Mental health and wellbeing benchmarks

Healthy policies

1. A whole school mental health and wellbeing policy is in place.
   a) The policy addresses the promotion of mental health and wellbeing through the creation of safe, inclusive and empowering environments; development of social and emotional skills that promote resilience; and family and community partnerships.
   b) The policy clearly identifies processes for recognising and responding to students who may be at risk of or experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties, including accessing support and making appropriate referrals.
   c) Staff, families and students are involved in guiding mental health and wellbeing policy and practice.
   d) Staff, families and students are provided with information about policy requirements.
   e) The diversity of the school and the community is considered when developing and implementing this policy.
   f) The policy is cross-referenced with, and complements other relevant policies (e.g. safe environments, occupational health and safety).
   g) The policy can be stand alone or incorporated into a whole school health and wellbeing policy.

2. The school has a staff health and wellbeing policy which supports mental health and wellbeing.

Healthy physical environment

3. The school provides a physical environment which is inclusive and safe.
   a) A welcoming and inclusive physical environment is created which reflects the diversity and interests of the students, families and staff.
   b) The school provides a warm and welcoming space for students, families and staff to meet informally to discuss private matters.
   c) Outdoor and indoor spaces, including the natural environment, are safe and accessible and provide a range of opportunities for learning and physical activity.
   d) Mental health promotion information and materials are visible and readily accessible in the school.
   e) School facilities are accessible and utilised for family and community activities where appropriate.
Healthy social environment

4. The school provides a safe, inclusive and empowering social environment.
   a) The school leadership and staff promote a culture of respect, fairness and equality.
   b) A sense of belonging and connectedness is created through inclusive and participatory practices.
   c) The school encourages and values the contribution of students, families and staff to a positive school environment.
   d) Respectful and supportive relationships are fostered between students, staff and families.
   e) The school implements strategies to promote positive and responsible behaviour, and to prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination and harassment.

5. Staff and families recognise they are role models and are encouraged and supported to demonstrate respectful relationships and a positive approach to mental health and wellbeing.

6. The school works together with families and professionals to support students experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.
   a) Student welfare/wellbeing/pastoral staff, programs and resources to support students’ needs are known to and accessible by all students and families.
   b) Staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills for recognising and supporting students who may be at risk of or experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties, including how to access support and make appropriate referrals.

Learning and skills

7. Social and emotional learning and mental health promotion messages are incorporated into the curriculum from foundation to year 6.
   a) The school provides a curriculum that actively engages and builds students’ self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management and relationship skills.
   b) Students are provided opportunities to make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks, problem solve and practice assertiveness, refusal and help seeking skills.
   c) Positive relationships are promoted through collaborative group activities which encourage inclusion, teamwork and cooperation.
   d) Social and emotional learning is delivered in one or more key learning areas of the curriculum.

8. 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

9. Families, students and staff are key partners in developing and supporting mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
   a) Families and staff are provided with information, ideas and practical strategies on a regular basis, to promote and support mental health and wellbeing at school and at home.
   b) Students are engaged in developing and implementing mental health and wellbeing initiatives via junior school council, student action teams or other representative structures.
   c) Families are encouraged to be involved in mental health and wellbeing initiatives at school.
   d) Staff are encouraged to develop competencies to facilitate engagement of families and students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Community partnerships

10. Staff are encouraged to work with local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase their capacity to deliver and promote mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
   a) Links are established with local health professionals, services and organisations to support mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
   b) Referral policies, procedures and pathways to local mental health services are developed collaboratively with local providers.
   c) Cultural groups within the community are encouraged to participate in the school’s mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
   d) 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.
   e) Partnerships enable positive transitions within and between education and care settings.