

THE MENTAL WEALTH HOUR

The conversation is the beginning

A school rhythm that turns listening into art

What the Hour does

The Mental Wealth Hour provides protected time for listening, learning, creative development and reflection. Older documents also call it the Mental Health Hour. It is a preparation cadence, not therapy or a compulsory personal testimony session.

Where it fits

Plan 45–60 minutes at least once every three weeks, weekly where feasible. Use an existing class, club, sports team, assembly, dorm, year-group or activity. The whole school does not have to stop for the festival. Specialist training, rehearsal and production time are agreed separately.

What comes out of it

A shared theme, useful question or creative direction. Counselling notes, identifiable disclosures, disciplinary cases and private journals stay out of festival material. Fiction and metaphor are welcome.

The minimum coordination

Before starting, agree the group, facilitator, current brief, adult support contact, right to pass, no-recording rules, three session dates and an arts/safeguarding review route.

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A sample 60-minute session

Minutes 0-5 Set the boundaries

Explain the purpose and prompt. Invite respectful listening. Everyone may pass, write quietly or step out using the agreed support arrangement. Explain that safety concerns must go to the designated adult.

Minutes 5-20 Explore a question

Use a fictional scenario. For a sports team: “A talented player thinks one missed goal defines them. What would help their team respond?” Discuss ideas rather than asking who has experienced this.

Minutes 20-30 Find the shared theme

Students identify themes such as pressure, belonging or asking for help. Remove names and details. Choose a question that an artwork could carry.

Minutes 30-50 Make a first response

Sketch, write, improvise or build a movement sequence. Try two interpretations. Ask what the audience should understand and which brief fits.

Minutes 50-60 Close and continue

Share only what students choose to share. Name the next creative action, remind everyone of the adult support route and record a short anonymous activity summary. For a 45-minute session, shorten the making stage and continue in the next agreed arts slot.

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Three sessions inside an existing calendar

Session one Listen and choose

Use a normal club or class slot. Explore a general prompt, distil a theme, select the brief and agree a first creative experiment. Record only date, group, minutes, brief and anonymous themes.

Session two Develop the message

In the next agreed cycle, bring draft work. Ask: What are we trying to say? What might an audience misunderstand? What needs a stronger symbol, clearer story or more careful handling?

Session three Review and prepare

Refine the work, complete the artist statement and rights declaration, and arrange adult arts/safeguarding review. Plan later rehearsals or technical preparation separately.

Keep the school calendar workable

Use one shared tracker and a short coordinator check-in. Schedule around examinations and existing commitments. Assemblies can introduce the festival; a smaller group can do the sustained creative work. Discuss capacity early rather than creating a parallel school programme.

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Facilitation and follow-through

Before the conversation

Check age fit, content boundaries and the named support route. Choose prompts that do not require personal disclosure. Know where a participant can pause and who will accompany them if needed.

During the conversation

Do not diagnose, shame, interrogate, promise absolute secrecy or ask for details of painful experiences. Review anonymous written responses before reading them aloud. Never record a private disclosure for creative inspiration.

If a concern arises

Pause the discussion and connect the student with the designated safeguarding adult through the school or organisation's agreed procedure. Keep the concern out of the activity log and public artwork. The website and chatbot are not emergency services.

After the festival

Return to the same group. Ask what the work helped people understand and what one practice should continue. Record aggregate participation and practical actions; do not claim clinical improvement from attendance.