Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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Note	This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director		

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1. Supporting Documents

- Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002)
- PSHE & RSHE Policy (EDE.POL.003)
- Attendance Policy (EDU.POL.005)
- Behaviour Policy (EDU.POL.027)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy (EDU.POL.022)
- Anti-bullying Policy and Critical Incidents Policy (EDU.POL.045)

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

2. Introduction

At The Acres, we believe good mental health and wellbeing are the foundation for learning and for a happy life. We treat mental health with the same care as physical health. Many of our pupils have lived through difficult experiences and arrive with social, emotional and mental health needs, so supporting wellbeing is not an add-on for us. It is central to everything we do.

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This policy sets out our whole-school approach to promoting positive mental health, how we identify and support pupils who need more help, and how we respond with care when a pupil is struggling, including in relation to self-harm and thoughts of suicide. We work in a relational, trauma-informed way and in partnership with families and health services.

3. Aim & Scope

This policy applies to all staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers, and visitors at The Acres. It aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for every pupil and member of staff.
- Help staff identify pupils who need more support and respond early.
- Set out how we provide and arrange support, including referral to specialist services.
- Explain how we respond safely and compassionately to self-harm and to concerns about suicide.
- Make clear that mental health is treated as a safeguarding matter where a pupil may be at risk.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

Mental health and wellbeing. How a person thinks, feels and copes with everyday life. Good wellbeing is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to cope, to recover and to thrive with the right support.

Whole-school approach. Promoting mental health across every part of school life, from ethos and relationships to curriculum, environment, pupil voice, staff training, working with parents, and targeted support.

Senior mental health lead. The member of the leadership team who oversees the school's whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Self-harm. When a person hurts themselves on purpose, usually as a way of coping with difficult feelings. It is a sign of distress and is responded to with care, not punishment.

5. Policy Content

5.1 Principles and Approach

Our approach rests on the following principles.

Parity with physical health. We treat mental health and wellbeing as seriously as physical health.

A whole-school approach. We build wellbeing into our ethos, relationships, curriculum, environment and daily practice, not just into our support for those in difficulty.

Relational and trauma-informed. We understand behaviour as communication, and we respond with relationships, safety and understanding.

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Early identification. We notice changes early and act, rather than waiting for a crisis. Staff support, they do not diagnose.

Our role is to notice, support and refer. Diagnosis is for trained health professionals.

Partnership. We work with parents, carers and health services, and we treat mental health as a safeguarding matter where a pupil may be at risk.

5.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing in Practice

A whole-school approach

At The Acres, we promote wellbeing through a calm, safe and welcoming environment, strong relationships between staff and pupils, and a culture where it is normal to talk about feelings and to ask for help. Pupil voice shapes our approach, and wellbeing runs through our curriculum, including our relationships, sex and health education.

Promoting positive mental health

We teach pupils about emotions, resilience and how to look after their own wellbeing and seek help, in an age-appropriate and accessible way. We build in opportunities for connection, achievement, physical activity and time outdoors, and we celebrate effort and progress so that every pupil can experience success.

Identifying pupils who need more support

Staff are well placed to notice when a pupil is struggling, for example a change in mood, behaviour, attendance, appearance, friendships or engagement. We pay particular attention to pupils who are more vulnerable, including those with special educational needs, those who have experienced trauma or loss, and those facing difficulties at home. Staff do not diagnose. They record what they notice and pass it to the senior mental health lead or designated safeguarding lead so that support can be put in place.

Graduated support and referral

Where a pupil needs more than universal support, we offer help that is matched to their needs. This may include time with a trusted adult, in-school wellbeing or therapeutic support, and an individual support plan agreed with the pupil and their family. Where a pupil needs specialist help, we make a referral with consent to services such as the local Child and Young People's Mental Health Service or a Mental Health Support Team, and we work alongside them. Where mental health needs are part of a wider special educational need, we link this support to the pupil's plan and the SEND Code of Practice. We use early help where a family would benefit from coordinated support.

Working with parents and carers

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We involve parents and carers as partners. We tell them when we have a concern, listen to what they know about their child, and plan support together. We share information sensitively and only as needed, and we signpost families to further help. Where there is a safeguarding risk, we follow our Safeguarding Policy (EDE.POL.002).

Responding to self-harm

We respond to self-harm calmly, with compassion and without judgement, and we never treat it as a disciplinary matter. Where staff become aware that a pupil may be self-harming, they keep the pupil safe, seek any needed first aid or medical help, and involve the designated safeguarding lead and a trained member of staff straight away. We assess risk, agree a support and safety plan with the pupil and, in the great majority of cases, their family, and we work with health services where needed. We are mindful of the wellbeing of other pupils and of confidentiality, and we balance a pupil's privacy with the need to keep them safe.

Responding to concerns about suicide

We take any sign that a pupil may be thinking about suicide seriously. Staff who have such a concern act immediately, stay with the pupil, and contact the designated safeguarding lead and a trained member of staff without delay. We secure any immediate medical help that is needed, involve the pupil's family other than in the rare case where this would increase the risk, and work with health and emergency services as appropriate. We follow a planned, trained response, and we make sure staff and pupils affected are supported afterwards, linking to our Critical Incidents Policy (EDU.POL.045) where needed.

Following a serious mental health incident, the school will undertake a structured debrief and review to ensure lessons are identified and support is adjusted where necessary.

Mental health as a safeguarding matter

Keeping Children Safe in Education is clear that mental health is a safeguarding issue. Where a pupil's mental health gives rise to a concern that they may be suffering or at risk of harm, we act through our Safeguarding Policy (EDE.POL.002), involve the designated safeguarding lead, and record our actions. We are alert to the links between mental health and other concerns such as abuse, neglect, bullying, online harm and exploitation.

Supporting our staff

Supporting pupils with significant needs can affect staff. At The Acres, we look after the wellbeing of our staff, provide access to support and supervision, and make sure no member of staff carries a serious concern about a pupil alone.

5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

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Wellbeing concerns, support plans and any safeguarding actions are recorded on CPOMS. Leadership and the senior mental health lead monitor wellbeing and support data, review the impact of what we do, and report to the proprietor and governors, so that The Acres keeps improving its approach.

5.4 Equality and Inclusion

At The Acres, this policy is applied fairly and in line with the Equality Act 2010. We make reasonable adjustments so that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities can access wellbeing support, and we are alert to the particular pressures faced by different groups of pupils. Any concern that this policy disadvantages a pupil should be raised with the headteacher.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Pupils

Are encouraged to talk to a trusted adult about how they feel, and to look out for one another.

6.2 Staff

- Build positive relationships, notice changes in a pupil, and pass concerns to the right person promptly;
- Respond to distress, self-harm or talk of suicide calmly and supportively, and involve the designated safeguarding lead.

6.3 Leadership and the senior mental health lead

Leadership at The Acres makes sure wellbeing is a priority across the school. The senior mental health lead at The Acres oversees the whole-school approach, the support offer, staff training, and the links with health services.

6.4 Governance

The proprietor and governors at The Acres make sure the school has an effective whole-school approach to mental health and that this policy is followed, and they review wellbeing and support data.

6.5 Parents and carers

Work in partnership with the school regarding their child's wellbeing, and are involved in planning support.

6.6 Named leads

The senior mental health lead at The Acres is Leah Dent – Pastoral Lead, Robyn Taylor is SENDCo. The designated safeguarding lead is Jessica Howkins.

Training Requirements

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All staff receive training to understand mental health and wellbeing, to spot the signs that a pupil needs help, and to respond to distress, self-harm and talk of suicide calmly and safely. The senior mental health lead, designated safeguarding lead and mental health first aiders at The Acres receive role-specific training, and our trauma-informed approach is refreshed regularly.

7. Equality Impact Statement

All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

8. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current statutory guidance and legislation, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025, and 2026 from 1 September 2026), which treats mental health as a safeguarding issue.
- Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges (DfE, 2021, updated 2026).
- Mental health and behaviour in schools (DfE, November 2018).
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance (DfE, 2025, statutory from 1 September 2026).
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice (2015), under which social, emotional and mental health is a type of special educational need.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026).

9. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The named owner for review at The Acres is the headteacher.

10. Appendices

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10.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

Mental Health Leadership
The school's Senior Mental Health Leads are:

- **Leah Dent, Pastoral Lead**
- **Robyn Taylor, SENDCo**

Mental health provision is overseen in partnership with:

- **Jessica Howkins, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**
- Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Mental Health Leads are responsible for:

- Coordinating the school's whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Monitoring intervention impact and outcomes.
- Liaising with families and external agencies.
- Supporting referrals to specialist services.
- Ensuring appropriate staff training and awareness.

Universal Mental Health and Wellbeing Offer
The Acres promotes positive mental health through:

- Daily relational practice and positive staff-pupil relationships.
- Trauma-informed approaches across all areas of provision.
- Pastoral check-ins.
- PSHE and RSHE curriculum delivery.
- SMSC curriculum themes.
- Wellbeing-focused assemblies.
- Pupil voice opportunities.
- Outdoor learning and enrichment activities.
- Celebration of achievement and personal success.
- Safe spaces for emotional regulation.

All pupils have access to universal wellbeing support as part of everyday school life.

Targeted Mental Health Support
Where pupils require additional support, interventions may include:

- Key adult mentoring.
- Pastoral support plans.
- ELSA interventions.
- Drawing and Talking therapy.
- Emotional regulation programmes.
- Social skills interventions.
- Therapeutic conversations.
- Transition support programmes.
- Anxiety management support.
- Attendance-related wellbeing support.

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The type, duration and impact of interventions are monitored through school systems and reviewed regularly.

Specialist and External Agency Support

The Acres works in partnership with a range of external agencies where specialist support is required.

These may include:

- CAMHS
- Educational Psychology
- Mental Health Support Teams
- Early Help Services
- School Nursing Service
- Children's Social Care
- Family Support Services
- Community Health Services

Current CAMHS contact details:

St Nicholas House, Shelford Street, Scunthorpe, DN15 6NU
Telephone: 01724 408460

Identification and Referral Processes

Mental health concerns may be identified through:

- Safeguarding records.
- Behaviour monitoring.
- Attendance monitoring.
- Pastoral referrals.
- Parent/carer concerns.
- Staff observations.
- Pupil self-referral.
- External agency recommendations.

Concerns are discussed with the Mental Health Lead and/or DSL and recorded on CPOMS where appropriate. Support plans and referrals are implemented using a graduated response model.

Self-Harm and Suicide Risk Management

All self-harm concerns are treated as safeguarding concerns.

The school will:

- Ensure immediate safety of the pupil.
- Inform the DSL without delay.
- Contact parents/carers unless doing so presents additional risk.
- Seek medical assistance where necessary.
- Complete risk assessments and safety planning.
- Liaise with external health services.
- Record actions on CPOMS.

Following significant incidents, leadership will undertake a structured review and provide wellbeing support for affected pupils and staff.

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Staff Wellbeing

The Acres recognises that supporting pupils with complex needs can impact staff wellbeing.

Support available for staff includes:

- Regular supervision and support from leaders.
- Access to wellbeing discussions.
- Debrief opportunities following significant incidents.
- Employee assistance programmes where available.
- Training on trauma-informed practice.
- Mental health awareness training.

Staff are encouraged to seek support at an early stage and raise wellbeing concerns with their line manager.

Monitoring and Evaluating Impact

Mental health provision is reviewed through:

- Intervention outcome data.
- Attendance trends.
- Behaviour and safeguarding data.
- Pupil voice surveys.
- Parent/carer feedback.
- Staff feedback.
- EHCP outcomes where applicable.
- Team Around the Child reviews.

This information is used to evaluate effectiveness and shape future wellbeing provision across the school.

Local Mental Health Priorities at The Acres

Due to the needs of pupils attending The Acres, particular focus is given to:

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- Anxiety and emotional regulation.
- Trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Attendance and emotionally based school avoidance.
- Self-esteem and resilience.
- Online safety and emotional wellbeing.
- Preparation for adulthood and transition planning.

The school's wellbeing offer is designed to meet these identified areas of need through an integrated pastoral, therapeutic and safeguarding approach.

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10.2 Appendix B: Sources of Support

The Head completes this section so that pupils, parents and carers know where to turn for help, including in a crisis. Include the school's own contacts and local and national services.

- School contact for a wellbeing concern: DSL, Jessica Howkins, Leah Dent, Pastoral Lead or Robyn Taylor, SENDCO

Local services, for example the GP, CAMHS and the local crisis line: St Nicholas House, Shelford St, Scunthorpe DN15 6NU. **Phone:** 01724 408460

National sources of support the school signposts:

- Call crisis line on 988 or 111
- Samaritans 116 123
- Childline 08001111
- CALM 0800 585858
- Papyrus – 0300 102 2470, text 88247

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