



Supporting Positive Health and Mental Wellbeing

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Linton School

Positive Health and Mental Wellbeing Policy

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Our School

Linton School is an independent special school for young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties for both boys and girls aged 8-18 years old. The school is registered for up to 12 learners and consists of 4 small classes to provide a nurturing environment to develop and progress throughout their learning journey. We are a trauma informed school that is able to support children and teenagers who suffer with trauma or mental health problems and whose troubled behaviour acts as a barrier to learning. Located in rural Preston we therefore benefit from some amazing outdoor space where we develop our outdoor, equestrian and horticulture skills. All the staff at Linton School are committed to creating a setting which not only focuses on academic success, but also provides our learners opportunities to develop their social, communication and independent skills.

Culture and Ethos

We are committed to providing a nurturing, safe and ambitious learning environment that supports every young person to achieve lifelong skills through a diverse learner centred curriculum. Respectful and supportive relationships are at the heart of all we do; we value every member of the school community equally. Through bespoke curriculums tailored towards each individual pupil's needs, experiences, interests and strengths we foster a love for learning and support our young people to achieve their full potential. As an educational setting our main aim is to prepare our pupils to make a positive contribution towards society by giving our students the skills they need to be successful, resilient and inspirational young adults. Linton schools purpose is to improve the quality of life for our young people both now, and in the future, 'building our futures together'.

The Vision

Linton School provides a safe, nurturing learning environment to provide skills for lifelong opportunities, which gives the young people an ambitious outlook towards their future.

The vision drives everything we do and will be achieved through:

- Outdoor enrichment activities to promote life skills through play, nurture and teamwork.
- Promoting independence, patience and listening skills through Equestrian lessons.
- Multi-disciplinary links from both internal and external companies to provide a bespoke, broad and balanced curriculum that develops the education of our pupils.
- Empowering each learner to achieve their personal goals and develop a lifelong love of learning.
- A positive and ambitious school environment that promotes learning for all.
- Offering a broad range of learning experiences within the curriculum that values academic attainment as well as developing social skills, experiences and resilience.

More information about the school can be found in the school Prospectus.

1. Framework for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Wellbeing is all about our holistic health, including the physical and emotional. When we have good levels of wellbeing we feel that life is in balance and that we can generally cope well. We feel motivated and engaged, we're resilient and able to deal effectively with daily troubles, as well as 'bounce back' from life's challenges. Mentally Healthy Schools, 2019

At Linton School we place great value on protecting the Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) of all members of our community. We recognise that for various reasons, the young people we work with all have mental health issues at times; and we acknowledge that the environment we work in can be stressful. We recognise that schools have a central role to play in promoting and protecting positive MHWB. Therefore we look after the MHWB of our staff and students through a framework of different approaches: including proactive strategies, responsive measures and specialised targeted interventions, drawing on the professional expertise of all those who are part of our organisation. This document sets these out in detail.

2. Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

We believe it is important to talk openly about mental health. We recognise that life has its ups and downs and that at times, these can be difficult to cope with by ourselves. Therefore we teach the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others mentally healthy as a core part of our PSHE curriculum. Topics covered include the concepts of mental health and ill-health; relationship and sex education; developing resilience; recognising and managing difficult feelings; and effective strategies to cope when life gets hard.

At Linton we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a pro-active way to avoid problems arising. We do this by:

- Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and well-being.
- Adhering to a positive, restorative approach to behaviour management.
- Helping children socially to form and maintain relationships.
- Helping children to feel comfortable about sharing any concerns or worries.
- Teaching children emotional skills and an awareness of mental health so that they understand their emotions and feelings better.
- Promoting self-esteem and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
- Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks.
- Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services, parents and carers.
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.
- Developing an open culture where it's normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- Providing opportunities to reflect.
- Enabling access to appropriate support.
- Mental Health and PSHE for all year groups

3. Developing Healthy Habits

We provide many formal and informal opportunities through the curriculum and beyond to help our students develop habits for positive mental health. We do this through:

- **Encouraging play and having fun** together e.g. through tutor activities, Enrichment and Friday Activities;
- Enabling them to be **part of a community** in school and beyond: e.g. Charity work; School Council; Voluntary Work; Pupil Voice activities;
- **Keeping active** e.g. through PE and Friday Activities; Horticulture; Equestrian; Offsite Education and at break time;
- Promoting **healthy eating** e.g. through Food Technology lessons, and work within Science and PSHE;
- Helping them **manage transitions** e.g. daily tutor time; end of day reflections; clear and predictable structure to the day; consistent daily timetable;
- **Celebrating success** in all forms e.g. reward points; Pupil of the Week; positive behaviour management strategies; highlighting staff achievements in De-Brief and Supervision; sharing good news with their home;
- **Caring for each other** e.g. modelling positive relationships between staff; the pastoral role of the form tutor; restorative practices to repair and rebuild relationships following incidents; a no-tolerance approach to bullying;
- Ensuring all staff and students have **regular breaks** and are encouraged to look after themselves;
- **Learning strategies that will help when times are hard** e.g. through DBT group therapy; through PSHE lessons; developing emotional literacy;
- **Helping each other to manage the difficult times** e.g. staff daily de-briefing; staff supervision; key role of the form tutor; multi-agency team support for every child; consistent use of Team Teach de-escalation strategies when a student is in a crisis.

4. Signposting and Support

We ensure that all staff and students are aware of the sources of support within school and beyond. Every student is supported by a personal tutor, their Care Team and their Therapist- these professionals work together to monitor every young person's MHWB, to identify issues quickly and to create a plan of support.

We display information about sources of support in communal areas such as the corridors and toilets, and regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. When we do this, we increase the chance of students seeking help by ensuring they understand:

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

Useful resources

Below are some useful resources for support with health and wellbeing.

www.freemindfulness.org

www.headspace.com

www.nhs.uk

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk

Samaritans - 116 123 (freephone) jo@samaritans.org (email)

5. Staff Training

- All staff receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their annual child protection training to enable them to keep students safe.
- Formal training opportunities are offered as part of the organisation's CPD programme these may be delivered by the Occupational Therapist and other specialist practitioners. This includes training on recognising mental health difficulties and suicide prevention. Most staff are Mental Health First Aid trained.
- Where the need to do so becomes evident, we host additional training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

The organisation will develop and run a range of health promotion initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting wellbeing. This includes face to face as well as online learning. The HR team will have primary responsibility for leading these programmes, but line managers and employees will be expected to engage with the companies Myrus training platform.

Example programmes include:

- Mental health awareness;
- stress management;
- disability awareness;
- bullying and harassment; and
- physical activity and fitness.
- Managers and employees are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including discussions around general welfare, wellbeing and employee surveys.
- The organisation will ensure that structures exist to give employees regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

6. Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

At Linton School, we recognise that our most valuable resource is our staff team. Staff deserve to work in a supportive environment that enables them to be the best they can be, to experience job satisfaction and gives them the capacity to fulfil their role with regards to our students.

- **Formal support:** All staff have access to one to one supervision with their line manager on a regular basis but at least once a term. They are encouraged to request additional supervision if required. This is an opportunity for their line manager to check in with them and discuss any concerns or worries the staff member may have, as well as any concerns the line manager may have picked up.
- **Informal support:** We are a small school with a close-knit supportive staff team. The teaching team meets on a daily basis at the start and end of the day. Staff are encouraged to reflect on their practice with their colleagues reflecting on their teaching as well as on how best to support and respond to the behaviour of the students. We support and care for each other, especially when there has been an incident or when it appears that a member of our team is in difficulty. The Head Teacher has an 'open door' policy and encourages all members of the team to approach her with any issue, worry or concern they may have.
- **Work/life balance:** Evidence shows that teachers feel a responsibility to their colleagues, pupils, students and schools even when they are not working. We promote

the importance of achieving a healthy work-life balance; open dialogue between line managers and staff about workload, and we encourage a culture of 'working smart not working long'. All staff have regular breaks during the school day and are encouraged to look after their colleagues and ensure they take breaks too.

- CareTech provides a free Employee Assistance Programme. All employees can access confidential support and advice relating to a range of issues including stress, health, workload and family issues. This service is available 24 hours a day for 365 days a year. Telephone: 0800 030 5182. Information about this service is given to staff on induction and is on display in the staff room.

7. Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs that indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with Rebekah Dennett (DSL) as soon as possible.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased 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
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning
- Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns
- Family circumstance

8. Supporting Students with Mental Health Issues

Mental illness can have a range and complexity of causes, however risk factors include: childhood abuse, trauma or neglect; family breakdown; bereavement and loss of a loved one; social disadvantage, poverty or debt; parental mental illness; and being in care. All our students have experienced some or all of these and are therefore more susceptible to mental ill-health than their mainstream peer group.

At Linton we are able to respond quickly at the first signs that a young person is in difficulty. We provide high staffing levels; a depth and breadth of professional expertise on our team; and effective multi-agency working.

Every student has a Positive Handling Plan which sets out the strategies and approaches that support them best when they are in difficulty.

When a student is in crisis, the school works closely with their staff and wider professionals to put together and implement a plan of support.

9. Statutory Framework and Guidance

Linton School has due regard for:

- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education- Statutory Guidance, DfE 2020
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, (KCSiE) 2023
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (July 2014)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, 2018