



# ABBNEY HILL ACADEMY POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

Updated Feb 2021

## Introduction Statement

***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 make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)***

At Abbey Hill Academy we aim to promote positive mental health for **every** member of our staff and student body. We pursue this aim using both whole school approaches and also specialised individual targeted approaches aimed at specific staff and students.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we also aim to recognise and respond to mental health issues and by developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health practices and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by episodes of poor mental health.

### These guidelines aim to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

### Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all Staff at Abbey Hill Academy have a responsibility to promote the positive mental health of students, we also have a dedicated Health and Wellbeing team within school, who can provide additional and more specific individual work if needed.

All members of this team have completed their Mental Health First Aid training and includes:

**Rebecca Whelan** – Head Teacher of Abbey Hill Academy

**Melissa Fisher** – Mental Health Champion/ Vice Principal for Pastoral and Wellbeing

**Bill Dingwall** – Vice Principal for LAC and Safeguarding

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the mental health lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to any of the designated safeguarding teachers.

If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Where a referral to an external agency, such as CAMHS/Alliance/Bridgeway/Barnardos is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Melissa Fisher and/or Bill Dingwall.

## Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and also throughout our Tutor sessions.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

## Signposting

Abbey Hill Academy will ensure that students, staff and parents are aware of sources of support within school and with reference to more specialist services and interventions if necessary and also support them through the referral process.

Students have all been given access to Kooth which is an online community for mental health and wellbeing and if additional support is required they can work alongside trusted adults to create a personalised Mental Wellbeing Plan.

Staff have been given access to Qwell which is an online platform for counselling and to support wellbeing for adults and they also are aware of our Service Level Agreement with Alliance for free staff therapy sessions if required. We also have additional support available for staff within school in the form of a Wellbeing Action Plan.

## Signs and Symptoms

Abbey Hill Academy staff are experienced and well trained in noticing possible warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs, or concerns from parents/carers will always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs know to report their concerns to a member of SLT or one of the designated safeguarding leads within school.

Possible warning signs could 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

- ❖ Lowering of academic achievement
- ❖ 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 secretly
- ❖ Lateness to or absence from school
- ❖ Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- ❖ An increase in lateness or absenteeism

## Managing disclosures

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so we ensure all staff have regular Safeguarding training which includes, knowing how to respond appropriately to a disclosure. If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff will listen, rather than advise and the priority will always be of the student's emotional wellbeing and their immediate physical safety. The concern will then be passed on and also logged on the school CPOMS system where it can be viewed and actions following the disclosure can be added and seen by relevant staff.

## Working with Parents

When a concern has been raised or a disclosure has been made we will ensure parents/carers are informed (If the disclosure has been made in relation to a parent/carer then we would seek advice from the Safeguarding Children's Hub in the first instance and take action from their advice)

We understand that it can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation and we would always offer the support of one of our Parent Support Advisor's (PSA) to the family if required. We can also highlight further sources of information and guide them through the next steps or the referral process with any external agencies.

## Professional Development

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep students safe.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year as part of our Mental Health Pathway and also all staff have access to the **MindEd** learning portal which provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.



We gained our Rights Respecting School Gold award in Nov 2020 and are committed to ensuring that all students know their emotional wellbeing is a priority within Abbey Hill Academy

## Links to UNCRC

**Article 3:** All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children

**Article 6:** You have the right to be alive

**Article 12:** You have the right to give your opinion and for adults to listen and take it seriously

**Article 17:** You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful and help you find and understand the information you need

**Article 19:** You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body and mind

**Article 23:** You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in the Convention, so you can lead a full life.

**Article 31:** You have the right to play and rest

**Article 39:** You have the right to help if you have been hurt, neglected or badly treated

