

**COVID-19 Appendic: additional notes for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**Nov 2020**

This is policy and guidance that applies Trust-wide and should inform the required school-specific interim additional mental health procedures

Date of Policy Approval: November 2020

Owner of Policy: Lisa Fathers

Authorised by: Additional notes in response Covid 19 pandemic

Policy Review Date: In response to updates

Distribution: **All staff, workers, governors and trustees**

**Website**

The coronavirus pandemic, subsequent lockdown and on-going restrictions and new routines is an unprecedented situation. It ***may*** have caused or exacerbated mental health issues although the evidence to date is not conclusive.

Just as important as academic work are the social lessons children learn at school and this aspect was missing during self isolation/ home learning.

This is why it is so important that alongside the academic we maintain our focus on aspects of school life that will help to address students’ social development.

**Possible challenges :**

* Deterioration in children's mental health owing to being involved domestic violence during lock down and the impact this has had on them – Home Office stats show an increase in domestic violence
* Children in poverty not having enough to eat or watching their parents go without
* children being anxious about school work due to digital poverty or just because they feel they’ve ‘got behind’
* some children who are high achievers having real anxiety about not working hard enough or not understanding new concepts on ‘on line learning’
* Bereavement
* Children's heightened anxiety
* Children's attachment to a parent or grandparent
* Students who have already got poor mental health

**Remote Learning and Mental Health**

An additional key challenge is that it is harder to detect mental health difficulties through virtual learning platforms, but some of the usual signs of mental health difficulties remain largely the same and can be looked for: decreased participation in lessons (presenteeism) , poor attendance, deadlines missed, a change from ‘their normal’, low mood, or a change in appearance.

Advice

*Stay flexible*, with so much unknown ahead, it’s critical that schools stay nimble and flexible to deal with students’ mental health needs.

*Regular check in,* routine check ins with students on the phone, Teams or any other platform are useful and some students may well open up more than face to face.

*Consider gaps* in provision, the expertise of school mental health professionals will possibly be needed now more than ever to help guide students and teachers through this crisis recovery. How can student leaders still play a part?

*Positivity*, focussing on some of the lessons learned from the remote teaching experience, such as flexibility and willingness to work beyond the traditional school schedule, could provide a good opportunity for more creative approaches.

Key contacts

Every school should detail the key contacts for mental health. This might be the same pastoral team as for safeguarding but you may also want to utilise Mental Health First Aiders especially to support any issues during remote learning periods. .