WELLBEING POLICY	FORTES EDUCATION 1981 Enlighten • Empower • Excel	
Applicable to	☒Schools ☐Nurseries	
Teams / Individuals	☒Academic Staff ☒Administration Staff	
Publishing Channel	☒Parents' VLE ☒Staff Dashboard ☒Website ☐Dept. Micro-site	
Linked Policies	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Behaviour for Learning Policy Anti Bullying Policy Inclusion Policy E-Safety and BYOD Policy Curriculum Policy Information and Data Protection Policy Crisis Management and School Closure Policy Staff Code of Conduct	
Linked Documents	Wellbeing Referral Form (CPOMS) Parent Consent Form for Counselling External Referral Form Professional Disclosure and Informed Consent Form Code of Character and Conduct (each school) SMS Flourish Framework Student Relationships and Conduct Expectations Poster	
Updated By	**Latest Publish Date**	**Monitoring Cycle**
Tracey Bishop	Pending approval	Annual
Version No.	**Amendments**	
1.0 to 1.4	Previous separate policies: Positive Education and Emotional Wellbeing Policy SMS v1.3, Counselling Policy SMS v1.4 and SRC Relationships Policy RIS v1.0	
2.0	Combined into one Fortes Wellbeing Policy covering Positive Education, teaching wellbeing and relationships, conduct and online safety, the graduated response and the school counselling service. Fortes vision and mission added; school details in Annex A	

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy sets out how Sunmarke School and Regent International School (the Fortes Education schools) promote the positive mental health, emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships of every student, and how they recognise and respond when a student needs more support. It brings together, as one Fortes policy, the Positive Education and Emotional Wellbeing Policy, the Counselling Policy and the Student Relationships and Conduct Policy previously held by the schools.

It applies to all students in every phase, to all staff and to parents and carers as partners in their children's wellbeing. School specific arrangements, including named leads and contacts, are set out in Annex A.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our vision: nurturing the next generation of changemakers for a better tomorrow.

Our mission: empowering young people through an innovative and character-building education that inspires them to thrive and achieve with purpose.

Wellbeing sits at the heart of this vision. Fortes Education schools are Positive Education schools: we believe that students learn best, and grow into confident and compassionate young people, when their wellbeing, character and relationships are developed alongside their academic achievement.

> *"Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life." (World Health Organisation, 2001)*

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is written with reference to:

- Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 on Child Rights (Wadeema's Law), which establishes children's rights to protection, privacy and non-discrimination and the priority of the child's best interests;
- Federal Decree Law No. 34 of 2021 on Combating Rumours and Cybercrimes, which includes serious offences relating to obscene content and the exploitation of children online;
- Federal Decree Law No. 26 of 2025 on Child Digital Safety, which applies from January 2027;
- Federal Decree Law No. 45 of 2021 on the Protection of Personal Data, which governs how wellbeing and counselling records are held;
- KHDA expectations on student wellbeing, child protection and protective education, and BSO standards on welfare and pastoral care.

Where this policy and UAE law differ, the law prevails.

DEFINITIONS

- **Positive Education:** the application of the science of wellbeing and positive psychology to education, so that students develop the skills of wellbeing and character alongside academic learning.
- **Wellbeing:** as defined by the World Health Organisation above.
- **Counselling:** a confidential process which offers support and guidance when things feel particularly difficult, delivered by a qualified school counsellor.
- **Peer on peer abuse:** any form of physical, sexual, emotional, financial or online abuse by one child towards another.
- **Harmful sexual behaviour:** sexual behaviour that is developmentally inappropriate, harmful, abusive or coercive.

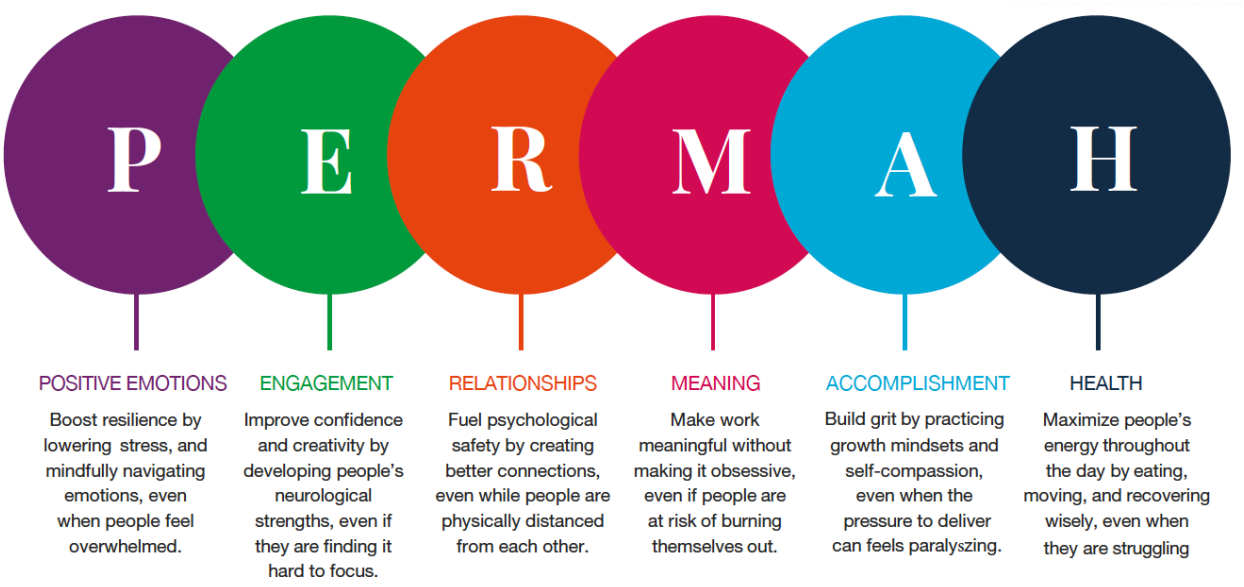
- **Youth produced sexual imagery:** the creation, possession or sharing of sexual images of anyone under 18, including images a young person has taken of themselves. This is always a safeguarding concern and may be a criminal matter in the UAE.
- **Child:** for safeguarding purposes, anyone under 18.

OUR APPROACH: POSITIVE EDUCATION

Our Positive Education culture and curriculum give students and staff access to evidence based teaching methods, interventions and resources linked to current research on wellbeing. Our whole school approach means that:

- Positive Education and wellbeing are planned strategically and embedded in the way of school life;
- wellbeing and character development are core business, and everyone has a role in developing them;
- wellbeing strategies are embedded in teaching and learning and are visible throughout the school;
- our approach is both proactive, identifying needs early, and responsive, supporting students when needs arise;
- staff wellbeing is recognised as fundamental to the success of the school.

Our approach is built on the PERMAH model of wellbeing: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment and Health.



We build these six elements by:

- increasing and prioritising positive emotions and teaching emotional regulation skills;
- helping students identify and use their character strengths;
- providing challenging activities that develop a growth mindset and self-efficacy;
- fostering positive relationships through restorative practice;
- promoting inclusion and communicating high expectations;
- teaching life skills and understanding of a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity;
- facilitating connection to the school community and celebrating success.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every member of staff is responsible for promoting Positive Education and the wellbeing of students. The following have specific roles:

Role	Responsibility
Director of Positive Education	Leads Positive Education across Fortes, advises on training and best practice, and approves wellbeing initiatives.
Principal	Ensures this policy is applied consistently in the school, with the training, supervision and systems needed for reporting and record keeping.
Senior Leadership Team	Promotes a positive ethos, supports class teachers and monitors the impact of wellbeing provision.
Head of Wellbeing and Positive Education Leads	Lead the wellbeing curriculum, Wellbeing Champions and wellbeing events, and coordinate Team Around the Child meetings.
Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies	Lead on every safeguarding decision, including concerns arising from relationships and conduct, and make referrals to external agencies.
School Counsellors	Provides the school counselling service set out in this policy and advises staff and parents.
School Nurse and clinic team	Support students' physical and emotional health, identify issues early and work with families.
SENCO and Inclusion team	Support students with special educational needs whose mental health affects their learning, including Individual Education Plans.
Heads of Year and pastoral staff	Oversee the wellbeing of their year group and are the first point of escalation for class teachers and tutors.
Class teachers and form tutors	Are responsible for the social and emotional wellbeing of students in their class, through wellbeing checks, restorative circle time and daily care, and raise concerns promptly.
Students	Treat others with respect, follow the Code of Character and Conduct, and seek help for themselves or others from a trusted adult.
Parents and carers	Reinforce key messages at home, keep the school informed and engage with the school when concerns arise.

TEACHING WELLBEING AND RELATIONSHIPS

Wellbeing is taught explicitly through the weekly Positive Education and Values in Action (VIA) lessons and reinforced through assemblies, form time and the wider curriculum. Lessons focus on emotional regulation, empathy and practical coping strategies such as breathing exercises, gratitude journals and Mindful Moments, and give students time to reflect on their character strengths and self-care. Wellbeing survey data is used to set the focus areas each year.

Relationships and protective behaviours are taught through a planned, age-appropriate programme across Positive Education, form time, assemblies, Computing and online safety, and Science where relevant. Key themes include:

- friendship, empathy, kindness, inclusion and resolving conflict;
- boundaries, privacy and personal space, and respectful behaviour;

- bullying, harassment, discrimination and the responsibility of bystanders;
- online safety, digital footprints, the risks of image sharing, coercion and grooming;
- recognising unsafe situations and knowing how to seek help;
- self-esteem and safe decision making.

Teaching is framed to respect UAE law, cultural values and public morals. Where content is sensitive, the schools use trained staff and approved materials, inform parents in advance where appropriate, keep lessons age appropriate, and signpost students to support rather than encouraging explicit discussion.

CODE OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Each school has a Code of Character and Conduct, co constructed with staff and students and built on the 24 character strengths promoted in assemblies and VIA lessons. The Code sets out the behaviour we expect to see. Restorative practice is used to resolve conflict and repair relationships, giving students the chance to learn and grow from their mistakes. Behaviour is managed under the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Relationships and conduct expectations

Students are expected to:

- use respectful language and behaviour, in person and online;
- avoid humiliating, threatening, coercive, sexually suggestive or discriminatory conduct;
- respect personal space and boundaries and follow the rules on appropriate physical contact in school;
- avoid public displays of affection that conflict with school expectations and UAE cultural norms;
- behave responsibly online, including in private group chats connected to school life.

Online conduct and image sharing

The schools treat online relationship harm as a serious safeguarding concern whether it happens on campus, on school devices or accounts, or off site where it affects the safety of students or the school community. The following are strictly prohibited: creating, possessing, requesting, forwarding or storing sexual images of anyone under 18; sharing obscene material; grooming, coercion, extortion or threats involving images; and harassment, stalking, impersonation or sharing another person's private information. The school's response prioritises safeguarding: it supports the student, secures devices where appropriate, preserves evidence safely and involves parents and external agencies as required.

Consequences

Where a student breaches these expectations, the school responds proportionately, taking account of the student's age and stage of development, intent and impact, any coercion or vulnerability, and previous incidents. Responses range from restorative meetings, loss of privileges and behaviour contracts to suspension or, in serious cases, exclusion, in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy and KHDA requirements.

A GRADUATED RESPONSE

Our proactive approach identifies wellbeing needs early; our responsive approach provides the right level of support when a need is identified. Support is organised in three waves:

Wave	Support
Wave 1	Universal provision for every student, plus monitoring at Team Around the Child meetings, light check ins and indirect support through recommendations and resources.
Wave 2	Small group support focused on wellbeing, such as Flourish Clubs or LEGO-based interventions. Monitored at Team Around the Child meetings.
Wave 3	Individual counselling sessions (up to 15), an Individual Education Plan and liaison with external professionals where needed. Monitored at Team Around the Child meetings.

Team Around the Child meetings

Team Around the Child meetings take place weekly or fortnightly to monitor, safeguard and plan provision for vulnerable students. They bring together the Head of Inclusion, pastoral leads, School Counsellor, school nurse, attendance officer and SENCO.

Student Wellbeing Champions

Primary and Secondary Wellbeing Champions are recruited to promote wellbeing, raise awareness of mental health and support whole school wellbeing and pastoral events.

Students at greater risk

We recognise that some students are at greater risk of poorer mental health, for example those who have been adopted, have previously accessed mental health services, live with a parent or carer with a mental illness or live in a household experiencing domestic abuse. Where a student has been identified as a cause for concern, has a diagnosed mental health need or is supported by external agencies, the SENCO draws up an Individual Education Plan and the wellbeing and inclusion teams work together to support the student.

RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Staff may become aware of warning signs that a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing difficulties. Warning signs must always be taken seriously. They include:

- physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental;
- changes in eating or sleeping habits, activity or mood;
- increased isolation from friends or family;
- a fall in academic achievement, or increased lateness or absence;
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide;
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope;
- changes in clothing, for example long sleeves in warm weather, or avoiding PE or getting changed secretively;
- secretive behaviour or substance misuse;
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

A member of staff who is concerned about a student's mental health or wellbeing speaks first to the Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Where there is any safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is followed.

Managing disclosures

If a student discloses harm, or a member of staff observes a concern, the member of staff:

- listens calmly and takes the concern seriously;
- reassures the student that they have done the right thing;
- does not promise confidentiality and does not investigate;
- records factual notes on CPOMS as soon as possible;
- reports to the Designated Safeguarding Lead the same day, without delay.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead decides the next steps, which may include parent contact, a support plan and referral to external agencies. The school does not carry out investigations that are the responsibility of the authorities. Support for the student may include counselling, a safety plan, increased supervision, timetable adjustments and, where safe, restorative work.

SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICE

Each school provides a counselling service for enrolled students when issues are affecting a student's learning or mental health. The service is confidential, child centred and voluntary, and is not part of the school's disciplinary procedures. The counsellor is accountable to the young person and, ultimately, to the school.

Counselling helps students manage issues such as anxiety and depression, anger, bullying, family relationships, transition and change, loss and grief, abuse and low self-esteem. It helps students develop coping strategies, communication and problem-solving skills, manage their relationships, understand and manage their feelings and recognise unhelpful thought patterns. The service also supports parents and, where needed, recommends external agencies to support the family.

Guiding principles

- Nurture positive emotions and resilience.
- Respect individual needs to build self-efficacy.
- Care with understanding and acceptance to encourage gratitude.
- Commitment to trust to develop self-regulation.
- Fairness and equality to encourage positive connections.

Referrals

Referrals can be made at any time by parents, teachers, peers or students themselves, and are initiated by staff on CPOMS. Students have the right to refuse counselling at any time.

- **Primary:** a teacher or parent refers the student. The teacher obtains parental consent and shares it with the counsellor, who assesses the student and agrees an action plan with the parent and teacher.
- **Secondary:** students may be referred by their form tutor, teachers, peers or parents, or may refer themselves by completing a self-referral.
- **Staff consultation:** staff may ask the counselling service for classroom or group support, such as lessons, observations or workshops.

External referrals. The counsellor considers the need for an external referral after the sixth session. Where it is needed, the counsellor meets the student and parents to agree a plan and continues to monitor the student

alongside the external provider. The student is not required to accept external support unless there is a risk of harm to themselves or others.

Sessions

Scheduled sessions last 30 minutes and take place weekly, fortnightly or monthly according to need, in the counsellor's office. Progress and goals are reviewed after the sixth session. Group sessions are held weekly by year group for students referred for group support. Secondary students may book directly; Primary sessions are agreed with the class teacher. Where remote counselling is needed, parental consent must include the use of video, and every session is recorded on CPOMS.

Consent

Written parental consent is required before a Primary student receives counselling, and parents of Primary students may decline the service. For students under 14, a parent signs the consent form, and in every case the school encourages students to involve their parents.

Secondary students may have one counselling check-in session without their parents' knowledge.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality allows a student to build trust, speak freely and seek help. The counsellor does not share detailed accounts of sessions but may, with the student's permission, share general progress with staff, and parents have the right to be told of their child's general progress. At the outset the counsellor explains that confidentiality will be breached where the student or anyone else is at risk of significant harm, including where a student wants to hurt themselves or another person, or is at risk of harm from others. The counsellor then informs the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where possible, keeps the student informed. Staff must never guarantee confidentiality to a student, in person or online.

Records

All counselling contact, consent forms and reports from external practitioners are recorded on CPOMS in the student's file, with counsellor notes held as restricted files available only to authorised staff. Online platforms used for counselling must meet school privacy and security standards, and any online security concern is reported at once to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the IT lead.

Bereavement and critical incidents

Where a student is affected by bereavement or a critical incident, the counselling service supports the student, their class and staff sensitively and compassionately, alongside the Crisis Management and School Closure Policy.

WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents play a crucial role in their children's wellbeing and are partners in our approach. The schools:

- help parents promote social and emotional wellbeing through parent meetings and regular wellbeing events such as Mindful Monday and Wellness Wednesday;
- share information and sources of support about common mental health issues through the website, newsletters and the Parents' VLE;
- inform parents in advance of sensitive relationships education content where appropriate;
- work with parents to agree support plans when concerns arise.

STAFF WELLBEING

All staff are expected to help create a positive and supportive environment in which everyone can flourish. The Senior Leadership Team, with HR and pastoral colleagues, promotes staff wellbeing, and a staff wellbeing working party meets each term so that staff are heard and involved in initiatives that support morale.

STAFF TRAINING

All staff receive training in Positive Education and the PERMAH model during induction, and training in emotion coaching and restorative practice. Annual safeguarding training includes recognising and responding to mental health concerns, peer on peer abuse, professional boundaries and online risks. Designated staff receive additional training on harmful sexual behaviour and managing disclosures. Further twilight sessions are held where a need emerges, and requests for training are made to the Director of Positive Education.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Wellbeing provision is monitored through wellbeing survey data, Team Around the Child records, counselling and referral data, incident trends and student and parent feedback. This policy is reviewed annually by the Head of Educational Operations with the wellbeing and safeguarding leads of both schools and approved by the Director of Education, or sooner if UAE law or KHDA requirements change.

ANNEX A: SCHOOL DETAILS

Item	Sunmarke School	Regent International School
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Andrea Higgins	David Williams
Deputy DSLs	Jayne West, Linzi Hammond, Henry Craig, Becky Holden, Claire Young, Jehan Toubia	Shane McLaughian; Grace Stewart
School Counsellors	Silke Glaab/Sarah Kay	Amy Copland
Counselling contact	schoolcounsellor.sms@forteseducation.com	To confirm
Head of Wellbeing	Nicholas Rickford	Grace Stewart
Wellbeing framework	SMS Flourish Framework	
Code of Character and Conduct	Sunmarke Code of Character and Conduct	Student Relationships and Conduct Expectations Poster