

# Mental Health Guidance

Academic Year 2022-2025



*“Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children by developing whole school approaches tailored to their particular needs, as well as considering the needs of individual pupils.”*  
*Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, November 2018)*

## **Overview**

All schools within the Connect Education Trust will do all they can to promote the health and wellbeing, including mental health, of all who learn and work within the Trust. Promoting a healthy lifestyle for all will be a priority. There a number of policies, strategies and procedures that will be used to promote the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff. These include:

- SEND
- Behaviour
- Attendance
- PSHCE/Healthy Eating
- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Physical Education
- SMSC

## **Objectives**

- To promote life skills across the curriculum so that pupils will learn about mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing.
- To ensure the good health, wellbeing and mental health of all who work in schools within the Trust is promoted effectively.
- To ensure that the Trust has a wide range of appropriate policies and strategies in place to ensure the good health, wellbeing and mental health of all and that they underpin everything that we do.

## **Strategies**

- We will appropriately promote the health, wellbeing and mental health of pupils across the subjects of the curriculum taking account of their age and stage.
- Staff will help pupils to acquire the relevant knowledge and understanding of the human body and how it works and of the social and emotional factors that influence health.
- To have a ‘designated leader’ and Trustee/LEC member for mental health with responsibility for the oversight of this guidance and strategy for ensuring the mental wellbeing of all in this school.
- All staff will encourage pupils to make informed choices and take appropriate decisions to help ensure that they understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle that also promotes good mental health.
- We will foster links between the Trust, school, home and community and appropriate outside agencies so that all are involved in a collective responsibility for promoting good health and good mental health.
- We will pay attention to the six areas of health and wellbeing across the curriculum, these will include mental, emotional, social and physical and spiritual wellbeing; planning for choices and changes; physical education and physical activity and sport; food and healthy eating; the dangers of substance misuse and relationships and parenthood.
- We will use the staff wellbeing guidance and strategy to promote the health and wellbeing, including the mental health of pupils, staff and all who work within the Trust.
- We will ensure that the curriculum, home learning, testing and assessment and teaching and learning strategies take account of pupils’ wellbeing and mental health.
- We will use the stress guidance to ensure that the health and wellbeing, including mental health of staff, is a priority.
- We will provide safe and healthy working conditions for all who work for the Connect Education Trust.

## Outcomes

The Connect Education Trust is committed to promoting and maintaining the good health and wellbeing, and mental health, of everyone here and we will work together with parents and the local community and appropriate outside agencies to enable pupils to make healthy, informed choices and to promote the health, mental health and wellbeing of all.

## Key Points and Principles

- At the Connect Education Trust we recognise that we have a central role to play in enabling our pupils to be resilient, and to support good mental health and wellbeing.
- Education about relationships, sex and health are important vehicles through which we can teach pupils about mental health and wellbeing.
- A consistent whole school and Trust approach is essential to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- School staff cannot act as mental health experts and must not try and diagnose conditions. However, there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems.
- As set out in chapter 6 of the statutory SEND 0-25 years Code of Practice 2015, schools need to be alert to how mental health problems can underpin behaviour issues in order to support pupils effectively. Staff also need to be aware of the duties under the Equality Act 2010, recognising that some mental health issues will meet the definition of disability.
- When staff suspect a pupil may have a mental health problem, they must use the graduated response process (assess-plan-do-review) to put appropriate support in place. There are tools in school to support with this, such as the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Boxall Profile, which can support in this process.
- It is important that staff have an understanding of the local services available. This may include the School Nurse, as well as national organisations. The school SENDCO, or other staff member, is the school's Designated Lead for Mental Health and will ensure that the list of local services available remains up to date.

## Connect Education Trust responsibilities in relation to Mental Health

“All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils”

P6 Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, November 2018)

At the Connect Education Trust we know that early intervention is crucial in supporting pupils. The school role in summary is:

<b>Prevention</b>	At the Connect Education Trust we have a safe and calm environment for all. Pupils are taught about mental health and wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this through school teaching and ethos.
<b>Identification</b>	Recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible.
<b>Early Support</b>	Helping pupils to assess the evidence based on early support and interventions.
<b>Access to Specialist Support</b>	Working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	If staff have a mental health concern that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action must be taken, in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## Creating a whole culture within the Connect Education Trust and whole school culture

The health and wellbeing of pupils and staff is promoted through the day to day running of the Trust, including through leadership practice, policies, values and attitudes, together with the social and physical environment.

In addition to this, the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff is further promoted through:

- **Teaching** using the curriculum to develop pupil's knowledge about health and wellbeing.
- **Partnerships with families and the community.** Proactive engagement with families, outside agencies and the wider community to promote consistent support.
- **Calm, dignity and structure** encompass every space and activity at the Trust.

At the Connect Education Trust we emphasise the importance of promoting positive mental wellbeing through:

- Teaching through PSHCE, including Sex and Relationships Education.
- Signpost to a school counsellor.
- Linking with specialist projects, such as the Healthy Minds #BeYou Project, the Fortalice Healthy Relationships Programme and the Positive Mindset Programme by the Believe and Succeed Academy.
- Positive classroom management in line with the school's behaviour policy, using reasonable adjustments for identified children, where relevant.
- Social skills interventions.
- Working with parents and carers to promote positive wellbeing at home.

At the Connect Education Trust there is a mentally healthy environment where pupils:

- Have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging (e.g. Circle Time).
- Have opportunities to participate in decision making (e.g. School Parliament).
- Have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements (e.g. Good News Assembly).
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed (e.g. extra-curricular clubs, significant talents register).
- Have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others. (e.g. residential, school trips).
- Have opportunities to reflect (e.g. Circle Time; Assembly).
- Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs (e.g. TA support in class).
- Are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours and interactions at all times.
- Have a right to an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well cared for.

At the Connect Education Trust there is a mentally healthy environment where staff:

- Have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way.
- Have a range of systems in place to support mental wellbeing e.g. performance management, briefings, training.
- Have recognition of their work-life balance.
- Feel valued and have opportunities in the decision making processes.
- Success is recognised and celebrated.
- Are provided with opportunities for CPD both personally and professionally.
- Can access support and guidance at times of emotional need in both the short and long term, provided by Occupational Health.

At the Connect Education Trust there is a mentally healthy environment where parents and carers:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people’s mental health.
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with the school and agencies.
- Are provided with opportunities to ask for help when needed and signposted to appropriate agencies for support.
- Are clear about their role, expectations and responsibilities in working in partnership with the school (e.g. home school agreement shared annually, Parents Meetings).
- Opinions are sought, valued and responded to (e.g. Questionnaires).
- Strengths and difficulties are recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately.

### **Understanding the link between mental health and behaviour**

“Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual recognises his or her own potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community.” (World Health Organisation, August 2014)

### **Mental Health problems in children**

At the Connect Education Trust we recognise that short term stress and worry is a normal part of life and many issues can be experienced as mild or transitory challenges for some pupils and their families. Others will experience more serious and longer lasting effects. The same experience can have different effects on different children and young people depending on other factors in their life. For example, it is normal for pupils to feel nervous or under stress around exam times, but other factors can make such stress part of an enduring and persistent mental health problem for some pupils. When a problem is particularly severe or persistent over time, or when a number of these difficulties are experienced at the same time, children are often described as experiencing mental health problems.

Where pupils experience a range of emotional and behavioural problems that are outside the normal range for their age, they might be described as experiencing mental health problems or disorders. Mental health professionals have classified these as:

- Emotional disorders, for example phobias, anxiety states and depression.
- Conduct disorders, for example stealing, defiance, fire-setting, aggression and anti-social behaviour.
- Hyperkinetic disorders, for example disturbance of activity and attention.
- Developmental disorders, for example delay in acquiring certain skills such as speech, social ability or bladder control, primarily affecting children with autism and those with pervasive developmental disorders.
- Attachment disorders, for example children who are markedly distressed or socially impaired as a result of an extremely abnormal pattern of attachment to parents or major care givers.
- Trauma disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of traumatic experiences or persistent periods of abuse and neglect.
- Other mental health problems including eating disorders, habit disorders, somatic disorders; and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and manic depressive disorder.

At the Connect Education Trust we understand that **only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem.**

Connect Education Trust staff may instead observe pupils day to day and could identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. This may include withdrawn pupils whose needs may be otherwise unrecognised.

**Risk and protective factors**

We recognise that certain individuals and groups are more at risk of developing mental health problems than others. These risks can relate to the child themselves, to their family or to their community or life events. In order to promote positive mental health, it is important that schools have an understanding of the protective factors that can enable pupils to be resilient when they encounter problems and challenges.

Risk and protective factors that are believed to be associated with mental health outcomes:

In the Child	
Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic influences</li> <li>• Low IQ and learning disabilities</li> <li>• Specific development delay or neuro- diversity</li> <li>• Communication difficulties</li> <li>• Difficult temperament</li> <li>• Physical illness</li> <li>• Academic failure</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure attachment experience</li> <li>• Outgoing temperament as an infant</li> <li>• Good communication skills, sociability</li> <li>• Being a planner and having a belief in control</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• A positive attitude</li> <li>• Experiences of success and achievement</li> <li>• Faith or spirituality</li> <li>• Capacity to reflect</li> </ul>

In the Family	
Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall parental conflict including domestic violence</li> <li>• Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted)</li> <li>• Inconsistent or unclear discipline</li> <li>• Hostile and rejecting relationships</li> <li>• Failure to adapt to a child’s changing needs</li> <li>• Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect</li> <li>• Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder</li> <li>• Death and loss – including loss of friendship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult)</li> <li>• Affection</li> <li>• Clear, consistent discipline</li> <li>• Support for education</li> <li>• Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord</li> </ul>

In the School	
Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying including online (cyber)</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships</li> <li>• Deviant peer influences</li> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Peer on peer abuse</li> <li>• Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear policies on behaviour and bullying</li> <li>• Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct)</li> <li>• 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems</li> <li>• A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health</li> <li>• Good pupil to teacher/school staff relationships</li> <li>• Positive classroom management</li> <li>• A sense of belonging</li> <li>• Positive peer influences</li> <li>• Positive friendships</li> <li>• Effective Safeguarding and Child Protection policies</li> <li>• An effective early help process</li> <li>• Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working</li> <li>• Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively</li> </ul>

In the Community	
Risk Factors	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic disadvantage</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation</li> <li>• Other significant life events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider supportive network</li> <li>• Good housing</li> <li>• High standard of living</li> <li>• High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying</li> <li>• Opportunities for valued social roles</li> <li>• Range of sport/leisure activities</li> </ul>

The balance between risk and protective factors is most likely to be disrupted when difficult events happen in pupils' lives, including:

- **Loss or separation** – resulting from death, parental separation, divorce, hospitalisation, loss of friendships (especially in adolescence), family conflict or breakdown that results in the child having to live elsewhere, being taken into care or adopted, deployment of parents in armed forces families;
- **Life changes** – such as the birth of a sibling, moving house or changing schools or during transition from primary to secondary school;
- **Traumatic experiences** such as abuse, neglect, domestic violence, bullying, violence, accidents or injuries;
- **Other traumatic incidents** such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack. Some groups could be susceptible to such incidents, even if not directly affected. As such, school staff are made aware of armed forces families, who may have parents who are deployed in areas of terrorist activity and are surrounded by issues in the media.

### **Children in Need, looked-after and previously looked after children**

At the Connect Education Trust we understand that where children and young people have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is therefore key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, and their high prevalence of special educational needs and mental health needs, can impact on their behaviour and education. This will be taken into account when creating behaviour plans, learning plans or adjustment plans for these children. In some cases it may also be necessary to create an individual healthcare plan. Strategies to support these children will also be shared with all adults who regularly work with them, in order to ensure consistency of approach.

Where a pupil is being supported through Local Authority Children's Social Care, their allocated social worker is a source of appropriately-shared information about wider developmental needs, child protection concerns, and parental, familial and contextual circumstances. Effective multi-agency working between schools and social care will help to inform a school's assessment of pupil's educational and mental health needs, as well as enabling a prompt response to any safeguarding concerns. This will be co-ordinated by the school's DSL and Deputy DSLs.

Each school will have a designated teacher. Both the designated teacher and Local Authority Virtual School Head are also sources of advice and expertise on looked after and previously looked after children (LAC and Post-LAC). Where a member of staff has concerns about a looked-after child's behaviour, the designated teacher and relevant AVSH should be informed at the earliest opportunity so they can help decide how to support the pupil to improve their behaviour.

Where a member of staff has concerns about the behaviour of a previously looked-after child, advice will be sought from the school's designated teacher in conjunction with the SENDCO and discussions held with parents. If this is deemed by all parties to be insufficient, then the child's parents or the school's designated teacher, following discussions with the pupil's parents, may seek the advice of the AVSH on strategies to support the pupil.

### **Mental health and special educational needs**

At the Connect Education Trust we understand that where children and young people have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is therefore key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, and their high prevalence of special educational needs and mental health needs, can impact on their behaviour and education. This will be taken into account when creating behaviour plans, learning plans or adjustment plans for these children. In some cases it may also be necessary to create an individual healthcare plan. Strategies to support these children will also be shared with all adults who regularly work with them, in order to ensure consistency of approach.

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The school's designated teacher, Amy Fry, and Local Authority Virtual School Head are also sources of advice and expertise on looked after and previously looked after children (LAC and Post-LAC). Where a member of staff has concerns about a looked-after child's behaviour, the designated teacher and relevant AVSH should be informed at the earliest opportunity so they can help decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour.



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