

Schools Positive Mental Health Accreditation scheme and network. December 2016

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6 step strategy for delivering on mental health in schools

- **This is not about schools having an identikit or tick box approach to wellbeing and promoting positive mental health – it is about demonstrating an ongoing, ambitious and developmental approach to creating the emotionally supportive and facilitating environments which are essential for learning and healthy development to take place.**

This document sets out the core strategic strands of action that would be part of the accreditation process – which can be actioned in nuanced ways, owned by the leadership and staff team, bespoke to each, unique school community.

Criteria

1. Training – Staff training, staff wellbeing as the key to the promotion of positive mental health

- Schools will provide regular (annual) **training for teachers** – to develop their understanding of child development research, social, emotional and neuroscientific aspects of the development of young people, the psychological dimensions of reaching out to learners and developing the skills to work effectively with young people.
- **This will be a training commitment on a par with the statutory requirement for safeguarding training** – and indeed will link with safeguarding strongly in working towards creating an emotionally supportive, facilitating environment.
- Training in emotional literacy will enable to create a transition from ‘managing behaviour’ to ‘managing relationships’ with learners. The former being more reactive, the latter being more observant and developmental.
- All teachers will understand that this is a core responsibility as well as best practice.
- **Pastoral CPD targets will form a part of Continuing Professional Development and annual review to ensure the training is applied and part of reflective practice.**
- Schools will proactively **walk the walk on mental health with their staff** – using programmes such as Mind’s ‘Mental Health at Work’. Schools will take responsibility for monitoring and having ongoing dialogue with staff about the stresses of their work and take active steps to promote positive mental health among the teachers and remove stigma involving mental health issues.

2. Progressive, networked approach to leadership in promoting positive mental health

- **There will be a commitment to developing wellbeing strategies as part of a network of schools in the accreditation scheme. This network will exist to share good practice and promote ongoing development of wellbeing strategies that work. This will be seen as a paramount objective supporting all teaching and learning activities.**
- Participation, self-evaluation and peer review as part of the network will help identify and shape training needs, as will regular accreditation assessment visits.
- Schools must take a public stance on their responsibility for the pastoral care of their students – to promote mental health and wellbeing in pupils and their families. This may be via a clear coherent policy on their website, the proactive outreach work on positive mental health as well making transparent the structures of support for pupils and families and the interventions available within the school.
- **There will be a commitment to the ongoing strategic development of wellbeing, reflected in the leadership team and in opportunities for teachers to take on responsibilities for leading on wellbeing.**
- In terms of **governance**, schools promoting positive mental health will have a committee linked to safeguarding that looks specifically at developing mentally healthy communities among students, staff and parents.

3. A listening environment

- **Improved mentoring skills for all adults working with children and young people:** no matter whether their role is academic or pastoral, all teachers, TAs and support staff will be trained to have greater skills to attune to the child or young person's social, developmental and emotional challenges and be able to have more facilitating conversations with the individuals in their care.
- In addition to PSHE, Circle Time, Form times, schools will embed a culture of leadership and expertise in working with emotions and managing positive relationships
- **Buddy or peer mentoring schemes will be used to train up and empower the student population, so that there is leadership and ownership within the student community.**
- As well as individual counselling services, schools will train teachers and teaching assistants more widely to be able to provide **group therapeutic interventions**, widening access to therapeutic activities and enabling counsellors and educational psychologists work to be targeted where it is most needed.
- Counsellors and Educational Psychologists will be used for targeted interventions, but also will be involved in sharing skill and expertise to widen therapeutic work and skill up other adults in the school community on an ongoing basis.

4. Outreach to Parents

- **Schools will become rich resources for parents assisting in the complex demands of parenting** - to open up partnerships between home and school with respect to mental health – to promote robust, healthy relationships and support parents in the often fraught tasks of parenting in the modern age. These resources may be on community events, and / or by having designated staff who act with responsibility for family liaison.

5. Extending the range of Safeguarding

- **Schools will have an extended highly trained safeguarding, multi-agency team** which is capable of working sensitively and proactively with parents of students in need.
- The greater capacity and depth of the safeguarding team will enable work with families who do not hit thresholds for external action from MASH / Social Services.
- The safeguarding team will have the capacity to act as advocates with local children's services to ensure the needs of young people are being met.
- Thus schools might evolve from working to help safeguard in a reactive way, to engaging with the promotion of 'a good enough' holding environment in a more proactive way.

6. Tracking, monitoring – an integrated approach to wellbeing and positive mental health through the curriculum

- Schools will **track the ways in which positive relationships and positive mental health can be delivered through the curriculum, to reinforce and support the work done to support emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships in PSHE.** This may be done through action research into the strategic use of group-work and group activities to provide experiential learning which underpins the development of empathy, emotional literacy, and emotional awareness (mind mindedness), executive functioning.