Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Clarity Independent School

Bridge Barn Farm
Woodhill Road
Sandon
CM2 7SG

Clarity Independent School is committed to safeguarding...

"Our school is committed to our whole-school approach to safeguarding, which ensures that keeping children safe is at the heart of everything we do, and underpins all systems, processes and policies...We promote an environment where children and young people feel empowered to raise concerns and report incidents and we work hard in partnership with pupils, parents and caregivers to keep children safe."

Clarity Safeguarding Policy September 2025

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Bridge Farm Barn, Woodhill Road, Sandon, Chelmsford CM2 7SG Tel: 01245 408 606 Email: admin@clarity.essex.sch.uk DfE number: 881/6073

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Policy Statement

"***Mental health is 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." (World Health Organisation)***

At Clarity Independent School, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our school staff and pupil body. Our culture is supportive, caring and respectful. We take a therapeutic approach to managing behaviour and actions. We encourage pupils to be open and we want each pupil to have their voice heard. We know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with those situations sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our School, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. 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.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Medical Needs and First Aid Policy, Asthma Policy and Allergies Policy, in cases where the pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND Policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.

Policy Aims

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and children.

At Clarity Independent School, we will always:

- Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better
- Ensure our pupils feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- Help children to form and maintain relationships and friendships
- Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem
- Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

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- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff
- Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements
- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect
- Promoting our pupils' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making
- Celebrating each pupil for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected
- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any student that needs it
- Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs and mental-ill health in students
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their own mental health

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all members of staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, staff with a particular role in this are:

- **Mrs D Hanson – Senior Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Head Teacher and overall responsibility**
- **Mrs Deveney – Assistant Head Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead**
- **Mr Clow - Assistant Head, Deputy Safeguarding Lead, SENCO**

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the usual child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Safeguarding Lead. If the pupil presents a medical emergency, then the usual procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including taking the child / young person to Accident and Emergency Department of the local hospital.

Teaching About Mental Health

Our PSHCE and RSE curricula are developed to give pupils the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training through the Zones of Regulation (by Leah M. Kuypers, MA Ed. OTR/L) and Interoception training (by Kelly Mahler), both of which are delivered at the school.

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We will regularly review our PSHCE and RSE curricula and lesson content to ensure that they are meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We will also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide students with strategies to help everyone keep mentally well.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the dining hall and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Identifying Needs and Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. We are aware that children with SEND do not always display signs of such issues in direct / typical ways and these may be displayed through different / less usual behaviours. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should follow our safeguarding procedures and communicate their concerns with the **Child Mental Health and Wellbeing Leads)** or Head Teacher.

Where required, these will be added to the pupil's One Plan and Pupil Profile.

Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in mood
- Changes in typical behaviours
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope
- Reduction in amount or quality of work produced and motivation
- Changes in attitude towards the future or next step e.g. college

- Secretive behaviour
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. no winter coat in the winter
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.gs. affecting the sense of safety of others or self-deprecating behaviours

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

- Attendance or absenteeism
- Punctuality or lateness
- Changes in education attainment and attitude towards education
- Changes in the child's ability to receive support and work with staff
- Changes in the child's hygiene / personal care, or the desires to do so
- Family and relationship problems

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement (see bereavement policy) and health difficulties.

Managing Disclosures

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil 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-judgmental**.

Staff should **listen**, rather than advise or judge, and our first thoughts will be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than exploring *'Why?'*

All disclosures should be **recorded in writing** and held on the students confidential file on the school e-recording safeguarding system; CPOMS, which will alert the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead and D/DSLs. This written record should include the following points and the red flag 'cause for concern' slip may be used to alert the D/DSLs if the child is at risk of immediate harm:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

Confidentiality

We must be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass on our concerns about a pupil, then we should discuss with the pupil first. They should be told:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and/or a parent/caregiver.

…when informing parents / caregivers…

Pupils should always be given the option of the school informing parents *for* them or *with* them to offer both parties support. This will usually take place through an Early Help meeting between the school D/DSL team and parents / caregivers.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying safeguarding issues regarding contacting their parents, the D/DSL team should be notified through a CPOMs record.

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents/caregivers, we will be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to a parent/caregiver we will consider the following questions (each case on an individual basis):

- Can the meeting happen face-to-face?
- Where should this meeting happen?
- Who should be present? (Parents/caregivers, the pupil, other members of staff)
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents/caregivers to learn of their child's issues and they may respond with anger, fear or upset during the conversation. We will be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent/caregiver time to reflect, following the school's Home School Communication Policy.

We will highlight further sources of information and give parents / caregivers as much information to take away where possible as it can be hard to take so much in whilst coming to terms with the news being shared. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents/caregivers can also be helpful, e.g. parent support forums and helplines.

We will provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and offer to book in a follow up meeting or phone call once parents/caregivers have had time to process the

information and consider any questions they may wish to ask. We will finish each meeting with an agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record on CPOMs.

Whole School Approach

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our students. This means working with parents/caregivers and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

As staff, we will model effective mental health and strategies to the pupils, by prioritising mental wellbeing and modelling good practice for maintaining a calm mind and body, such as: modelling healthy thought processes and resilience; 'brain breaks'; 'breathing breaks'; 'Sensory regulation breaks'; 'movement breaks' during lessons; and drinking plenty of fresh water, to support efficient self-regulation.

Emotional Wellbeing Support Strategies to meet Identified Mental Health Needs:

- We have adopted the **Therapeutic Thinking Approach** to managing behaviour, which focusses on the child's lived experience and offering support to make healthy choices, rather than a judgement of their actions and a punitive response. We use an empathic approach and restorative learning consequences to empower students to reflect on and learn from their mistakes, rather than invoking shame and guilt. This encourages a positive attitude towards reflecting and repairing relationships and therefore, promotes positive self-perception and positive self-esteem.
- **Weekly 'Wellbeing sessions'** with our Wellbeing Coach (a multidisciplinary therapist) are recommended for all of our pupils to participate in.
- **Individualised Regulation Plans** (**strategy)**- Each student has an individualised plan which outlines the strategies that work well to support their individual emotional wellbeing needs (as identified in their EHCP) and maintain regulation.
- **Quiet Alone-time pass (see appendix)** –This pass allows the holder to enjoy the privilege of a peaceful and quiet alone-space during the lunch period for relaxation, reading, a quiet task, or personal reflection. (This has been implemented in response to pupil voice requests from some of our older students who felt that this would support them to independently implement regulation strategies and prepare themselves for the afternoon lessons).
- **Supported social skills interventions** – targeted social communication interventions and supported social interactions are an essential part of our provision delivered by our SENDCO. We aim to ensure all students feel included, have friends and are a valued part of our community.

Supervision and Managing Our Own Mental Health as Staff

It is always advisable to additionally share the impact of hearing a disclosure with either the Child Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead or one of the D/DSL team, as this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing and make us not face the responsibility for the student alone, it ensures continuity of care towards staff, not only pupils, and it provides extra sources of ideas and support.

Working with Parents/Caregivers

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times.

To Support Parents/Caregivers we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school
- Share and make available further support for parents
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child or a friend of their child
- Give the parents guidance about how they can support their child's positive mental health
- Ensure that this policy is easily accessible to the parents
- Keep parents informed about the mental health training our school staff receive and how mental health is covered in our school curriculum

Working with all Parents/Caregivers:

Parents/caregivers are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents/caregivers we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues
- Ensure that all parents/caregivers are aware of who to talk to and how to do this, whether it is regarding their child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents/caregivers
- Share ideas about how parents/caregivers can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information sharing
- Keep parents/caregivers informed about the mental health topics their child will be learning about in PHSCE / RSE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Working with Other Agencies and Partners

As a part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our pupils' mental health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with the following (not exhaustive):

- NHS
- Pediatricians
- SET CAMHS
- Counselling services and Psychotherapists
- Therapists (including our school 'Wellbeing coach', a multi-disciplinary therapist)
- Family support workers
- Behavioural Support workers
- Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB) and the Children and Families Hub

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm, eating disorders, or other more severe difficulties, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. Being young people, our pupils are learning about resilience and are not likely to be in a place of strength themselves yet to support another pupil in a time of crisis. In order to keep children and their peers safe and prevent further upset amongst peers, we encourage the children to speak to staff about mental health issues rather than their peers.

It is always important to ensure that we are aware of the impact that mental health difficulties may have on children's friends. We support them to:

- Allow their friend a little extra space where needed
- Know where and from whom to access support for themselves
- Know safe resources and further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with difficult emotions they may be feeling

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as a part of their regular safeguarding training. This will enable them to keep pupils safe. Staff also undertake Trauma Perceptive Practice training which is delivered in-house by our TPP tutors.

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Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually. If you have any questions regarding this policy please contact the school.

Overall responsibility for Mental Health and Wellbeing in **Clarity Independent School** rests with the Head Teacher; Debbie Hanson.

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Appendix 1: OPTIONAL - Quiet Alone Time Pass

Optional Quiet Alone-Time Access Pass	**Rules for Quiet Time Access**
This certifies that ……. has been granted permission to access **Quiet Alone-Time** during lunch break. This pass allows the holder to enjoy the privilege of a peaceful and quiet alone-space during the lunch period for relaxation, reading, a quiet task, or personal reflection. The holder may leave Quiet Alone-Time at any time to seek assistance from supervising staff. **Issued on:** **Signed,**	• This certificate must be presented upon request and will be validated at each use in the hall by the lunchtime supervising staff. • You will be notified of the specific space provided for you by the supervising staff member. • The quiet space must be used respectfully and left tidy - even if you believe / perceive it was not found so. • For alone use only, not pairs or groups. • This privilege is to allow quality, quiet activities and is not for sleeping or eating. • If you need assistance whilst in quiet alone-time, please approach the lunch-time supervising staff in the hall / dining room **(not staff in the offices or reception).** • **Misuse of this privilege at any time, may result in immediate revocation.** *We hope you enjoy your Quiet Alone-Time!*

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