



R.E.A.L. Education Limited

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

**(R.E.A.L. Education Ltd.)
(R.E.A.L. Independent Schools, Hinckley)
(R.E.A.L. Independent Schools, Mansfield)**

Last reviewed 18/07/2024



1. Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.

(World Health Organisation, Feb 2022)

At R.E.A.L, we are committed to supporting and promoting positive mental health and the well-being of every member of our community, including parents and carers. We take both a universal, whole school approach and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable learners and their families to ensure this is met.

We are a Trauma informed organisation, recognising the prevalence and multi-layered impact of trauma and adversity at an individual, family, societal and organisational level; as well as the crucial parallel processes which can occur within & between these systems. We support our learners who have experienced trauma or mental ill health, whose behaviour, as a result often presents a barrier to learning. We hold a holistic, relational, integrated perspective which allows us to be more reflective and connected with all.

We are person-centred, putting relationships at the very heart of what we do. We have a supportive and caring ethos, where each individual and contribution is valued. **We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play.**

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. By curating and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policy and procedures we promote a safe and stable environment for learners affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

2. Scope

This document describes R.E.A.L's approach to assessing and promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all members of staff and governors.

This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding Policy and Health and Safety Policy where a learner's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) where a learner has an identified special educational need or is on the child protection register. Additionally, if a learner has an identified Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) this should also be read in conjunction with this policy.

The Behaviour, Anti Bullying, PSHE and SMSC policies should also be read alongside this document to provide a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to mental health.



We follow DfE guidance as outlined in the [Mental Health and Behaviour Advice for Schools](#) document.

Who is this policy for?

This policy is intended for all staff, learners and parents / carers linked to R.E.A.L. Although, we are aware that learners who are not on R.E.A.L's school role will adhere to their own school's policies. R.E.A.L's supportive and caring ethos, however, is spread amongst all. It is also recognised that the Enhanced Support Programme may not be available to those not on R.E.A.L's school roll.

This Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and learners
- To raise awareness as to how the whole school community can look after their own mental health and wellbeing and that of others
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues and help de-stigmatise mental health
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to learners suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all members of staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of learners, R.E.A.L staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Head of Schools, Head of Safeguarding and Standards, Head of Health, Safety and Environment, Head of Behaviour and Attitudes, Head of Personal Development , Link Governor for Safeguarding and Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, R.E.A.L counsellor and PSHE Lead.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a young person should speak to the Learning Manager in the first instance. If there is a fear that the young person is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to a designated safeguarding lead or to the head of schools. If the young person presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.



What is meant by a 'mental health difficulty'?

The term 'mental health' describes a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. A mental health difficulty is one in which a person is distracted or unable to engage with ordinary life due to upsetting, disturbing thoughts and/or feelings. These problems may distort or negatively impact a person's view of the world and produce a variety of symptoms and behaviour likely to cause distress and concern.

Legal Considerations

Under The Equality Act (2010) a person with a mental health difficulty is covered if their condition leads to an adverse impact on their ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities. This will include learners with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, self-harm and disordered eating.

The Act also covers those who have had a mental illness or difficulty in the past, even if they have recovered, and those whose condition meets the definition but is successfully controlled by treatment (for example psychiatric medication such as antidepressants) or therapy.

Under The Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against young people with a diagnosed mental health condition, and 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made to ensure they can access education. The general principle of 'reasonable adjustments' is that wherever possible, schools should make practical adjustments to enable a learner to continue their education. Mental health problems are often variable and learners may only need adjustments for a limited period of time whilst they receive treatment or until they are better able to function.

Under the Data Protection Act (DPA), all information regarding a young person with mental health difficulties is regarded as sensitive and personal information. Any and all information about the young person's mental health is shared on a 'need to know' basis, and is aligned with defined procedures on sharing of information about the young person.

Duty of Care - All staff need to be aware of the concept of the 'Duty of Care'. This is a legal obligation which requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all our young people, staff and visitors. If a school knows (or should know) that a young person is experiencing mental health difficulties, the young person should be advised to seek appropriate help and reasonable measures to support them need to be in place. This is particularly important in regard to passing on personal information where mental health difficulties occur.



Strategies

1. We will appropriately promote the health, wellbeing and mental health of learners across the subjects of the curriculum being delivered to each individual, taking account of their age and stage.
2. Staff will help learners 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.
3. To have a 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead' and Link Governor for mental health and wellbeing, with responsibility for the oversight of this policy and strategy for ensuring the mental well-being of all.
4. All staff will encourage learners 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.
5. We will foster links between 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.
6. 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.
7. We will promote universal health and well-being, including the positive mental health of learners and all staff.
8. We will ensure that the curriculum, testing and assessment and teaching and learning strategies take account of the learner's well-being and mental health.
9. We will ensure that the health and well-being including mental health of staff is a priority.
10. We will provide safe and healthy working conditions for all at R.E.A.L.

3. R.E.A.L's responsibility in relation to Mental Health

We understand that early intervention is crucial in supporting learners. R.E.A.Ls role in summary is:

Prevention	R.E.A.L ensures that all sites have a safe and calm environment for all learners, staff and visitors. Learners are taught about Mental Health and Wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this through
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	R.E.A.L's ethos
Identification	Recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible, using the internal referral process. (Enhanced Support Programme)
Early Support	Helping learners access evidence based early support and interventions
Access to Specialist Support	Work effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment
Safeguarding	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-School approach and culture at R.E.A.L

The health and wellbeing of learners and staff is promoted through the day to day running of the sites, including through leadership practice, R.E.A.L's policies, values and attitudes, together with the social and physical environments.

In addition, the health and wellbeing of learners and staff is further promoted through:

Teaching	Using the curriculum to develop learner'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

At R.E.A.L we emphasise the importance of promoting positive mental wellbeing through:

- Teaching through PSHE, including sex and relationship education
- Access to R.E.A.Ls counselling service
- Positive management of learning environments, in line with R.E.A.L's Behaviour Policy, using reasonable adjustments for identified learners, where relevant
- Social Skills support
- Working with parents and carers to promote positive wellbeing at home

At R.E.A.L there is a mentally healthy environment where **learners:**

- 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
- 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 R.E.A.L 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 well-being 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

At R.E.A.L there is a mentally healthy environment where **parents and carers**:

- Are recognised for their significant contribution to their child and young person's mental health
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with R.E.A.L and agencies
- Are provided with opportunities to ask for help when needed and signposted to appropriate agencies for support
- Feel confident to talk to R.E.A.L about things that may be of concern, without judgement, stigma or bias, and with the interest of the young person held at the centre of all discussions and agreed actions
- Strengths and difficulties are recognised, acknowledged and challenged appropriately

4. Identifying learners with possible Mental Health Difficulties

If a member of staff is concerned about a learner and suspect that mental health difficulties may be present, they will raise this with the Learning Manager. This will then be highlighted through a submission form via the internal referral process (Enhanced Support Programme). A learner may also be identified via a Safeguarding referral or a Significant Incident Form (SIRF) referral. This will then determine the relevant process to help further identify and support needs. During this period,



the parents/ carers and learners are involved and encouraged to give their views and suggestions. They will be supported through the graduated response process:

- An assessment to establish a clear analysis of the learner's needs;
- A plan to set out how the learner will be supported;
- Action to provide that support;
- Regular reviews to assess the effectiveness of the provision and lead to changes where necessary

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead will use evidence to determine if a learner can be supported at R.E.A.L through reasonable adjustments and a learning plan. Risk management is part of the daily safeguarding responsibility of R.E.A.L. If it is deemed that more help is required e.g. from an external agency, then the family will be supported through other professionals involved as needed.

Warning Signs

Learners who are showing signs of mental distress do not always express problems directly or ask for help, even where there are clear signs that they are having difficulties and could be due to a number of reasons. Learners may still feel stigma around mental health problems, or may be concerned about the consequences of telling someone. They may be unaware that they have a problem, or be aware but feel that they can cope with it on their own.

Adolescence can particularly be a difficult developmental time and this period of change can result in gradual onset of mental illness. It is important that warning signs are recognised and an appropriate, supportive response is put in place as soon as possible. R.E.A.L staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a learner is experiencing increased mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to the Learning Manager of the young person. This may result in completion of a Safeguarding Form, as directed by the Learning Manager.

Possible warning signs may include, but not exclusive:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends and family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing - e.g. long sleeves in warm weather



- Secretive behaviour
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Mental Health Emergencies or Crisis'

A Mental Health Emergency or Crisis is defined as:

'A mental health crisis often means that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. You may feel great emotional distress or anxiety, cannot cope with day-to-day life or work, think about suicide or self-harm, or experience hallucinations and hearing voices.' NHS, 2019.

There may be instances where a learner's behaviour and mental state are concerning and may lead to immediate danger through harm to themselves or others. The following situation or symptoms classify as a mental health emergency:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal ideation
- Hearing voice
- Psychosis: Experiencing hallucinations and/or delusions
- Extreme emotional distress

If a learner presents with any of the above problems, relevant staff will go through the normal safeguarding procedure and contact a Designated Safeguarding Lead, Head of Schools or Head of Safeguarding and Standards to ensure the learner, fellow peers, and staff members are safe. If the learner requires being sent home or is advised to go to A&E, this will be directed by the Head of Schools or the Head of Safeguarding and Standards.

Mental health crises or emergencies are often not spontaneous and the learner may have been experiencing symptoms for a length of time. Therefore, it is essential that a learner's mental health concerns are communicated to the Learning Manager of the young person to ensure R.E.A.L is focusing on preventative strategies, and is carefully monitoring and supporting vulnerable students.

5. Internal Support

Referrals

Learners requiring internal support can be highlighted and referred for support via the internal referral process (Enhanced Support Programme) form by the Learning Manager of the young person or the Provision Manager. In some cases, the learner may self-refer to the Mental Health Lead. Parents and carers will be contacted in this event.



Where a referral to Single Point of Access (SPA) / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Learning Manager of the young person, with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead informing, offering advice, guidance and consultancy where appropriate. Building sustainable long term relationships with local services is part of R.E.A.L's approach.

Internal Interventions

The following are examples of interventions currently used internally with learners who are experiencing mental health difficulties:

- Access to R.E.A.L's Counselling Service (limited number, referral only)
- One-to-one intervention with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead
- Group work
- Reduced timetable
- Bespoke work delivered via timetabled staff - guided by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead

External Support and Signposting

Learners experiencing mental health difficulties are often best supported with support from both in and outside of education. There are various mental health charities who provide helpful information for parents/guardians, and who offer tools to assist young people with their mental health. The following resources can be helpful to review and are often signposted to learners for support:

- GP - Your local GP is usually the first person to contact regarding concerns about a young persons mental health
- Kooth - Online, free counselling for young people
- Childline - Free counselling for young people via phone or online
- Calm Harm - Free app for self-harm
- Clear Fear - Free app for anxiety
- Mind - General mental health support and knowledge
- Young Minds - General Mental Health support and knowledge
- Samaritan - support line (116 123)
- A&E - Young people can be taken to A&E during a mental health emergency or crisis

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and will regularly highlight sources of support to learners within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of the learner help-seeking by ensuring learners understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at



- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

6. Managing disclosures in relation to Mental Health

A learner may choose to disclose a mental health concern about themselves or a peer to any member of staff, therefore, all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

How to respond to a Mental Health Disclosure

If a learner chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a peer to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgmental.

Staff should be prepared to listen and give the learner some time, rather than advise. Our first thoughts should be of the learners emotional and physical safety rather than exploring 'why?'. Try to be sympathetic and understanding, and remember to be sensitive to issues relating to sexuality, race, religion, culture and gender or any physical or sensory impairment or condition they may have.

Ensure that learners are aware that you will need to pass the information onto their Learning Manager as a result of R.E.A.L.'s responsibility to their safety and duty of care. Try to be clear about what you will communicate and answer any questions the learner may have about information sharing. See the confidentiality section of this document for more details.

Disclosures should be reported to the Learning Manager in the first instance and then reported to the Head of Schools and Head of Safeguarding and Standards as soon as possible. Appropriate documentation should then be completed as directed - potentially a Safeguarding Form, a Serious Incident Report Form (SIRF) or a Enhanced Support Programme referral form. **At R.E.A.L this should not be left to the end of the day.**

All disclosures should be recorded and held on the learners file. This record should include:

- Date and time of disclosure, and date and time of the incident
- The name of the learner and the name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation, from the learner's point of view
- Additional relevant information
- Agreed next step

This information should be recorded and stored appropriately and shared with appropriate personnel. Support and advice about next steps should be provided.



Staff should be very clear about boundaries in the instance of a serious threat by a learner to harm themselves. Staff responsibility to the learner in a crisis is limited to listening, being supportive, and passing the information onto the relevant member of staff - Head of Schools, the Head of Safeguarding and Standards or any Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Under no circumstances should a member of staff who is not professionally qualified attempt to counsel the learner.

Confidentiality

As with all safeguarding for learners, we will be honest with regards to the issues of confidentiality. If we feel it is necessary for us to pass on concerns about a learner, then we will discuss with the learner:

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

Parents and carers should be informed. We will give learners the option of us informing parents and carers for them or with them.

If a learner gives us a reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents and carers should not be informed, but the Head of Safeguarding and Standards must be informed immediately.

Keeping Records

Relevant staff members will keep updated notes as a record of discussion with learners and any action decided or taken. This will be filed appropriately, in order to keep personal, sensitive information secure and should always be written with sensitivity.

7. Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our learners to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE/ RSHE and Wellbeing curriculum.

The specific content of the sessions will be determined by the specific need of the individual learners we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling learners to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.



We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Mental health will also be thematically addressed in sessions such as English or Physical Education, where appropriate. This will enable learners to put their learning into practice and engage in different ways of learning about mental health.

8. Promoting Positive Mental Health at R.E.A.L

Supporting Peers

When a learner is suffering from a mental health issue, it can be a difficult time for their peers at R.E.A.L who may try to support them. Peers often want to support but do not know how without compromising their own well-being. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which peers may need additional support. Direct support from R.E.A.L, or support with advice for staff in the referring school, will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the learner who is suffering and their parents and carers with whom we will discuss:

- What is helpful for peers to know and what they should not be told
- How peers can best support
- Warning signs that their peers needs help (e.g signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their peers condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Support Parents / Carers

Parents and Carers are often very welcoming of support and information about supporting their child's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents and carers, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on R.E.A.L's website
- Ensure that all parents and carers are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have a concern about their child or a friend of their child
- Make our Mental Health Policy easily accessible to parents and carers
- Share ideas about how parents and carers can support positive mental health in their child via the parent support group, the R.E.A.L monthly newsletter, the website and all other regular communication with your Learning Manager or Provision Manager.



- Keep parents and carers informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home where appropriate

Parents, carers and staff members may also struggle with their mental health. Caregiving and teaching can both be emotionally demanding jobs and it is important to ensure that care is taken around personal wellbeing. The following resources can be helpful for parents and staff members to support their own mental health.

- GP - The NHS offers a variety of therapeutic interventions to assist with mental ill health.
- NHS 5 ways to wellbeing - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>
- Education Support - a UK charity dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education staff in schools, colleges and universities. <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The COVID-19 outbreak had an impact on everyone's daily life and it is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to events and changes that they have never faced before. These changes can affect the way a person thinks, feels and behaves, displaying feelings of loneliness, frustration, anxiety and boredom.

Bomber (2020) has gone so far as to say that society is undergoing 'collective trauma' as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Due to the crisis it is likely that our nervous system is on alert with low level fight or flight response primed. Mental Health challenges of all members of the R.E.A.L staff team will have been affected by changes and uncertainties imposed by the situation and responsive measures should take this into consideration.

R.E.A.L staff are best placed to identify and recognise how mental health issues can bring about changes in a young person's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, and that these behaviours can be an indication of an underlying problem. We understand that some learners will require ongoing face to face sessions in order to ensure their mental health needs are supported. Continuing positive relationships between staff and learners will be integral to reforming the supportive school community at R.E.A.L.

R.E.A.L will prioritise the mental health and well being of all learners and ensure appropriate support is provided, including referrals to specialist services where required. These may include our R.E.A.L counselling service, CAMHS, social care, drama therapists and other organisations.

Training



As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep learners safe.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD training will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more learners. Training can be provided within R.E.A.L by identifying staff with experience in this area. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, Referral and Intervention Team or Head of Safeguarding and Standards might be able to offer this training. For more advanced training on specific topics, external expertise will be utilised. Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

In addition to training sessions, improved awareness of mental health issues may be achieved through awareness raising campaigns or events. These are particularly effective if tied in with other events such as World Mental Health Day which provide opportunities for staff and learners to work together. Campaigns that include practical activities such as workshops to promote mental well-being may be particularly effective in promoting the awareness of good mental health.

We will post relevant information on our Wellbeing page in the Staff Hub for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd leaning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every academic year and will be updated when required to reflect changes.

Linked Policies

Health, Safety and Welfare Policy
Safeguarding and Protection of Young People in Our Care Policy
Prevent Bullying Policy
SEND Policy
Behaviour Policy
RSHE Policy
Attendance Policy
PSHE, SMSC and Citizenship Policy