MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Early support, emotional safety, appropriate referral and staff boundaries

EFFECTIVE: SEPTEMBER 2026 | REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2027 | IMPACT AP

1 | PURPOSE AND BOUNDARIES

Promote emotional wellbeing and enable learners to access education safely. Impact provides educational and pastoral support; staff must not diagnose mental illness or promise treatment beyond their competence. Use professional advice and commissioned support appropriately. The policy covers in-person, online, transport and off-site contact and links to Safeguarding, SEND, Attendance and Behaviour.

2 | LEADERSHIP AND REPORTING

Kate Willis leads pastoral coordination as Principal and DSL, supported by Deputy DSL Kirsty Lampkin. Every staff member notices changes and reports concerns promptly. Allocate a trusted adult where useful, with clear cover and boundaries. A wellbeing concern involving abuse, exploitation, neglect or risk of harm must follow safeguarding procedures without waiting for a pastoral meeting.

3 | RECOGNISING CHANGE

Notice persistent distress, withdrawal, panic, exhaustion, changes in attendance, concentration, relationships or behaviour. Ask calmly and privately what support would help, using accessible communication. Avoid assuming disruptive behaviour is deliberate or that quietness means safety. Record observable changes and the learner's words; consider physical health, sensory needs and circumstances as well as mental health.

4 | DAILY SUPPORTIVE PRACTICE

Provide predictable routines, clear expectations, calm transitions and opportunities to ask for help. Agree regulation strategies, safe breaks and check-ins. Use strengths and meaningful success to build confidence. Avoid public confrontation, forced disclosure, humiliation or pressuring learners to explain traumatic experiences in a group. Review support with the learner rather than imposing one approach on everyone.

5 | INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PLANS

Agree a proportionate plan with the learner, relevant family members, commissioner and professionals where appropriate. Record triggers, early signs, helpful strategies, responsibilities, contact arrangements and review dates. Connect the plan to EHCP provision where relevant. Describe what staff can actually provide and the contingency if the named adult or service is unavailable.

6 | IMMEDIATE RISK OR CRISIS

If someone is in immediate danger, has taken an overdose, is seriously injured or cannot be kept safe, call 999 and provide first aid within competence. Stay with them or maintain safe supervision, alert the DSL and remove avoidable hazards without increasing risk. Do not rely on a promise of safety. Record action and follow emergency or clinical advice.

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7 | SELF-HARM AND DISCLOSURES

Respond calmly, listen and avoid judgement, blame or requests for graphic details. Do not promise secrecy. Report promptly to the DSL and arrange appropriate medical and safeguarding assessment. Consider other learners affected and avoid circulating images or methods. Support must be based on individual need; a single checklist score or apparent reassurance does not settle the level of risk.

8 | FAMILY, REFERRAL AND CONSENT

Involve parents or carers when appropriate and safe, explaining any safeguarding reason for withholding or delaying contact. For adult learners, respect capacity, confidentiality and their choices while acting lawfully on serious risk. Coordinate with the commissioner, GP, mental-health or social-care services. Record referrals, expected response and follow-up; a referral alone does not mean support has begun.

9 | ATTENDANCE AND REINTEGRATION

Agree a supported return after crisis or extended absence, with clear education, supervision and review arrangements. Any reduced programme must be justified, commissioned and regularly reviewed, not an indefinite informal exclusion. Share necessary safety information with responsible staff. Do not demand disclosure of a diagnosis as the only route to a reasonable adjustment.

10 | CONFIDENTIALITY AND QUALITY REVIEW

Keep records accurate and secure, sharing only what is needed for safety and delivery. Staff seek supervision and support while maintaining professional boundaries; no private counselling through personal accounts. Kate reviews concerns, attendance, learner feedback and effectiveness of support. Escalate unmet needs with commissioners and record actions and outcomes.

11 | POLICY CONTROL AND REVIEW

Policy owner: Kate Willis, Principal and Proprietor. Effective date: September 2026. Scheduled review: September 2027, or sooner after relevant changes, incidents or feedback. Record actual governance approval and implementation decisions and brief staff on their duties. These policy dates do not assert that approval, staff training or operational checks have already occurred. Use the Complaints or independent reporting route for concerns about implementation.

12 | SOURCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

DfE: Mental health and behaviour in schools; Impact safeguarding and healthcare procedures.

gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2

Check current versions and apply according to Impact's legal and commissioning status.