



Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

This policy has been produced for GEMS FirstPoint School, when 'The School' is referred to in this policy it is solely GEMS FirstPoint School that is being referred to.

Review Cycle	1 Year
Last Review	October 2023
Next Review	November 2024





Policy Statement

At GEMS FirstPoint School we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard and by using effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

Scope

This policy is a guide to all parents and staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining GEMS FirstPoint School's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

Our Wellbeing Vision Crafted by Students

We aim for our school to be a comfortable, happy and joyful environment where we are kind to each other. We aim for our school to feel like home, where we all show understanding towards one another and where **everyone fees included**.

Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in students.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to students with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst students and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.

Key Staff Members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Class teachers, TAs, LSAs, Tutors
- School Counsellor
- Head of Inclusion
- Mental Health First Aid trained staff.
- HODs Moral, Social, Cultural Studies
- Designated Safeguarding Lead & Designated Mental Health Lead and Deputy DSLs
- The School Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student, in the first instance they should speak to the Head of Primary School or Head of Secondary School, as applicable.

If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed, and the DSL (or Deputy DSL) must be informed immediately. If the child presents a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

Positive Psychology

GEMS FirstPoint School recognises the importance of Martin Seligman’s Positive Psychology approach.



The GEMS FirstPoint School Positive Education Approach

Martin Seligman (2011) asks what it is that enables us to cultivate talents, to build deep, lasting relationships, to feel pleasure, and to contribute meaningfully to the world? In a word, what is it that allows us to flourish? Seligman identifies 6 key areas of wellbeing:

1. positive emotions
2. engagement
3. relationships
4. meaning
5. achievements
6. health. At GEMS FirstPoint School we recognise these areas and, crucially, we pinpoint how they are developed for each of our students.

We are committed to the wellbeing of the GEMS FirstPoint School community, collectively and individually.

	For Students
Positive Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Happiness Wall and ‘Random acts of Kindness’ Wellbeing Tree ○ Daily Positive Conversations (What went well? Why?) ○ Wellbeing Curriculum as part of Moral, Social, Cultural Studies ○ Mental Health First Aid trained staff ○ Outdoor mindfulness and peaceful spaces ○ Wellbeing Warriors providing peer support ○ School Counselor Support ○ A culture of celebration through weekly assemblies ○ Assemblies with a consistent Wellbeing theme threaded throughout ○ Leuven Scales & PASS survey analysis and responses ○ Play leaders
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rich and varied co-curricular programme affording students wide opportunities for “flow”. ○ Strengths identification and development through scholarship/Higher Performance Learning Programmes. ○ School House System competitions and events ○ Happiness & Wellbeing council
Relationships (The FPS Family)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A sense of belonging, through sports teams & clubs ○ Whole School House System – Air Falcons, Earth Leopards, Fire Foxes and Water Sharks ○ School community events (Picnic on the green etc) ○ Student community groups ○ Coffee mornings / parent engagement sessions
Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The GEMS FirstPoint School Vision, Mission, Values – ‘Find Personal Success’ which guides our actions and aspirations ○ Values & Aims of the school ○ Opportunities for charity and supporting local community ○ The ‘end goal’ – University Placements, Internships, Careers Duke of Edinburgh & Mini Dukes Awards
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Celebrating achievements in assembly ○ Regular Goal setting and celebrating incremental success





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A culture of a Growth Mindset approach - the power of 'not yet' ○ Student Spotlight
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wide range of PE lessons with swimming as a key strength as well as active learning such as Desert School ○ High quality medical facilities and staff ○ Care plans where required ○ Wellbeing Room and School Wellbeing Support and Counselor
Overarching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student wellbeing surveys & actions ○ Wellbeing intervention plans (barrier plans) where required

Despite all we do to promote positive mental health we know that some Students may suffer from poor mental health

Individual Care Plans

When a student has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support through another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the student, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the student's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency?
- The role the school and specific staff

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our students need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our Wellbeing curricula, assemblies and our Wellbeing Warrior support.

We will follow the guidance issued with regard to Moral, Social, Culture, Studies to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively. This curriculum is supplemented by relevant resources.

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote students' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of students' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges. **See Section on Supporting Peers**



Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services. Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure students understand:

- What help is available?
- Who is it aimed at?
- How to access it
- Why should they access it?
- What is likely to happen next?

Sources of support at school and in the local community / School based support:

What is it?	Who is it suitable for?	How is it accessed?	How is this communicated?
Class teacher or tutor pastoral support	All students from FS to Year 13	Student or parent talks to class teacher or tutor	At the beginning of each year through class and parent communication and regularly repeated
Year Group Leader / Head of Year	Students from FS to Year 13	Student or parents talks to Year Group Leader / HOY	At the beginning of the year through class and parent communication
Senior Leadership Support	All students from FS to Year 13	Student or parent talks to member of SLT	At the beginning of the year through assemblies and letters / curriculum information sessions
School Counsellor & Wellbeing Support	All students, parents, and staff	Referral made by staff, student or parents	Regular communication to parents through newsletter and letters, open events and through assemblies Staff Induction
Mental Health First Aid Trained Staff	All students from FS to Year 13	MHFA Champion supports staff working with students	Staff INSET and Induction
Group Support with School Counsellor & Wellbeing Support	All students in FS to Year 13	Referral made by staff	Inclusion Team Liaison
Year 6 & 13 wellbeing Warriors	All students	Student to speak with peers	Assemblies

Local Support

In Dubai, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support for mental health. A Government portal for Mental Health is available here - [Mental health - The Official Portal of the UAE Government](#)

Emirates Health Services which provides Mental Health Services - [Mental Health Services | Services Directory | Services | Emirates Health Services - UAE \(ehs.gov.ae\)](#)





Warning signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student or colleague is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning sign should alert one of the Key Staff Members noted on page 2.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement / enthusiasm for vocation
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or loss of hope

Identifying need

The school has standing agenda items of safeguarding, student welfare and health and safety to ensure these key areas are maintained as a regular focus. These are opportunities for all and Key Staff to identify emerging signs of students with poor mental health and swiftly act upon any concerns.

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 mental health services, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We are fortunate to have a School Counsellor and Wellbeing Support worker located at the school to support and provide advice to the community around the emotional and mental health needs of our students. Work is undertaken with families and individuals where required. Our Key Staff, as identified earlier in the policy, work hard to identify issues early, determine potential risks and provide early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural challenges.
- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems.
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach.
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs.
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, 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.

Managing disclosures

If a student 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 using 'Guard' and raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy DSLs). Our Wellbeing Warriors, as Year 6 & 13 students, are trained so that any disclosures made to them will immediately be reported to the appropriate Assistant Head teacher (who coordinates the Wellbeing Warriors) and ultimately Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy DSL as appropriate. Support will be available for a Wellbeing Warriors through regular meetings with the School Counsellor and Assistant Head teachers (Primary and Secondary School)

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on serious concerns about a student to someone outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the student and/or parents. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell.
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them.
- When we are going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the student and/or parents first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as when students are deemed to be in danger of harm.


It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a Key Staff Member or DSL as appropriate, this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the student. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

If a student gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Working with Parents

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents of any concerns, there are questions we consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Can the meeting take place somewhere quiet without disturbance?
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents, Key Staff Members etc?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?



We are mindful that for any parent, hearing about concerns for their child can be upsetting and distressing. 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. Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should 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. Ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the student's record on Guard / SIMS as appropriate and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

Supporting Parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing students' emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to material promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems.
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (social media, newsletters etc.)
- Offering support to help parents develop their parenting skills as appropriate.
- Offering bespoke 1:1 support and advice through our School Counsellor
- Having open lines of communication between parents and class teacher or tutor, Year Group Lead or Head of Year and Key Staff Members

Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from poor mental health, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the student who is suffering, 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
- 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.

Training

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 to enable them to keep students safe. Additional and specific training is undertaken by all staff regarding supporting Mental Health in children.

All staff are encouraged to visit <https://www.minded.org.uk/> learning portal which provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

PASS survey analysis and actions training.



Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Suggestions for individual, group, or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Vice Principal who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Related Policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- E-Learning Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Inclusion and SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy