



APPLEFORD SCHOOL

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

This policy applies to the whole school, including boarding

The Policy is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office.

All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours including activities away from school. This policy also takes into consideration the National Minimum Standard (NMS) for residential special schools (RSS).

We have a whole school approach to safeguarding, which is the golden thread that runs throughout every aspect of the school. All our school policies support our approach to safeguarding (child protection). Our fundamental priority is our children and their wellbeing; this is first and foremost.

Monitoring and Review: This policy is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by Dr Peter Gardner (Managing Director), the Advisory Board and Mr James Langan (Headmaster). The Proprietor will undertake a full annual review of this policy and procedures, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. This discussion will be formally documented in writing. The Proprietor recognises the expertise staff build by undertaking safeguarding training and managing safeguarding concerns. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay. All staff will be informed of the update/reviewed policy and it is made available to them in either a hard copy or electronically.

Policy Agreed: September 2026

Date Published (including on website): September 2026

Next Review: September 2027

Signed:

Dr Peter Gardner
Directing Lead and Proprietor

Mr James Langan
Headmaster

This policy constitutes guidance for all staff, including non-teaching staff and the Advisory Board and is referenced within:

- Appleford School improvement plans
- Appleford School Safeguarding Policy and 'Keeping children safe in education'
- Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Policy
- Appleford School Positive Behaviour Code
- Medical Action Plans in cases where a pupil's mental health is connected to a medical issue
- Appleford School SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need or disability.
- The policy also draws on information from the following key documents and Government guidance:
 - [Mental Health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges](#) ◦ [Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing](#) ◦ [Supporting pupils at school](#)

Appleford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

- [with medical conditions](#) ○ [Supporting pupils with medical conditions – Useful resources](#) ○ [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education](#) ○ [Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children](#) ○ [Mental health and behaviour in schools](#) ○ [Counselling in schools](#)
- [PSHE Association - Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing \(2021\)](#)

Pupils, staff and parents/carers have an input in developing this policy so that it remains a ‘live’ document that is reviewed and responsive to the evolving needs of Appleford School community.

Section Contents

- 1 Policy Statement and Purpose of the Policy
- 2 Principle 1: Leadership & Management Roles and Responsibilities
- 3 Principle 2: Ethos & Environment - Creating and sustaining a respectful Appleford School community
- 4 Principle 3: Curriculum teaching & learning
- 5 Principle 4: Pupil Voice
- 6 Principle 5: Staff development
- 7 Principle 6: Identifying need and monitoring impact
- 8 Principle 7: Working with parents
- 9 Principle 8: Targeted support
- 10 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Disorders
- 11 Why Mental Health and Well-Being is important
- 12 Factors, triggers and risks impacting on young people’s emotional wellbeing:
- 13 Self-care and signposting support
- 14 Working with parents, specialist services and supporting peers
- 15 Confidentiality
- 16 References
- Appendix 1 Additional Information and Procedures for Specific Disorders – Anxiety, Eating disorders
- Appendix 2 Additional Information and Procedures for Specific Disorders – Self Harm
- Appendix 3 How to Help – Flowchart;
- Appendix 4 Diagram 2 – Social Media and Mental Health
- Appendix 5 Diagram 3 – Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Appendix 6 Diagram 4 – Professional disagreement and escalation
- Appendix 7 WhatsApp Parent Guide
- Appendix 8 YouTube Parent Guide;
- Appendix 9 Anna Freud C.A.R.E approach
- Appendix 10 THRIVE Framework
- Appendix 11 ALGEE Action Plan
- Appendix 12 Tips to cope with Anxiety
- Appendix 13 Tips for talking with young people
- Appendix 14 Appleford School Coordinated approach to pastoral care
- Appendix 15 Tips for self-care

1. Policy Statement and Purpose of the Policy: *‘It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults’* Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) We consider behaviour to be a message – disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise irregular behaviour

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may well be related to an unmet mental health need. Our headmaster is the senior mental health lead and a member of the leadership team in accordance with the DfE guidance of May 2024.

Definition of Mental Health and Well-Being: The World Health Organisation has defined Mental Health as *"a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community"*.

It is widely recognised that a child’s emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development and learning as well as their physical and social health and their mental wellbeing in adulthood. Good mental health is important for helping children and young people to develop and thrive. There is good evidence to support the association between good mental health and education engagement and academic achievement. The benefits to preventing mental health problems in children and young people from arising, and intervening early where they do, may result in improved attainment, attendance, reductions in behavioural problems, as well as happier, more confident and resilient children and young people. The Government document *Promoting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing: A whole school or college approach (Sep 2021)* provides 8 principles to promoting a whole schools approach to Mental Health & Wellbeing.

Appleford School has adopted a comprehensive and long-term **‘whole school’ approach** to promoting the holistic social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, whilst recognising that this is one element of a wider multi-agency approach. Our approach moves beyond learning and teaching to pervade all aspects of Appleford School life, an approach endorsed by DfE and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), in relation to its effectiveness in bringing about and sustaining health benefits. We are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional well-being in all pupils, their families, members of staff and the Advisory Board. Our open culture allows pupils’ voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

Promoting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing

Figure 2. Eight principles to promoting a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.



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COVID and Mental Health: We should not underestimate the adverse effect that COVID-19 had on pupil's mental health and well-being. This is recognised and understood by Appleford School, where we strive to provide a positive environment for our pupils and our staff. We promote positive mental health and recognise and respond to mental ill health. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils and staff affected directly, or indirectly, by mental ill health. We pursue this ideal through whole school approaches, and targeted approaches aimed at individually vulnerable pupils.



We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help pupils become more resilient, be happy and successful, and prevent problems before they arise. This encompasses the following aspects:

- Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience that everyone understands
- Helping pupils to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to
- Helping pupils to be resilient learners
- Teaching pupils social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
- Early identification of pupils who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services both internally and externally
- Parent/Carer engagement strategy
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and resilience.

Appleford School's role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing can be summarised as:

Prevention: Creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils and pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This will include teaching pupils and pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos.

Identification: Recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible.

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Early support: Helping staff and pupils to access evidence informed early support and interventions.

Access to specialist support: Working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

This policy aims are to:

- promote positive mental health and emotional well-being in all staff and pupils;
- develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience building techniques;
- prevent mental health problems by increasing understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- identify and support pupils with mental health needs;
- train and support all staff to understand mental health issues;
- spot early warning signs to help prevent mental health problems getting worse;
- provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for advice and specific support;
- raise awareness amongst staff and HR that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their well-being; instilling a culture of staff/pupil welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around Appleford School
- be a happy, open, trusting, mutually supportive and well-ordered community;
- be free of any kind of abuse, teasing, harassment, bullying or any other kind of anti-social behaviour.
- grow intellectually, spiritually and culturally, allowing pupils and adults to engage with mutual respect;
- encourage healthy and ethical living.

Specific aims for pupils are to:

- develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes, which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical well-being now and in the future;
- make informed decisions to improve their emotional, social and physical well-being;
- experience challenge and enjoyment in the school environment;
- experience positive aspects of healthy living and activity;
- establish a pattern of health and well-being which will be sustained into adult life;
- ensure they keep themselves, and others safe
- prevent any stigma attaching to mental health difficulties.

Key points and principles ([Mental health and behaviour in schools](#))

Fundamental to this policy is the recognition of the role that Appleford School can play in promoting resilience amongst pupils.

This policy sits alongside our Pivotal Learning strategy which aims to find ways of improving resilience in pupils as well as enabling challenge for all in the classroom. Appleford School has a central role to play in enabling their pupils to be resilient and to support good mental health and wellbeing. It is important that Appleford School promotes good mental wellbeing for all pupils. Education about relationships, sex and health are vehicles through which Appleford School can teach pupils about mental health and wellbeing.

The Appleford School approach to mental health and behaviour is part of a consistent whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. This involves providing a structured environment with clear expectations of behaviour, well communicated social norms and routines, which are reinforced with highly consistent consequence systems. This is paired with an individualised graduated response when the behavioural issues might be a result of educational, mental health, other needs or vulnerabilities.

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Appleford School considers how best to use SEN resources to provide support for children with mental health difficulties where appropriate.

Appleford School staff cannot act as mental health experts and should not try to diagnose conditions. However, they endeavour to ensure they have clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.

There are things that Appleford School can do for all pupils, as well as those at risk of developing mental health problems, to intervene early to create a safe and calm environment and strengthen resilience before serious mental health problems occur.

As set out in the statutory SEND 0-25 years Code of Practice 2015, Appleford School must be alert to how mental health problems can underpin behaviour issues in order to support pupils effectively, working with external support where needed. We are also aware of our duties under the Equality Act 2010, that some mental health issues will meet the definition of disability.

Appleford School ensures it has clear systems and processes in place for early intervention and identification, referral to experienced skilled professionals, and clear accountability systems.

The school understands the local services available, and how/when to draw on or commission them. Where required, Appleford School may expect/advise parents and pupils to seek support elsewhere, including from their GP, NHS services, trained professionals working in specialist CAMHS, voluntary organisations and other sources.

There are national organisations that offer further resources, training, support and advice (see references).

2. Principle 1: Leadership & Management Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand risk factors for mental illness. Some children will require additional help, and all staff should have the skills to identify any early warning signs of mental health problems, thereby ensuring that pupils with mental health issues receive the early intervention and support they need.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or well-being of a pupil should speak to the Mental Health Lead in the first instance. Concerns that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm should trigger the normal child protection procedures with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the pupil presents as a medical emergency, normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the First Aid Staff and contacting the emergency services, if necessary. This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Form tutors and class teachers
- Head of Boarding, Head of Pastoral care
- Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Deputy Designated safeguarding leads/ Mental Health Lead/SENCo • PSHEE co-ordinator

Lead Members of Staff: As Mental Health Lead, the Headmaster is responsible for understanding and being able to explain how a whole school approach will benefit everyone, not just to mental health and wellbeing but more broadly, improved attainment, attendance, reductions in behavioural problems, as well as happier, more confident and resilient children and young people.

3. Principle 2: Ethos & Environment - Creating and sustaining a respectful Appleford School community

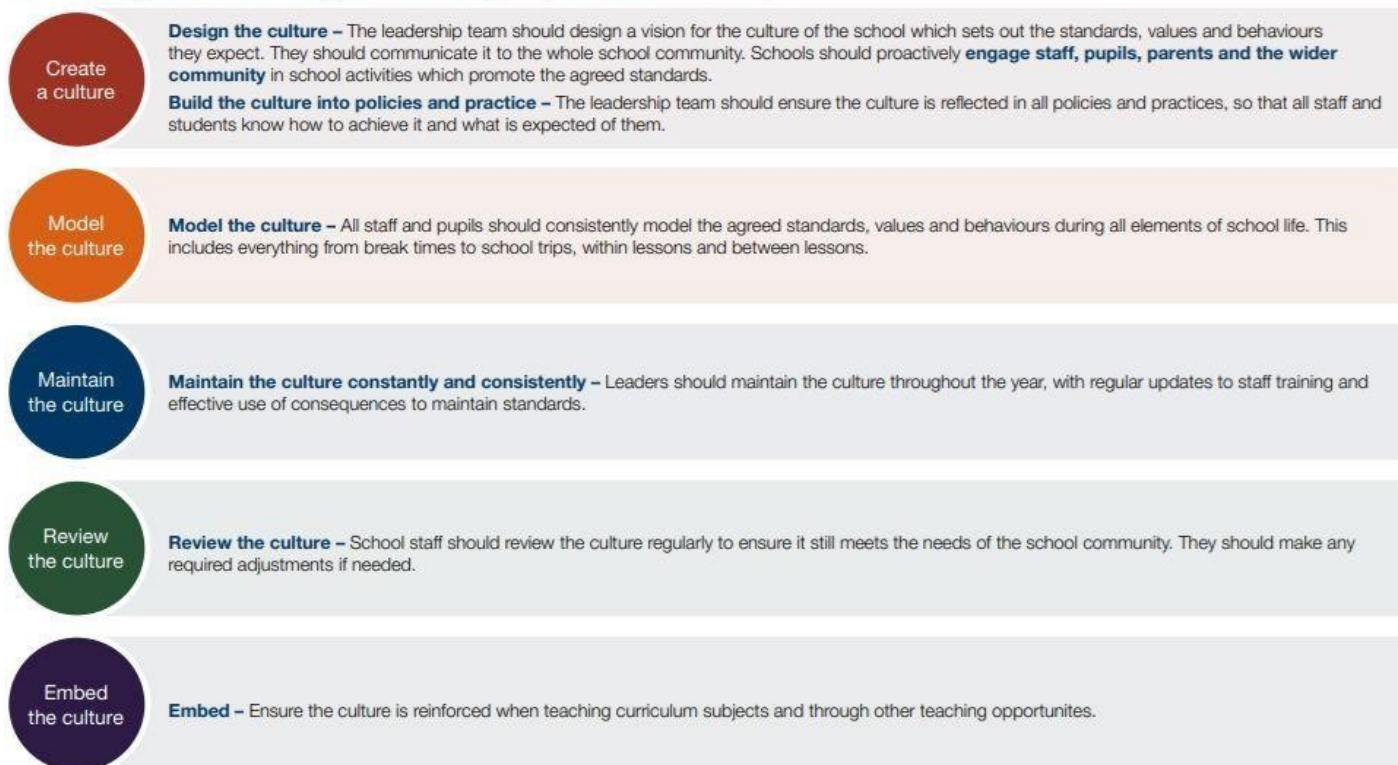
Appleford School strives to create a culture of acceptance and respect across the whole school (promote respect, inclusivity and value diversity), where pupils can enjoy the knowledge-rich education they deserve in a safe and supportive environment that allows them

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to discover who they are. We have found the tools within the [DfE Respectful School Communities Self-Review and Signposting Tool](#) helpful in developing and maintaining Appleford School culture. We recognise that relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are critical in promoting wellbeing and in helping to engender a sense of belonging to and liking of Appleford School. Our approach is very much a restorative one. The 2014 SEND reforms also included a change from the characterisation of Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development needs to *Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs*.

A whole school approach

What makes a good whole school approach for creating a respectful school community?



4. Principle 3: Curriculum teaching & learning

Appleford School strives to embed the language of social and emotional learning into the class environment, recognising that it has the potential to help young people acquire the skills they need to make good academic progress as well as benefit pupil health and wellbeing.

Appleford School promotes social and emotional skills through dedicated Personal Social Health and Economic education (PSHE) lessons for all year groups once a week. This includes statutory content regarding Relationships Education (RE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. Statutory guidance on the implementation of the curriculum states that such content should be delivered in a *carefully sequenced way, within a planned programme of lessons*. As part of the Health Education curriculum, all pupils will be taught about mental health. By the end of prep school, pupils are expected to be able to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources. By the end of the senior school, pupils should understand how they are feeling and why; to further develop the language that they use to talk about their bodies, health and emotions; and to understand where normal variations in emotions end, and health and wellbeing issues begin. Lesson are based around the PHSE association programme. Resources are carefully adapted to suit the exact needs and intentions of the course and will be updated and renewed as required by the PSHE coordinator. Information and signposting to such organisations is available on our Parent Portal. Additionally, we will use PSHE lessons as a vehicle for providing pupils who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting pupils to support any of

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their friends who are facing challenges. Pupils have the option to receive the information via the pastoral team. Parents are informed when potentially sensitive topics are to be covered and have the opportunity to withdraw their child from the upcoming lesson.

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHEE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the individual needs of the cohort being taught, but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils 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 (currently in force) to ensure that we teach Mental Health and Emotional Well-being issues in a safe and sensitive manner, which helps rather than harms.

[https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional wellbeing](https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing)

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote pupils' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions as well as those of other people. We focus on helping pupils to build their self-esteem, to develop a growth mindset and to develop healthy lifestyles. In line with the ethos of Appleford School, our PSHEE curriculum is designed to encourage respect for other people and this includes those who may experience mental health difficulties. Though planned in advance the programme remains flexible so as to be able to adapt and respond to certain pastoral needs or react to events within school and the wider communities we belong to. The overall rationale of the course is to nurture Appleford School pupils in becoming self-aware, informed, empathetic and confident individuals with open-minds and strong decision-making capabilities.

The following activities also form part of the curriculum:

- Pupil Council
- Positive mental health promotion in classes, specifically: Thinking Skills, PE, RE
- Throughout the year positive mental health is discussed and promoted
- Displays and information about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Themed weeks with a well-being focus
- Reading to explore themes and learn about emotions, difference, loss, bullying, change, resilience

5. Principle 4: Pupil Voice

Involving Appleford pupils in decisions that impact on them can benefit their mental health and wellbeing by helping them to feel part of the school and its wider community and to have some control over their lives. At an individual level, benefits include helping pupils to gain belief in their own capabilities, including building their knowledge and skills to make healthy choices and developing their independence. Collectively, pupils benefit through having opportunities to influence decisions, to express their views and to develop strong social networks. Appleford School has a School council and prefects.

6. Principle 5: Staff development

Wellbeing (n): A state of complete physical and mental health that is characterised by high-quality social relationships.

Promoting staff health and wellbeing is an integral principal of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. The wellbeing of individuals is affected by many interrelated factors. This means that levels of low or high wellbeing are rarely due to just one factor, and that the issue should be looked at holistically. Our aim is to prioritise a culture of wellbeing that supports emotional wellbeing and resilience and reduces stigma. We utilise the 5 Steps framework from Anna Freud to develop our approach to mental health and wellbeing.

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Appleford School demonstrates a commitment to staff health and wellbeing in several ways:

- Embedding wellbeing in training and professional development
- Providing staff with tools and resources to support wellbeing

Wellbeing starts with the individual.

- As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training to enable them to keep pupils safe.
- A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.
- Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance development process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupils.
- Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.
- Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the leadership team who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

7. Principle 6: Identifying need and monitoring impact

There are a variety of tools that education settings can use as the basis for understanding and planning a response to pupils' mental health and wellbeing needs. There are three key purposes for which schools and colleges might wish to measure mental wellbeing:

- **Snapshot:** to provide a survey snapshot of pupil mental wellbeing to inform planning and whole-school practice
- **Identification:** to identify individuals who might benefit from early support to facilitate swifter access to specialist support
- **Evaluation:** to consider the impact of early support and targeted interventions.

At Appleford School there are regular discussions in staff meetings to raise any concerns, either initial or on-going, about any individual pupil's mental health needs which will then be addressed by the form or class teacher or passed to the Mental Health lead for advice and extra help.

8. Principle 7: Working with parents (see also section 14)

The family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. There is strong evidence that well implemented universal and targeted interventions supporting parenting and family life have the potential to yield social as well as economic benefits. Appleford School ensures that the mental health and wellbeing support offer is clearly communicated with parents and carers. Where Appleford School identifies additional needs, we work closely with the local authority to ensure parents and carers are aware of the wider support available to them in their local area.

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Appleford School has supported families in the following ways:

- During lockdown, Appleford School communicated via TEAMS, emails and telephone calls to all families
- Communicating information about RSE/PSHE topics to parents prior to in-school delivery
- Liaising directly with parents of individuals with particular SEMH needs to discuss targeted support
- helping parents to be role models for their children regarding how they deal with setbacks and develop resilient thinking.

9. Principle 8: Targeted support (see also section 14)

Some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health (e.g. those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents or carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence). Delays in identifying and meeting emotional wellbeing and mental health needs can have far reaching effects on all aspects of children and young people's lives, including their chances of reaching their potential and leading happy and healthy lives as adults. Staff at Appleford School can find different sources of support at <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/youth-wellbeing/>

10. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Disorders Possible difficulties pupils may experience

include:

Self-harm: Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents. Younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair, or bang or bruise themselves.

Depression: Variations in mood are a normal part of life for all of us, for someone who is suffering from depression these mood swings may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may dominate their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months and have a significant impact on their behaviour, ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias: Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences, at low levels, as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months, and they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is required.

Obsessions and compulsions: Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they don't turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms.

Suicidal feelings: Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings, though they may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide, without warning.

Eating problems: Food, weight and body shape disorders may be coping mechanisms to deal with, or communicate about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences in daily life. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted); binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food, including refusing to eat in certain situations, or with certain people. This can convey messages that the child cannot communicate verbally.

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Some examples of other disorders may include:

- Conduct Disorder (aggression, destroying/losing property, theft, running away etc.)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Soiling and Wetting
- Autism (social deficits, communication difficulties, restrictive and repetitive behaviours) • Substance Abuse
- Depression and Bi-Polar Disorder
- Schizophrenia (abnormal perceptions, delusional thinking)
- Suicidal Thoughts (not a disorder but thoughts based, and equally as serious).

Prevention: Appleford School has specific procedures in place to assist pupils. These procedures support staff in identifying and assisting pupils with mental health problems. This includes, but is not limited to: pastoral support, relevant and effective training for all staff members, induction training for new staff members, anti-bullying and safeguarding policies, behaviour management, peer mentors and liaison with external agencies.

Identification of Mental Health Difficulties: It can be very difficult to recognise a pupil with mental health difficulties. However, staff should be alert to changes in a pupil's behaviour, presentation and engagement and should raise any concerns to the DSL. **Any immediate concerns, such as a pupil at risk of harm to themselves or others, must be reported to the Headmaster and DSL immediately.**

Intervention: It is in the best interests of the pupil to offer support for mental health problems when they arise, as the longer a pupil struggles the more complex the problem becomes. Supporting a distressed pupil can take up a lot of time and be challenging, so please follow the guidance below:

- think cautiously about how you can/or cannot help
- do you have the time and expertise to help them?
- is there a conflict with other roles you may have?
- clarify your role/limits to the pupil
- be ready to take a definite line about the degree of your involvement
- obtain support for your response whenever necessary.

If you are concerned about a pupil:

- be proactive, don't evade the problem
- collect more information from staff members to determine if your concern is shared
- discuss your concerns in private with the pupil and be willing to listen
- tell the pupil that you may not be able to maintain confidentiality, in line with your safeguarding duty, explaining you will communicate with them if information needed to be shared, and with whom it has been shared
- if you still have concerns that you are not the best person to deal with the pupil's problems, and there is no improvement, in spite of your minimal intervention, please notify the DSL or DDSL for guidance – they may have more information available to them and more skills in dealing with these types of problems
- IF UNSURE, ALWAYS REFER THE PUPIL ON so you are not left to deal with situations you may not be able to manage.

Next Steps: The concerned staff member would discuss the matter with the DSL or a DDSL. The aim of the meeting will be to decide:

- whether there are any child safeguarding concerns
- who, if anyone, the information should be referred to (other staff, parents, outside agencies);
- the next steps to be taken, including referral to outside agencies such as therapist, psychiatrist and/or emergency care
- the appropriate support and follow up within Appleford School (and externally if required) will be arranged for the pupil and actions agreed.

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11. Why Mental Health and Well-Being is important:

We aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for our Appleford School community: pupils, staff, parents, and carers. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall well-being and can affect their learning and achievement. Persistent mental health problems may lead to pupils having greater difficulty in learning than the majority of pupils in their age specific cohort.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice identifies Social, Emotional and Mental Health as one of the four areas of Special Educational Need. All children go through mood changes through their school career, and some face significant life events. About 10% of children aged 5 to 16 have a diagnosable mental health need and these can have an enormous impact on their quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: *"in order to help their pupils succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy"*.

Schools should be a place where children and young people experience a nurturing and supportive environment, offering strategies to raise self-esteem, overcome adversity and build resilience. For some, school will be a place of respite from difficult home lives, providing positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting pupil well-being and engendering a sense of belonging and community. Our role at Appleford School is to support pupils to manage change and stress, develop resilience, achieve their potential, and access help when they need it. We also have a role in educating pupils about how to maintain positive mental health and how to identify factors affecting their mental health. In addition, we should encourage them to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues and direct them to appropriate help and support. We recognise the equal importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being.

Mental health is not just the absence of mental illness but rather it is the presence of emotional well-being. We want all of our children and young people to:

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve.

12. Factors, triggers and risks impacting on young people's emotional wellbeing:

All staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand risk factors for mental illness. Some children will require additional help, and all staff should have the skills to identify any early warning signs of mental health problems, thereby ensuring that pupils with mental health issues receive the early intervention and support they need. All staff understand possible risk factors (as exemplified in Table 1 below) that might make some children more likely to experience problems.

Factors impacting on young people's emotional wellbeing:

Fear of failure: Children and young people are expressing fear of failure at increasingly younger ages. High expectations are often internally driven by pupils themselves in addition to external pressure from parents or school. As well as worrying about academic pressures, young people often voice concerns about their job prospects when they finish school.

Bullying: Bullying is a key trigger for mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, as well as a key maintaining factor (i.e. young people find it far harder to overcome difficulties in a context of teasing and bullying). Bullying can take place both face-to-face or

online (and in many cases, both). It is important that pupils understand that what is sometimes meant in good humour is easily misinterpreted or can escalate rapidly, causing distress and emotional pain.

Body image: Body image is a real concern amongst young people — not just girls and young women (as is often believed). Low self-esteem and poor body image are leading causes of pupils opting out of extracurricular activities or failing to engage in class. The pressure to look a certain way or weigh a certain amount is felt keenly by many, and these pressures can contribute to the development of disordered eating behaviour and other emotionally and physically harmful responses.

The online environment: Young people may see little or no division between the online and offline world. They may have friends who they know purely online and do not see this as problematic or unusual. However, PSHE education teaching does not always fully reflect this. Much of what is taught in an offline context with regard to healthy relationships and staying safe can be readily adapted to address the online context too. Potential dangers to pupils online include online abuse and grooming, cyberbullying and becoming involved in dangerous communities which advocate harmful behaviours (for example ‘pro-ana’ communities which advocate anorexia as a lifestyle choice and provide advice and support to maintain this ‘lifestyle’ as opposed to promoting support to change harmful behaviours).

Sexual pressures: Ready access to pornography has led to an increase in sexual pressures felt by children and young people. For example, pressure to look and behave a certain way when in a relationship. Access to pornography that often portrays relationships where consent is neither given nor sought may also be one factor contributing to an increase in abuse in teenage relationships.

Change, loss and grief (including bereavement): Losses might include the death of a pet or family member, parental separation, moving or having someone close to them move away, rejection from university or college. Pupils are also subjected to more explicit depictions of death via media reporting of disasters, wars and atrocities, as well as on social media. The Covid-19 pandemic has also brought change, loss and death to the fore. It is important that pupils recognise how change, loss (including bereavement) and grief affect people, the different responses people can have when grieving and strategies to help manage grief, as well as support services available.

Common triggers for unhealthy responses in school-aged children and young people include:

- **Family relationship difficulties:** Stable family relationships are a crucial source of emotional support for young people, so it is important to think about what extra support might be needed when things are difficult at home.
- **Peer relationship difficulties:** Difficult relationships at school can leave young people feeling desperate, with no one to turn to. In these instances, they are more likely to turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as self-harm, disordered eating or substance abuse.
- **Trauma:** Experiencing trauma (e.g. a bereavement, an accident, or suffering abuse) will leave a young person vulnerable and in need of support. Bear in mind that this is about the pupil’s perception of the trauma, so difficulties may be triggered by something seemingly insignificant but which has had a deep impact on the pupil concerned.
- **Being exposed to unhealthy coping mechanisms in other pupils or the media:** When young people are exposed to self-harm, eating disorders or other unhealthy coping mechanisms, either by witnessing them first-hand, via TV or online, they may be more likely to replicate such behaviours. Be especially vigilant and respond proactively if high-profile programmes run stories involving eating disorders or self-harm.
- **Difficult times of year, such as anniversaries:** The anniversary of a significant event such as the death of a parent is often a very difficult time for a young person. It is not uncommon for problems to arise many years after the trauma, on a milestone anniversary or when there are other difficulties (e.g. exam stress). Good communication between class teachers/form tutors, mental health, pastoral and PSHE Leads is really important to ensure all are aware and have a common response.
- **Trouble in school or with the police:** If a young person gets into trouble at school or with the police, this can be hugely stressful and lead to them using coping mechanisms such as alcohol, drugs or self-harm.

- **Exam pressure:** The pressure of exams can be keenly felt by pupils and is a common trigger for mental health problems. Teachers should keep a close eye on pupils as they enter exam periods and other times when academic pressure increases significantly. PSHE education lessons offer an ideal context for pupils to learn healthy habits and strategies for coping with academic pressures.
- **Transition to a new school:** The transition to a new school can be difficult for pupils, whether they are making the natural progression from primary to secondary — accompanied by some of their friends — or changing schools part way through the school year. PSHE education should include learning to support pupils' resilience and coping strategies for transition at all relevant points.
- **Illness in the family:** If a parent or sibling falls seriously ill, this can put huge pressure on a young person. They may be taking on some form of caring role, and may be receiving less time and attention from loved ones, due to the focus on the family member who is unwell. They may have deep worries about their relative but feel unable to voice worries for fear of being a burden, and may instead turn to other coping mechanisms such as alcohol, drugs or self-harm.
- **Groups at greater risk of vulnerabilities:** Some young people are more vulnerable to experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues than their peers. These include:
 - looked after children and young people
 - children and young people who have been adopted
 - LGBT+ children and young people
 - children and young people whose family have a history of mental health issues
 - young carers
 - young offenders

All staff should recognise **risk factors** for pupils such as:

- physical long-term illness
- having a parent who has a mental health problem
- death and loss, including loss of friendships
- family breakdown
- bullying.

Staff should also recognise **positive factors** that protect children from adversity, such as:

- self-esteem
- communication
- problem-solving skills
- a sense of self-worth and belonging
- emotional literacy.

Appleford School Mental Health Lead works, with other staff, to coordinate school activities to promote positive mental health by:

- providing advice and support to staff
- keeping staff up-to-date with information about what support is available
- liaising with the PSHEE Leader on Mental Health teaching
- being the first point of contact and communicating with the Mental Health service
- leading on, and making referrals to services.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the school environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need support that is more intensive, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to pupils with mental health needs, and their families. This support includes:

- The School's Mental Health Team (Mental Health Lead, PSHEE co-ordinator, Pastoral team)

- The Medical Team (with Mental Health first-aiders)
- ELSA trained staff
- THRIVE trained staff
- DSL/DDSLs
- Their Learning Mentor

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- SENCO who helps staff to understand their responsibilities to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including pupils whose mental health problems mean they need special educational provision (SEMH)

Research shows that particular groups and individuals are at increased risk of having mental health problems. Table 1 demonstrates these risk factors for the child, family, school and local community, and also highlights some protective factors that are thought to make developing a mental health problem less likely.

Table 1: Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice for School Staff, DfE, (September, 2023)

	<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Protective Factors</i>
<i>In the child</i>	Genetic influences Low IQ learning and disabilities Specific development delay or neuro-diversity Communication difficulties Difficult temperament Physical illness Academic failure Low self-esteem	Being female (in younger children) Secure attachment experience Outgoing temperament as an infant Good communication skills, sociability Being a planner and having a belief in control Humour Problem solving and a positive attitude Experiences of success and achievement Faith or spirituality Capacity to reflect
<i>In the family</i>	Overt parental conflict including domestic violence Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) Inconsistent or unclear discipline Hostile or rejecting relationships Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs Physical, sexual neglect or abuse Parental psychiatric illness Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder Death and loss – including loss of friendship	At least one good parent – child relationship (or one supportive adult) Affection Clear, consistent discipline Support for education Supportive long-term relationship or the absence of a severe discord
<i>In the school</i>	Bullying Discrimination Breakdown of a lack of positive relationships Deviant peer influences Peer pressure Poor pupil to teacher relationships	Clear policies on behaviour and bullying 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems A whole school approach to promoting good mental health Positive classroom management A sense of belonging Positive peer influences
<i>In the community</i>	Socio-economic disadvantage Homelessness Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events Discrimination Other significant life events	Wider support network Good housing High standard of living High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying Opportunities for valued social roles Range of sport/leisure activities

Appleford School is committed to providing a supportive environment, but it is important to recognise that we are not a mental health facility and there are limits to the extent of support we can provide; in some cases, we will need pupils to seek outside support from the NHS and from other support services.

Longitudinal studies propose that the more risk factors a child has, the more likely they are to develop a mental health or behavioural problem. In particular, there is a correlation between socio-economic disadvantage, family breakdown and a child having cognitive or attention problems, increasing the likelihood of these children developing behavioural problems. Mentally healthy pupils are able to progress emotionally within the normal scope. Pupils acquiring behavioural difficulties beyond this normal scale are defined as experiencing mental health problems or disorders. These disorders can critically damage academic performance.

Warning Signs: Appleford School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional well-being issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing these signs should communicate their concerns with our Mental Health and Emotional Well-being Lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- changes in behaviour
- reduced concentration
- changes in eating/sleeping habits
- increasing isolation from friends or 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
- skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- being late to, or absent from, school
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- discontinuing hobbies or interests
- failing to take care of personal appearance/hygiene
- seeming euphoric, after a bout of depression
- often feeling anxious or worried
- frequently expressing anger or being intensely irritable much of the time
- having frequent stomach aches or headaches, with no physical explanation
- being in constant motion or unable to sit quietly for any length of time
- having trouble sleeping, including frequent nightmares
- losing interest in activities which were enjoyable
- avoiding spending time with friends
- having trouble doing well in school, or having declining academic grades
- obsessing about weight gain, exercising or dieting excessively
- having low or little energy
- exhibiting spells of intense, frenetic activity
- self-harming, such as cutting or burning his/her skin
- engaging in risky, destructive behaviour
- smoking, drinking, using drugs
- having suicidal thoughts
- researching suicide on websites, or social network sites
- thinking his/her mind is controlled, or out of control, hearing voices

At Appleford School, we understand our responsibilities and ensure that pupils with mental health difficulties are not discriminated against, making sure that we provide reasonable adjustments to support their learning in accordance with the Equality Act (2010). We aim to offer an empathetic environment which will support and aid pupils with mental health issues to accomplish their true academic potential. We do this by:

- encouraging young people's voice and authentic involvement in learning/decision making through the school council
- genuine participation with parents/carers/families, particularly those of young people in difficulty
- having an 'open door' policy to encourage pupils with mental health difficulties to seek support

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- signposting pupils to resource and tools such as <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/>
<https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/mental-health>
- encouraging staff to use MHFA ALGEE framework: a step-by-step action plan to use when providing support (Appendix 11)
- having effective procedures in place to deal with disclosures and confidentiality (and guidance on when information will be passed onto other people/parents if immediate health and safety concerns are raised)
- having an effective Child Safeguarding Policy functioning alongside this policy.

13. Self-care and signposting support:

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within Appleford School and in the local community. We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as toilets, and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum.

Sources of support at school

School-based Support:

- ☐ Form teachers and form tutors
- ☐ Pastoral department
- ☐ Medical administrator
- ☐ Mental Health Lead
- ☐ SLT

Self-Care and support: Self-care is defined as “The actions that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of and with others in order to develop, protect, maintain and improve their health, wellbeing or wellness”. Self-care techniques and general lifestyle changes can help manage the symptoms of many mental health problems. They may also help prevent some problems from developing or getting worse.

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/>

14. Working with parents, specialist services and supporting Peers:

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how to do so. 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 friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one, or group settings, and will be guided by conversations with the pupil who is experiencing the difficulty and their parents, with whom we will discuss what it is helpful for friends to know - and what they should not be told.

How friends can best support

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend 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 friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Working with Parents:

Parents often welcome assistance and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website;
- ensure all parents are aware of whom to talk to, if they have concerns about their own child, or a friend of their child; • make our Mental Health Policy easily accessible to parents;
- share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children;
- keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at School.

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's health issues can be upsetting and distressing and signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation. Where staff have met with parents to discuss concerns, lines of communication will be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage. A record of any meeting and points discussed/agree will be added to the pupil's record and an Individual Medical Action Plan created if appropriate.

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue
- Who should be present – pupils, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

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Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment:

In some case a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders. We have access to a range of specialist services, and during the support will have regular contact with the service to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the pupil's Medical Action Plan. School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Mental Health Lead/DSL, following the assessment process and all such referrals will be recorded. Referrals to specialist services will only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs.

Specialist Service	Referral process
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Accessed through Appleford School referral, GP or self-referral
Place2be	Accessed through Appleford School signposting
Educational Psychologist	Accessed via the SENDCo

Targeted support: We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

At Appleford School, we aim to support the emotional and mental health needs of pupils. We ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by: • Providing specific help for children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems

- Working closely with Children's Services, CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers.
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

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 pupils safe. Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be reviewed as part of our performance development process and training will be enhanced throughout the year as a result of developing situations with one, or more, pupils. Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host training sessions for all staff, to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Supporting Pupil's Positive Mental Health: Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including; *Pupil-led Activities*

- Buddy Bench
- Anti-Bullying Ambassadors

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- Prefects
- School Council or Boarding Council
- *Transition Support*
- Support for vulnerable children, for example, Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) support small group work such as Lego therapy or Social Communication Groups
- Transition meetings with parents, pupils and relevant staff
- Pastoral drop-ins or meet and greet service
- Key adults support vulnerable pupils e.g. Tutors, ELSA, Houseparents
- Lunch Clubs
- Social groups

Class activities

- Breathing/meditation in class
- PSHE lessons including self-care

Whole School

- ELSA Drop in sessions
- Alternative lunch options in Pastoral
- Weekly newsletter guides for parents
- Weekly Pastoral updates for staff
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support both within and outside of school

Small group activities

- Small friendship, social skills groups
- Lunch club support
- Pastoral rooms for those children that find some scenarios overwhelming

Teaching about Mental Health and Well-being

- Through PSHE we teach about social and emotional skills that will help pupils to be more resilient, understand about mental health and help reduce the stigma of mental health problems.

15. Confidentiality

Pupils will be encouraged to tell their parents about their problems or give permission for a member of staff to do so. Staff will never promise to keep secrets for students. If it is felt they are at risk to themselves, confidence will be broken and the parents informed. We realise that a pupil with mental health problems might not have the ability to recognise that they need help, if the need arises we will break confidentiality in order to get them the support they need.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on CPOMS including:

- ☐ Date ☐ Nature of the disclosure, main points from conversation and
- ☐ Staff Member to whom the disclosure was made agreed next steps

This information will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and appropriate professionals.

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Ideally, consent should be gained from the pupil first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as pupils up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with the DSL or DDSL this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the pupil. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support. Parents must always be informed following a disclosure but pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk from parents, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the safeguarding and child protection procedures should be followed.

16. References:

- Guide to investing in your relationships: mentalhealth.org.uk/relationship
- Mental health and well-being provision in schools: DfE: referencenRR837, ISBN:m978-1-78105-940-1
- Make it count, Pupils-guide: mentalhealth.org.uk
- Make it count: Teachers-guide: mentalhealth.org.uk
- Making the case for young people's mental health: MHFA England
- Every mind matters: Sleep, year 6 and Social Media, year 6
- Every mind matters: What to do about worry
- Mental health and behaviour in school: DfE-00327-2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>
- [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#) (DfE: 2023)
- Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk OCD UK www.ocduk.org Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org
- Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk
- Self-Harm www.selfharm.co.uk
- Suicidal thoughts [Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS](#): www.papyrus-uk.org
- www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and well-being www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)
- www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health
- COVID-19 operational guidance: DfE-00024-2021

APPENDIX 1: Additional information and Procedures for Specific Disorders

a) Anxiety <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/anxiety/>

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, like a worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone feels anxious from time to time and it usually passes once the situation is over. It can make a pupil's heart race, they might feel sweaty, shaky or short of breath. Anxiety can also cause changes in behaviour, such as becoming overly careful or avoiding things that trigger anxiety. When anxiety becomes a problem, worries can be out of proportion with relatively harmless situations. It can feel more intense or overwhelming, and interfere with everyday lives and relationships.

Signs of anxiety: Anxiety can show in a variety of ways: changes in the body, being constantly worried, changes in behaviour.

A pupil may:

- Feel tired, on edge, restless, irritable
- Feel a sense of dread
- Be unable to concentrate or make decisions
- Have trouble sleeping
- Feel sick, dizzy, sweaty or short of breath
- Be shaky or trembly
- Get headaches or tummy aches
- Avoid situations or put off doing things they are worried about
- Have difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Experience a noticeably strong, fast or irregular heartbeat
- Have pins and needles
- Have a dry mouth
- Sweat excessively
- Repeatedly check things or seek assurance from others

Anxiety affects everyone differently and can be brought on by different situations or experiences. It is the body's natural reaction to perceived danger, focusing our attention and giving us a rush of adrenaline to react, sometimes called the "fight or flight" response. Sometimes it can be difficult to know what is making a pupil anxious, which can be upsetting or stressful in itself. That's why learning to recognise what is making them anxious can help so they can deal with the uncertainty better. There are lots of things that can influence mental health, such as upbringing, childhood environment, things that happen and even temperament.

b) Eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder.

It's also common for people to be diagnosed with "other specified feeding or eating disorder" (OSFED), where symptoms do not match one particular eating disorder.

Some specific examples of OSFED include:

- **Atypical anorexia** – where someone has all the symptoms a doctor looks for to diagnose anorexia, except their weight remains within a "normal" range.
- **Bulimia nervosa (of low frequency and/or limited duration)** – where someone has all of the symptoms of bulimia, except the binge/purge cycles don't happen as often or over as long a period of time as doctors would expect.

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- **Binge eating disorder (of low frequency and/or limited duration)** – where someone has all of the symptoms of binge eating disorder, except the binges don't happen as often or over as long a period of time as doctors would expect.
- **Purging disorder** – where someone purges, for example by being sick or using laxatives, to affect their weight or shape, but this is not as part of binge/purge cycles.
- **Night eating syndrome** – where someone repeatedly eats at night, either after waking up from sleep, or by eating a lot of food after their evening meal.
- **Orthorexia** - refers to an unhealthy obsession with eating “pure” food. Food considered “pure” or “impure” can vary from person to person. This doesn't mean that anyone who subscribes to a healthy eating plan or diet is suffering from orthorexia. As with other eating disorders, the eating behaviour involved – “healthy” or “clean” eating in this case – is used to cope with negative thoughts and feelings, or to feel in control. Someone using food in this way might feel extremely anxious or guilty if they eat food they feel is unhealthy.

It's also possible for someone to move between diagnoses if their symptoms change – there is often overlap between different eating disorders. An Eating Disorder in a child is a mental health and safeguarding concern.

Risk Factors

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person more vulnerable to developing an eating disorder:

- difficulty expressing feelings and emotions
- a tendency to comply with others' demands
- very high expectations of achievement
- a home environment where food, eating, weight or appearance have a disproportionate significance
- an over-protective or over-controlling home environment
- poor parental relationships and arguments
- neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- overly high family expectations of achievement
- being bullied, teased or ridiculed due to weight or appearance
- pressure to maintain a high level of fitness/low body weight e.g. for sport or dancing.

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs, which indicate a pupil is experiencing difficulties that may lead to an eating disorder. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should follow the School's Safeguarding Procedures.

Physical Signs

- weight loss/weight gain
- dizziness, tiredness, fainting
- feeling Cold
- hair becoming dull or lifeless
- swollen cheeks
- callused knuckles
- tension headaches
- sore throats/mouth ulcers
- tooth decay

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- restricted eating/over-eating
- skipping meals
- scheduling activities during lunch
- strange behaviour around food
- wearing baggy clothes
- wearing several layers of clothing
- excessive chewing of gum/drinking of water
- increased conscientiousness
- increasing isolation/loss of friends
- believes s/he is fat when s/he is not
- secretive behaviour • excessive exercise
- control around food: removal of food groups, quantities and avoidance of social events.

Psychological Signs

- preoccupation with food
- sensitivity about eating
- denial of hunger despite lack of food
- feeling distressed or guilty after eating
- self-dislike
- fear of gaining weight
- excessive perfectionism.

Management of an Eating Disorder: Where there is found to be indicators of concern for disordered eating and/or potential ED diagnosis, the DSL must be informed and will refer the pupil for help. The decision about how, or if, to proceed with a pupil's schooling while they are suffering from an eating disorder (ED) will be made on a case-by-case basis by the leadership team. Input for this decision will be managed by the DSL and will include the pupil, parents and members of the multi-disciplinary therapeutic team treating the child.

Provision for the education of pupils with an ED are outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The Head will need to balance the wishes of a pupil with an ED to remain in school with the statutory requirement placed on all schools to consider the welfare of all children in its care. It may be necessary to make temporary arrangements for a pupil with an ED, until full re-integration to the school environment is deemed in the best welfare interests of all pupils.

The reintegration of a pupil with an ED into school following a period of absence should be handled sensitively. The pupil, parents and members of the multi-disciplinary therapeutic team treating the pupil will be consulted during both the planning and reintegration phase. Any meetings with a pupil and/or their parents and School Safeguarding team should be recorded in writing and include:

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed

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APPENDIX 2: Additional information and Procedures for Specific Disorders

Self-harm (Please see our Self-Harm Policy)

Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to deliberately cause harm to one's own body by:

- cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin
- swallowing inedible objects
- taking an overdose of prescription or non-prescription drugs
- swallowing hazardous materials or substances
- burning or scalding
- hair-pulling
- banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- scouring or scrubbing the body excessively
- abusing drugs and alcohol
- eating disorders.

Risk Factors: *The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person particularly vulnerable to self-harm:*

- depression

- anxiety
- poor communication skills
- low self-esteem
- poor problem-solving skills
- hopelessness
- impulsivity
- drug or alcohol abuse.

Family Factors

- unreasonable expectations
- neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- poor parental relationships and arguments
- depression, self-harm or suicide in the family.

Social Factors

- difficulty in making relationships/loneliness
- being bullied or rejected by peers
- encouragement to self-harm (including suicide) on social media.

Possible warning signs include:

- changes in eating/sleeping habits (e.g. pupil may appear overly tired if not sleeping well)
- increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity and mood e.g. more aggressive or introverted than usual
- lowering of academic achievement
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- abusing drugs or alcohol

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- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- changes in clothing e.g. always wearing long sleeves, even in very warm weather
- unwillingness to participate in certain sports activities e.g. swimming

Any member of staff who is aware of a pupil engaging in or suspected to be at risk of engaging in self-harm should follow the School's Safeguarding and Welfare procedures and consult the DSL.

Any meetings with a self-harming pupil and/or their parents and Safeguarding Team should be recorded on CPOMS by the DSL and include:

- Dates and times
- An action plan
- Concerns raised
- Details of anyone else who has been informed.

This information is stored in the pupil's safeguarding file held on CPOMS by the DSL. It is important to encourage pupils to tell an adult if they know/suspect one of their peers is showing signs of self-harming. Peers of the self-harming pupil will be supported by the Safeguarding Team, who will reinforce that pupils are not responsible for the care of pupils who self-harm. They will be given a clear course of action to follow if they become aware of continued self-harm, including notifying the DSL.

If a pupil has self-harmed or is at risk from doing so, the following short term welfare strategies are put in place:

- Immediate alert process if a pupil is absent from a lesson (staff have access to updated welfare list)
- Reduced access to tools for self-harming in lessons

Our welfare strategies will be closely monitored to assess progress; the pupil who self-harms will be expected to show a clear attempt to use relevant strategies to reduce self-harm. If progress is not made, or if the pupil does not co-operate within an agreed period of time, a meeting with parents/guardians will be set up to discuss future management. This may include a break from school and/or further professional referral. Incidents of self-harm, which lead to hospitalisation or significant medical intervention will lead to an enforced time at home. Return to school may be dependent on medical/psychiatric advice.

The peer group of a young person who self-harms may value the opportunity to talk to a member of staff either individually or in a small group. Any member of staff seeking further advice on this should consult the DSL.

When a young person is self-harming it is important to be vigilant in case close contacts with the individual are also self-harming. Occasionally schools discover that a number of pupils in the same peer group are harming themselves.

APPENDIX 3: HOW TO HELP FLOW CHART

Assessing if a pupil has a problem?

- Did the pupil tell you?
- Have other staff/pupils informed you of their concerns?
- Have you noticed an alteration in the pupil's appearance (weight increase/decrease, deterioration in personal hygiene)?
- Have you observed a variation in the pupil's mood (solitary, sad, depressed)?
- Has the pupil's behaviour recently declined?
- Has the pupil's academic accomplishment altered considerably?
- Has the pupil had these issues for a considerable time?



Deal with the situation.

Be ready to listen.

Speak confidentially.



After discussion with the pupil, if you still have concerns or further intervention is required, speak to the DSL or DDSL.

Ask the pupil for consent to share the information and tell the pupil with whom and what is being shared.



The DSL and DDSL meet to determine:

- if there are any child safeguarding concerns;
- who, if anyone the information should be referred to (other staff, parents, outside agencies);
- the next steps to be taken, which may include referral to outside agencies such as therapist, psychiatrists and/or emergency care;
- the appropriate support and follow up within Appleford School (and externally if required) will be arranged for the pupil and actions agreed.



Encourage them to tell parents.

Team to nominate someone to tell parents unless inappropriate/child safeguarding issues.

FOLLOW UP

Appleford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

should be taken into consideration when supporting

APPENDIX 4: Diagram 2 – Social Media and Mental Health

The following information supplements the main section of this policy and pupil mental and health and wellbeing.



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APPENDIX 5: Diagram 3 – Adverse Childhood Experiences

The following information supplements the main section of this policy and pupil mental and health and wellbeing.

1. What is it?

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) refer to stressful or traumatic events that children and young people can be exposed to as they are growing up. ACEs range from experiences that directly harm a child, such as physical, verbal or sexual abuse, and physical or emotional neglect, to those that affect the environments in which children grow up, such as parental separation, domestic violence, mental illness, alcohol abuse, drug use or imprisonment.

2. What is it?

There is a distinction between 'normal' stressful life events, such as parental divorce or illness of a loved one, and adverse childhood experiences, very traumatic life events, such as being or seeing someone else physically or sexually abused. These are experiences that will often be associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

3. Why does it matter?

The first UK study in Blackburn with Darwin (BWD; Bells et al 2014) found that increasing ACEs were strongly associated with adverse behavioural, health and social outcomes across the life course. Further studies found that almost half of the general population reported at least one ACE and over 8% reported four or more.

7. What should we do?

- Think about how those experiences will have an impact on the child's healthy development and on their behaviours.
- Recognise the signs, and see beyond a child just 'acting out'.
- Try to help them become more grounded, give them choices and allow them to feel more in control.
- Understand that it is likely this will have an impact on any attachment for that child and there will be mistrust. We need to try and build a relationship with the child that is different to ones they have experienced previously.
- Finally, it is important to remember that ACEs tend to be passed from generation to generation.



4. Why does it matter?

When exposed to stressful situations, the "fight, flight or freeze" response floods our brain with corticotrophin-releasing hormones (CRH), which usually forms part of a normal and protective response that subsides once the stressful situation passes. However, when repeatedly exposed to ACEs, CRH is continually produced by the brain, which results in the child remaining in this heightened state of alert and unable to return to their natural relaxed and recovered state.

5. What is the impact?

Children and young people who are exposed to ACEs have increased - and sustained - levels of stress. In this heightened neurological state a young person is unable to think rationally and is physiologically impossible for them to learn or develop. In the same way a child not having these experiences will.

6. What is the impact?

ACEs research shows that there is a strong dose-response relationship between ACEs and poor physical and mental health, chronic disease (such as type II diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, cancer), increased levels of violence, and lower academic success both in childhood and adulthood.

should be taken into consideration when supporting

APPENDIX 6: Diagram 4 – professional disagreement and escalation

The following information supplements the main section of this policy and pupil mental and health and wellbeing.



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APPENDIX 7:

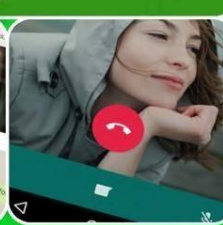
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WhatsApp is one of the most popular messaging apps in the world, with more than 1.5 billion people in more than 180 countries using it to send and receive text, photos, videos and documents, as well as make voice and video calls through an Internet or Wi-Fi connection. The free app offers end-to-end encryption, which means that messages can only be read by the sender and the recipient in one-to-one chats, or all members if it is a group chat. Not even WhatsApp can read them.








What parents need to know about

WhatsApp

AGE LIMIT CHANGE

Since May 2018, the minimum age for using WhatsApp is 16 years old if you live in the European Union, including the UK. Prior to this, the minimum age was 13, which still applies for the rest of the world. WhatsApp has not yet stated whether it will take action against anyone aged between 13 and 16 who already hold accounts under the old terms and conditions, such as closing their account or seeking parental permission.

FAKE NEWS AND HOAXES

WhatsApp has been linked to enabling the spread of dangerous viral rumours. In India, for example, a number of attacks appear to have been sparked by false rumours shared on WhatsApp.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

To start a chat in WhatsApp, you need to know the mobile number of the contact you want to speak to and they also need to have the app downloaded. WhatsApp can find contacts by accessing the address book of a device and recognising which of those contacts are using WhatsApp. If your child has shared their mobile number with someone they don't know, they can use it to get in touch via WhatsApp.

SCAM MESSAGES

Occasionally on WhatsApp, people receive spam messages from unauthorised third parties or from fraudsters pretending to offer prizes to 'lucky people', encouraging recipients to click on a link to win a prize. A common scam involves messages warning recipients that their WhatsApp subscription has run out with the hope that people are duped into providing their payment details. Other scam messages include instructions to forward the message in return for a reward or gift from WhatsApp or another person.

THE 'ONLY ADMIN' FEATURE AND CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is the act of sending threatening or taunting text messages, voice messages, pictures and videos, with the aim to hurt and humiliate the receiver. The group chat and group video call features are great for multiple people to chat simultaneously, but there is the potential for people to hurt others with their comments or jokes. The 'only admin' feature gives the admin of a group chat greater control over who can send messages. Whilst this can be good for one-way announcements, the group admin has the power to block somebody from responding to an offensive message in a chat, which could result in a child being upset and unable to reply.

LIVE LOCATION SHARING

WhatsApp's 'Live Location' feature enables users to share their current location in real time to their contacts in a chat, allowing friends to show their movements. The feature, which can be found by pressing the 'attach' button, is described by WhatsApp as a "simple and secure way to let people know where you are." Location-sharing is already a common feature on other social apps, including Snapchat's Snap Map and Facebook Messenger and can be a useful way for a child to let loved ones know they are safe. However, if your child is in a group chat with people they do not know, they will be exposing their location.



National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents



CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Even though somebody would need your child's phone number to add them as a contact, as an extra security measure we suggest altering their profile settings to control who can see their profile photo and status. The options to choose from are 'Everyone', 'My Contacts' and 'Nobody'. We suggest selecting 'My Contacts' or 'Nobody' to ensure their profile is protected.

REPORT SCAM MESSAGES

Advise your child not to tap, share or forward any message that looks suspicious or sounds too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they will be given the option to report the number as spam directly inside the chat. They can also report a contact or a group as spam using the following steps: 1) Open the chat. 2) Tap on the contact or group name to open their profile information. 3) Scroll to the bottom and tap 'Report Spam'.

DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES

If your child has sent a message to the wrong chat or if a message they sent has contained a mistake, they can delete it. To do this, simply tap and hold on the message, choose 'Delete' and then 'Delete for everyone'. The app allows seven minutes to delete the message after it has been sent, but it is important to remember that recipients may have seen and screenshot a message before it was deleted.

EXPLAIN HOW TO BLOCK PEOPLE

If your child has received spam or offensive messages, calls or attachments from a contact, they should block them. Messages and status updates sent by a blocked contact will not show up on the phone and will stay undelivered. Blocking someone will not remove this contact from the contact list - they will need to be removed from the phone's address book. To block a contact, your child needs to open the person's chat stream and tap on the settings.

LEAVE A GROUP

If your child is part of a group chat that makes them feel uncomfortable or has been added to a group they don't want to be part of, use the group's settings to show them how to leave. If someone exits a group, the admin can add them back in once, if they leave again, they cannot be added again.

SET TIME LIMITS

A 2017 study found that by the age of 14 the average child will have sent more than 35,000 texts, 30,000 WhatsApp messages and raked up more than three solid weeks of video chat. Although it is inevitable that your child will use technology, you can still set boundaries. This is not easy, especially since teens use their devices for both schoolwork and free time, often simultaneously.

USING LIVE LOCATION SAFELY

If your child needs to use the 'Live Location' feature to share with you or a friend, advise them to only share it for the amount of time they need to. WhatsApp gives the options of either 15 minutes, one hour or eight hours. However, your child can choose to stop sharing at any time.

SOURCES: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/apr/26/whatsapp-playstore-ban-under-16s-the-mystery-is-how> <https://whatsappbrand.com/> <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/whatsapp-update-latest-india-blocks-forward-messages-app-download-9454011.html>

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Appendix 8

Appleford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.



YouTube is a video sharing site/application that enables you to upload, view, rate, share and comment on a wide variety of videos. Consisting of a huge resource of information, advice and entertainment, YouTube now has 1.9 billion logged-in monthly users who watch a billion hours of video daily. Most of the content on Google-owned YouTube is uploaded by individuals, but organisations and media companies also offer some of their content via this platform.

AGE RESTRICTION
13+



What parents need to know about YouTube

SPENDING A PREMIUM

YouTube Premium (formerly YouTube Red) is a new paid streaming subscription service in the UK, offering a three-month free trial to tempt viewers into a £12-per-month plan. This includes the ability to download videos, stream videos with the app in the background, gives exclusive access to original content and a separate music streaming service and gaming app.



DANGEROUS 'CHALLENGE' & VIRAL VIDEOS

On YouTube, 'challenge videos' are shared quickly and can be very dangerous. One person may post a video of themselves doing something unusual like eating a hot chilli or jumping in a river and before you know it, the video goes viral and everyone wants to join in and share their videos. The speed in which challenge videos spread across the Internet makes it difficult to keep up with the latest ones.

SHARING VIDEOS

As well as watching videos, many children are keen to share their own videos online, emulating their YouTube heroes, such as Stampy or DanTDM. However, if they post something on YouTube, they may later regret it or feel embarrassed about what they have shared. There is also a risk that they will receive hurtful or negative comments regarding not only their content, but also their appearance. YouTube's comment section is infamous for being one of the most opinionated on the Internet.

IN-APP MESSAGING

When your child is logged into their Google account and browsing the YouTube website, they can share and talk about videos with their friends using the chat bubble. This can be found at the top right of the desktop site or through in-app messaging on their mobile or tablet. When they tap on the 'Friends' icon, they have a list of suggested people from their contacts - which can be any contact they've had on Google or somebody who has sent them an invite link.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE VIDEOS

As YouTube is the biggest video sharing website in the world, there is content available for all ages, meaning that some content will not be appropriate for your child. If you think that content is unsuitable, there is a flagging feature to submit it for review by YouTube staff, but you will need to be aware that just because video is not appropriate for a younger audience, it may not violate YouTube's policies. YouTube has mechanisms in place to automatically remove explicit and harmful content, yet offensive content may still slip through.



**National
Online
Safety**

Top Tips for Parents



TURN ON 'RESTRICTED' MODE

'Restricted Mode' is an optional setting you can use to help screen out potentially mature content you may prefer your child not to see. Restricted Mode works on the browser or device level, so must be turned on for each browser or device your child uses. To do this, follow these steps:

Desktop:

- Go to the bottom of any YouTube page and switch 'Restricted Mode' to 'ON'.
- To make it more difficult for this to be turned off, you will be given the option to lock restricted mode onto your browser.

Mobile:

- Tap the three vertical dots at the top-right on the screen and press, 'Settings'.
- Click on 'Restricted mode filtering'.
- Press 'Restrict'.

Please note that you can't 'lock' restricted mode on a phone in the same way that you can on a desktop. You will need to turn this on each time your child uses it.

CREATE A FAMILY GOOGLE ACCOUNT

By having a shared family Google account, checking the history will enable you to see exactly what your child is watching and sharing on YouTube. To see the history on a computer, on the right hand menu under the library section, click 'History'. On mobiles, the viewing history can be found by clicking on the 'Library' tab.

BLOCKING ACCOUNTS

When using YouTube, there may be instances where your child receives negative comments. If somebody's giving your child a difficult time, here's how to block them and prevent future comments and replies:

- Go to their channel/account by clicking on their name.
- Click on 'About'.
- Tap the dropdown box with an image of a flag on it.
- Press 'Block user'.
- Tap 'Submit'.

MONITOR WHAT YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING/POSTING

The only way to truly know what your child may have been watching is to regularly monitor them. You can do this by checking their viewing history. YouTube videos can also be easily downloaded, so it is important that your child understands the associated dangers of content they are uploading and that it could harm their online reputation in the future. Show them how to set their videos to private or choose a small network of YouTube users to share with. To get started, your child can use YouTube Studio which offers learning modules on creating a YouTube channel, however, you should encourage them not to use their real name.

'NEW FEATURES'

DIGITAL WELLBEING

YouTube has launched a tool called 'Time Watched' that allows you to see how long has been spent on the platform. Once you have discovered how much time has been spent on the app, there is the option to set a time limit. Once the limit is reached, a reminder will pop up on the screen. You can also disable sounds and vibrations to help resist the urge to check for notifications.

OPT FOR A FAMILY PREMIUM PLAN

A YouTube family Premium plan may be a cost-effective option if you have more than one child. For £17.99 a month, it allows you to share a YouTube paid membership with up to five other family members - aged 13 and older - living in the same household. As the account holder, or family manager, you must create a Google family account.

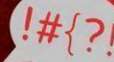
MANAGING IN-APP MESSAGES

If your child is accessing YouTube via your account, bear in mind that they may be contacted by Google contacts who are complete strangers to them. You can remove someone from the suggested contacts list by pressing and holding the person's name and tapping on the red 'x'.

POPULAR YOUTUBE GAMERS

There are hundreds of YouTube accounts which show other people playing and commenting on games. These are called 'Let's Play' videos. While YouTube can be a great resource for hints, tips and news for games, it is a good idea for parents to keep a close eye on what YouTube's are posting. Often, the games they are playing will contain strong language and violence. A few examples of popular YouTube gamers for you to have a look at are:

- Stampy
- Yogscast Lewis & Simon
- PewDiePie
- EthanGamer
- Markiplier
- PopularMMOs
- Captainsparklez
- Jacksepticeye
- LtCorbis
- Dan TDM



SOURCES: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/tech/6702517/youtube-porn-videos-roblox-sex-games-watch-online/>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-frnIP96M>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12auy7hc-hc>, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5126833/Terrifying-truth-child-watches-YouTube.html>, <https://www.todayparent.com/family/crazy-youtube-challenges-kids-are-doing/>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yek0Jb0s8g>, <https://tacoboca.com/magazine/common-sense-media-youtube/>, <http://familytech.com/so-your-kid-wants-to-start-their-own-youtube-channel/>, <https://www.laptopmag.com/articles/block-someone-youtube>, <https://www.youtube.com/intl/en-GB/yt/about/brand-resources/#logos-icons-colors>, <https://www.common-sense-media.org/blog/popular-youtube-gamers-kids-cant-get-enough-of-stamp>

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APPENDIX 9: ALGEE Action Plan

The MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE) is a step-by-step action plan to use when providing support to someone who may be experiencing a distressing situation, just as you would if you were administering first aid for a fall. The MHFA Action Plan has five steps, which can be used in any order.

- **A – Approach, assess for risk of suicide or harm.** Try to find a suitable time or place to start the conversation with the person, keeping their privacy and confidentiality in mind. If the person does not want to confide in you, encourage them to talk to someone they trust.
- **L – Listen non-judgmentally.** Many people experiencing a challenge or distress want to be heard first, so let the person share without interrupting them. Try to have empathy for their situation. You can get the conversation started by saying something like, “I noticed that ...” Try to be accepting, even if you don’t agree with what they are saying.
- **G – Give reassurance and information.** After someone has shared their experiences and emotions with you, be ready to provide hope and useful facts.
- **E – Encourage appropriate professional help.** The earlier someone gets help, the better their chances of recovery. So, it’s important to offer to help this person learn more about the options available to them.
- **E – Encourage self-help and other support strategies.** This includes helping them identify their support network, programs within the community, and creating a personalized emotional and physical self-care plan.

It is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to executing the MHFA Action Plan — you don’t even have to use every single step to provide support — and every situation will be different. If you are ever in a crisis situation where the person you are supporting is thinking about harming themselves or others, or is acting erratically, call 911 immediately, and tell the dispatcher that responders with specific training in mental health or crisis deescalation are needed. In non-crisis situations, you can go through the MHFA Action Plan and offer support to the person in need.

Regardless of the nature of the situation, staying calm is crucial as you offer support. Remember that your role is not to diagnose someone or solve the problem, but instead to provide support and information.

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Top tips to cope with anxiety



Shift your focus

Some people find relaxation, mindfulness or breathing exercises helpful. They reduce tension and focus our awareness on the present moment.

[Try NHS-recommended relaxation exercises](#)



Understand your anxiety

Try keeping a diary of what you are doing and how you feel at different times to help identify what's affecting you and what you need to take action on.



Challenge your anxious thoughts

Tackling unhelpful thoughts is one of the best things we can do to feel less anxious. Watch the video to find out more.

[Video: Reframing unhelpful thoughts](#)



Make time for worries

If your worry feels overwhelming and takes over your day, setting specific "worry time" to go through your concerns each day can help you to focus on other things. Watch the video for more advice.

[Video: Tackle your worries](#)



Face the things you want to avoid

It's easy to avoid situations, or rely on habits that make us feel safer, but these can keep anxiety going. By slowly building up time in worrying situations, anxious feelings will gradually reduce and you will see these situations are OK.



Look at the bigger picture

If we feel anxious about a situation, we might get stuck on the details and stop seeing things rationally. Thinking about your problem or situation from someone else's view can make it easier to come up with a plan. What advice would you give to a friend or family member?

11: Hands Up 4 Healthy Minds - Tips for talking with young people



Tips for talking with young people

**#HandsUp4
#HealthyMinds**

We believe talking about mental health can help you and those around you to be happier and healthier.

Anyone who works with or cares for a young person has the opportunity to play an active role in supporting their mental wellbeing. Giving a young person the chance to open up and have a conversation about their mental health can reassure them that help is available and empower them to access appropriate support should they need to.

Starting a conversation is the first step on that journey.

Creating a safe space

- Give yourself plenty of time so you don't appear to be in a hurry
- Meet in a neutral space such as a quiet room or pastoral room
- Sit down even if the other person is standing – it will make you seem less intimidating
- Make it clear that they are not in trouble

Talking tips

- Keep your body language open and non-confrontational
- Be empathetic and take them seriously
- Take into account cultural differences in communication styles e.g. how much eye contact is appropriate
- Do not offer glib advice such as "pull yourself together" or "cheer up"
- Keep the chat positive and supportive, exploring the issues and how you may be able to help

Useful questions to ask

- How long have you felt like this?
- How can I help you?
- What kind of support do you think might help you?
- How are you feeling at the moment?

How to listen

- Give the person your full focus and listen without interrupting
- Listen to their words, tone of voice and body language – all will give clues as to how they are feeling
- Accept them as they are. Respect the person's feelings, experiences and values although they may be different from yours. Do not judge or criticise because of your own beliefs and attitudes
- Don't make a moral judgement. Be genuine – show that you accept the person and their values by what you say and do
- Get on their wavelength. Place yourself in the young person's shoes and demonstrate to them that you hear and understand what they are saying and feeling

What happens next?

- Keep the conversation going – follow up and ask them how they are doing. Reassure them that you are always here if they want to talk, and really mean it.
- Give reassurance that there are lots of sources of support and some of these might be available at home through parents/carers, through their place of education, by visiting their GP, or online. If appropriate, offer to go with them to seek support.

Take a look at our list of support organisations for young people
To learn more about how to support the mental wellbeing of young people, visit mhfaengland.org
Find us on social media by searching 'MHFA England'

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12: [MHFA Self-Care Infographic](#)

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Self-care and support for young people

Some coping strategies are more helpful than others. As with any skill, we can always learn new ways of dealing with stress.

Here's some **self-care tips** to help **protect against stress**:

#HandsUp4
#HealthyMinds

Try

Nurture your physical health – body and mind are connected, so eat regular meals and find a fun form of exercise that suits you and your schedule.

Set aside time to have fun or do something nice for yourself – positive emotions can help build a buffer against stress.

Spend time on an activity you enjoy – whether painting, playing guitar, or learning a new sport.

Talk to someone – tell a trusted friend or family member about how you're feeling, or chat online on a support site like **Childline** or **The Mix**.

Avoid

Overdoing it on caffeine, alcohol or sugar – they're a quick fix which can increase stress in the long term.

Overworking – we all need time to unwind so try to build in short, regular breaks while you're studying, working or revising.

Chasing perfection – it can create unrealistic expectations. It's not fair to compare yourself, as a whole person, to social media highlights from someone else's life.

Too much screen time – it can affect your sleep, so try to switch off now and then, and don't feel pressured to always be reading, watching or playing something.

Bottling up your feelings and assuming they will go away – this can make things worse in the long run.

If you're struggling to manage your stress, don't keep it to yourself – there is no shame in seeking help.

A good place to start can be talking to your GP, your parent or carer, or a counsellor at your school/college/university.

There are also plenty of organisations out there who can help. See **list of support organisations**



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