

NEO — Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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Review Date	December 2026, then annually, or sooner if practice or legislation changes
Owner	Designated Safeguarding Lead and SENCo, with the Director, NEO & Head of School
Approved by	Approved by the Director, NEO & Head of School on 14 October 2026 under authority delegated by the Proprietor (CEO of Nudge Education Ltd) on 13 October 2026; for noting at the NEO board on 3 December 2026
Version	v10.26

A fully online alternative provision for learners aged 11–18

1. Purpose

Most learners come to NEO because school stopped working for them: anxiety, illness, exclusion, a placement breakdown, or long periods out of education. Wellbeing is not an add-on to NEO's curriculum; it is the condition for it. This policy sets out how NEO notices, measures and supports learner mental health and wellbeing, what it does when a learner is struggling, where its role ends and clinical services begin, and how it protects the wellbeing of the adults who do this work. It gives effect to the mental health and trauma expectations in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the online education standards (4.1), and draws on the DfE's *Mental health and behaviour in schools* and *Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges* guidance, applied by NEO as its standard.

2. The Cornerstones

NEO's model is built on six Cornerstones: Connection, Movement, Creativity, Reflection, Rest and Nutrition. They shape the day (a 10:00 start because attendance rises when anxious mornings are given room; short lessons with breaks; water, snacks and moving about as part of how we teach; Friday Cornerstones Day) and they are the frame in which wellbeing is noticed and talked about with learners, without clinical language. The Cornerstones apply to staff as well as learners (section 7).

3. Noticing and measuring

Every learner completes the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index at the Initial Assessment and at the start and end of each half-term, with their Practitioner-Mentor, used unadapted so that scores are comparable over time. Scores are held on the learner's record, discussed with the learner and, with their agreement, the family, and reported to the NEO board only as cohort movement, never by learner. A low or falling score is a prompt for a conversation and a support-plan review, not a diagnosis. Daily noticing happens in the 09:30 mentor group and the 13:00 check-in: the Practitioner-Mentor is the one adult who sees the learner every timetabled day and is expected to act on what they see.

4. Support at NEO

Support is graduated. Universal: the Cornerstones, the RSHE and Relational Intelligence curriculum, a named Practitioner-Mentor, small groups, cameras-off as a regulation strategy, a breakout room with the mentor available in every session, and the "Tell someone" routes in the **NEO — Privacy Notice for Learners**. Targeted: a support plan agreed with the learner, family and SENCo (adjusted timetable, check-in frequency, sensory and screen adjustments, work in Google Classroom when live sessions are too much), reviewed each half-term. Specialist: where a learner needs more than an education setting can provide, the DSL and SENCo work with the family, the commissioner and the home local authority to secure it (GP, CAMHS or the local mental health support team, the school nurse, social care), and NEO keeps the learner's education going alongside.

NEO staff are not clinicians and do not provide therapy or counselling. They notice, listen, keep the learner safe, and connect them to help. Some Nudge Education practitioners hold therapeutic qualifications, and additional 1:1

mentoring time can be commissioned for a learner, but Nudge Education Ltd is not a clinical service: a mentoring session may be therapeutic in approach — building a relationship, talking about what would help — and is never therapy, counselling or a clinical intervention, and is never described to families or commissioners as such. Where a learner needs clinical support, NEO's role is to help the family and commissioner secure it from the right service.

Nudge Education trains core staff as Mental Health First Aiders through the Nudge Designated Safeguarding Lead, who is an accredited MHFA trainer; the accreditation lasts three years. NEO staff can take this course, and the introductory mental health awareness session, as part of NEO's CPD programme, and NEO aims to have at least one trained Mental Health First Aider available during live session hours.

5. When a learner is at risk

Any indication that a learner may be at risk of harm, including self-harm, suicidal thoughts, disordered eating or abuse, is a safeguarding matter and is reported to the DSL the same day under the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**. The DSL is contactable throughout live session hours. Where a learner is in immediate danger during a session, the host keeps the learner on the call, the co-host contacts the DSL and the family, and emergency services are called if the learner cannot be reached or is not safe; the critical incident protocol applies. Staff do not ask safety-assessment questions; they stay with the learner and get the right adult. Smoothwall safeguarding alerts are reviewed and decided by the DSL under the online safety policy (Monitor on managed devices is not yet deployed; filtering is).

6. Families and commissioners

Families are told how NEO supports wellbeing at induction and can raise concerns at any time through the Practitioner-Mentor or the Tuesday coffee morning. Weekly reports to families and commissioners include a plain-language wellbeing note. Information about a learner's mental health is shared only as the **NEO — Data Protection, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy** allows: to keep the learner safe, with the learner's involvement wherever possible.

7. Staff wellbeing

NEO is a small, distributed team doing emotionally demanding work. Planning time is protected in contracts; Friday reflective practice is asynchronous for those who do not work Fridays; supervision for the DSL is monthly and for Practitioner-Mentors termly; half-termly face-to-face meet-ups are funded; an employee assistance route is available through Nudge Education; and the half-term reset means regular meetings relax and leave is taken in breaks. The rule in NEO's own AI policy, that systems must know how to stop, applies to people first.

8. Roles

Role	Responsibility
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Owens this policy with the SENCo; leads the response to risk; liaises with clinical and statutory services.
SEnCo	Support plans; WHO-5 cadence; adjustments; links to EHCP reviews.
Director, NEO & Head of School	Reports cohort wellbeing to the board; protects staff wellbeing arrangements.
Practitioner-Mentors	Daily noticing; WHO-5 with the learner; first conversation; same-day escalation.
Qualified Educators	Teach to the Cornerstones; raise concerns the same day.
Families and commissioners	Share what NEO needs to know; act on referrals NEO cannot make itself.

9. Related documents

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; DfE Mental health and behaviour in schools; DfE Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges*

- **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** with NEO Online Addendum
- **Trauma-Informed Practice Policy** with NEO Online Addendum
- **NEO — RSHE Policy; NEO — Behaviour and Regulation Policy; SEND Policy**