



**ALDENHAM SCHOOL**

# **LIFE MATTERS POLICY**

**Reviewed August 2021  
by Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Welfare (PSG)**

## **The School**

Aldenham School is a mixed gender, 11 to 18 day and boarding school, with approximately 700 pupils, roughly 170 of who are in the Sixth Form. The School's main ethos is the education of the whole child, which is brought about with a varied curriculum, diverse programme of Activities and a wide-ranging Life Matters programme.

## **Programme formation**

The entitlement of all pupils at Aldenham School to Life Matters is non-statutory, but is influenced by, and does embrace many aspects of, government guidance in relation to Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship. The planning and delivery of the Life Matters programme is the responsibility of the Assistant Head (Safeguarding and Welfare). This is in conjunction with the Head of Life Matters in the school. The planning and review of the programme is carried out annually, inviting feedback from staff, pupils and external organisations to assess the relevance, quality and level of coverage. A formal consultation of proposed changes to the Life Matters programme was undertaken with parents and staff in March 2021.

## **Aims and objectives of Life Matters**

The Life Matters programme at Aldenham School is designed to give as much practical support as possible to pupils to create an enjoyable, safe, productive learning environment and to minimise potential health risks for pupils and their families. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is encouraged through our supportive school ethos, where all are valued, positive relationships are encouraged and the safe and secure school environment that is conducive to learning and personal development. A particular emphasis has been placed on issues of consent, following on from the Ofsted review in Spring 2021.

## **External visitors**

External visitors also contribute to Life Matters, and include:

- Learning Performance, Study Skills and Memory Technique
- Debbie Love, Relationships
- School Nurse, Personal Health and Sexual Health
- Wasted Youth, Drugs and Alcohol
- The Money Charity, financial planning for young people
- Drugs Line, Drugs and Alcohol
- Beat, Eating Disorders

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and speakers will be chosen to reflect the topics delivered.

To ensure safeguarding requirements are adhered to, all external visitors are supervised by at least one member of the school staff and external visitors are not allowed to remain in a classroom environment with pupils without direct supervision. In some instances, parental consent is provided in advance of Life Matters seminars.

## **Approaches to teaching and learning**

To facilitate pupil learning in Life Matters:

- The purpose and objectives of the session are made clear
- Learning experiences are planned to meet the needs of pupils
- Learning experiences draw on pupils' own experiences or existing knowledge and provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn, practice and demonstrate skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding

- An emphasis is placed on active learning through planned discussions, investigations, role-play activities, group work and problem solving
- Attention is given to developing a safe and secure classroom environment
- Staff are provided with schemes of work and lesson plans for every module
- Pupils are given the opportunity to assess evidence, make decisions, negotiate, listen, make and deal with relationships, solve problems and work independently and within groups
- Particular emphasis is placed on giving pupils an appropriate space in which they can reflect on contemporary issues facing society and engage in open discussion of difficult topics, such as the sharing of “nudes/semi-nudes” and issues related to sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Opportunities are provided for whole-school projects, which allow for collaborative learning and interaction between age and gender groups. For instance, the Head of Life Matters was a key part of the planning team for the highly successful i-week (Identity Week) in Summer 2021.

Sensitive issues need to be presented in a broad and balanced way, pitched appropriately to the pupils’ needs and experience. The use of ground rules helps create a supportive climate for discussion, will encourage the development of trust and confidentiality, and respectful listening to the opinions of others.

### **Assessment**

As with any learning process, assessment of pupils’ personal, social and emotional development is important. It provides information which indicates pupils’ progress and achievement and identifies areas that need further support and development. Assessment of work can take a number of different forms: written, group work, oral presentation, drama and informal judgements as tutors, Head of Life Matters and other members of staff observe pupils during lessons and at other times around school.

### **Resources**

Resources used in Life Matters lessons are reviewed annually and new resources are assessed for their suitability by the Assistant Head (Safeguarding and Welfare). Resources used should be of a certain standard, i.e. present balanced arguments, not belittle attitudes or moral values, or be sexist, racist or homophobic.

### **Staff training**

All staff engaged in the teaching of Life Matters are required to undertake training provided by the DFE in the form of PowerPoint presentations. This training is augmented by the use of specialist providers wherever possible and sharing of knowledge and pedagogical techniques between team members. The Head of Life Matters keeps logs of all training undertaken.

### **Equal opportunities**

Aldenham School regards access to a coherent programme of Life Matters as a fundamental right for all its pupils, irrespective of their academic ability, gender or ethnicity. Some issues may be perceived differently by boys and girls and may be tackled by single sex groups initially. Staff planning and delivering the programme will be expected to detect and respond appropriately by rearranging groups for teaching purposes when the need arises. When discussing moral issues relating to different cultures or religions, pupils should not be allowed to denigrate the beliefs of others.

If a pupil discloses or alludes to any issue that may suggest they are at personal risk, the Tutor must follow the Safeguarding Policy and ensure the concerns are reported to the appropriate member of staff. Similarly, if a child alludes to or confirms they have been the victim of bullying, the Tutor must follow the Anti-Bullying policy.

## **Child withdrawal procedures**

Parents have the right to request that their son or daughter is wholly or partially removed from receiving the Life Matters talks and presentations from external speakers. If a parent chooses to withdraw their child from any part of the programme, they should be given the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Assistant Head (Safeguarding and Welfare). If the parental concerns cannot be resolved, arrangements should be made for the withdrawal of the pupil. In the event of any such withdrawal, the School will ensure that it meets its statutory obligation to deliver Relationships and Sex Education to the child via alternative means of delivery. For further details, please see the RSE Policy.

## **Evaluation and monitoring**

Evaluation and monitoring procedures are to be completed annually by the Assistant Head (Safeguarding and Welfare), Head of Life Matters and pupils, with the outcomes used to develop and amend the programme for the year ahead. Feedback is also encouraged and welcomed at both House and Housemasters meetings throughout the year. Parents are to be encouraged to discuss the programme with their children.

## **Working with parents**

Aldenham School is required to make copies of this policy available for inspection by parents. A copy of this is attached to the school website. The purpose of informing parents about the policy is that they are better equipped to decide whether or not to withdraw their son or daughter from the programme. The opinions of parents are taken into account when reviewing and planning the policy and programme outline. Parents of some religious groups and ethnic minority communities may not be comfortable for their children to discuss aspects of the Life Matters programme in public. Consideration should be given to inviting such parents to discuss their needs and concerns privately. The Assistant Head (Safeguarding and Welfare) should maintain records of contact with parents from meetings, discussions and individual interviews for consideration in the policy and programme review process.

## **Links with other policies**

The Life Matters policy is linked closely with other key whole school policies, including Curriculum, Safeguarding Children, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), Anti Bullying, Health and Safety, and Anti Cyber Bullying.

## **Dissemination**

Aldenham School Governors and all teachers have access to the current Life Matters policy via the Shared Documents drive. Parents are entitled to see a copy of the policy on request and a reference copy should be attached to the school website for parental access.

## **Policy review**

The policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis by the Assistant Head (Safeguarding and Welfare) and the Head of Life Matters.