

Mental Health Resource Pack for Schools



Contents

How to promote positive mental health in schools	1
Children's mental health	2
Recognising the signs of mental health issues in pupils	4
Promoting positive mental health in schools	5
How to implement a whole-school approach to mental health	7
How to promote staff wellbeing in schools	9
What is teacher wellbeing?	10
What is the current state of wellbeing in schools?	11
The importance of teacher wellbeing	12
Tips and ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools	13
How to write a school mental health policy	18
Why a school mental health policy is essential	19
What to include in a school mental health policy	20
How to implement and maintain your policy	21
School mental health policy example	23
Child mental health quiz	24
Questions	24
Answers	27

How to promote positive mental health in schools

An individual's mental health is just as important as their physical health and ignoring one's mental health can have life long negative effects. Children and young people, just like the adults around them, can struggle with their mental health. Daily stress, world events and raging hormones can become overwhelming and make life incredibly stressful for many young people.

Teachers and those who work with children in a school environment are well positioned to recognise signs of declining mental health, support the children in their care and promote the importance of looking after one's mental health. In this section we will explore how schools can promote positive mental health and provide practical, actionable tips on how to implement a whole-school approach to promoting positive mental health.



How to promote positive mental health in schools

Children's mental health

The mental health of children and young people is often overlooked. Many young people do not feel seen or may struggle to communicate what they are feeling, either because they cannot recognise it themselves or because they simply do not have the language to explain what they are experiencing.

Many adults can be, knowingly or unknowingly, dismissive of children's mental health issues, incorrectly assuming that they are 'too young' to experience mental health struggles such as depression or anxiety. Moreover, adults may also dismiss the severity of a child's struggle. For example, minimising anxiety to occasional worry and pushing a child to take part in something that is actively making them anxious as it 'will be good for them' or because they need to 'learn to get over it.' When this happens children can feel misunderstood or ignored which can further discourage them from talking to people about how they feel.

Not Making the Grade, a report by Mind on how the approach to mental health for young people (11 – 25 year olds) is failing them, notes that many students can feel overwhelmed by the demands of school, exacerbating mental health struggles that may be rooted in issues outside of school. Furthermore, the report found that young people are not getting the help that they need from school and are instead facing punishment, isolation or exclusion for behaviour linked to their mental health struggles, significantly worsening their mental health. The report found that some young people were disciplined after being unable to meet deadlines or complete homework, whilst others found themselves excluded for certain behaviour. However, in most instances, the underlying reason for said behaviour, such as poor mental health, was not addressed.

There are numerous different factors that can impact a young person's mental health. As part of their report, Mind explored the key drivers of mental health problems amongst young people. Understanding the potential causes of mental health problems among young people is vital as it enables schools to offer tailored support that is actually effective.

The report noted the following as significant drivers of mental health problems amongst young people:

- Trauma
- Racism
- School closure and lockdowns
- Pressure for academic achievement
- Poor educational experiences
- Declining access to services
- Social media
- Systemic inequality
- Reduced sleep quality
- Financial insecurity



How to promote positive mental health in schools

Children's mental health (continued)

With these drivers in mind it's clear to see how schools are particularly well positioned to identify struggling students and support them before their mental health deteriorates further. The regularity with which teachers and school staff see young people enables them to identify changes in behaviour which may indicate declining mental health. It has been argued that declining mental health among young people is an increasingly widespread issue that many teachers across the country are noticing. A 2026 survey by the [National Education Union](#) asked teacher members about the state of mental health among their students. It found that:

- **68%** of secondary school teachers regularly saw absenteeism due to student mental ill-health.
- **76%** regularly saw their students experiencing social difficulties.
- **73%** of respondents noted regularly seeing exam anxiety.
- **78%** of secondary school teachers and **45%** of primary school teachers reported seeing students with eating disorders.
- **40%** of respondents noted that their schools did not have counsellors. Surprisingly, **45%** of respondents in special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) also reported that their schools did not have a counsellor.
- Only **20%** of respondents felt that the existing in-school mental health support in their school was sufficient.
- **62%** of secondary school teachers and **44%** of primary school teachers reported occasionally observing self-harm among students.

Additionally, Mind's 2025 report [Care Before Crisis](#), which explored the state of young people's mental health, found that:

- **1 in 5** young people have a probable mental health problem.
- **8%** of all children in England have an active referral to children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS).
- **20.8%** of young women aged 17-19 have an eating disorder.
- Referrals to crisis care teams for under 18s have **more than tripled** each month since 2019.



It cannot be denied that young people across the nation are struggling with their mental health. However, despite the bleak statistics, it is possible to turn the tide and provide targeted and timely support to children and young people.

How to promote positive mental health in schools

Recognising the signs of mental health issues in pupils

New Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance notes that education staff are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify behaviours that suggest a young person may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. The guidance states that all staff should be aware that mental health problems can develop into safeguarding concerns such as self-harm, suicidal ideation or risk of suicide. As such, school staff must be able to recognise potential warning signs that a child is at risk. These signs can include:

- Significant changes in behaviour
- Ongoing difficulty sleeping
- Withdrawing from social situations
- Not wanting to do things they usually like
- Physical signs of self-harm or neglecting themselves

It's important to note that these signs do not automatically indicate that a young person is suicidal or having a mental health crisis. However, they are common signs that someone may be struggling with their mental health and therefore should not be dismissed as they may help to create a larger picture of what a young person is experiencing.

Other signs that a pupil may be struggling with their mental health include:

- Poor attendance or absenteeism
- Sudden mood changes
- Unexplained physical changes, such as weight loss or gain
- Sudden poor academic performance

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to diagnose a mental health problem. However, noticing changes in a child's behaviour and intervening early can make a significant difference to a child and ensure that they receive help in a timely manner. When engaging with a child with suspected mental health difficulties it's important that teachers and school staff exercise active listening and give the necessary space and time for children to express how they feel. Many young people struggle to speak to adults about how they feel out of fear of being dismissed or even reprimanded. Therefore, any discussions with a child about their mental health must be done in an attentive and sensitive manner so as to help children feel safe and confident that they are being taken seriously.

How to promote positive mental health in schools

Promoting positive mental health in schools

A recurring theme throughout Mind's report Not Making the Grade is the lack of support that children and young people received from teachers. **48%** of young people surveyed detailed being punished for behaviour that was a direct result of poor mental health whilst the trauma at the heart of the behaviour was ignored. **27%** of the cohort had been placed in isolation and **10%** had been physically restrained by staff. When mental health crises are met with discipline and punitive measures in schools, young people can feel further distressed and traumatised which can worsen their already poor mental health.

Ways in which schools can promote positive mental health include:

Encouraging social time

Social media is an unavoidable part of modern day life. However, despite the fact that it was first intended to help unite people and encourage more social engagement, it is often the root cause of young people feeling isolated; there is actually very little socialisation at the heart of social media. As such, encouraging students to take the time to interact with one another face-to-face can help them to form stronger relationships and enjoy the benefits of in-person friendships. Scheduling in 30 minutes or even an hour every week where students can be social and focus on something other than the curriculum encourages them to interact with one another and help form strong relationships which they can turn to in times of stress in the future.

Running lunchtime and/or after-school clubs

Lunchtime and after-school clubs provide students with the chance to learn new skills, interact with new students and explore additional interests. The structure of school provides a useful and familiar framework however lunchtime and after-school clubs can run separately from the curriculum, thereby offering students the chance to blow off steam and engage in more relaxing activities. Clubs can also help to create a sense of belonging which can help young people to feel included and part of a community that they know cares about them.

Having an open-door policy

An open-door policy reaffirms to young people that mental health issues are not something to be ashamed about. This in turn can make it easier for them to turn to a teacher rather than suffering in silence. Pupils must know that they can go and talk to their teachers about any issues that they are having. An open-door policy cements this into a school's ethos and affirms that the needs of young people are at the heart of a school's focus.

How to promote positive mental health in schools

Promoting positive mental health in schools (continued)

Actively discussing mental health

Whilst there have been undeniable improvements over the last decade, mental health issues, especially among children and young people, are still somewhat of a taboo. Young people can feel embarrassed to discuss their mental health as they fear backlash from their peers, their family or teachers. When mental health is something that is only discussed negatively or following an extreme incident in the news, it perpetuates the notion that poor mental health is something to be ashamed of and something that is rarely experienced. This is simply not the case and anyone can be impacted by poor mental health at any stage of their life. Actively discussing mental health and the importance of looking after one's mental health can help to shift perspectives on it and encourage young people to be vocal when they are struggling. PSHE and RSHE lessons can be used to discuss how anyone can be impacted by poor mental health. Similarly, charities such as Mind and Rethink could be invited into schools to give talks about their work and the support they can provide.

Organising wellness weeks

Wellness weeks can be beneficial to students and staff alike and can help to reiterate a whole-school approach to positive mental health. Wellness weeks highlight that looking after one's mental health is a continuous process and not something that should be discussed solely once a year. For your wellness week you could:

- **Encourage connections** – Dedicate a week to students engaging with pupils that they don't normally interact with. You could encourage this by asking people to discuss their likes and interests and pairing or grouping pupils based on shared passions.
- **Host a sports day** – Sports days are a great way to create a sense of community. Not only is exercise proven to boost endorphins, but a shared goal can help unite students as they cheer each other on to succeed.
- **Give to others** – Organising charity events also encourages students to come together for a greater goal. Moreover, by selecting fun charity events such as a bake sale or fancy-dress day, you can get pupils excited about giving to others, highlighting how charitable acts can reduce stress and improve emotional wellbeing.
- **Be mindful** – As mentioned it's important to openly discuss mental health with children so that they don't feel ashamed of what they might be struggling with. It is equally important to discuss ways to help one's mental health. Teaching children mindfulness techniques can help to create a calming environment and give young people the tools to regulate their emotions during times of stress.

How to promote positive mental health in schools

How to implement a whole-school approach to mental health

One of the best ways in which schools can support the mental health of young people is by having a whole-school approach to mental health. The Department for Education (DfE) notes that a whole-school approach, when applied consistently and comprehensively, contributes to protecting and promoting young people's mental health and wellbeing. As part of their **guidance** the DfE published 8 principles of a whole-school approach. These are:

- An ethos and environment that promotes respect and values diversity.
- Leadership and management that supports and champions efforts to promote emotional health and wellbeing.
- Staff development to support their own wellbeing and that of pupils and learners.
- Curriculum teaching and learning to promote resilience and support social and emotional learning.
- Enabling student voice to influence decisions.
- Identifying the need for monitoring the impact of interventions.
- Targeted support and appropriate referral.
- Working with parents and carers.

When adopted and implemented consistently, these principles can support children and young people to maintain good mental health. This improves standards in schools and helps pupils to thrive in their education, giving them the necessary tools for a successful life. Embedding the 8 principles of a whole-school approach supports pupils to:

- Attend school
- Develop key life skills, particularly social and emotional skills
- Engage in learning
- Achieve academically
- Have better longer term outcomes, such as future employment

How to promote positive mental health in schools

How to implement a whole-school approach to mental health (continued)

To support the implementation of a whole-school approach to mental health, schools can adopt the strategies listed above. Schools can also consider:

Appointing a mental health lead

This can be a senior member of staff whose role is to promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff. Senior mental health lead training can help staff members to provide caring and timely support to students and staff who may be struggling.

Utilising resources

The DfE has a wide range of resources to help mental health leads in their role. Resources can be used to support attendance or to offer targeted and effective support. Resources can also take the form of posters prominently displayed around the school. Visible posters can help to reaffirm a school's commitment to support mental health and ensure that mental health is spoken about openly.

Investing in training

*Alongside mental health lead training, schools can support a whole-school approach by providing staff with **regular training**. Training from a reputable training provider will give school staff the confidence to recognise signs that a child may be struggling with their mental health and to know what to do to support them.*

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

Teaching and working in schools can be incredibly rewarding, but it also comes with significant responsibilities and pressures. From managing workloads and supporting students to safeguarding duties and adapting to changes in education, school staff face a wide range of challenges every day. In this section, we'll explain what teacher wellbeing is, explore why it matters for individuals, schools and students, look at the current state of wellbeing in UK schools and give some practical ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools.



How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

What is teacher wellbeing?

Teacher wellbeing refers to the physical, mental, emotional and social health of everyone working in a school. It applies to teachers, teaching assistants, learning support assistants, pastoral staff, school office staff, site teams, lunchtime supervisors, senior leaders and anyone else who contributes to the day-to-day running of a school.

Good wellbeing doesn't mean feeling happy or stress-free all the time whilst at school, as everyone experiences challenging periods at work. Instead, wellbeing is about feeling supported, respected and equipped to manage the demands of the role while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

A workplace that supports teacher wellbeing is one where people:

- Feel safe, respected and included.
- Have manageable workloads wherever possible.
- Understand what is expected of them.
- Receive appropriate training and professional development.
- Can access support when they need it.
- Feel confident raising concerns without fear of judgement.
- Have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.
- Feel recognised for their contribution to the school community.

Supporting wellbeing is not solely the responsibility of individual employees. School leaders, governors and academy trusts all have an important role in creating policies, practices and cultures that promote positive wellbeing across the whole school.

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

What is the current state of wellbeing in schools?

Wellbeing remains a significant concern across the education sector. In recent years, schools have continued to experience challenges, including increased student needs, recruitment difficulties, financial pressures and higher workloads. These factors can all affect the wellbeing of teachers and support staff. Recent surveys and reports show that:

- Many teachers report experiencing work-related stress on a regular basis: **78%** of education staff described themselves as stressed and **45%** reported experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety or panic attacks because of their work ([source](#)).
- Teacher retention continues to be a challenge, with workload and wellbeing frequently cited as contributing factors why teachers leave the profession ([source](#)).
- School leaders often report high levels of pressure due to increased accountability, staffing shortages, budget constraints and increasing student needs ([source](#)).
- Education staff are increasingly supporting students with complex mental health, behavioural and safeguarding needs, adding further emotional demands to their roles ([source](#)).

[The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter](#) encourages schools and colleges to place wellbeing at the centre of leadership decisions and highlights the importance of manageable workloads, supportive leadership, professional development and access to appropriate wellbeing support. While many schools have introduced wellbeing initiatives, research suggests that lasting improvements are most successful when wellbeing becomes part of everyday leadership and organisational culture, rather than relying on occasional activities or one-off events.

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

The importance of teacher wellbeing

Supporting staff wellbeing benefits everyone, from individual employees and students to the wider school community. When staff feel well supported, they are more likely to feel motivated, engaged and confident in their roles. This can contribute to improved teamwork, greater job satisfaction and better staff retention.

On the other hand, prolonged stress can affect physical health, mental health, concentration, decision-making and relationships with other colleagues. It may also increase sickness absence and staff turnover, placing additional pressures on the rest of the workforce.

Wellbeing also has an important connection to safeguarding. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) makes clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that all staff should be able to identify concerns, respond appropriately and work with other agencies where necessary. Staff who are experiencing excessive stress, fatigue or burnout may find it more difficult to maintain focus, notice subtle changes in a child's behaviour or confidently act on their concerns.

Similarly, Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance highlights the importance of effective multi-agency working, professional curiosity and information sharing. Staff who feel supported and have manageable workloads are generally better placed to contribute effectively to safeguarding processes and provide consistent support for children and young people.

School leaders also have responsibilities under health and safety legislation to protect their employees' health, including their mental health, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes considering workplace stress, carrying out appropriate risk assessments where required and taking reasonable steps to reduce avoidable pressures.

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

Tips and ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools

The most successful schools take a whole-school approach to supporting staff wellbeing that considers leadership, workload, communication, professional development and workplace culture. Small, consistent changes often have a greater long-term impact than isolated wellbeing initiatives. Here are some ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools:

Create a positive school culture

A supportive culture helps staff feel valued and encourages open communication. Leaders should set the tone for workplace wellbeing through their actions, behaviours and decision-making. Schools can promote a positive culture by:

- *Encouraging respectful and supportive relationships between colleagues.*
- *Recognising and celebrating achievements, both big and small.*
- *Providing opportunities for staff to contribute ideas and feedback.*
- *Ensuring everyone feels included regardless of their role.*
- *Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the school.*
- *Addressing concerns promptly and fairly.*

Manage workload effectively

High workload is consistently identified as one of the biggest contributors to poor wellbeing in education. While some pressures are unavoidable, schools should regularly review working practices to identify unnecessary tasks and reduce avoidable workload. Strategies include:

- *Reviewing marking and feedback policies to ensure they are proportionate.*
- *Avoiding unnecessary meetings and making meetings purposeful.*
- *Using technology where appropriate to reduce administration.*
- *Setting realistic deadlines.*
- *Reviewing data collection processes to remove duplication.*
- *Protecting planning, preparation and assessment time where applicable.*
- *Encouraging staff to take annual leave and breaks where appropriate.*

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

Tips and ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools (continued)

Support good leadership

Leadership has a significant influence on staff wellbeing and employees are more likely to feel supported when leaders communicate openly, listen to concerns and model healthy working practices themselves. Effective leaders should:

- Hold regular one-to-one wellbeing conversations.*
- Be approachable and available when staff need support.*
- Provide constructive feedback alongside recognition.*
- Encourage healthy work-life boundaries.*
- Monitor workload across teams rather than relying on individuals to raise concerns.*
- Make wellbeing a regular agenda item during leadership discussions.*

Encourage open conversations about wellbeing

A culture where staff feel comfortable discussing their wellbeing can help identify concerns before they become more serious. Employees should know who they can speak to if they are struggling and trust that any conversations will be treated sensitively and appropriately. Schools can encourage open communication by:

- Normalising conversations about mental health and wellbeing.*
- Providing confidential opportunities for staff to seek support.*
- Training managers to have supportive wellbeing conversations.*
- Sharing information about internal and external support services.*
- Regularly seeking staff feedback through surveys, meetings or suggestion boxes.*
- Acting on feedback where possible and communicating any changes that have been made.*

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

Tips and ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools (continued)

Provide meaningful professional development

Professional development should help staff feel confident in their roles rather than becoming another source of pressure. Training is most effective when it is relevant, practical and carefully planned throughout the year. When planning staff development:

- Create an annual training programme rather than scheduling sessions at short notice.
- Prioritise training that reflects the school's current risks and priorities.
- Give staff sufficient time to complete mandatory learning.
- Build opportunities for discussion and reflection into training sessions.
- Ensure new starters receive appropriate induction training.
- Review training regularly to identify any gaps or emerging needs.

Avoid compliance fatigue

Schools have a legal responsibility to provide mandatory training in areas such as safeguarding, health and safety and data protection. However, repeatedly asking staff to complete numerous online courses or attend lengthy training sessions within a short period can lead to compliance fatigue. This may reduce engagement and make it harder for staff to retain important information.

Instead of viewing training as a series of tick-box exercises, schools should develop a structured programme that supports learning throughout the year. Good practice includes:

- Spreading mandatory training across the academic year where possible.
- Combining related topics into planned training days.
- Providing refresher training at appropriate intervals, rather than unnecessarily repeating the same content.
- Tailoring training to different staff roles where appropriate.
- Allowing sufficient time for staff to complete training during working hours where possible.
- Reinforcing key learning through discussions, brief updates and practical scenarios.
- Reviewing training feedback to improve future sessions.

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

Tips and ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools (continued)

Promote a healthy work-life balance

While busy periods are inevitable in education, schools should encourage healthy working habits throughout the year. Staff who feel able to switch off outside work are more likely to maintain good wellbeing over the long term. Leaders should also model healthy behaviours themselves as when senior staff demonstrate good work-life balance, employees are more likely to feel able to do the same. Schools can support work-life balance by:

- Encouraging staff to take lunch breaks where possible.
- Discouraging unnecessary emails outside working hours.
- Setting realistic expectations around response times.
- Reviewing expectations for evening and weekend working.
- Encouraging staff to use flexible working arrangements where appropriate.
- Supporting phased returns following long-term absence where needed.

Make wellbeing everyone's responsibility

Although leaders play a key role, creating a positive working environment requires commitment from the whole school community. Every member of staff can contribute to a supportive culture through daily acts of support, as these can have a significant impact on workplace morale and help colleagues feel valued. Staff can help by:

- Checking in with colleagues regularly.
- Offering support during particularly busy periods.
- Sharing ideas and resources.
- Respecting each other's time and workload.
- Challenging behaviours that create unnecessary stress.
- Promoting kindness, inclusion and teamwork.

How to promote staff wellbeing in schools

Tips and ideas for supporting staff wellbeing in schools (continued)

Signpost staff to additional support

Even in schools with a strong wellbeing culture, some staff may need additional support during difficult periods. Schools should ensure employees know what help is available and how to access it. Making support visible and easy to access helps reduce barriers to seeking help early. This may include:

- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).
- Occupational health services.
- Mental health first aiders.
- Trade union support.
- GP services.
- NHS Talking Therapies.
- Charity and wellbeing organisations.
- Flexible working or reasonable workplace adjustments where appropriate.

How to write a school mental health policy

It is essential that schools treat the mental health of their students with the importance that it deserves. Anyone can struggle with their mental health at any stage in their life, however the mental health struggles of young people are often ignored until they reach crisis point. Teachers and school staff are well placed to notice changes in a child's behaviour that may indicate that they are struggling thereby enabling access to early intervention. A whole-school approach to positive mental health can help students to feel seen and confident that their school has their best interests at heart.

A school mental health policy can further support this approach, cementing positive mental health into a school's ethos and signalling to students and parents alike their commitment to supporting all students. In this section we will explain why a school mental health policy is important and provide guidance on how to create one for your setting.



How to write a school mental health policy

Why a school mental health policy is essential

An individual's mental health is just as important as their physical help. However, despite advancements in recent years, mental health remains a somewhat taboo subject, forcing some to hide their struggles and suffer in silence. Young people, just like adults, can struggle with their mental health. Pressures from both inside and outside of school can make life overwhelming for many students, damaging their emotional wellbeing and impacting their academic achievements. Promoting positive mental health in schools is therefore essential to creating and maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment. A school mental health policy can play an integral role in the promotion of positive mental health as it highlights a school's dedication to supporting all students.

It is not a legal requirement for a school to have a standalone mental health policy, however, new Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) statutory guidance states that staff should recognise that mental health problems can develop into safeguarding concerns. As part of a school's responsibility to keep children safe, staff should therefore know how to recognise changes in behaviour that suggest that a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. Teachers and school staff are well placed to notice any warning signs that a child is struggling with their mental health. A school mental health policy recognises this position and acknowledges the importance of noticing these signs to keep children safe, especially as they could indicate wider safeguarding concerns.

The government's Plan for Change seeks to break down barriers to opportunity. One of the ways in which it aims to do this is by improving support for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in schools. This is because good mental health and wellbeing improves standards and helps students to achieve and thrive in their education. Good mental health enables students to:

- Attend school
- Develop key life skills, particularly social and emotional skills
- Engage in learning
- Achieve academically
- Have better longer term outcomes, such as future employment

The Department for Education (DfE) encourages embedding an evidence-based, holistic, whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing to help students achieve these goals. A school mental health policy clearly shows a school's approach to mental health whilst ensuring that pupils receive continually high standards of support. Moreover, it provides a clear framework for how a school will approach mental health, thereby supporting robust safeguarding measures.

How to write a school mental health policy

What to include in a school mental health policy

A school mental health policy should detail the school's approach to mental health. It should outline how a school will increase understanding and awareness of mental health issues and provide guidance to staff, students and parents on how the school will support those struggling with their mental health. A comprehensive mental health policy can serve as a clear indicator to students that they will be able to get the help that they need in times of crisis and that their concerns will be listened to.

You may find that other policies, such as safeguarding or anti-bullying policies, already allude to your school's approach to mental health. You may therefore question why a separate policy is necessary. However, a separate standalone mental health policy reaffirms a school's commitment to supporting their student's mental health and helps to ensure that there are no gaps in the promotion of positive mental health. The DfE notes that schools should have clear systems and processes in place for early intervention and identification. A school mental health policy can succinctly collate any policies that may relate to mental health in one central place, ensuring staff and students can easily understand the systems and processes that they need to follow.

A school mental health policy, as with any policy, must be tailored to suit the needs of your individual school. Having a policy that does not match your environment can quickly render it redundant and hinder any support that can be offered. As such, the information provided below should be used as a guide only and must be adapted for your setting. Below you will find a skeletal example of what could be included in a school mental health policy. You can read content suggestions for each section in more detail in the example policy later in the pack.

Your school mental health policy could include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Policy statement | • Managing disclosures |
| • The policy scope | • Confidentiality |
| • The policy aims | • Whole-school approach |
| • Key staff members | • Working with parents |
| • Teaching about mental health | • Working with other agencies and partners |
| • Support at school and in the local community | • Supporting peers |
| • Signposting | • Training |
| • Identifying needs and warning signs | • Policy review |



You may choose to add or remove sections depending on the needs of your school. Whatever you choose to do, you must ensure that your policy is easily accessible and written in a way that everyone can clearly understand.

How to write a school mental health policy

How to implement and maintain your policy

It can be helpful to see a school mental health policy as a living document. This ensures that its efficacy is constantly being monitored and avenues remain open for feedback and adaptation. This can also support the policy's implementation which, as with all policies, should not simply be written down and forgotten about. The implementation of a successful and effective school mental health policy goes beyond printing a few pages of A4 and handing them out to parents. It must be embedded into a school's culture, modeled by staff and reflect the needs of students.

To support the implementation of a school mental health policy schools can:

Involve students

When young people feel listened to they are more likely to trust the adults around them. This can encourage them to speak to a teacher or member of school staff when they are struggling before it reaches crisis point. Involving students in the development of a school mental health policy helps to ensure that pupil voice is a core part of the policy. Involving students does not mean allowing them to write the policy, however, you may choose to gather small groups of students and ask them for their views on how the school could support their mental health. This insight could form a fundamental part of the policy and, as it would accurately reflect the needs of students, help it to feel more authentic. Alternatively, when reviewing a school mental health policy, you may ask students what they want to change or what they think works well. This keeps the policy as a living document that authentically reflects the lived experiences of the students.

Encourage open communication

A school mental health policy signals that mental health is not something that should be spoken about in hushed whispers in the corridor or as harmful rumours to spread about other students. Openly discussing mental health and how anyone's mental health can be impacted at any time, helps to normalise it which in turn stops it being a taboo subject. This reaffirms a school's ethos and dedication to supporting students in times of crisis. Open communication also includes being honest. This could include sharing elements of the policy that might need updating or, where appropriate and without revealing personal details, perhaps sharing how the mental health policy has helped others in the past. This highlights a school's dedication to keeping their mental health policy as a living document that can be adapted as needed to ensure that it consistently supports students. It also highlights how a school can and will follow through on their commitments to their pupils.

How to write a school mental health policy

How to implement and maintain your policy (continued)

Training

Ensuring that staff are well trained emboldens them to offer holistic support to students. Comprehensive training gives staff the confidence to recognise signs of poor mental health and act accordingly. Training works in tandem with a school mental health policy as it ensures that school staff have a base level of understanding that can help to identify mental health concerns.

Use visual aids

Aspects of a mental health policy could be turned into posters that are prominently displayed around school. Posters may cover signs that someone is struggling with their mental health, guidance and the details of who to turn to in times of mental overwhelm, or tips on what someone can do to maintain positive mental health. Prominently displaying these posters can provide students with guidance whenever they need whilst keeping the policy as an active thought in their minds.

To ensure that your school mental health policy is a living document it must be reviewed regularly. The policy cannot be something that is written once and then reprinted year after year even if it is not fit for purpose. Encourage teachers to share their opinions and where appropriate, students too. Monitoring the efficacy of a mental health policy is integral to making sure that it actually works and reflects the needs of the people it is intended to support. It may be beneficial to review your policy at the end of each academic year, taking the time to look back on instances when the policy needed to be used and assessing whether it was effective and timely.



Below you will find an example of a school mental health policy. The example includes a detailed insight into the example sections listed above which can be tailored to suit the needs of your school setting.

It is vital that you adapt the policy to meet your individual needs. Therefore, you should not use the policy as a template, but as a starting point for your own tailored policy.

School Mental Health Policy example

[Download the School Mental Health policy here](#)

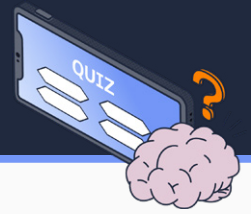
EXAMPLE USE ONLY

School mental health policy



0333 006 7000

www.highspeedtraining.co.uk



1. Children are too young to experience severe mental health problems.

- ☐ A True
- ☐ B False

2. How long did children in England have to wait on average for treatment in 2024-25?

- ☐ A 94 days
- ☐ B 72 days
- ☐ C 128 days
- ☐ D 85 days

3. Certain factors can make a child or young person more likely to experience mental health problems. Which of the following are potential factors that could impact a child's mental health? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ A Being an only child
- ☐ B Having a parent with mental health problems
- ☐ C Experiencing bullying
- ☐ D Taking on adult responsibilities

4. Self-harm has become increasingly prevalent amongst young people. Which of the following are forms of self-harm? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ A Over-exercising
- ☐ B Misusing alcohol and/or drugs
- ☐ C Unsafe sex
- ☐ D Restrictive eating



5. Schools in the UK are legally required to have a standalone mental health policy to support students.

- ☐ A True
- ☐ B False

6. School staff are well positioned to notice changes in a child's behaviour that may indicate that they are struggling with their mental health. Which of the following are signs that a pupil may be struggling? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ A Poor attendance or absenteeism
- ☐ B Developing new interests
- ☐ C Withdrawing from social situations
- ☐ D Changes in physical appearance

7. Children and young people who are struggling with their mental health may not disclose this to the adults around them. Why may some children struggle to talk about their mental health? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ A They do not have the language to communicate how they feel
- ☐ B They are making up how they feel
- ☐ C They are worried they won't be believed
- ☐ D They are worried they will get in trouble

8. Which of the following are signs of anxiety in children and young people? (Select all that apply).

- ☐ A Difficulty sleeping
- ☐ B Socialising with new friends
- ☐ C Frequent stomach aches or headaches
- ☐ D Developing new hobbies and interests



9. Children and young people can feel anxious at times just like the adults around them. This can be reflective of a situation, such as upcoming exams, or because of common childhood fears, such as a fear of the dark. When does anxiety become a problem for children?

- ☐ A When it happens infrequently
- ☐ B When it starts to impact their everyday life
- ☐ C When it bothers siblings and/or other family members
- ☐ D When they are shy about meeting new people

10. Self-care can help children to reduce stress and build emotional intelligence. What are some other benefits of self-care for a child's mental health? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ A It teaches children healthy coping strategies
- ☐ B It builds social connections outside of the classroom
- ☐ C It increases emotional intelligence
- ☐ D It develops independence



Answers

1. **B**

No one is 'too young' to experience mental health problems and anyone can struggle with their mental health at any age. A child's youth does not protect them from mental health issues nor does it mean that their struggles are less severe.

2. **C**

Children in England waited on average 128 days for treatment with many children waiting for more than two years for support. The longer children wait for support, the higher the risk they will become more unwell making them more likely to need support from crisis and A&E services.

3. **B C D**

Having a parent with mental health problems can result in an unstable environment in which a child does not feel safe or secure, especially if these mental health problems are unsupported. Moreover, evidence suggests that some mental health problems, such as schizophrenia, run in families, meaning that children can 'inherit' the same mental health problems as their parents. Experiencing bullying can also make a child more susceptible to mental health issues due to prolonged stress, emotional distress and feelings of sadness and isolation. Finally, a child having to take on adult responsibilities can exacerbate mental health struggles as they are forced to grow up before their time and not given the space to process their emotions or experience life in an age-appropriate way.

4. **A B C D**

All of the listed options are examples of self-harm. People can harm themselves in many different ways and this can make it hard to identify. Whilst there can be a link between self-harm and suicidal ideation, most people who hurt themselves don't want to die. A child or young person may self-harm to deal with stress, because they are overwhelmed by difficult feelings or in order to feel a sense of control.

5. **B**

It is not a legal requirement for schools to have a standalone mental health policy. However, new KCSIE guidance states that staff must recognise mental health problems and the fact that they can develop into safeguarding concerns. A school mental health policy acknowledges the importance of this responsibility and signals to parents and children that they are dedicated to keeping children safe.



Answers

6. ☐ A ☐ C ☐ D

These signs do not automatically indicate that a young person is struggling with their mental health. However, changes in physical appearance, a sudden lack of interest in school and isolation are all common signs that an individual may be struggling with their mental health. As such, they should not be dismissed as they may help to paint a larger picture of what a young person is experiencing.

7. ☐ A ☐ C ☐ D

Young people may not have the language to express how they feel. This can lead to frustration at not being understood or being able to accurately convey the severity of what they are feeling. Moreover, many children worry that there will be repercussions to them sharing their struggles and that they either won't be believed or they will get in trouble. This may be due to negative experiences in the past or how mental health has been discussed around them in the past. A child's silence should not be taken as 'proof' that they are not struggling with their mental health. As such, creating an environment where mental health and wellbeing is promoted and discussed openly can help children feel more comfortable to speak up about their issues and worries.

8. ☐ A ☐ C

Anxiety in children and young people can manifest as physical symptoms, especially if they do not have the language to verbally communicate what they are feeling. It's important to note that a child may not recognise these as signs of anxiety themselves. As such, potential symptoms of anxiety should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a larger picture which can shed light on what a child may be experiencing.

9. ☐ B

Anxiety is an unavoidable part of life, however when it begins to impact a child's daily life it becomes a problem. When a child's anxiety is strong, gets worse or does not go away it impacts their ability to do daily activities. This in turn stops them from doing things they enjoy which can lead to isolation, low self-esteem and poor confidence.

10. ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Self-care is the intentional practice of taking time to do things that improve your overall wellbeing. Encouraging a child to engage in self-care can help to reduce stress and anxiety and improve their overall quality of life.

