

Mental Health and Wellbeing policy



Purpose

Leadership and staff acknowledge the importance of promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

This policy confirms our commitment to:

- providing a safe, welcoming and supportive environment
- promoting a culture of respect, fairness and equality
- embedding social and emotional learning into the curriculum
- ensuring families, students and staff are key partners in mental health and wellbeing initiatives
- engaging and working collaboratively with local health professionals.

As a health promoting school, we will promote the mental health and wellbeing of students, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment, and developing community links and partnerships.

Policy statement

Background

Schools play a key role in promoting mental health in all children and young people, recognising that children and young people's learning and development is supported by environments that promote mental health.¹

Mental health promotion in schools is about creating positive, safe and supportive environments, and providing opportunities to build and practice relationship skills, resilience and social and emotional competencies. All staff are involved in mental health promotion as it relates to every area of the school – the culture, policies, curriculum and activities.²

¹ DEECD Promoting Healthy Minds for Living and Learning
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/healthyminds.pdf>

² DEECD 'Building Mental Health Promotion Capacity'
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/health/Pages/building.aspx> (last updated 28 September 2013)

Whole school engagement

It is recognised that every member of Foster Primary School has an impact on students' health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes positive mental health and wellbeing. All members of our school community including staff, students, families and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy.

Definitions

Mental health: For children, this means “the capacity to enjoy and benefit from satisfying family life and relationships and educational opportunities, and to contribute to society in a number of age-appropriate ways. It also includes freedom from problems with emotions, behaviours or social relationships that are sufficiently marked or prolonged enough to lead to suffering or risk to optimal development in the child, or to distress or disturbance in the family.”³

Resilience: The ability to bounce back from adversity in order to lead a healthy and fulfilling life.⁴

Social and emotional competence: The ability to recognise and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships and handle challenging situations capably.⁵

Procedures

Healthy policies

- Staff, families and students are involved in guiding the development and implementation of the whole school mental health and wellbeing policy and are seen as key partners in promoting and supporting positive mental health in the school.
- Staff, families and students are provided with information about policy requirements.
- If a student is suspected of being at risk of or experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties the school will work closely with the classroom teacher, Principal, Welfare Officer and family to provide supports for that student.

Healthy physical environment

- The school provides a welcoming and inclusive physical environment that reflects the diversity and interests of the students, families and staff.
- The school provides a warm and welcoming space for students, families and staff to meet informally to discuss private matters relating to the child's wellbeing and education.

Healthy social environment

- The school encourages and values the contribution of students, families and staff to a positive school environment and all members of the school community promote a culture of respect, fairness and equality.
- The school has a range of strategies to promote positive and responsible behaviour, and to prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination and harassment.
- Staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to recognise and support students who may be at risk of, or are experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties, including how to access support and make appropriate referrals.

³ Raphael B. 2000, Promoting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Discussion paper: key principles and directions. Canberra: Department of Health and Aged Care, National Mental Health Working Group retrieved from KidsMatter Early Childhood: A framework for improving children's mental health and wellbeing. 2012 page 91

⁴ School Drug Education and Road Aware. Challenges and Choices. Early Childhood Resource for resilience, drug and road safety education. Government of Western Australia, 2005

⁵ Zins J E and Elias M J. Social and Emotional Learning in Safe and Sound: An educational leader's guide to evidence-based social and emotional learning programs. Developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, USA, 2003.

Learning and skills

- The school provides the Victorian curriculum that actively engages and builds students' self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management and relationship skills. Social and emotional learning is delivered in one or more key learning areas.
- Staff are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum.

Engaging children, young people, staff and families

- Families, students and staff are key partners in developing and supporting mental health and wellbeing initiatives and are, on a regular basis, provided with information, ideas and practical strategies to promote and support mental health and wellbeing at school and at home.
- Students are engaged in developing and implementing mental health and wellbeing initiatives via junior school council, student action teams or other representative structures.
- Families and students from diverse cultural backgrounds are engaged to ensure cultural values and expectations about mental health and wellbeing are respected.

Community partnerships

- The school engages with local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase its capacity to deliver and promote mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Cultural groups within the community are encouraged to participate in the school's mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- The school provides information to students and families about local mental health and wellbeing services, parenting and family services, and other resources that are available to support the mental health and wellbeing of students and families.

Relevant accountability documents

[DET School Policy and Advisory Guide – Health Education Approaches](#)

[DET Promoting Healthy Minds for Living and Learning](#)

Related school policies

- Safe Environments Policy
- Staff Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Health and Physical Education Policy
- Esmart
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing

Monitoring and review

The mental health and wellbeing policy will be monitored and reviewed by the staff, school council, student representatives and the health and wellbeing team at least once every three years.

Endorsed by school council: _____

Date: _____

Next review date: _____