Educate U

Social and Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Approved by: Susan Evans, Director of Education	**Date:** 01/04/21
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Next review due by: 09/10/27	

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Wellbeing Policy

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that "in order to help their child succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to the resilient and mentally healthy."

The World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing "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 his or her own community."

Pupils with SEMH experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviours. These sometimes reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression, self-injury, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other pupils may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attachment disorder.

'Behaviour' was removed as a distinct SEND Category for the 2014 Code of Practice, under the assumption that undesirable behaviour is a communication of unmet need in one or more of the categories of SEND (i.e. broad areas of need – Social Emotional and Mental Health needs, Communication and interaction needs, Cognition and Learning needs or Sensory and/or Physical Needs).

Educate U understands that 'behavioural difficulties' could be an indication of an unmet need in one or more of the categories of SEND. We also understand that 'behavioural difficulties' do not necessarily mean that a child or young person has a possible mental health problem or special educational need. Negative experiences and distressing life events such as Adverse Childhood Experiences can affect mental health in a way that brings about temporary changes in a young person's behaviour.

As stated in the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, and in order to meet the varied SEMH needs of our pupils, our school promote a nurturing, caring, supportive environment in which each individual is valued and respected. We have high expectations that every pupil succeeds, aspires, believes and acts. We recognise that all children and young people need the foundation of positive mental health to benefit fully from all of the opportunities available to them.

Everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable including older students in KS5 who may face increased independence, exam stress, or post-school decision-making challenges. At times, anyone may need additional support to maintain

or develop good mental health. The mental health of children and young people, adults in schools, parents and carers and the wider whole school community will impact on all areas of development, learning, achievement and experience. All children and young people have the right to be educated in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody. All adults have the right to work in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody including staff. School is committed to raising awareness, increasing understanding and providing a place where all children and young people and staff feel safe, secure and able to achieve and experience success and well-being.

Policy Aims:

1. To recognise our responsibilities in supporting students with mental health and wellbeing needs.

2. To provide a consistent approach that means the school environment and school ethos all promote the mental health of the whole school community.

3. To acknowledge healthy relationships, underpin positive mental health and have a significant impact.

4. To increase the level of awareness and understanding amongst staff and parents/carers of issues involving the mental health of young people, in particular with low self-esteem, self-harm, emotional regulation, anxiety, depression, loss and bereavement.

5. To detect and address problems in the earliest stages where they exist in thinking and attitudes to self/image, self-esteem and self-control.

6. To implement the appropriate level of support in school available to students with mental health issues and also in partnership with outside health agencies and child support groups including KS5 learners navigating advanced coursework, vocational studies, apprenticeships, or career planning.

7. To continue to promote positivity around mental wellbeing.

8. To reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

9. To ensure all staff is alert to their responsibility to ensure the wellbeing and welfare of all students, progress and achievement in school depends on this.

10. To promote staff wellbeing and healthy mental health.

At Educate U we will provide:

A mentally healthy environment which has:

• A clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all.

• A commitment to being responsive to children and young people's needs.
• Clearly defined mental health links in school policies.
• Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals.
• Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information.
• A named lead for mental health promotion with the expectation that there is support and involvement and an ethos that 'mental health is everyone's businesses.

A mentally healthy environment is where children and young people:

- Have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging.
- Have opportunities to participate in decision making.
- Have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements.
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed?
- Have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- Have opportunities to reflect.
- Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs.
- Have a right to be in an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well cared for.
- Are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times.

A mentally healthy environment is where staff:

- Have recognition of their work-life balance.
- Have the mental health and wellbeing of the staff reviewed regularly.
- Feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision making processes.
- Celebrate and recognise success.
- Are able to carry out roles and responsibilities effectively.
- Are provided with opportunities for CPD both personally and professionally.
- Have their unique talents and skills recognised and opportunities are provided for development.
- Have time to reflect.
- Can access proactive strategies and systems to support them at times of emotional needs in both the short and long term.
- Have a range of strategies that support their mental health, e.g. a provision 'Mental Health First Aider' a named person to speak to, signposting etc.

A mentally health environment where parents/carers:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people's mental health.
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies.
- Are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed.
- Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support.

- Are clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working in partnership with school.
- Opinions are sought and valued and responded to.
- Strengths and difficulties are recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately.

A mentally healthy environment where the whole school community:

- Is involved in promoting positive mental health.
- Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health. Contributes towards the ethos of the school.

A healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health through:

The formal and semi-formal curriculum and extended provision, e.g. whole school nurturing approach, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), ELSA, PSHE, Wellbeing activities and play, nurture, adaptive learning activities, individual timetables

The implementation of the policy for promoting positive mental health in schools:

- Will give school a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to mental health.
- Should underpin all policies and practices currently used in schools.
- Will raise awareness as to how the whole school community can look after their own.
- Mental health and that of others.
- Will help to de-stigmatise mental health.
- Will support people and provide opportunities that enable everyone to reach their potential.
- Will strengthen relationships and provide opportunities for different ways of working.
- Will provide foundations for life-long learning.
- Will promote and strengthen resilience throughout the whole school community and empower every to face life's challenges.
- Integral to this is our recognition of equal responsibility to vulnerable staff, student and their parents/carers and those with Protected Characteristics (Equality Act, 2010).
- The promotion of positive mental health for children and young people is everyone's responsibility.

Rationale

Our school aims to provide a whole school approach to SEMH, which is essential to ensure consistency and effectiveness for all students.

We aim to include:

- High quality in class support – all members of staff are responsible for the emotional wellbeing of students.
- A whole school nurturing approach – support and opportunities for social and emotional development.
- Communicating with parents positively and realistically to create a partnership approach to their child's emotional health and wellbeing.
- Liaison with appropriate agencies to enlist advise and/or support (e.g. Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Health Therapist).
- Additional practices to promote wellbeing and positive mental health include:
- A school Council with elected membership which represents all year groups, that meets every two weeks

Supporting Students with Mental Health at School

Staff teams that knows every student in their group well are trained to spot where poor or unusual behaviour may have a root cause that needs addressing.

Effective use of data so that changes in students' patterns of attainment, attendance or behaviour are noticed and can be acted upon. This transfer of information happens:

- Daily staff briefing/bulletin.
- Weekly spotlight on one student in briefing (Thursday's child)
- Twice weekly safeguarding meetings.
- Half Termly pupil progress meetings.
- Senior Mental Health lead / MH First Aider on site to debrief at the end of the day.
- DSL and DDSL on site to debrief at the end of the day.

Any staff member who is concerned regarding the mental health and wellbeing of a pupil should refer concerns to the Senior Mental Health lead.

If any member of staff feels the pupil is in immediate danger of harm, then normal safeguarding procedures should be followed (see Safeguarding and Child Protection policy) including a referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

If the student has seriously self-harmed then staff should follow the normal procedures for medical emergencies, including alerting Reception so that their appropriate first aid can be given and if necessary contacting the emergency services for admission to hospital.

Support

- A whole school approach to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of all students.
- Clear policies on behaviour, anti-bullying, SEND and nurture.
- Culture within the school that values all students, allows them a sense of belonging and makes it possible to talk about problems in a non-stigmatising way.
- Continuous professional development for all staff.
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to help judge whether individual students might be suffering from a diagnosable mental health problem in accordance with DfE Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Guidance, 2015.
- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and wellbeing activities.
- Working with outside agencies to provide interventions for students with mental health problems (e.g. CAMHS, Educational Psychology, Community Paediatrician).

Early intervention is paramount to success. All interventions and approaches should be recorded on MyConcern as follow up actions.

Supporting staff who are working with students with mental health issues

School acknowledges that staffs who are working closely with distressed students exhibiting mental health problems/issues can themselves be placed under emotional strain. All staff are welcome to approach their line manager or other senior leaders where appropriate. Staff have access to Nurture U on a Friday after school and bookable time with the lead therapist and educational psychologist on Wednesday after school. Staff also have access to the school's well-being subscription app called Health Assured which is there to support the physical and mental health of our staff. Staff can also book in free reflexology as part of our wellbeing offer.

Awards

2024-2027 Wellbeing for Schools Award kitemark

As recognition of our commitment to social and emotional wellbeing, Educate U has been awarded the 2024-2027 Wellbeing for Schools Award kitemark. This award reflects our dedication to creating a nurturing and supportive school environment where all students can flourish academically, socially, and emotionally. We are committed to continually evaluating and improving our practices to ensure that every student at Educate U receives the support they need to reach their full potential.

Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK) Award

Educate U has been recognised through the Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK) Award, acknowledging our commitment to embedding trauma-informed, relational practice

throughout the school. The external assessment in October 2025 highlighted our strong therapeutic ethos, emotionally safe environments and whole-school implementation of the Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect framework. Particular strengths included our use of PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), highly personalised emotional regulation strategies, multidisciplinary therapeutic support and reflective staff practice. This recognition reinforces our commitment to understanding behaviour as communication, recognising the impact of adverse childhood experiences and ensuring that relationships, emotional safety and regulation underpin every aspect of school life.

Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) – Centre of Excellence

Educate U has achieved Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Centre of Excellence status, recognising our commitment to inclusive education and meeting the individual needs of children and young people with SEND and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Our June 2026 external review recommended the continuation of this prestigious status, highlighting the strength of our personalised curriculum, integrated therapeutic provision, collaborative working with families and commitment to ensuring every learner feels safe, understood and valued. The assessment particularly recognised how therapeutic thinking is embedded across education, the importance placed on pupil voice and the school's ability to create a genuine sense of belonging for children who may have previously experienced significant barriers to education. This award reflects our ongoing commitment to removing barriers to learning, promoting emotional wellbeing and enabling every child to develop confidence, independence and positive aspirations for their future.

This Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Wellbeing Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- SEND Policy
- Trauma informed Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Self Harm Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.