbeing to SAT and let other members of staff know when they need support
- Follow the school's policy on out-of-school hours working guidance, including information on when it is and isn't reasonable to respond to communications (this is extended to work related communications on social platforms, as well as internal email) – **See Appendix A**
- Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit
- Use shared areas respectfully and with consideration of others
- Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing

3.1 Role of line managers

Line managers are expected to:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern
- Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system to their staff
- Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the school's policies
- Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress, and regularly talk to staff about their work life balance
- Make sure new staff are properly and thoroughly inducted and feel able to ask for help
- Understand that personal issues and pressures at work may have a temporary effect on work performance, and take that into account during any appraisal or capability procedures
- Promote information about, and access to, external support services such as Spectrum Life <https://www.spectrum.life/>
- Help to arrange personal and professional development training where appropriate
- Keep in touch with staff if they're absent for long periods
- Monitor staff sickness absence, and have support meetings with them if any patterns emerge

3.2 Role of senior staff

As well as SAT, Jackie Martin is our Senior Mental Health Lead at Freemantle.

Senior staff are expected to:

- Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff and adhering to agreed working hours
- Manage a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- Make sure accountability systems are based on trust and professional dialogue, with proportionate amounts of direct monitoring
- Regularly review the demands on staff, such as the time spent on paperwork, and seek alternative solutions wherever possible
- Make sure job descriptions are kept up-to-date, with clearly identified responsibilities and staff being consulted before any changes are made
- Listen to the views of staff and involve them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives
- Communicate new initiatives effectively with all members of staff to ensure they feel included and aware of any changes occurring at the school
- Establish clear guidelines on out-of-school hours working, including on when it is and isn't reasonable for staff to respond to communications, and provide clear guidance to all stakeholders
- Make sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated
- Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload
- Provide resources to promote staff wellbeing, such as training opportunities
- Promote information about, and access to, external support services, and make sure that there are clear routes in place to escalate a concern in order to access further support
- Organise extra support during times of stress, such as Ofsted inspections
- Conduct back to work interviews to support staff back into work
- Conduct exit interviews with resigning staff to help identify any wellbeing issues that led to their resignation

3.4 Role of the Board of Directors

The director responsible for staff wellbeing is Karen Linnington.

The governing board is expected to:

- Make sure the school is fulfilling its duty of care as an employer, such as by giving staff a reasonable workload and creating a supportive work environment
- Monitor and support the wellbeing of the Headteacher and Executive Officer
- Ensure that resources and support services are in place to promote staff wellbeing
- Make decisions and review policies with staff wellbeing in mind, particularly in regards to workload
- Be reasonable about the format and quantity of information asked for from staff as part of monitoring work
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of any monitoring visits and what information will be required from them

4. Reporting and Monitoring Mental Health Concerns

4.1 Warning signs

All staff will be aware of signs that a pupil's mental health is deteriorating. Some warning signs include changes in:

- Mood or energy level

- Eating or sleeping patterns
- Attitude in lessons or academic attainment
- Level of personal hygiene
- Social isolation
- Poor attendance or punctuality
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Secretive behaviour
- Covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously
- Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes
- Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause
- Physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

4.2. Managing concerns

If a pupil makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgmental and reassuring.

Staff will focus on the pupil's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow academy policy and pass on all concerns to the Senior Mental Health Lead, DSL or a DDSL. All disclosures are recorded and stored in the pupil's confidential Cpoms file.

If a member of staff has a concern about a child they should report the concern on Cpoms alerting the Senior Mental Health Lead and DSL/DDSL. This will ensure that actions can be decided upon to put support in place.

Concerns regarding staff members should be raised with the Headteacher. Staff also have access to Spectrum Life, our Employee Assistance Programme, to seek support.

4.3. Confidentiality

Staff will not promise a pupil that they will keep a disclosure secret – instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

A disclosure cannot be kept secret because:

- Being the sole person responsible for a pupil's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing
- The support put in place for the pupil will be dependent on the member of staff being at school
- Other staff members can share ideas on how to best support the pupil in question

Staff should always share disclosures with at least 1 appropriate colleague. This will usually be a DDSL or Senior mental health lead. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Parents/carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern. In this case the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy will be followed.

4.4. Supporting pupils

Universal support for all pupils

As part of our Academy's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils, our school offers support to all pupils by:

- Raising awareness of mental health during assemblies, PSHE and mental health awareness events.

- Signposting all pupils to sources of support.
- Having open discussions about mental health during lessons.
- Providing pupils with avenues to provide feedback on any elements of our school that is negatively impacting their mental health, such as through our Pupil Leaders, Mental Health Champions and our Eco Warriors.
- Monitoring all pupils' mental health through assessments, e.g. a strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Appointing a senior mental health lead with a strategic oversight of our whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Making classrooms a safe space to discuss mental health and wellbeing through interventions such as ask it baskets or circle time

Assessing what further support is needed

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the Senior Mental Health Lead/ELSA will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to assessing the support our school can provide, further to the baseline support detailed above in section.

Our school will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the pupil's mental health needs are
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

Internal mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a pupil will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our school includes:

- Emotional Literacy Support
- Morning transition support
- Reduced Timetables in consultation with Senior Leadership Team and our SENCo
- Lunch Club
- Bespoke packages of support in line with pupil needs

Making external referrals

If a pupil's needs cannot be met by the internal offer our school provides, our school will make, or encourage parents/carers to make, a referral for external support.

A pupil could be referred to:

- Mental Health in Schools Team
- Their GP or a paediatrician
- CAMHS
- Mental health charities (e.g. [Samaritans](#), [Mind](#), [Young Minds](#), [Kooth](#))
- Local counselling services such as No Limits

4.5 Supporting and collaborating with parents/carers

We will work with parents/carers to support pupils' mental health by:

- CAHMS
- Asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support
- Informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child

- Engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child
- Highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on our school website, including the mental health and wellbeing policy
- Liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child
- Providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g. parent/carer forums)
- Keeping parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE, and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

5. Additional Support Available

The Academy is part of Southampton Co-operative Learning Trust where liaison and support between schools is provided.

Here are some useful websites for supporting mental health and wellbeing:

- NHS Every Mind Matters: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>
- Steps2Wellbeing: <https://www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk/>
- Education Support: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>
- Solent Mind: <https://www.solentmind.org.uk/>
- Employee Assistance Programme 'Spectrum Life': <https://www.spectrum.life/>
- Stormbreak: <https://stormbreak.org.uk/>

6. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by The Lead for Mental Health and wellbeing and SAT. After every review, it will be approved by the Board of Directors, and made available to all stakeholders.

7. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to the following policies:

- Staff and Directors Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix A: Out of core hours staff working protocols agreement

Context

Academy staff have the right to a healthy 'work life balance' (WLB) and the right to 'disconnect' at the end of the working day, and this must be protected. This agreement is designed to ensure we all understand and agree what can and cannot be expected from our staff, whilst ensuring that our core purpose of educating and protecting the welfare of our pupils is at the heart of everything we do.

Freemantle Academy acknowledges it is essential to retain strong links between families and teachers, but we also acknowledge that staff cannot be expected to be available to parents at all times.

We also acknowledge that staff have a responsibility towards effective communication and in supporting their own and others' CPD, but we also understand that staff have home lives too and cannot be expected to be available to each other at all times.

At Freemantle we aim to continually review and evolve our relationship with families, as well as embrace a culture of reflection and sharing of good practice amongst our fellow team members, but we also must be mindful of how these relationships are managed to ensure this does not have a detrimental effect on staff's emotional and mental health, especially when requests from parents or staff are not urgent or expectational.

Colleague Access outside Normal hours

Email traffic should be reviewed by all colleagues with the following considerations in mind:

1. Is this a safeguarding issue? If YES - respond immediately.
2. Do I need an urgent response from my colleague or senior leader?
3. Can the email wait until the next working day?
4. Would it be better to talk with a colleague?

Staff should aim to reduce email traffic wherever possible. There is no expectation to respond to emails 24/7, especially at weekends. With that in mind, we would recommend that, with the exception of safeguarding or absence, that **weekday emails are not sent out to staff after 8pm or after 1pm on a Sunday afternoon.**

Please note, if staff decide to set up their own WhatsApp groups with colleagues, it is essential that they also consider the above protocols when using this platform, so that we consider staff wellbeing and do not add unnecessarily to workload out of hours.

Parental Access to staff outside normal hours

Staff should consider the following before responding to parents:

1. Is this a safeguarding issue? If YES - respond upon receipt!
2. Is a child or family member in danger? If YES - respond upon receipt!
3. Do I need to provide an urgent response to the parent?
4. Can the email wait until the next working day?
5. Do I need to respond or pass the query on to a senior leader?

There will be times when information requires an urgent response, where necessary, colleagues should put this in the title of the email being sent.

Emails or phone calls to parents/carers should be responded to between 08.00 and 17.30 (Mon- Fri term time), unless the teacher feels the issue is urgent or requires an immediate response.

Staff Professional Development – out of hours

Staff CPD is strategically planned to facilitate learning for all, as part of a rolling programme of support. Accessing a wealth of CPD opportunities that are now available online, key training events are highlighted on a regular basis to allow all staff to select development sessions that are appropriate to their needs and that fit in with other commitments they may have.

Outside of any statutory training we must engage with, every member of the Freemantle team has the chance to determine their own individual pathway of development that is positive and that enhances their work-life balance – extending their knowledge and understanding both in and out of our Academy environment.

Reporting Absence

Please see Absence policy – **staff must contact school by 07.30 on the day of absence and on any subsequent days, unless a doctor's certificate has been issued. It is courteous to also email the teachers within your team to let them know you will not be in.**

Monitoring

This agreement will be reviewed annually by SAT in the summer term. SAT and Directors will discuss staff and pupil wellbeing during each half termly Directors meeting, to ensure that we are taking a strategic approach to building and maintaining a culture of wellbeing. This approach will ensure that our Academy approach to wellbeing and mental health is sustained and developed over time and in response to the ever-changing climate of education.

If any aspect of the agreement, or Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy is not delivering the desired outcomes, SAT and Directors will review and amend these in consultation with staff and the wider school community where necessary.