Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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1. Aims

At Red Balloon of the Air (RBAir), we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of learners, parents/carers and staff.

This policy focuses on learners' mental health and wellbeing. It aims to:

- set out RBAir's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all learners;

- provide guidance to staff on their role in supporting learners' mental health and wellbeing, including how they can foster and maintain an inclusive culture in which learners feel able to talk about and reflect on their experiences of mental health;
- support staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental health issues and understand that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a learner has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- inform learners and their parents/carers about the support they can expect from RBAir in respect of learners' mental health and wellbeing and provide them with access to resources;
- ensure clear systems and processes are in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy was written regarding:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Articles 3 and 23 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2026 — Statutory guidance for schools and colleges
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) — Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (Department for Education, 2018) — Non-statutory advice for school staff
- Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges in April 2026

3. Roles and responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across RBAir and for understanding risk factors. If any members of staff are concerned about a learner's

mental health or wellbeing, they should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and add concerns to CPOMS.

Staff are aware that only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem, but education staff are well placed to observe learners daily and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Certain members of staff have extra duties to lead on mental health and wellbeing at RBAir. These members of staff include:

3.1. The Therapy Team Lead

The Therapy Team Lead:

- line manages all therapists across RBAir and ensures safe provision in line with Therapeutic Frameworks;
- coordinates support for the mental health needs of learners at RBAir and oversees the delivery of interventions where these are being delivered within the educational setting;
- supports the identification of at-risk learners, and those exhibiting signs of mental ill health;
- supports staff in contact with learners with mental health needs to help raise awareness, and gives all staff the confidence to work with learners;
- oversees and monitors the outcomes of interventions on learner education and wellbeing;
- works closely with the DSL to ensure mental health concerns that are also safeguarding concerns are appropriately escalated.

3.2. The Mental Health Lead

The role of the RBAir Mental Health Lead is not to necessarily provide interventions, but to have an organisational overview and to coordinate the RBAir approach to positive mental health and wellbeing, in line with any specific RBAir policies.

As endorsed by the Department for Education, they will:

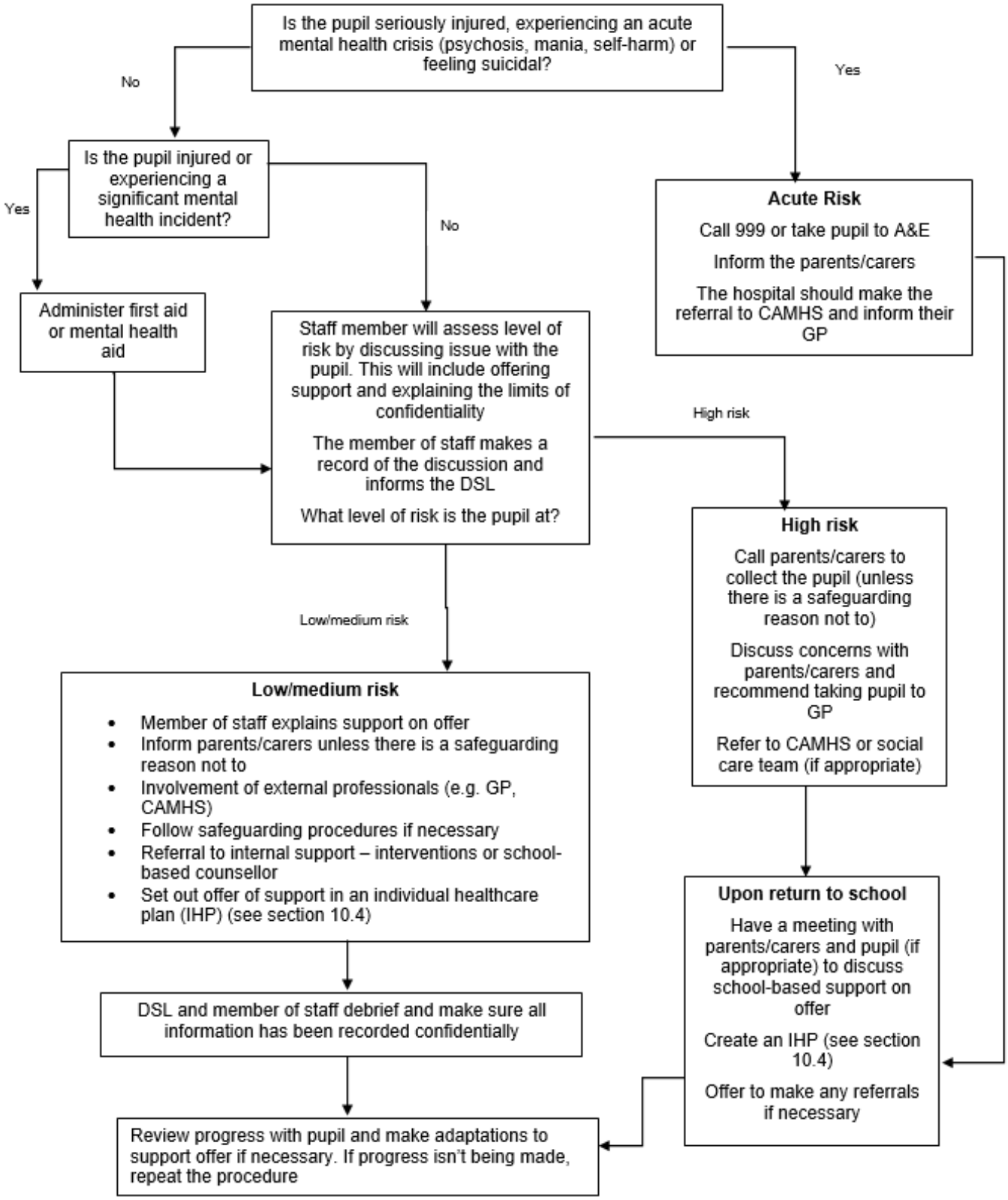
- oversee RBAir's approach to mental health and wellbeing, including how it is reflected in the design of behaviour policies, curriculum and pastoral support, how

staff are supported with their own mental wellbeing and how learners and parents are engaged;

- ensure staff understand the process for identifying and responding to mental health concerns, including when these may indicate safeguarding issues;
- work with the DSL to ensure appropriate referral pathways are in place and understood by all staff.

4. Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis

If staff have a mental health concern about a learner that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action must be taken to follow RBAir's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and by speaking to the DSL or a deputy DSL.


Is the pupil seriously injured, experiencing an acute mental health crisis (psychosis, mania, self-harm) or feeling suicidal?
No
Yes
Is the pupil injured or experiencing a significant mental health incident?
Yes
No
Acute Risk
Call 999 or take pupil to A&E
Inform the parents/carers
The hospital should make the referral to CAMHS and inform their GP
Administer first aid or mental health aid
Staff member will assess level of risk by discussing issue with the pupil. This will include offering support and explaining the limits of confidentiality
The member of staff makes a record of the discussion and informs the DSL
What level of risk is the pupil at?
High risk
Low/medium risk
High risk
Call parents/carers to collect the pupil (unless there is a safeguarding reason not to)
Discuss concerns with parents/carers and recommend taking pupil to GP
Refer to CAMHS or social care team (if appropriate)
Low/medium risk
Member of staff explains support on offer
Inform parents/carers unless there is a safeguarding reason not to
Involvement of external professionals (e.g. GP, CAMHS)
Follow safeguarding procedures if necessary
Referral to internal support – interventions or school-based counsellor
Set out offer of support in an individual healthcare plan (IHP) (see section 10.4)
Upon return to school
Have a meeting with parents/carers and pupil (if appropriate) to discuss school-based support on offer
Create an IHP (see section 10.4)
Offer to make any referrals if necessary
DSL and member of staff debrief and make sure all information has been recorded confidentially
Review progress with pupil and make adaptations to support offer if necessary. If progress isn't being made, repeat the procedure

5. Warning signs

All staff will be on the lookout for signs that a learner's mental health is deteriorating. Some warning signs include:

- changes in mood or energy levels;
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns;
- changes in attitude in lessons or academic attainment;
- changes in levels of personal hygiene;
- social isolation;
- poor attendance or punctuality;
- expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure;
- abuse of drugs or alcohol;
- rapid weight loss or gain;
- secretive behaviour;
- covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously;
- refusing to participate in certain activities or being secretive when changing clothes;
- physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause;
- physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted;
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide;
- increased absence from RBAir, particularly on repeated occasions and/or prolonged periods;
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups;
- a significant decline in educational performance;
- signs of assault or unexplained injuries;
- unexplained gifts or new possessions;

Staff understand that learners may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a learner.

6. Managing disclosures

If a learner makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgemental and reassuring.

Staff will focus on the learner's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow RBAir's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and pass on all concerns to the DSL. All disclosures are recorded and stored in CPOMS, the safeguarding database.

Staff understand that they should never promise a learner that they will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the learner.

Staff are able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse and/or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When making a record of a disclosure, staff will include:

- the full name of the member of staff who is making the record;
- the full name of the learner(s) involved;
- the date, time and location of the disclosure;
- the context in which the disclosure was made;
- any questions asked or support offered by the member of staff.

7. Confidentiality

Staff will not promise a learner that they will keep a disclosure secret – instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

Disclosures should not be kept secret because:

- the DSL needs to assess the level of risk to the learner and whether further action needs to be taken;
- being the sole person responsible for a learner's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing;
- staff should always share disclosures with at least one appropriate colleague. This will usually be the DSL. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Staff understand that the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping learners safe and promoting their welfare. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of learners.

Before sharing information disclosed by a learner with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the learner and explain:

- who they will share the information with;
- what information they will share;
- why they need to share that information.

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the learner to share their information, but the safety of the learner comes first.

Parents/carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern which would indicate that it would be unsafe to do.

8. Process for managing confidentiality around disclosures

1. Learner makes a disclosure.

2. Member of staff offers support.

3. Member of staff explains the issues around confidentiality and rationale for sharing a disclosure with DSL.

4. Member of staff will attempt to get the learner's consent to share – if no consent is given, the staff member will explain to the learner who the information will be shared with and why .

5. Member of staff will record the disclosure into CPOMS and share the information with the DSL, DDSL, and the parent/carer (if appropriate).

6. Any other relevant member of staff or external professionals will be informed on a need-to-know basis.

9. Supporting learners

9.1. Baseline support for all learners

As part of RBAir's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all learners, RBAir offers support to all learners by:

- completing an Initial Assessment highlighting a learner's emotional and mental health needs;
- having open discussions about mental health during lessons as part of our PSHE curriculum and wider preventative education approach;
- providing learners with avenues to provide feedback on any elements of RBAir that is negatively impacting their mental health;
- monitoring all learners' mental health through assessments, i.e. the YP Core 10;
- providing an oversight of the wellbeing needs of individual learners and the learner body (undertaken by the Therapy Team Lead). This will be communicated to the Pastoral Lead and the Head of Centre;
- considering the training needs of staff in relation to the presenting learner needs (undertaken by the Mental Health Lead);
- offering pastoral support through the learner's Link Mentor;
- making learning environments a safe space to discuss mental health and wellbeing;
- ensuring systems are in place (and they are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for learners to confidently report concerns, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.

9.2. Assessing what further support is needed

If a learner is identified as having a mental health need, the Therapy Team Lead will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to assessing the support RBAir can provide.

RBAir will offer support in cycles of:

- assessing what the learners' mental health needs are;
- creating a plan to provide support;
- taking the actions set out in the plan;

- reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered.

Where mental health concerns are also safeguarding concerns, the DSL will be involved in the assessment and planning process to ensure appropriate protective measures are in place.

9.3. Mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a learner will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at RBAir includes:

- a reduced timetable;
- increased Link Mentor support;
- therapy;
- additional pastoral support and attention, particularly for learners with SEND who may face additional barriers in communicating their needs.

9.4. Making external referrals

If a learner's needs cannot be met by the internal offer RBAir provides, RBAir will make, or encourage parents/carers to make, a referral for external support.

A learner could be referred to:

- their GP or a paediatrician;
- CAMHS;
- mental health charities (e.g. Samaritans, Mind, Young Minds, Kooth);
- social care teams in each authority;
- local authority children's social care (where there are safeguarding concerns);
- the police (where appropriate, in line with our safeguarding procedures).

Where a referral to local authority children's social care is made, we will follow the local referral process and provide as much information as possible to support any assessment.

10. Supporting and collaborating with parents/carers

We will work with parents/carers to support learners' mental health by:

- asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support;
- informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child unless there is a child protection concern which would indicate that it would be unsafe to do so;
- engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child;
- highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on the RBAir website, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy;
- liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child;
- providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g. parent/carer forums);
- offering 1:1 parental support for an agreed period (offered by the Mental Health Lead), if the need is highlighted.

11. Supporting peers

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be very challenging for learners. Learners may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

We will offer support to all learners impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- strategies they can use to support their friends;
- things they should avoid doing/saying;
- warning signs to look out for;
- signposting to sources of external support.

12. Signposting

Sources of support are displayed around our Centres and linked to on the RBAir website, so learners and parents/carers are aware of how they can get help.

The Mental Health Lead will be available to provide further information to learners and parents/carers if they want to learn more about what support is available.

13. RBAir approach to promoting mental health awareness

13.1. Mental health and PSHE

We follow the agreed PSHE curriculum where learners are encouraged to:

- develop healthy coping strategies;
- challenge misconceptions around mental health;
- understand their own emotional state;
- keep themselves safe.

13.2. Wellbeing

RBAir provides a range of wellbeing activities for learners, including:

- Online Community Sessions
- clubs
- PSHE
- trips
- physical wellbeing activities.

14. Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:

- discussing mental health with learners to break down stigma;
- encouraging learners to disclose when their mental health is deteriorating.

15. Training

All staff will be offered training by the Mental Health Lead so that they:

- have a good understanding of what learners' mental health needs are;
- know how to recognise warning signs of mental ill health;
- know a clear process to follow if they identify a learner in need of help.

16. Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a learner experiencing poor mental health can affect that staff member's own mental health and wellbeing. To help with this we will:

- treat mental health concerns seriously;
- offer supervision sessions to staff whose roles involve regular safeguarding or pastoral responsibilities;
- ensure all staff have access to 1:1 meetings with their line manager, where wellbeing can be discussed openly and confidentially;
- support staff who are experiencing poor mental health themselves;
- create a pleasant, inclusive and supportive work environment;
- ensure staff feel comfortable discussing matters that may have implications for the safeguarding of learners;
- provide clear processes for staff to follow if they have concerns about a colleague's wellbeing;
- recognise the expertise staff build through safeguarding training and through managing safeguarding concerns on a daily basis.

As employees, staff who feel they need further support are able to access the following services:

- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – Wisdom Health Assured
  A free and confidential service offering 24/7 access to emotional, legal, and financial support, as well as counselling and wellbeing resources. Login details are available from RBET HR Administration.

- Education Support – a free, confidential helpline for everyone working in education in the UK. Further information is available at www.educationsupport.org.uk or via telephone 08000 562 561.

- RBET HR – for guidance on wellbeing, absence, or employment-related support.

- Line Manager 1:1s – regular opportunities to discuss wellbeing, workload and professional development.

- Peer Support – opportunities to share experiences and advice with colleagues.

- Supervision – available for staff with designated safeguarding, pastoral or therapeutic roles.

Additional sources of help include:

- Occupational Health Service – referral available via RBET HR for staff requiring additional support or workplace adjustments.

- Mind – mental health information and support. More information is available at www.mind.org.uk.

- Samaritans – free 24/7 listening service. Further information is available at www.samaritans.org or by telephone 116 123.

- NHS Mental Health Services – support available via GP referral or local self-referral options.

Staff understand that supporting learners' mental health is part of their wider safeguarding responsibilities and that maintaining their own wellbeing enables them to better support learners.

17. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Mental Health Lead and the Therapy Team Lead, annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Head of Centre and RBET trustees.

As part of the review process, we will:

- evaluate the effectiveness of our mental health support through data analysis, including monitoring of interventions and outcomes;
- seek feedback from learners, parents/carers and staff about our mental health provision;
- ensure the policy remains aligned with current statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025;
- review our referral pathways and external partnerships;
- assess whether our training provision for staff remains appropriate and up-to-date.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour for Learning Policy, SEND Policy and RBET's Anti-Bullying Policy to ensure a coordinated whole-provision approach to supporting learners' mental health and wellbeing.