

POLICY – Mental Health and Well-Being (MHWB)

Education Universal

Policy Author	Laura Dickie, Head of Policy Tonia Lewis, Education and Quality Improvement Lead
Approval Date	Feb 2026
Policy Approver	Jo Dunn, Compliance, Regulation and Quality Director
Next Review Date	Feb 2029
Version No.	001
Policy Level	Education
Staff groups affected	All Education

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the service's established governance and quality assurance systems. Responsibility for ensuring that the policy remains compliant with legislation and regulatory frameworks sits with the Proprietor Representative and Regional Lead.

A formal review of this policy will be undertaken no later than three years from the date of approval, or sooner if changes in legislation, regulatory guidance, or operational requirements necessitate it.

The Head of Policy will support this process by identifying relevant changes in legislation, regulation, national standards and emerging best practice. The Head of Policy will also incorporate learning from inspections, audits and practice developments into future revisions whilst overseeing all proposed amendments to the universal content to ensure accuracy, consistency and compliance.



David Horton

Head of Education



Tracey Wilson

Principal

Terminology

Our aim is to use consistent terminology throughout this policy and all supporting documentation as follows:

Term	Definition
‘Establishment’ or ‘Site’	A generic term referring to the school/college owned by CareTech.
Learner	Any child or young person under the age of 18, or young adult over 18 who receives education.
Service Head	The senior person with overall responsibility for the school/college.
Tutor/Teacher	Members of staff who have teaching responsibility for learners at the school/college.
Parent/Carer	Parent or person with parental responsibility.
Regulatory Authority	The independent regulatory body responsible for inspecting and regulating services (e.g., Ofsted, Estyn, Education Scotland).
Social Worker	The worker allocated to the individual learner; if none is allocated, the Duty Social Worker or Team Manager is responsible.
Placing Authority	The local authority/agency responsible for placing the learner or commissioning the service.
Local Authority	The local authority for the establishment’s location.
Staff	All staff working at the location, including employed staff, students on placement, contractors, agency staff, volunteers and proprietors.



1. Local School/College Profile

The Forum School is an independent specialist day school providing education for pupils aged 7-19 years with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), associated communication and interaction needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs. The school provides a highly structured, therapeutic learning environment that promotes emotional wellbeing, independence, resilience and positive relationships. Many pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and benefit from personalised learning programmes, therapeutic support and reasonable adjustments to enable them to succeed academically, socially and emotionally. The school works closely with families, local authorities, therapists and other professionals to ensure pupils receive coordinated support. The Forum School promotes a culture of kindness, respect and acceptance where differences are celebrated and every pupil is supported to feel safe, valued and included.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out the universal framework for promoting, protecting and supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) for Learners and staff across all sites (Schools/Colleges). It applies to all members of the staff team, all Learners and visitors, and describes the proactive, responsive and targeted approaches that together create a safe, caring and high-expectation learning environment.

This policy is to be adopted and implemented at The Forum School and across all sites. Where local terms, roles, procedures, or national equivalents are required, these must be completed only in sections marked Adapt Locally.

3. Scope

- Applies to all sites in the organisation (Schools/Colleges), all Learners, all Teachers/tutors, the wider education team, and the multi-agency team working around each Learner.
- Covers universal, targeted and specialist support for MHWB within the curriculum, pastoral systems, behaviour supports, and partnership working with clinical and care colleagues.
- Interfaces with (and does not replace) safeguarding and child protection, attendance, behaviour, anti-bullying, SEND equality, curriculum and assessment policies.
- Local elements (e.g., national statutory frameworks, local contacts/roles, inspection remits, URLs) must be added only where the policy is marked

4. Local Adaptation Requirement

“Some sections in this policy are marked *Adapt Locally*. These sections are completed by each site to reflect local operational procedures or national equivalents (e.g.,

safeguarding framework, inspection remit, curriculum/quality framework, data protection contacts). Where England specific statutory references appear in the universal policy, sites in Wales and Scotland must insert their own national equivalents into the marked Adapt Locally sections. All local additions must be accurate, up to date, consistent with national legislation and regulator guidance, and fully aligned with the universal standards in this policy. Where no local adaptation or local equivalent is required, the universal content remains fully applicable.”

5. Legal and Regulatory Context

This universal policy aligns to the relevant education, safeguarding and equality duties in each nation. Where the policy cites an England reference, the site must append or provide its national equivalent in the relevant *Adapt Locally* area.

6. Vision and Ethos

Our organisational vision is that Learners are supported to develop self-esteem, confidence, respect and consideration for others, enabling them to become effective and contributing citizens. Through an interesting, engaging and tailor-made curriculum, Learners are encouraged to develop a love of learning so each Learner can achieve the best attainable outcomes for their ability. Talents will be recognised, developed and celebrated within a caring and supportive site community.

Our approach to education is to inspire and engage Learners through a wide range of positive learning experiences so they can build personal resilience. We foster a culture of mutual respect across the site community that is predictable, safe, and positive, where Learners feel known and valued.

Our enduring concern is to help our Learners do their best and to leave our care well-rounded and prepared young adults.

For a more detailed description of what the site offers, see School Prospectus

7. Learner Profile

Most young people at our sites may have social, emotional and mental health needs, often accompanied by additional learning needs. Many have experienced loss and trauma, leading to attachment needs and difficulties with trust. As a result, some Learners may initially find it difficult to form and maintain appropriate positive relationships.

Typical profile indicators (adjust locally only where indicated):

- **Ages 7 to 19**
- May be placed within a residential home
- Residents from placing authorities throughout the United Kingdom
- Many have SEND or significant gaps in prior learning — Most learners will have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Individual Learning Plan

Each Learner engages in a personalised learning programme appropriate to age and ability. Baseline assessment informs learning goals and an individualised curriculum. Literacy and numeracy are core. For Key Stage 4 and 5 Learners, there are opportunities to pursue a range of formal qualifications and vocational experiences including AQAs and GCSEs

8. Organisation Vision Statement / Motto / Values

Organisation Vision Statement

“As a member of the CareTech Group we share a common vision: ‘To actively enable each and every one of the people in our care to achieve their personal best, however it is defined by or for them.’

Whole-Site Objectives / Ethos

1. To inspire through an academic, creative and flexible learning environment which meets individual needs.
2. To support individuals to build resilience, develop confidence, achieve, and become independent learners.

9. Aims of Our Site and Our Curriculum

Working collaboratively with care colleagues, the clinical team, families/carers and Learners, we aim to:

- Provide a positive, safe and caring environment in which Learners and the staff team feel happy and secure in learning.
- Remove or reduce barriers to learning.
- Provide access to high-quality education and pastoral care that enhances personal development, stimulates growth and ensures equal opportunity.
- Develop self-esteem, independence and empathy, and consideration for the feelings and needs of others in the site and wider community.
- Encourage Learners to positively manage their own behaviour and difficulties.
- Establish a climate where young people and adults relate respectfully, with high levels of mutual interest and personal respect.
- Develop the skills needed so Learners can be as independent as possible, make safe choices and be ready for life after School/College.
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets each Learner’s needs, statutory requirements, and, where applicable, the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Individual Learning Plan (IDP) plan, Coordinated Support Plan (CSP)
- Work in close partnership with parents/carers, the clinical team and other professionals.

Our Curriculum Intent

INTENT	Intention 1 — Develop our sense of self	Intention 2 — Develop our sense of others	Intention 3 — Develop our sense of the world
--------	---	---	--

We strive to...	• Develop strong personal character • Ensure high levels of mental & physical wellbeing • Be passionate about learning and life	• Understand equity for all and challenge inequality • Support the wellbeing of others • Be tolerant and understand everyone has their own path	• Use the world sustainably • Understand and respect rules and laws • Take part in enrichment experiences that develop positive citizenship
------------------------	---	---	---

10. Framework for Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB)

10.1 Rationale

Wellbeing is holistic, encompassing physical and emotional health. When wellbeing is strong, people experience balance, motivation and engagement; they are resilient and can deal with everyday difficulties and 'bounce back' from challenges.

At The Forum School, we place great value on protecting the MHWB of all members of our community. We recognise that our Learners may experience mental health challenges; we also acknowledge education can be a demanding environment for staff. Sites have a central role in promoting and protecting positive MHWB. We therefore use a layered framework of proactive strategies, responsive measures and specialist targeted interventions, drawing on the professional expertise of the education team, clinical team and multi-agency team.

10.2 Proactive Measures

A. Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

We speak openly and safely about mental health, recognising life has ups and downs. We teach the knowledge, skills and understanding Learners need to keep themselves and others mentally healthy as a core part of our PSHE curriculum Topics include: concepts of mental health and ill-health; relationships and sex education; resilience; recognising and managing difficult feelings; and healthy coping strategies.

We follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure MHWB teaching is safe, sensitive and helpful.

B. Developing Healthy Habits

We provide formal and informal opportunities—within and beyond the curriculum—to help Learners develop habits for positive mental health, including:



- Encouraging play and fun (e.g., tutor activities, enrichment, 1:1/group activities).
- Building community and belonging (e.g., charity work; School/College Council; voluntary work; Learner Voice).
- Keeping active (e.g., PE, Outdoor Education, gardening, break/lunch activities).
- Promoting healthy eating (e.g., Food Technology; partnership with Care Team).
- Managing transitions (e.g., meet & greet; reflections; predictable routines; consistent timetables).
- Celebrating success (e.g. Praise Principal Stars; weekly awards; positive behaviour strategies; recognising staff achievements in de-brief/supervision; sharing good news with care colleagues).
- Caring for each other (e.g., modelling positive staff relationships; pastoral role of the tutor; restorative practices; no-tolerance approach to bullying; kindness as a site value).
- Ensuring regular breaks and promoting staff and Learner self-care.
- Teaching strategies for difficult times (e.g., key-worker sessions; PSHE lessons; developing emotional literacy).
- Helping each other manage difficulties (e.g., staff daily de-briefing; staff supervision; key role of the form tutor; multi agency team support; consistent use of positive behaviour support and PILLARS de-escalation strategies when a Learner is in crisis).

Information about sources of support is displayed in communal areas (e.g., notice boards and monthly e bulletins and highlighted in the curriculum.

C. The Role of the Teacher

Every Learner is part of a tutor group with an allocated form tutor. The form tutor provides consistent pastoral support; monitors academic and social progress; and promotes involvement, commitment and high standards of work and behaviour.

- Meet and Greet each morning supports transition into the site, readiness for learning, early identification of worries, and planning for success.
- Daily tutor time allows in-depth work on individual/group issues and supports a positive, calm start or close to the day.

D. Positive Behaviour Support

Many Learners display attachment needs. Our behaviour policy is underpinned by the Nurture Group Principles to foster positive mental health and enable emotional development:

- Social, emotional and behavioural skills develop developmentally; we meet Learners at their emotional stage.
- The classroom provides a safe base with reliable, consistent adults.
- Nurturing approaches build positive self-esteem.
- Language helps to put thoughts and feelings into words.
- All behaviour is communication.
- Transitions are significant and require careful, supported management.

We take a positive and proactive approach to behaviour support: clear expectations, consistent reinforcement, and individualised support. Plans are co-produced with the multi-agency team and take SEMH needs into account. See Positive Behaviour Support Policy for detail.

E. Signposting and Support

All staff and Learners are made aware of sources of support within the site and beyond. Every Learner is supported by a personal teacher, their Care Team and their clinicians; these professionals monitor MHWB, identify issues early and plan support.

We explicitly teach how to seek help, ensuring Learners understand:

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

10.3 Staff Training

- All staff receive regular training on recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their annual child protection/safeguarding training to keep Learners safe.
- The Headteacher, Principal and the home/clinical teams hold HPG and TAC meetings (or more frequently if required) to discuss MHWB of Learners; staff can access formal training/support on specific issues (e.g., Attachment, Autism awareness, OCD, self-harm, eating disorders).
- Formal training opportunities are provided through the organisation's CPD programme, delivered by specialist practitioners.
- Where needs are identified, additional site-wide training is hosted to promote understanding of specific MHWB topics.

10.4 Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our most valuable resource is our **staff team**. Staff deserve a supportive environment that enables them to be their best, experience job satisfaction and sustain capacity to fulfil their role with Learners.

- **Formal support:** One-to-one supervision with line managers is available regularly (at least once per half-term). Additional supervision can be requested.
- **Informal support:** The education team meets daily at the start and end of the day. Staff reflect on pedagogy and on supporting Learner behaviour. We care for each other, especially after incidents or during difficulty. The Headteacher operates an open-door approach.
- **Work/life balance:** We promote a healthy work-life balance, open dialogue about workload, and a culture of working smart, not working long. Staff have regular breaks and encourage colleagues likewise.
- **Employee Assistance Programme:** CareTech provides a free EAP with confidential support 24/7/365 (e.g., stress, health, workload, family issues).

Telephone: 0800 030 5182. Information is provided on induction and displayed in the staff room

11. Responsive Measures

11.1 Staff Responsibilities

All staff share responsibility for promoting Learner mental health. Specific roles (e.g., DSL, Deputy DSL, SENCO/ALNCo/ASNCo, Designated Teacher for Children Looked After) and their responsibilities are as follows:

David Horton	Head of Education	DSL	07879 538432
Sarah Howe	Assistant Head of Education	DDSL	07823 402346
Tracey Wilson	Principal	DDSL	07732 600688
Chloe Beevers	Behavioural Support Assistant	DDSL	251
Melissa McCarthy	Regional Lead	DDSL	07917 048872
Kerry Byron	Registered Manager – Woodland View	DDSL	07525 29525 07955 105076
Mark Rogers	Registered Manager – Paddocks View	DDSL	07525 32629
Hannah Everard	Registered Manager – Riverstone View	DDSL	07525 29524
Graham Norris	Operations Director of Education		07580 864354
Jeremy Wiles	Group Executive Director – Children’s Services		0208 735 6150
LADO Martha Sharp, Laura Taulk and Lynne Bowman. LADO@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Dorset LADO Tel 01305 221122			
Local Child Safeguarding Board Tel Office hours 01305 221196 Out of Hours 01202 65727			
Local Adult Safeguarding Board Tel Office hours 01305 221196 Out of Hours 01202 657279			

11.2 Warning Signs

Staff should take warning signs seriously and share concerns promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

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/family; becoming socially withdrawn



- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Misuse of drugs or alcohol
- Expressions of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing (e.g., long sleeves in warm weather)
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or changing secretly
- Lateness to or absence from the site
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Record-keeping and Escalation: Concerns should be recorded in line with **site** safeguarding procedures (see Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy). Urgent risk should be escalated immediately to the DSL

11.3 Supporting Learners with Mental Health Issues

Mental ill-health can have multiple, complex causes. Risk factors include childhood abuse, trauma, neglect; family breakdown; bereavement and loss; social disadvantage/poverty/debt; parental mental illness; and being in care. Many of our Learners have experienced some of these and may be more susceptible than mainstream peers.

Our sites respond quickly at early signs of difficulty by leveraging:

- High staffing levels and skilled support
- Depth and breadth of professional expertise across the team
- Access to the on-site therapy team
- Effective multi-agency working

Every Learner has an allocated clinician; the site enables attendance at therapy sessions and implements clinical advice in education. Every Learner has a positive behaviour support plan detailing strategies and approaches that support them during difficulty. In crisis, the site works with clinical and care colleagues to co-produce and implement a support plan.

11.4 Supporting Peers (Learners)

When a Learner is experiencing mental health difficulties, peers may need additional support. On a case-by-case basis, and guided by the Learner and parents/carers/social worker, we consider:

- What peers should and should not be told
- How peers can best support
- Words/actions peers should avoid
- Warning signs of relapse or emerging risk

We also highlight:



- Where/how peers can access support for themselves
- Safe, reliable information about the condition
- Healthy coping strategies for their feelings

12. Monitoring

Concerns about MHWB can be raised daily at staff briefing and de-brief and are a standing item on the staff meeting agenda. Concerns are recorded as a School/College Welfare concern or a Child Protection concern, depending on assessed risk. Records are kept on the Safeguarding Log and in the individual Child Protection file. Patterns of concern are monitored by the multi-agency team and discussed at the PCR meeting (or more frequently if required).

13. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment
- SEND
- Curriculum Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- PSHE/PSHCE/PSE curriculum map and planning

Equality Impact Statement

This policy has been developed to promote equality, safeguard individual's rights, and ensure fair and inclusive practice across all services. The potential impact of the policy on children, young people, young adults, families, and staff with protected characteristics has been considered in line with the Equality Act 2010.

No negative impacts have been identified. Staff must apply this policy with sensitivity to individual need and make reasonable adjustments to ensure equitable access, safety, wellbeing, and participation for every individual. Any emerging risks of differential impact should be reported and addressed through ongoing review and quality assurance.

Appendices

Appendix A – Legal and Regulatory Framework in England

Appendix A — England

The legal and regulatory frameworks and guidance underpinning Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) in England.

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 — ISS

- **Means:** Legal standards all independent schools must meet across Parts 1–8 (quality of education, SMSC, welfare/health/safety, suitability, premises, information, complaints, leadership).
- **Requires:** Evidenced curriculum and assessment; robust safeguarding/health & safety; safer recruitment and SCR; suitable premises; compliant information/complaints; effective governance.
- **Our stance:** Termly ISS compliance review by Part with actions, owners and dated evidence.
- **Implementation example:** ISS evidence index mapping each paragraph to policies, training logs, risk assessments, the SCR and curriculum records; monthly SCR sampling and KCSIE-cross-referenced safeguarding policy.
- **Links:** Regulations: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283>
DfE guidance: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67605baec80a844a7aa4b7cb/Independent_School_Standards_Guidance.pdf

Ofsted — Education Inspection Framework (renewed from Nov 2025)

- **Means:** National inspection framework and remit toolkits for maintained schools, FE and non-association independent schools.
- **Requires:** Evidence aligned to the relevant toolkit/operating guide and compliance with applicable legislation (including ISS).
- **Our stance:** Maintain an inspection evidence set mapped to toolkit sections and cross-referenced to ISS Parts 1–8.
- **Implementation example:** Termly-refreshed folders (curriculum intent/implementation/impact, safeguarding culture, inclusion, leadership & governance) plus a 2-page site overview linking MHWB plan, attendance/wellbeing analysis and DSL logs.
- **Links:** EIF: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

- **Means:** Statutory safeguarding guidance for all schools/colleges; defines DSL role, training, safer recruitment, information-sharing.
- **Requires:** Annual staff training/updates; clear reporting routes; DSL-led record-keeping; child-centred practice.
- **Our stance:** All staff complete KCSIE Part 1 annually; induction pack and training matrix maintained.



- **Implementation example:** Termly safeguarding audit (policies, logs, file transfer, SCR sampling); spot checks of concern logs and documented CP file transfers at admission/exit.
- **Links:** Guidance page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

- **Means:** National multi-agency guidance for help, support and protection, including education's role and CP standards.
- **Requires:** Partnership working, lawful information-sharing and compliance with national child-protection practice standards.
- **Our stance:** DSL procedures/thresholds align to local arrangements and multi-agency processes.
- **Implementation example:** DSL attendance at strategy discussions with shared chronology/assessment tools; recorded strategy outcomes with review dates and actions.
- **Links:** Guidance page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) — statutory guidance

- **Means:** Statutory guidance covering Relationships Education/RSHE and **physical health & mental wellbeing**.
- **Requires:** Published policy, taught curriculum and assessment, with parent engagement.
- **Our stance:** MHWB curriculum mapped to RSHE strands; annual policy consultation held.
- **Implementation example:** Sequenced RSHE/MHWB curriculum with baseline→formative→summative assessment and adaptive teaching notes, plus a parent-facing overview.
- **Links:** Guidance page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Mental health and behaviour in schools (DfE)

- **Means:** Non-statutory guidance on culture, identification and support where MHWB needs present as behaviour.
- **Requires:** Early identification, graduated support, reasonable adjustments and multi-agency coordination.
- **Our stance:** Graduated response pathway recorded in the Learner plan.
- **Implementation example:** Weekly pastoral/MHWB triage using attendance/behaviour/wellbeing data; half-termly review of intervention logs with outcomes/next steps.



- **Links:** Guidance page: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee6148fa8f54a8bb65ba9/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools.pdf

SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years

- **Means:** Statutory guidance under the Children and Families Act 2014 on SEND identification, EHC plans and multi-agency coordination.
- **Requires:** Person-centred assessment→planning→review; joint commissioning; reasonable adjustments; annual EHC reviews.
- **Our stance:** Termly SEND/MHWP panel aligns provision and captures “normal way of working” evidence.
- **Implementation example:** Outcome-based EHC tracking linking curriculum and MHWP targets with the provision map; annual review minutes circulated to partners.
- **Links:** Code page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Equality Act 2010 — Education

- **Means:** Anti-discrimination and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), including anticipatory reasonable adjustments.
- **Requires:** Accessible assessment/environments; equality information/objectives (where PSED applies).
- **Our stance:** Termly accessibility checks on curriculum/assessment; record each Learner’s normal way of working.
- **Implementation example:** Accessibility walk-throughs and exam-access planning with evidence sampling; assistive tech and adjusted environments in place before summative assessments.
- **Links:** DfE advice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>