MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR STAFF AND PUPILS POLICY

THIS POLICY WAS APPROVED:	JANUARY 2023
POLICY VERSION:	VERSION 1.1
THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED:	JANUARY 2026
MEMBER OF STAFF WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEW:	MIKE FISH
THIS POLICY WAS CONSULTED WITH:	LOCAL GOVERNING BODY
THIS POLICY WAS DISTRIBUTED TO:	MARLEIGH PRIMARY ACADEMY STAFF

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1 Introduction

1.1 At Marleigh Primary Academy, we value the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing in every aspect of an individual's life. We aim to actively promote a whole academy ethos of positive mental health and wellbeing, ultimately benefitting all members of the academy community (including children, staff, parents and carers). We recognise that as an academy, we are in a unique position to play a pivotal role in allowing children to reach their fullest potential, both during their time at Marleigh Primary Academy and beyond; something which is greatly affected by an individual's sense of wellbeing and positive mental health. This is additionally recognised by the Department for Education (DfE), who state that: "in order to help their children succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy".

1.2 In 2017, statistics showed that 1 in 8 young people, between the ages of 5 and 19, suffered from a diagnosable mental health condition. In addition to this, in the 2018 Teacher Wellbeing Index, it was found that almost 50% of academy staff had experienced panic attacks and anxiety directly relating to work, and 76% of education professionals asked had experienced behavioural, psychological or physical symptoms in line with ill mental health. This appears to be significantly higher than reported symptoms in the general population.

1.3 The benefits of early intervention and an open approach to mental health have been widely documented, further supporting our aim to support the development of positive wellbeing and mental health across the academy. The World Health Organisation defines mental health as: "… a state of wellbeing 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." This is in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which identifies the importance of establishing an environment within which children feel safe, and where they are encouraged to talk and be listened to, encouraging high self-esteem, and preventing potential safeguarding issues.

1.4 At Marleigh Primary Academy, we pursue our aim of supporting universal positive mental health and wellbeing using a two-tiered approach; whole academy approaches, including the use of PSHCE (personal, social, health, citizenship education) lessons, and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at specific pupils with the potential for support and help from external agencies.

1.5 The Governing Body and Anglian Learning Trust have a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its staff and recognises that their wellbeing is critically important to its success. The prevention and effective management of stress that is work related is central to the Academy's responsibility to its staff and to the role of managers and supervisors.

1.6 All employees have the right to expect that their working conditions and relationships will be such that they do not result in unnecessary anxiety or prolonged stress symptoms. Pupils additionally have the right to feel safe and supported in their academy environment, and to develop the emotional resilience, wellbeing and understanding to deal with the ups and downs of life.

This policy statement is an indication that the academy is committed to the following:

- Preventing, in so far as is practicable, employee stress resulting from inappropriate work practices, excessive workloads or interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

- Where work-related stress does occur, taking steps to minimise the impact of this stress on individuals.

- Providing training and support to help managers and employees understand and recognise the nature, causes and management of work-related stress; and, for managers in particular, how to prevent or minimise work-related stress.

- Creating a whole academy ethos that is supportive of the development of positive mental health and wellbeing.

- Maintaining and formalising the provision of in-academy, targeted approaches to mental health and wellbeing for those children who are potentially vulnerable to experiencing wellbeing difficulties.

- Defining clear pathways for the escalation of targeted approaches to mental health difficulties, including the involvement of external agencies where appropriate and necessary.

1.7 The Governing Board recognises that the pace of change across the education sector and pressure on resources increases the likelihood of work-related stress. Whilst it may not be possible to eradicate all work-based stress, the Governing Body wishes to create an organisational culture in which issues of staff stress are taken seriously and the well-being of staff is given a high priority.

1.8 Given the increasing prevalence and awareness of ill mental health in children, young people and adults, the academy recognises its vital role in promoting both a preventative and reactive approach to mental health, whereby it is recognised and discussed as openly and honestly as physical health.

2 Whole Academy Approach

2.1 We take a whole academy approach to promoting resilience, emotional wellbeing and positive mental health which will support children to increase their resilience to deal with the ever-increasing stressors of everyday life.

2.2 Where children have an overall positive sense of mental wellbeing, this may act as a protective barrier against factors which might otherwise cumulatively or individually contribute to ill mental health, allowing us the possibility of preventing problems before they arise. This will be underpinned by the following principles:

- Sharing an ethos, policies and behaviours which support mental health and resilience, ensuring that all members of the academy community understand their role. This will create an environment here children are confident and open to talk about their needs, and where they know they will be listened to.
- Use of the Academy's Learning to Learn characters to facilitate the development of resilient, respectful learners who are able and confident to develop positive relationships with others, and to take necessary risks with the understanding of the benefits of doing so.

- Teaching a curriculum which allows children to develop social and emotional skills, and an awareness of emotional wellbeing and positive mental health, benefitting both staff and children equally.

- Early identification of children with mental health needs and a clear pathway for intervention and involvement of external agencies where necessary.

- Communicating with and working effectively with parents, carers, external agencies and members of the academy and wider community.

- Supporting and facilitating training of staff to develop their understanding and their own resilience and wellbeing.

3 Supporting Positive Mental Health

3.1 For the reasons outlined so far, Marleigh Primary Academy will actively promote an understanding of mental health and wellbeing using a variety of approaches.

3.1.1 Classroom Approaches

- Staff will demonstrate the implementation of Marleigh Primary Academy's Positive Behaviour Policy, focussing on the importance in considering underlying reasons for external behaviour, and the use of a restorative justice approach.

- Class teachers will consider the use of a worry box in classrooms to ensure that children are able to share their concerns in an anonymous and appropriate way.

- Regular weekly circle time, in line with the academy's PSHCE policy, whereby any class issues can be discussed.

- Use of the Cambridgeshire PSHE scheme which facilitates positive mental wellbeing.

3.1.2 Whole Academy Approaches

- Occasional special days and events surrounding mental health and wellbeing, and how children and staff can develop resilience and protect their own mental health.

- Assemblies to raise awareness of wellbeing and positive mental health.

- Peer mediation/Peer mentoring- children work together to solve problems, in addition to planned sessions where identified adults support and mentor a designated child.

- Development of safe spaces within the academy at lunch time to provide a space for children to visit should they need to.

- Signposting staff to sources of support services if needed.

All of these approaches will be underpinned by a willingness to talk openly about mental health as a academy, with the understanding that there is no great division between mental and physical health, and that mental health is something we **all** have, and which fluctuates for us all at varying points in our lives.

4   Targeted Approach

4.1   Whilst an open and supportive ethos will support positive mental wellbeing, it is important that as an academy we are aware of mental health needs as they arise, to allow the facilitation of early intervention.
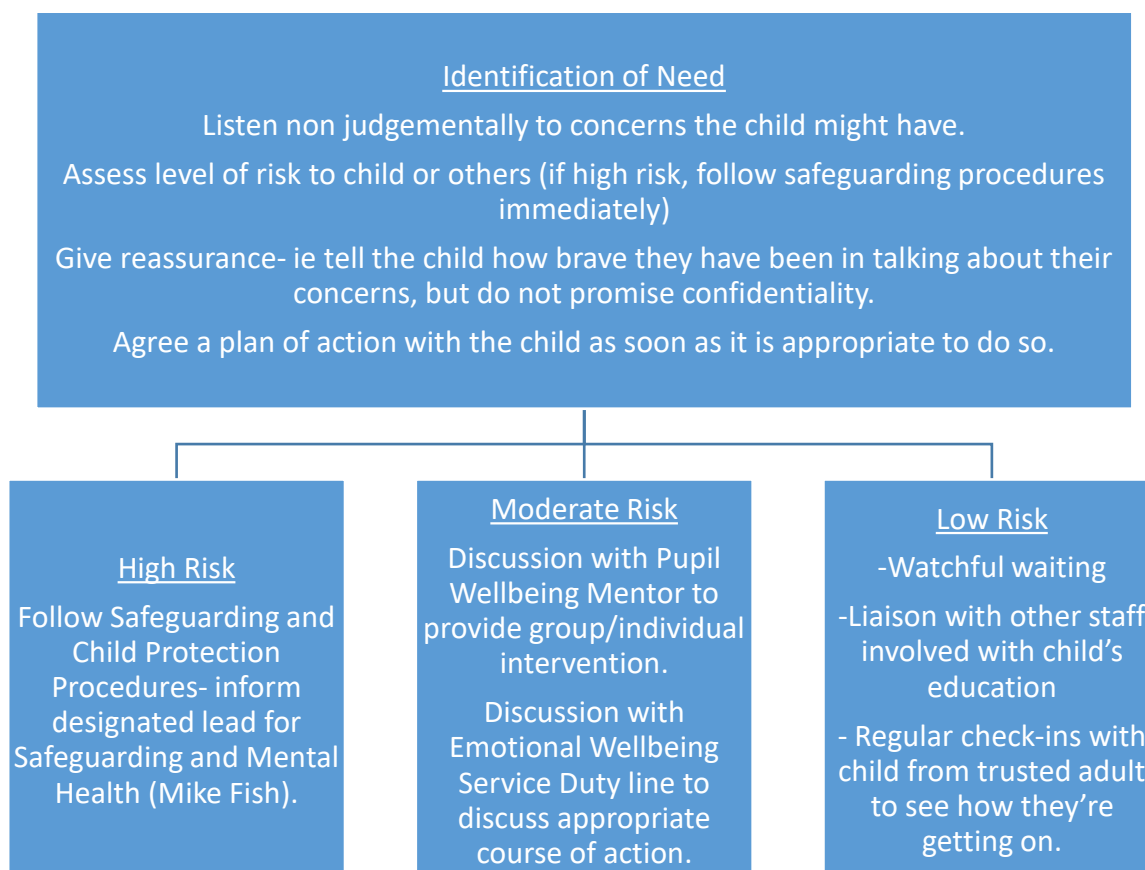
4.2   Identifying needs

4.2.1   Where additional support may be needed with regards to mental health, the academy aims to identify needs as early as possible in order to prevent the issue from escalating. This is done in a variety of ways:

- Regular chance for discussion during staff meetings - any concerns can be shared with all members of teaching staff and the designated lead for mental health at the beginning of any staff meeting.

- Parents and carers are encouraged to speak to class teachers whenever needed, and concerns surrounding mental health can be passed on in a timely fashion.

- Potential use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), to assess and record the areas of need a child may be demonstrating.

- Use of worry boxes within classrooms. Class teachers monitor worry boxes and pass on ongoing concerns to designated lead for mental

health.

- Gathering information from a previous academy on transfer when deemed appropriate and necessary.

- Pupil Progress Review meetings on a termly basis.

- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff.

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Identification of Need

Listen non judgementally to concerns the child might have.

Assess level of risk to child or others (if high risk, follow safeguarding procedures immediately)

Give reassurance- ie tell the child how brave they have been in talking about their concerns, but do not promise confidentiality.

Agree a plan of action with the child as soon as it is appropriate to do so.

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High Risk

Follow Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures- inform designated lead for Safeguarding and Mental Health (Mike Fish).

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Moderate Risk

Discussion with Pupil Wellbeing Mentor to provide group/individual intervention.

Discussion with Emotional Wellbeing Service Duty line to discuss appropriate course of action.

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Low Risk

-Watchful waiting

-Liaison with other staff involved with child's education

- Regular check-ins with child from trusted adult to see how they're getting on.

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4.3 Warning Signs

4.3.1 Any member of staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 Mike Fish.

4.3.2 Possible warning signs, which 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
- Drop in academic attainment
- 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 secretively
- Lateness to, or absence from academy
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

5 Training

5.1 As a minimum, all staff will receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues. All staff will be given the option to undertake a level 2 qualification in Young People and Children's Mental Health.

5.2 Additional training will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations within the academy population.

6 The Responsibilities of Managers

6.1 Prevention, recognition and management of work-related stress are critical parts of the management function.

6.2 Managers will try to create a working environment which avoids or reduces potential stressors. They will:

- ensure effective communication about Academy performance, change and proposed developments. This recognises that the impact of change can be reduced if staff feel they have been adequately prepared for it;
- establish reasonable workloads for individuals giving consideration to their post, experience and their capabilities and establish fair and equitable workloads across staff groups;
- ensure that work deadlines are reasonable and properly scheduled;
- ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities;

- create an academy culture in which it is clear that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated and deal promptly with those who are accused of inappropriate behaviour (see Policy on Bullying and Harassment);

- take seriously staff concerns about inappropriate student behaviour and ensure procedures to support staff are in place;

- create a culture where all staff know they can raise concerns and their concerns will be treated seriously and sympathetically; and which avoids a blame culture;

- recognise that employees need to balance their work and home lives and responsibilities;

- treat all staff equitably.

6.3   The Leadership Team will:

- ensure that staff are appropriately trained for the work they are required to undertake;

- be prepared to review individual workloads and objectives and ensure that work-life balance issues are addressed;

- consider flexible or part time working where appropriate.

6.4   Stress Absence Procedure

6.4.1   There may be occasions where stress impacts so negatively on health that individuals take time off work. It is the Leadership Team's objective to minimise sickness absence, to provide support for staff and to plan and implement a structured return to work where this is desirable.

6.4.2   It is important that individuals in such circumstances seek immediate advice from their GP to facilitate as speedy a return to work as possible.   Where the employee consents, the Occupational Health Adviser will be asked to provide a report which will give the academy guidance on the management of the problem in order to inform senior managers whether reasonable adjustments can or should be made to the individual's work. A senior manager will consider the circumstances of the employee's stress and will give consideration to

an appropriate strategy for the individual to return to work, which may include:

- adjustments to the individual's duties, workload or place of work where this can reasonably be achieved, either on a temporary or longer term basis, with consideration of any salary implications;
- an initial return to work on a part-time basis;
- the offer of a job at a lower level of responsibility with a correspondingly lower salary grade;
- making available therapeutic counselling.

6.4.3 Where the circumstances leading to the employee's stress involve conflict with other staff, the appropriate senior manager will instigate an independent review to provide an objective analysis of the causes of the conflict and possible solutions. The Governing Body recognises its obligations to act in response to absences which result from work-related stress; to act supportively but also to act speedily. In the event of the employee not wishing to reveal the cause of the illness to the Academy or not willing to be referred to the Occupational Health Adviser, a senior manager will remind the employee of the importance of this and will, where appropriate, consult with the employee's representative to better understand genuine reasons why an employee is not responding. However, if the Academy asks again for this information and the employee does not respond, the Academy would follow the sickness absence management procedures.

7 Support for Women During Menopause and Peri-menopause

7.1 Marleigh Primary Academy will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of how the menopause, per-menopause and early menopause can affect working women, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women experiencing them.

7.2 Where women members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, because he is a man, or someone much younger, or both, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be

respected.

7.3   The risk assessments which we undertake will consider the specific needs of menopausal women, and, in doing so, we will consult with women staff members and share with all managers and new managers, requesting signatures to confirm that measures are understood and will be acted upon. Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature and ventilation issues and will also address welfare issues; such as access to toilet facilities and cold water, during and outside break and lunch times.

7.4   Marleigh Primary Academy will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. These could include simple measures such as:

- leaving doors open;
- ensuring that windows can be safely opened;
- ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom or other room by turning down radiators (as long as the temperature does not drop below 18 degrees Celsius, this will be comfortable for all occupants);
- provision of fans;
- fitting blinds to windows;
- establishing a system that allows cover for women who need to access toilet/ washing facilities while they are teaching (to deal with heavy and recurring bleeding);
- considering requests for changes to working arrangements, e.g. temporary part-time working;
- swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments;
- adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal women.

7.5   This is not a definitive list of measures. Leaders will actively listen to women staff and take on board other suggestions.

7.6   It is recognised that many of these practical and easy-to-institute changes to the workplace, which will make working life more bearable for menopausal

women, will benefit all staff.

8 Support for staff members during times of personal crisis

8.1 In line with the Anglian Learning Discretionary Leave of Absence Policy, leaders will seek to be supportive of staff members' mental health and wellbeing during times of personal crisis, such as bereavement. This will include discussing the staff members' needs with them, including necessary absence and reasonable adjustments when back in work.