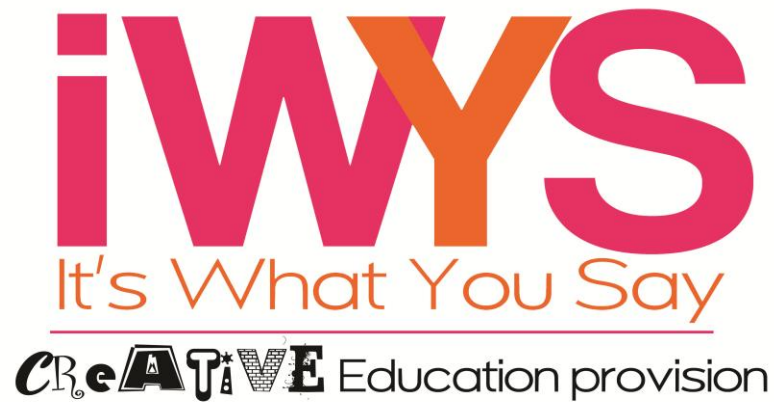




IWYS ALTERNATIVE PROVISION MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING POLICY

Document control	Details
Approved by	Charmaine Baines/Proprietor / head of Provision
Effective from	September 2026
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Provision	IWYS Alternative Provision, Stoke-on-Trent

2. Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for all students.
- Create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.
- Reduce stigma surrounding mental health.
- Help students develop resilience and healthy coping strategies.
- Identify emerging mental health concerns as early as possible.
- Provide appropriate support before difficulties escalate.
- Ensure students know who they can talk to.
- Provide additional support for students experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Recognise the relationship between mental health, behaviour, attendance and educational engagement.
- Ensure mental health concerns are considered within safeguarding procedures.
- Support parents/carers to understand and respond to children's emotional wellbeing.
- Support staff wellbeing and prevent avoidable work-related stress.
- Work effectively with external agencies and specialist services.
- Listen to student views when developing wellbeing provision.
- Monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all IWYS students, teaching and support staff, senior leaders, the Mental Health Lead, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), volunteers, visiting tutors and contractors working with students.

It applies to mental health and wellbeing concerns arising within IWYS, at home, online, during off-site activities, vocational placements, in the community and during transitions into or out of IWYS.

4. What We Mean by Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. Mental health exists on a continuum. Students may experience periods of good wellbeing, temporary emotional difficulty or more persistent mental health problems.

IWYS will not automatically treat changes in mood, behaviour or emotional wellbeing as evidence of a mental health disorder. Staff should notice changes, listen without judgement, consider wider circumstances, record concerns appropriately, provide proportionate support and consult the DSL or Mental Health Lead where appropriate. Staff must not diagnose students.

5. The IWYS Whole-School Approach

5.1 Ethos and Environment

- Promote an environment in which students feel safe, respected, listened to, valued and included.
- Provide positive relationships between students and adults and challenge discriminatory, abusive, bullying or harmful behaviour.
- Consider mental health when developing behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, curriculum, SEND, student support and transition arrangements.

5.2 Leadership and Management

The DSL and other relevant staff will provide strategic leadership for mental health and wellbeing.

- Coordinate the whole-school approach.
- Support staff awareness and training.
- Help identify appropriate interventions.
- Maintain awareness of local support services.
- Support wellbeing monitoring and evaluation.
- Work with external professionals where appropriate.

Mental health remains a shared responsibility and is not solely the responsibility of the Mental Health Lead.

5.3 Staff Wellbeing

IWYS will promote respectful working relationships, appropriate communication, manageable workloads, opportunities to raise concerns, access to support, supervision and professional development.

5.4 Curriculum and Learning

Mental health and emotional wellbeing will be promoted through PSHE, relationships and health education, safeguarding education, resilience, emotional regulation, healthy relationships, managing stress, sleep, healthy lifestyles, online safety, social media, self-esteem, body image, coping with change, coping with setbacks and seeking help.

5.5 Student Voice

- Use student feedback, individual discussions, and pastoral reviews.
- Ask students what helps them feel safe and able to learn.
- Identify barriers to engagement and preferred methods of support.
- Provide appropriate opportunities for students to influence wellbeing provision.

5.6 Identifying Need

Staff should notice significant or persistent changes in mood, behaviour, attendance, concentration, engagement, eating, sleeping, social interaction or self-worth. Staff should consider pattern, duration, context and impact rather than relying on a single sign.

5.7 Targeted Support

Students may receive individual check-ins, pastoral support, support plans, reasonable adjustments, parental involvement and referral to appropriate specialist services.

5.8 Working with Families and Services

IWYS will work, where appropriate, with parents/carers and relevant health, education, safeguarding and voluntary-sector services to support students.

6. Staff Training and Awareness

- Understanding children's mental health.
- Recognising early warning signs.
- Anxiety, stress and low mood.
- Self-harm and suicidal ideation awareness.
- Eating difficulties.
- Trauma and adverse experiences.
- Neurodiversity and emotional wellbeing.
- Online harms, bullying and cyberbullying.
- Safeguarding and mental health.
- Responding appropriately to disclosures.
- Professional boundaries, confidentiality and information sharing.
- Referral procedures.

Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions. Their responsibility is to notice, respond, record and refer appropriately.

7. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Teaching will be age-appropriate, sensitive and inclusive. Students will not be required to disclose personal mental health experiences publicly. Learning will support emotional literacy, healthy coping strategies, resilience, healthy relationships and help-seeking.

8. Student Voice

- Student feedback and wellbeing surveys where appropriate.
- Pastoral and individual meetings.
- Suggestion systems and group discussions.
- Reviews of support plans.

Students should be able to identify what helps them feel safe, what makes learning easier, barriers to engagement and preferred methods of support.

9. Early Identification

Staff should be alert to withdrawal, persistent sadness, anxiety, anger or irritability, unexplained behaviour changes, attendance difficulties, reduced engagement, concentration problems, changes in eating or sleeping, loss of interest, physical complaints, hopelessness, low self-worth, self-harm indicators, concerning online activity, risk-taking and social isolation.

A single change does not necessarily indicate a mental health problem. Staff should consider the pattern, duration, context and impact.

10. Mental Health and Safeguarding

Mental health concerns must be considered alongside safeguarding. A concern may become a safeguarding concern where there is evidence or suspicion of abuse, neglect, exploitation, serious self-harm, suicidal intent, significant risk, harmful online activity, serious bullying, coercive or controlling behaviour, domestic abuse or another circumstance requiring safeguarding intervention.

Where a safeguarding concern exists, staff must follow the IWYS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report to the DSL without delay.

11. Responding to a Student Who Needs Help

- Listen calmly and take the student seriously.
- Avoid judgement and provide reassurance.
- Do not promise absolute confidentiality.
- Establish whether there is an immediate safety concern.
- Inform the appropriate member of staff.
- Record the concern factually.
- Follow safeguarding procedures where necessary.
- Ensure appropriate follow-up.

Staff should not attempt to provide counselling beyond their competence.

12. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Students should be treated respectfully and information handled sensitively. Staff must explain that information cannot be kept secret if there is a concern that a student or another person may be at risk of harm. Information will be shared proportionately on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

13. Levels of Support

Level	Typical support
Universal	Positive relationships, inclusive environment, PSHE, wellbeing education and healthy routines.
Early Support	Trusted adult, pastoral support, check-ins, wellbeing strategies and individual support.
Targeted Support	Individual support plans, parental involvement, SEND/pastoral support and referral to appropriate services.
Specialist Support	Referral or liaison with CAMHS, NHS services, mental health professionals or other specialist agencies.
Safeguarding / Crisis	Immediate safeguarding response and emergency services where required.

14. External Services and Referrals

Where appropriate, IWYS may work with NHS services, Mental Health Support Teams, CAMHS, GPs, educational psychology services, local authority services, school nursing services, voluntary-sector organisations, specialist counselling services and other appropriately qualified professionals.

Where IWYS has access to a local Mental Health Support Team, the Mental Health Lead should make appropriate use of its advice and support.

15. Crisis and Immediate Risk

Where a student presents an immediate risk to themselves or another person, staff must treat this as an urgent safeguarding and safety matter.

- Remain with the student where it is safe to do so.
- Alert the DSL or senior leader immediately.
- Follow the emergency safeguarding procedure.
- Contact emergency services where required.
- Contact parents/carers where appropriate.
- Record the incident and actions taken.
- Ensure appropriate follow-up support.

Where a child is in immediate danger, staff should call 999.

16. Self-Harm

Any disclosure, evidence or concern relating to self-harm must be taken seriously. Staff must listen without judgement, establish immediate safety, inform the DSL/DDSL record the concern, involve parents/carers where appropriate, consider professional referral and review support arrangements. Self-harm should not automatically be treated as a disciplinary matter.

17. Suicide and Suicidal Thoughts

Any indication that a student may be considering suicide must be treated seriously and passed to the DSL or senior leader immediately. IWYS will prioritise immediate safety, follow safeguarding procedures, seek professional advice, involve parents/carers as appropriate, use emergency services where necessary and arrange follow-up support. Staff must never agree to keep suicidal thoughts or plans secret.

18. Mental Health and Behaviour

Emotional distress may sometimes present through anger, refusal, withdrawal, aggression, avoidance, disengagement, poor attendance, concentration difficulties or emotional outbursts. Staff should consider whether behaviour may communicate an unmet need while maintaining clear expectations and appropriate boundaries.

IWYS will combine consistent boundaries and consequences with pastoral support, safeguarding consideration and reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

19. SEND and Mental Health

Where appropriate, mental health considerations will form part of SEND assessment, individual support planning, reasonable adjustments, behaviour support, communication strategies and transition planning. Mental health concerns should not automatically be attributed to SEND, and SEND should not be assumed to explain emotional distress.

20. Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are important partners in supporting student wellbeing. IWYS will, where appropriate, communicate concerns sensitively, encourage relevant information sharing, signpost families to services, involve parents/carers in support planning and work collaboratively around attendance and engagement.

There may be circumstances where information cannot immediately be shared with a parent/carer because doing so could increase risk to the child. Safeguarding procedures will determine the appropriate action.

21. Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Promote respectful working relationships.
- Support manageable workloads and appropriate communication.
- Provide opportunities to raise concerns.
- Promote access to support and appropriate supervision.
- Recognise staff contributions.
- Maintain a culture where asking for help is acceptable.

Staff should raise concerns about their own wellbeing with an appropriate manager or other trusted professional.

22. Anti-Bullying and Online Safety

Bullying, cyberbullying and harmful online behaviour can significantly affect mental health. IWYS will maintain clear procedures for prevention, identification, response, support, recording, parental engagement and safeguarding referral where necessary. This policy should be read alongside the IWYS Behaviour Policy and relevant online safety procedures.

23. Attendance and Mental Health

Mental health difficulties can affect attendance and engagement. Changes in attendance should be considered alongside anxiety, family circumstances, bullying, SEND, safeguarding, physical health and other barriers to education. Support should address barriers while maintaining appropriate attendance expectations.

24. Transition

Mental health and wellbeing will be considered during joining IWYS, return from extended absence, changes of course, work experience, transition to college, apprenticeships, employment, return to mainstream education and leaving IWYS. Relevant information should be shared appropriately to support continuity.

25. Record Keeping

Mental health concerns and interventions should be recorded factually, objectively, clearly, proportionately and securely. Safeguarding records must be maintained in accordance with IWYS safeguarding procedures.

26. Equality, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

IWYS will promote an inclusive environment where students are not discriminated against because of disability, SEND, mental health difficulties, sex, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity,

age where applicable, or other protected characteristics. Students experiencing mental health difficulties will be treated with dignity and respect.

27. Student Support Plan

Area	Details
Student	
Main concern	
Known triggers / barriers	
Strengths / interests	
Preferred trusted adult	
Strategies that help	
Classroom adjustments	
Warning signs	
Safeguarding considerations	
Parent / carer involvement	
External agencies	
Review date	
Student's views	

28. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Student feedback.
- Parent/carer feedback.
- Staff feedback.
- Attendance information.
- Behaviour data.
- Safeguarding information.
- Referral information.
- Support-plan reviews.
- Intervention outcomes.
- Training records.

Monitoring will identify what is working, gaps in provision, emerging needs, training requirements and changes needed to policy or practice.

29. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Key responsibilities
Proprietor / Management	Ensure appropriate arrangements and resources exist to promote wellbeing and safeguard students.
Senior Leadership Team	Implement the policy, allocate resources and ensure staff understand their responsibilities.
Mental Health Lead	Coordinate the whole school's mental health and wellbeing approach.
DSL	Manage safeguarding concerns, including mental health concerns presenting safeguarding risks.
All Staff	Promote positive relationships, recognise concerns, respond appropriately, report safeguarding concerns and maintain professional boundaries.
Students	Look after their wellbeing, treat others respectfully, seek help when needed and report concerns.
Parents / Carers	Share relevant concerns, work with IWYS and engage with recommended support.

30. Related IWYS Policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying procedures
- Attendance Policy
- SEND Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Administering Medication and Medical Conditions Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Personal Care Policy
- Risk Assessment procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy

31. Legislative and Guidance Framework

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Relevant Department for Education mental health and behaviour guidance.
- Relevant local safeguarding arrangements.

This policy should be read with the current versions of statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements. KCSIE 2026 is the statutory safeguarding guidance currently in force in England from 1 September 2026. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 was updated by the Department for Education in March 2026.

32. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where legislation or statutory guidance changes, safeguarding procedures change, local services change, significant incidents identify a need for review, monitoring identifies weaknesses, or IWYS provision changes.

Approval	Name	Date
Charmaine Baines	Proprietor/ Senior Leader/ DSL	September 2026

Key reference: The Department for Education's whole-school approach identifies eight principles for promoting mental health and wellbeing, including positive ethos, leadership, staff development, curriculum, student voice, identification and monitoring, targeted support and appropriate referral.