MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING POLICY

At North West Academy of English (NWA) we are committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of our students and staff. Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful.

At NWA we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support, especially when moving to a new country. Positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers, management, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting student mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside our other relevant school policies.

POLICY AIMS

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students. At our school, we will always:

• Ensure our students and staff feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.

• Encourage students and staff to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.

• Help students and staff to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks.

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
- Celebrating each student 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 of mental-ill health in students.

KEY STAFF MEMBERS

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead: *Francesca Giacomini*
- SENCO: *Konrad Radlak*
- Welfare Officers: *Clare Heaney and Chris McGowan*

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, then in the first instance they should speak to: *Francesca Giacomini*. If a student presents with a medical emergency, then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

SUPPORT AT SCHOOL AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We have a range of support available in school for any students struggling, as listed below:

- Open door office: students can come to speak to any member of staff they feel comfortable with, at any time.
- Drop-In Forum – an opportunity to meet with the Welfare Officers on a weekly basis.
- Safeguarding officers: if a student has a particular welfare concern, they can speak to the safeguarding team (as outlined above).
- Counselling services: we can refer students for a range of counselling services offered by external organisations such as:
  Calms (CALMS - Community Action for Locally Managing Stress (calmsstresscentre.org))
  STEPS (Mental Health Counselling Service | Derry/Londonderry, NI | STEPS (stepsselfhelptherapy.co.uk))
- GP services: please see student handbook for details of GP services in the area.

SIGNPOSTING

We will ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the support that is available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS

Certain staff are trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they are able to offer help and support to students who need it, when they need it. These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer as appropriate.

Staff are 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 becoming socially withdrawn.

• Changes in mood.

• Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.

• Drug and alcohol abuse.

• Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.

• Secretive behaviour.

• Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption. Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues including: Attendance and absenteeism; Punctuality and lateness; Changes in educational attainment.

MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a student discloses concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner. All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it is necessary to keep the student safe, in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

The disclosure record will contain:

• The date of the disclosure.

• The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.

• The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.

• Agreed next steps.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If a member of staff thinks it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the student. They will be told:

• Who the staff member is going to tell.

• What the staff member is going to disclose.

• Why it is necessary for somebody else to be told.

• When the contact will be.

However, it may not be possible to gain the student's consent first, such as in the case of students who are at immediate risk. Protecting a student's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

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

To support group leaders of under-18s we will:

• Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.

• Ensure that group leaders are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their student.

• Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents or agents.

TRAINING

Many staff receive training in mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This forms part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep students safe. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with students.

DECLARATION OF HEALTH ISSUES PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

All students must disclose any pre-existing medical conditions, including, but not limited to, physical, mental, or psychological health concerns, prior to their participation in any programme, activity, or service provided by NWA. This disclosure ensures that appropriate accommodations can be considered and necessary precautions can be taken to safeguard the well-being of all students.

Failure to disclose relevant medical information may limit NWA's ability to provide necessary support and may also result in increased risk to the student. In such cases, NWA shall not be held responsible, or liable. for any injuries, health complications, or other adverse outcomes that may arise due to the lack of disclosure. By participating in NWA programmes, students acknowledge their responsibility to provide accurate and complete medical information and accept any associated risks should they choose not to do so.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy is reviewed at least annually. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes, and in response to any changes in personnel or changes in any other area.

Reviewed: 13/02/26

Signed: 

(Chief Executive, North West Academy of English)

Queries relating to this policy should be addressed to

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