

## Inwoods Small School

### INWOODS SMALL SCHOOL - MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

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## **1. Introduction**

Recent developments in society, medicine and psychology have highlighted the importance of good mental health for the overall well-being and development of an individual. More awareness exists about the link between mental health, trauma, early childhood experiences and behaviour. Schools play an essential role in identifying issues and providing support for those in need.

The intentions of Inwoods ensure that it provides excellent pastoral support and a warm, caring atmosphere in which children can face and learn about the issues of their inner life with the steady support of teachers. Further, and in recognition of the importance of family support in these matters, a collaborative approach among the school, children, and their families is considered essential.

Inwoods recognises the importance of the topic of mental health for all its children and staff and is committed to continue providing an education and atmosphere that positively contributes to the overall well-being of all members of the school, and to provide specific mental health support wherever needed.

## **2. The Whole School Approach to Mental Health**

Inwood's intention is to educate the whole human being, encompassing academic, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects. Furthermore, at its core is the intention to understand oneself in relationship with others and the wider world. The school provides an atmosphere that is characterized by care, affection and a sense of friendship and equality, and that is free of fear. Learning at Inwoods is understood as an activity based on curiosity and understanding, rather than on fierce competition and the principles of reward and punishment. Children are able to express themselves in a safe environment where there is freedom to learn.

The children have ample opportunities to express their voices and to participate in decision making processes, not just around the topics they study, but also on the day to day agreements of the school. The children and staff embark together on a journey of self-discovery through relationship. This is supported by the whole set-up of the school which enables small class sizes and ample forums for discussion and questions.

## **3. Well-being at Inwoods**

One fundamental aspect in creating an environment that nurtures well-being at Inwoods is the restriction on the use of screens in the classroom and a curriculum and school site that allows

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a lot of time outside in nature. This intentional approach helps create a balanced and more mindful learning environment, with learning experiences that are hands on and experiential.

Regular exercise is integrated into the school's timetable, with long breaks that happen outside, a nature day, that involves long walks in the countryside and sports activities scheduled once a week on a Wednesday afternoon. In addition, outdoor gardening sessions provide opportunities for students to connect with the natural world.

At Inwoods we put emphasis on agency and interest in learning rather than on fierce competition. By encouraging the children to take ownership of their education and explore their passions, the school fosters a love for learning and promotes a positive attitude towards academic pursuits.

Central to our approach is also the creation of a tight-knit community and robust pastoral care system. Children benefit from a strong sense of belonging, peer support, and close relationships with caring staff members. This environment provides a safe and supportive space for children to share their challenges, seek guidance, and receive the necessary support to navigate their personal and academic journeys.

To ensure comprehensive mental health education, at Inwoods we offer a strong PSHE/RSE programme. Through these lessons the children are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop resilience, manage stress, and make informed decisions concerning their mental health.

The school also places a significant emphasis on silence and downtime, recognizing the value of being quiet and self-reflection. Each day we start the day with silence and throughout the day, children are provided with space to recharge and reflect.

The provision of healthy food and nutrition is paramount at Inwoods and is supported by the parents. Recognizing the vital connection between diet and mental health, the school ensures that the children's snacks and packed lunches are well-balanced, nutritious vegetarian meals each day.

All these aspects create a whole school atmosphere that contributes to positive mental health and a feeling of overall well-being. However, some children with stronger or pre-existing mental health issues or emotional trauma might need specialised support which is provided throughout the year.

### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

All staff members are responsible for the creation of the special, caring atmosphere of the school. They will also be instrumental in the identification of mental health issues in children, and whether there is a need for extra intervention.

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All staff are trained to be able to identify and first-respond to mental health issues. If it is a serious concern, they are aware that they need to pass this information on urgently to Kate, the School Coordinator. All the staff meet weekly and children that are causing concern are identified and discussed and strategies are put in place.

For specialised support, the school cooperates with external providers such as counsellors, play therapists or child psychologists.

### **5. Mental health Education**

Inwoods is committed to raise awareness and educate its pupils and staff about mental health issues and general well-being. Specific activities for pupils and staff are listed below.

#### **5.1 For Pupils**

All students receive education on mental health issues through the PSHE / RSE programme. The RSE Education, in conjunction with PSHE, makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, their behaviour and Inwoods statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote pupils' wellbeing. (See our PSHE / RSE Policy for more details.)

#### **5.2 For staff**

All school staff receive regular training on mental health issues and support. The training is usually conducted or organised by the School Coordinator who themselves regularly undergo training in the areas of mental health, trauma, brain development and emotional well-being.

At least once a year, the school asks staff to do a mental health related training or to attend a session with a mental health professional as part of their continuing development. Over the course of the year, several sessions are organised for staff to discuss mental health issues and support with each other, to share experiences and skills related to this topic. Additionally, during weekly staff meetings, ways on how to better support our pupils are discussed, as well as more specific topics. All these are instrumental in the identification and first response to mental health issues in pupils.

### **6. External support**

As pointed out above, most children are well supported through the unique atmosphere at Inwoods, but if additional support is needed, we work with the parents to find suitable external support, such as play therapists or child psychotherapists.

#### **External services**

- Childline
  - <https://www.childline.org.uk/> (Tel: 0800 1111)

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- Free phone and online counselling services for people under 19
- Help at Hand
  - <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/> (Tel: 0800 528 0731)
  - Free and confidential service (email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk))
- Kooth
  - <https://www.kooth.com>
  - Free online counselling services
- Shout
  - <https://giveusashout.org/> (Tel: 85258 for text messages)
  - Free mental health support through text messages

### **Information on mental health**

- YoungMinds - <https://youngminds.org.uk>
- Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- On My Mind (Anna Freud Centre) - <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/>
- Stem4 - <https://stem4.org.uk>
- CAMHS resources - <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/>

## **7. Safeguarding and confidentiality**

When pupils suffer from a more serious mental health condition (like self-harm, eating disorders, etc.), safeguarding is an important consideration, usually when the child is either at risk of harm or considered a threat to himself or others. Staff members are expected to identify such situations and follow the school's 'Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy'.

All staff work closely to best support children. When a referral to the DSL is necessary, according to the need and in consultation with the child and the parent, a safety plan is put in place and closely monitored.

## **8. Suitability and reasonable adjustments**

At Inwoods the well-being and mental health of our pupils is of utmost importance. However, while we strive to provide a supportive environment, it is important to acknowledge that the school may not be a suitable place for children who require extensive mental health support.

It is essential that mental health history and specific mental health needs are disclosed during the admissions process so the school can evaluate whether it can fully support the applicant according to their specific needs. Once enrolled, parents can help by sharing more details about

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any mental health needs and history with the School Coordinator at the beginning of the school year.

Reasonable adjustments, and often beyond, will be made to accommodate children with specific mental health needs. The school is committed to offering appropriate support and working collaboratively with children, their families, and external professionals to ensure their well-being. However, there are limitations to the level of support that can be provided within our resources and expertise.

The school cannot accept responsibility for children who are not fully functional or who are unable to fully participate in school life. Additionally, children who pose a sustained risk to themselves or others for a prolonged period of time may not be able to receive the necessary support within our school setting.