



Snowflake School

‘Improving the quality of family life’

Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a document that embraces the many school practices that support health and wellbeing, to minimise the harm from stress and ensure that there is cohesion and progress in working towards the health and wellbeing of the whole Snowflake School community.

Snowflake School is a school for pupils aged 5-16 with a diagnosis of autism. Pupils are supported 1:1 by staff and we acknowledge that aspects of the work can be emotionally challenging and/or stressful.

Guidelines for Implementation

A member of the Senior Leadership Team leads on Mental Health and Wellbeing for Snowflake School. Snowflake Leadership Group and the trustees will ensure that the school; -

- Provides an ethos where everyone is valued and where respect, empathy and honesty are the cornerstones of all school relationships.
- Treats every member of the community as a unique individual.
- Ensures that emotional wellbeing is acknowledged and discussed without stigma or guilt.
- A wellbeing/mental health representative for both pupils and staff has been appointed in each site.

1) Pupils

a. Key principles and challenges Communication

A key strand in emotional wellbeing is the ability to communicate thoughts, fears, dreams and to know you are heard. We recognise that this can be particular challenge for pupils who have autism, and we constantly seek to support them to manage this. Adolescence, in addition to the factors already described, dealing with hormonal changes and the challenges regarding: exploration of a sense of self; becoming aware of difference; exploring identity; developing a sexual identity; and the effect of these on self-esteem, are also pertinent to our pupils.

b. Strategies and Provision

Snowflake School adopts a whole school stance to emotional and mental health and wellbeing; these principles are embedded in the curriculum and the total approach. Each pupil has an education health and care plan, and their emotional health and wellbeing is acknowledged in the social emotional and mental health section of the Plan. All pupils have relevant targets in this area which are reviewed termly. The school monitors the effectiveness of this provision internally. Core knowledge and attitudes are delivered and explored in discreet PSHE lessons including the school's sex-education programme. We have very close and detailed knowledge of our pupils and work alongside families and outside agencies to identify those who may require additional support will

signpost relevant services accordingly. In addition, each site has two designated mental health leads: one for pupils and one for staff.

c. Evidence-Based Approach

Using evidence-based approach and a very individualised learning target for each of the pupils based on their strengths and needs.

Research indicates that children diagnosed with autism make optimum educational gains where intervention is consistent between different environments. As such we aim to work closely with parents to enable them to continue teaching their child, to manage any behaviours that challenge learning and participation and to generalise their mastered skills to the home and community environments.

This approach is based on our values and enables learners to access learning opportunities across their personalised learning plan and to achieve their full potential. The focus of all behaviourally based intervention is on the individual and their learning needs. We work closely with the child or young person and their families to identify the things that are important to them, and use these aspirations, in combination with a robust assessment of their abilities, interests, prior learning and experience, to plan an appropriate learning programme. It is this personalised and collaborative approach which enables us to provide the highest quality teaching, learning and support.

d. Behaviour Interventions

All behavioural interventions are, as ethically required, function based, very individualised based on each child's motivation and a functional replacement behaviour will be taught.

Where the school feels that the pupil requires additional support beyond the remit of the school, a referral will be made to the relevant service. This could include the Educational Psychology Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), social care, or other agencies. This process will fully involve the families. The school may also recommend that families take the pupil to their GP to access medical services or a community advocacy service. This service provides support for young people using non-instructed advocacy approaches to gain wishes and feelings for those who are looked after by the local authority, subject to Children Protection and Child in Need plans.

e. Provision for all

We recognise that traditional 'talking therapies' can be difficult for pupils to access and so seek to explore alternative means for pupils to explore difficult emotions and topics and improve their quality of life by:

- Timetabled lessons in PSHE which includes relationships and sex education to enable pupils to recognise and express emotions and deal with growing up.
- Outstanding teaching and learning based on the principles of applied behaviour analysis of children diagnosed with autism and those of their families.

- Developing the necessary pivotal skills as building blocks for future skill acquisition and independent learning in other settings.
- Strong, ongoing communication with families, through; parent/carers' events where they can discuss concerns, Earwig, the online communication method where photos/ videos can be safely shared and regular face to face and written contact.
- Preparation and support for dealing with transitions and change.
- Increasing tolerance of busier environments and the wider community.
- Providing learning about leisure.
- Promotion of a healthy lifestyle including diet and exercise.
- Individual programme regarding appropriate sexual behaviour (e.g. private time).
- Sensory integration,
- OT sensory diets.
- Outdoor activities exercise.

2. Adults

Snowflake School recognise that the staff is the most important resource, to be valued, supported and encouraged to develop personally and professionally within a learning and caring community. There is a relationship between healthier more positive staff, pupil achievement and school improvement.

There are employer duties to staff that require sensitive staff policies and practice. Which include:

a. Management of change

- Provide a range of strategies for involving staff in school decision making processes.
- Operate sensitive Performance Management and Appraisals linked to clear job specifications.
- Provide extra support from the Senior Leadership Teams at certain times of stress and/or difficulty e.g. OFSTED Inspections, Child Protection cases.
- Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system.

b. Staff Workload

- Provide staff with a sense of safety and the confidence to deal positively with stressful incidents.
- Review the demands on staff regarding the time spent on paperwork and seek practical alternative solutions wherever possible, through the School Improvement Plan process.
- Respond sensitively and flexibly to external pressures that impact on staff lives whilst at the same time ensuring the efficient running of the school.
- Maintain contact with staff when they are absent.

- Maintain positive staff-pupil relationships to ensure an effective teaching and learning environment.
- Staff contact with families and colleagues should take place on weekdays between 7am – 5pm only.

c. **Well Being.**

- Decision making processes must have clarity and transparency.
- Opportunities are provided for all staff to socialise and relax with each other.
- New staff are supported with an appropriate level of induction.
- An open management system exists that responds quickly to problems.
- A welcoming and tidy staff area exists, sensitive to issues of race, gender, homophobia, culture and disability.
- Regular and systematic monitoring of staff absences, return to work meetings and threshold checks.
- 6-month probation review sessions to be held with line manager.
- Staff attend one training session from 4pm–5pm per week, other training may take place between 3.15 - 4pm.
- Regular breakfasts, snacks & treats provided.
- WFH Time for staff with additional responsibilities to complete major tasks.
- Time is set aside for such tasks as work sampling and planning sampling.
- Regular 1-1 check in meetings.
- Wellness action plan for employees for managers to complete.

When Problems Arise: -

The school will provide support and discuss options as appropriate to the circumstances. In some cases, this may include:

- external support such as support from the Local Authority e.g. counselling.
- Occupational Health, HR services.
- Mental Health Risk Assessments.

d. **Absence due to Ill Health –**

The school follows the Local Authority's procedure for managing absence due to ill health (see attendance policy). The school will implement the use of risk assessments regarding health needs, when required, including mental health.

Attendance Policy

This lays out all the support the school offers in terms of staff wellbeing during and following absence. Examples include welfare meetings, return to work support, phased returns, Occupational health referrals, risk assessments.

Appendix 1

- A. Mental Health Risk Assessment Model
- B. Wellness Action Plan for employees

This policy is written in accordance with our strategic wellbeing/mental health objective and action plan.

A. Mental Health Risk Assessment Model

Snowflake School	RISK ASSESSMENT – Mental Health	
Date assessment completed:	Description of area or activity being assessed:	
Review 1	Mental and emotional wellbeing related to home/work circumstances.	
Periodic review: as needed		
Context Statement:		
Signature of assessor:		
Name: Date:		
Signature of Person being Assessed:		
Name: Date:		
1st Review:		

	RISK ASSESSMENT Mental Health	
DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY or FACILITY AND ITS USE		
<p>Use this area to describe the area and/or the main activities to be covered by this risk assessment;</p> <p>There is a potential for circumstances outside of work related to home and living, to impact emotional well-being and therefore work capacity.</p>		
SAFETY RULES AND GENERAL COMMENTS		
<p>Use this area to describe any safety rules or provide general comments on the area or activity being assessed;</p> <p><u>Key Findings:</u></p> <p>The assessment has been developed based upon a framework of risk control measures, these measures need to be discussed between the assessor and the worker to ensure their appropriateness to the working situation.</p> <p><u>Key Comments:</u></p> <p>It is recommended that this assessment is reviewed regularly. It may be necessary to make changes to the control measures to address changes in capability.</p> <p>It is essential that the member of staff discusses any needs/changes in need as they arise <u>note: see detailed assessment and actions list below</u></p>		

	GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT FOR injury, medical condition and anxiety	Assessment Ref:
HAZARDS		
Identify significant hazards relevant to this risk assessment		

Personal life related stress and anxiety	Absence Lack of focus Tiredness depression						










ASSESSMENT OF RISK				
Assess the risks against each significant hazard group identified				
Significant Hazard	Perceived Nature of Risk	Generic Control Measures	Residual Risk Low/Medium/High	Additional Control Measures
Personal life related stress and anxiety	Absence Lack of focus Tiredness depression			
Feelings of overwhelmedness	Increased vulnerability to stress and anxiety due to recent events and ongoing financial burden.			

ACTION PLAN					
Develop an action plan to support the risk assessment					
Action to be taken to further reduce risk	Person responsible for completing action	Target completion date (Prioritized on risk)		Action closure	
		Date	Priority	Signature	Date

Agreed and signed by:

Agreed and signed by staff member:

B. Wellness Action Plan for employees

	<p>1. What things can you do at work that help you stay mentally fit and healthy?</p>
	<p>2. What are some things your colleagues can do to help you stay mentally</p>
	<p>3. Are there any situations that can trigger poor mental health for you?</p>
	<p>4. When you are struggling with stress pressure or poor mental health how does this impact your work life and personal life?</p>
	<p>5. Are there any early warning signs that you or other should be aware of when you are struggling?</p>
	<p>6. Is there anything you or others could do at work to reduce triggers and help you manage the impact when you are struggling?</p>
	<p>7. If your colleagues notice that you are struggling what are some helpful things they could do to support you?</p>
	<p>8. What steps can you take if you start to experience poor mental health at work?</p>
	<p>9. Who can you share your action plan with so they can support you to stay mentally healthy at work?</p>

Revision

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Reviewed By	Sumen Starr
Approved by Board of Trustees on	February 2025