

Student Wellbeing Policy



Legislation / Guidance that inform this document

- The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations (2015)

Other Red Balloon policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Behaviour for Learning
- Curriculum

Statement of intent

Red Balloon seeks to enable every young person referred to the organisation to develop interpersonal skills, intrapersonal knowledge and self efficacy so that they are able to be effective learners throughout their lives and are able to live full, happy independent lives regardless of the 'career' or 'life' path they elect to pursue.

Responsibility for Implementation

It is the responsibility of the coordinator (the day to day responsibility may be delegated to a colleague) to ensure that a full range of provision (through the taught curriculum, wellbeing sessions and the general life of the centre) is available to support all students. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that their practice *always* contributes to the positive development of all students.

Policy purpose

The Schools Standards Regulations require that the proprietor of an independent school ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, is drawn up and implemented effectively.

Red Balloon Centres provide for students who have self-excluded from school or for whom continued attendance at mainstream school is problematic in terms of their mental health. We therefore aim to ensure that

the emotional and wellbeing needs of students are met, and so this document is a necessary extension to Red Balloon's 'academic' curriculum policy.

Red Balloon Learner Centres are schools and are evaluated as such. Thus the purpose of the Red Balloon wellbeing curriculum is twofold:

- to enable students to engage effectively with learning;
- to enable students to grow into emotionally healthy, well-functioning people, able to contribute positively to society through making informed choices about their lives; developing empathy, and sympathy thus enabling them to pay heed to the needs of others; attaining financial independence and parenting well, should they elect to pursue that role.

Policy into Practice

Concepts that underpin the wellbeing structure

RBAir staff seek to enable all students to be :

- kind (not callous);
- generous (not greedy);
- forgiving (not vindictive);
- tolerant (not bigoted);
- trustworthy (not deceitful);
- morally brave (not apathetic)
- convivial (not egotistical)
- ecological (not rapacious).

Red Balloon believes that it is the quality of the relationships between all the members of the school community that sit at the heart of the school experience – one that produces young people capable of managing their own learning and making informed life choices. Staff understand that emotions can block learning: when anyone is experiencing heightened emotions of, for example, anger or sadness, those emotions are likely to prevent that person

from engaging in learning or rational thinking, indeed doing anything other than responding to the emotions.

Students who come into Red Balloon Centres may have experienced 'broken' relationships with peers or teachers in previous school placements and may still be trying to deal with the strong emotions that usually ensue as a result of those experiences.

Thus wellbeing work is built into the fibre of the learning process, through:

- sessions in the 'set' curriculum (with the caveat that all RB students have bespoke learning programmes);
- the way that conflict is resolved;
- every element of daily interactions.

It is the community itself that is the core element of Red Balloon's wellbeing provision. Each community is supportive of every member, but demanding (not in a threatening way, but in terms of expectancy of treatment of others) at the same time.

Sessions within the curriculum

Wellbeing provision focuses upon three areas:

- self,
- others,
- world.

Those concepts are developed further in the appendix to this policy (a guide to centres re the nature of their wellbeing provision).

These sessions may take three distinct forms: individual sessions, usually described as counselling or therapy, though the confidentiality rules usually applied by counsellors cannot apply fully (eg if issues of disclosure or criminality arise or 'areas' are discussed that might help teaching staff working with students, they must be 'shared'), group sessions based upon Mosley's 'Circle Time' model and taught sessions as part of the PSHEE curriculum. The aim of all sessions is to build intra-personal knowledge and

interpersonal skills, although circle time sessions may be used to address centre issues.

Students are also encouraged to develop their relationship skills through paired and group work in lessons, through teaching other students when that appears apposite and through the creative arts curriculum. Students are encouraged to use a range of vehicles to express their emotions: those emotions may be acted out, drawn, written in prose, poetry or lyric or simply spoken. Presentations to the centre community are encouraged as a way of demonstrating progress and learning, and developing crucial skills of self expression and confidence that 'my views are worthwhile', indeed 'I am worthwhile'.

Conflict resolution

We acknowledge that conflict is a permanent aspect of relationships, indeed of life, and therefore work with students to enable them to seek win – win outcomes to conflict through the use of conflict resolution strategies and restorative justice practices. In seeking such outcomes we hope to enable students to understand that:

- we all experience the same range of emotions , but respond differently to them and some responses are demonstrably healthier than others, or, at the least, individuals who display those responses appear happier with themselves and usually cause less pain or discomfort to others;
- individual differences are laudable (they are what make humans so interesting!);
- self knowledge (intrapersonal knowledge) is crucial – I need to understand me, to like myself for who I am rather than what others want me to be, and to acknowledge my 'lesser' points alongside my 'better' ones;
- 'responsibility is the key to freedom', and the key to responsibility is upholding the rights of others alongside asserting one's own rights.

Within the fabric of the community

Young people who have been let down, hurt, rejected, expect to experience those things again (it must be 'my' fault!) and, therefore, may search for

indicators (lack of eye contact, too busy to speak, no acknowledgement of 'me') of further rejection. Thus welcoming students every day, responding positively to them throughout the day, respecting their rights through being ultra well prepared for lessons, interacting with them outside lessons, and ensuring they leave with a positive farewell, are essential elements of staff practice. All staff contribute to this: students regularly seek out administrators and housekeepers from whom they receive such warm welcomes. It is within these positive relationships that young people find their own identity and those relationships are greatly enhanced when people can share some 'quality world'. The use of the term 'quality world' is important. My quality world is made up of my key interests, my passions. To form a relationship with a young person it is often necessary to step into their quality world: if the professional shares that interest, that piece of quality world, then such interaction is easier, but staff must be prepared to enter into young people's quality worlds, even if they do not share the interest – it is a key indicator of care and a base on which to form a relationship: the professional stepped towards the student.

A student's well-being provision is a core part of their curriculum. For some students belonging to a supportive community and experiencing successful learning is sufficient for them to grow in terms of self efficacy and esteem; other students may require access to counselling or therapy either individually or in group settings. Each Red Balloon Centre will have a responsible person for ensuring that wellbeing provision is strong and that the quality of that provision is regularly monitored.

Quality Assurance

Each centre will seek to track the progress of students in terms of their personal development, and will evaluate the relationship between that progress and the academic progress made by students. Data generated will be reflected upon, conclusions shared and compared across centres and practice developed in light of those 'analyses'.

Policy updated Sept 2018 by Bob Sproson, Director of Education - for annual review.