

Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Policy

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Contents

Purpose	2
Scope	2
Legal Framework	2
Related Documents	3
Responsibilities	3

Purpose

To outline the NAS Education Directorate's policy for NAS independent schools' approach to Wellbeing and Mental Health.

1. To state the National Autistic Society's ethos and philosophy towards the promotion, and maintenance of positive wellbeing including mental and physical health within the relevant legal and regulatory framework.
2. To give guidance to staff to be able to identify, report and provide relevant support in the promotion, and maintenance of wellbeing and positive mental health.
3. To ensure staff understand and prioritise the rights and dignity of autistic children and young people who access the National Autistic Society Schools, even when highly dysregulated and in distress, and behaving in a physically challenging way, must always be borne in mind.
4. To support autistic pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally, emotionally healthy and safe as part of the PSHCE/Social curriculum offered in each of our schools and to enable them to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed for themselves and others.

This policy aims to ensure a common understanding across the National Autistic Society (NAS) independent schools regarding the reasons autistic people respond in the ways that they do to the demands and stresses in life, considering the impact of autism alongside an individual's own life events and experiences.

Scope

This policy applies to all schools and children's services within the National Autistic Society.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Health and Social Care Act 2012

- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2002
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Children Act 1989

This policy has been created with regard to the following DfE guidance:

- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2016) 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disabilities code of practice: 0 to 25'

Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with other NAS policies including Supporting Positive Behaviours in Schools and Children Services SO-0030, Safeguarding Children Policy SO-0189, and Anti-Bullying in Schools and Children and Young People's Services SO-0193.

Responsibilities

The school's leadership as a whole is responsible for:

- Using a preventative approach to create a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely to occur, in order to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the school community and instill and nurture resiliency skills in pupils. A preventative approach includes teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing these messages in our activities and ethos.
- Ensuring that only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of how potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences (ACE), including abuse and neglect, can impact on a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education.
- Equipping staff with the knowledge required to identify pupils whose behaviour suggests they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.
- Raising awareness and employing efficient referral processes in order to help pupils access evidence-based early support and interventions.
- Working effectively with external agencies to ensure the school can provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

- Identifying where wellbeing concerns represent safeguarding concerns, and ensuring that appropriate safeguarding referrals are made in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school governance committee is responsible for:

- Promoting a whole-school culture where calm, dignity and structure encompass every space and activity.
- Ensuring provision is in place for all pupils with welfare and MH difficulties,
- Ensuring arrangements are in place to support pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Ensuring there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible welfare and MH problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.

Principals responsibility:

- Ensuring and supporting the implementation of this policy in their service.
- Ensuring the allocation of internal and external resources, including clinical and counselling resources, to address the needs of children/young people, and staff about the implications of more serious or prolonged consequences to mental ill health.
- Ensuring that a comprehensive recording and reporting process is in place and is regularly reviewed.
- Ensuring that the systems in place in the service are used competently through regular monitoring and training of staff.
- Ensuring that support teams develop individual risk assessments (RAMP) and individual positive support plans which detail support strategies.
- Ensuring plans are shared with the individual, using the method of communication most appropriate to them, parents/advocates, purchasers and other interested agencies, recognising the importance of consent in terms of the fundamental issues of respect, dignity and mental capacity.
- Ensuring that individual support plans, and the behaviour element, are regularly reviewed and updated in the light of people's development and progress.
- Ensuring that staff have access to advice and support from specialists where necessary. This can be from within services, such as the transdisciplinary teams, and/or through using external consultants.

- Ensuring that parents and carers are kept regularly consulted on their dependent's response to his or her individual support plan and focusing on any behaviour element within that plan.
- Any significant events are to be communicated promptly. Ensuring that training in the support of autistic people we support is provided for staff.
- Ensuring that those staff have access to the advice, training and development opportunities appropriate to their needs.

School staff responsibilities:

- To treat all pupils and students who use our services fairly, with respect and understanding while having regard for their rights and responsibilities.
- To assist the pupils/students we support to support and improve all aspects of their everyday activities.
- To thoroughly familiarise themselves with the current person-centred support plans for the pupils/students they support and consistently apply the strategies described.
- To satisfy themselves that they are clear on what they may and may not do in terms of welfare, wellbeing and positive behaviour support, and to seek clarification as necessary.
- To record and report behavioural incidents as required by the systems, currently CPOMS, in the National Autistic Society service.
- To report any changes, they notice in the individual's response to their support plans and to the team supporting them.
- To use staff review, reflective practice and professional clinical and non-clinical supervision sessions to confirm their understanding of this policy and to seek further explanation or personal development as necessary
- To take part in training in support positive mental and physical health.
- To support other staff in the team and demonstrate confidence in each other's skills and abilities to support pupils and students.
- To provide appropriate models of behaviour for pupils and students they support.
- Personal likes and dislikes and values regarding culture, age, sex, religion, must not influence staff's approaches.

- To wear clothing to help protect them when working with individuals in crisis as specified on individual Risk Assessments (RAMP). This will be decided on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the dignity of the individual and the safety of the staff to make judgments considering this policy and to act within the school's procedures.

However, as no policy or procedure can cover every eventuality, staff are expected to use their professional judgment and experience when supporting individuals.