



Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in School

Introduction

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. (World Health Organisation).

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and each pupil. We pursue this aim using both universal whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. We actively promote democracy, the rule of the law, individual liberty and respect those with different faiths and beliefs. These are fundamental British Values which underpin all that we offer, as does our School Motto 'Not for oneself but for all.'

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average year group (40) three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and well-being. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need. It should also be read in conjunction with the Staff Handbook and also the Safeguarding policy.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with children with mental health issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

Lead members of staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Mrs Jane Whittingham – Headteacher/Deputy Safeguarding Lead/Designated Mental Health Lead
- Mrs Gemma Mitchell – Pastoral Lead/Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Lead/Mental Health First Aider
- Miss Louise Robins and Mr Mark Parton – Deputy Designated Leads
- Mrs Louisa Wilkins – Designated Safeguarding Governor
- Mrs Jackie Trew – Lead First Aider & Mental Health First Aider

- Mrs Lucy Mathieson– Lead SENCO
- Mrs Sue Simms – Staff Well-being Liaison Governor
- Dr Mina Patel – Pupil Well-being Governor

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of pupil should speak to the pastoral lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Headteacher or the Children’s Single Point of Access (C-SPA). If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by one of the leads as stated above. Guidance about referring to CAMHS is provided in Appendix C.

Individual care plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil’s condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSCHÉ curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort being taught but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We follow the PSCHÉ Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional well-being issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in Appendix B.

Warning signs

There are often warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional well-being issues. These warning signs are taken seriously and staff observing any of them should communicate their concerns with DSL/Deputy DSL. While not exhaustive, the list below details possible warning signs as follows:

- Unusual play (in playground)
- Unusual drawings (in class)
- Tendency to isolate themselves
- Compulsive lying
- Attention seeking
- Pulling hair out (self-harm)
- Hurting other children
- No empathy
- Anxiety

- Hiding inside clothes (making self-invisible)
- Loud and disruptive
- Hiding lunch
- Over/under eating
- Soiling

Managing disclosures

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend/sibling to any member of staff so all staff have been briefed/trained on how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend/sibling to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and the focus should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'why?'

See Appendix B for more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the pupil's confidential file. This written record should include:

- Date of disclosure
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the DSL/Deputy DSL who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. See Appendix C for guidance about making a referral to CAMHS.

Confidentiality

Staff will be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary to pass on concerns about a pupil, then they should discuss with the pupil:

- Who they are going to talk to
- What they are going to tell them
- Why they need to tell them

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the DSL/Deputy DSL. This helps to safeguard the emotional well-being of the member of staff as they are no longer solely responsible for the pupil. It also ensures continuity of care in the absence of that member of staff and provides an extra source of ideas and support. This should be explained and discussed with the pupil along with who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSL must be informed immediately.

Working with parents and carers

Where it is considered appropriate to inform parents/ carers of a disclosure, staff will always seek to be sensitive in approach and will consider on a case by case basis the following points

- Should the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen?
- Who should be present? (parents, pupil, other members of staff)
- What are the aims of the meeting?

The school accepts that, on learning of their child's issues, parents may be upset or surprised and may respond negatively during the first conversation. The school understands that (within reason) it will always seek to give the parent time to reflect.

As it can be difficult to 'take in' information while coming to terms with unexpected news, the school will provide parents with leaflets/information to take away in addition to highlighting sources of further support aimed specifically at parents - e.g. Parent helplines and forums.

The school will provide a contact point for parents if they have further questions and will consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call as parents often have many questions.

Each meeting will finish with agreed next steps and a brief record of the meeting will be kept on the child's confidential record.

Communicating with parents and carers

Parents and carers often welcome support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents and carers the school will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website.
- Ensure that all parents/carers are aware of who to talk to and how to arrange this if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents/carers can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings.
- Keep parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSCH and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

Supporting peers/siblings

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends/siblings.

Friends/siblings often want to support but do not know how best to do it. The school will seek to support friends/siblings and will consider what is most appropriate on a case by case basis.

Support will be provided on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting and will be informed by the views of the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom the school will discuss:

- What is helpful for friends/siblings to know and what they should not be told.
- How friends/siblings can best support.
- Things friends/siblings should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset.
- Warning signs that their friend/sibling may need help (e.g. signs of relapse).
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues to enable them to keep pupils safe.

The school will provide access to CPD training on Educare for staff wishing to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal (www.minded.org.uk) provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff requiring more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of the school's performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, the school will host training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Reviewed: June 2019, July 2020, August 2020, June 2021, June 2022, July 2023, June 2024

Next review date: June 2025

Person responsible: Mrs Jane Whittingham (Headteacher)

Appendix A: Guidance and advice documents

[Supporting Mental Health in Schools and Colleges](#) - Department for Education (2017)

[Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing](#) - Public Health England (2015)

[Mental health and behaviour in schools](#) - departmental advice for school staff. Department for Education (2016)

[Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future](#) - departmental - advice for school staff and counsellors. Department for Education (2017)

[Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing](#) (2015). PSHE Association. Funded by the Department for Education (2015)

[Keeping children safe in education](#) - statutory guidance for schools - and colleges. Department for Education (2016)

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#) - statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England. Department for Education (2017)

[Healthy child programme from 5 to 19 years old](#) - is a recommended framework of universal and progressive services for children and young people to promote optimal health and wellbeing. Department of Health (2009)

[Future in mind – promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#) - a report produced by the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce to examine how to improve mental health services for children and young people. Department of Health (2015)

Appendix B: Talking to pupils when they make mental health disclosures

The advice below is from pupils themselves, in their own words, together with some additional ideas to help you in initial conversations with pupils when they disclose mental health concerns. This advice should be considered alongside school policies on pastoral care and child protection and discussed with relevant colleagues as appropriate.

Focus on listening

"She listened, and I mean REALLY listened. She didn't interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone but I knew quite quickly that I'd chosen the right person to talk to and that it would be a turning point."

If a pupil has come to you, it's because they trust you and feel a need to share their difficulties with someone. Let them talk. Ask occasional open questions if you need to in order to encourage them to keep exploring their feelings and opening up to you. Just letting them pour out what they're thinking will make a huge difference and marks a huge first step in recovery. Up until now they may not have admitted even to themselves that there is a problem.

Don't talk too much

"Sometimes it's hard to explain what's going on in my head – it doesn't make a lot of sense and I've kind of gotten used to keeping myself to myself. But just 'cos I'm struggling to find the right words doesn't mean you should help me. Just keep quiet, I'll get there in the end."

The pupil should be talking at least three quarters of the time. If that's not the case, then you need to redress the balance. You are here to listen, not to talk. Sometimes the conversation may lapse into silence. Try not to give in to the urge to fill the gap, but rather wait until the pupil does so. This can often lead to them exploring their feelings more deeply. Of course, you should interject occasionally, perhaps with questions to the pupil to explore certain topics they've touched on more deeply, or to show that you understand and are supportive. Don't feel an urge to over-analyse the situation or try to offer answers. This all comes later. For now, your role is simply one of supportive listener. So make sure you're listening!

Don't pretend to understand

"I think that all teachers got taught on some course somewhere to say 'I understand how that must feel' the moment you open up. YOU DON'T – don't even pretend to, it's not helpful, it's insulting."

The concept of a mental health difficulty such as an eating disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can seem completely alien if you've never experienced these difficulties first hand. You may find yourself wondering why on earth someone would do these things to themselves, but don't explore those feelings with the sufferer. Instead listen hard to what they're saying and encourage them to talk and you'll slowly start to understand what steps they might be ready to take in order to start making some changes.

Don't be afraid to make eye contact

"She was so disgusted by what I told her that she couldn't bear to look at me."

It's important to try to maintain a natural level of eye contact (even if you have to think very hard about doing so and it doesn't feel natural to you at all). If you make too much eye contact, the pupil may interpret this as you staring at them. They may think that you are horrified about what they are saying or think they are a 'freak'. On the other hand, if you don't make eye contact at all then a pupil may interpret this as you being disgusted by them – to the extent that you can't bring yourself to look at them. Making an effort to maintain natural eye contact will convey a very positive message to the pupil.

Offer support

"I was worried how she'd react, but my Mum just listened then said 'How can I support you?' – no one had asked me that before and it made me realise that she cared. Between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me stop self-harming."

Never leave this kind of conversation without agreeing next steps. These will be informed by your conversations with appropriate colleagues and the schools' policies on such issues. Whatever happens, you should have some form of next steps to carry out after the conversation because this will help the pupil to realise that you're working with them to move things forward.

Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues

"Talking about my bingeing for the first time was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking, my teacher looked me in the eye and said 'That must have been really tough' – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me."

It can take a young person weeks or even months to admit to themselves they have a problem, let alone share that with anyone else. If a pupil chooses to confide in you, you should feel proud and privileged that they have such a high level of trust in you. Acknowledging both how brave they have been, and how glad you are they chose to speak to you, conveys positive messages of support to the pupil.

Don't assume that an apparently negative response is actually a negative response

"The anorexic voice in my head was telling me to push help away so I was saying no. But there was a tiny part of me that wanted to get better. I just couldn't say it out loud or else I'd have to punish myself."

Despite the fact that a pupil has confided in you, and may even have expressed a desire to get on top of their illness, that doesn't mean they'll readily accept help. The illness may ensure they resist any form of help for as long as they possibly can. Don't be offended or upset if your offers of help are met with anger, indifference or insolence; it's the illness talking, not the pupil.

Never break your promises

"Whatever you say you'll do you have to do or else the trust we've built in you will be smashed to smithereens. And never lie. Just be honest. If you're going to tell someone just be upfront about it, we can handle that, what we can't handle is having our trust broken."

Above all else, a pupil wants to know they can trust you. That means if they want you to keep their issues confidential and you can't then you must be honest. Explain that, whilst you can't keep it a secret, you can ensure that it is handled within the school's policy of confidentiality and that only those who need to know about it in order to help will know about the situation. You can also be honest about the fact you don't have all the answers or aren't exactly sure what will happen next. Consider yourself the pupil's ally rather than their saviour and think about which next steps you can take together, always ensuring you follow relevant policies and consult appropriate colleagues.

Appendix C: What makes a good referral to Specialist CAMHS?¹

If the referral is urgent it should be initiated by phone so that CAMHS can advise of best next steps. Before making the referral, have a clear outcome in mind. What do you want CAMHS to do? You might be looking for advice, strategies, support or a diagnosis, for instance. You must also be able to provide evidence to CAMHS about what intervention and support has been offered to the pupil by the school and the impact of this. CAMHS will always ask 'What have you tried?' so be prepared to supply relevant evidence, reports and records.

General considerations

- Have you met with the parent(s) or carer(s) and the referred child or children?
- Has the referral to CAMHS been discussed with a parent or carer and the referred pupil?
- Has a parent or carer given consent for the referral?
- What are the parent or carer pupil's attitudes to the referral?

Basic information

- Is there a child protection plan in place?
- Is the child looked after?
- Name and date of birth of referred child/children
- Address and telephone number
- Who has parental responsibility?
- Surnames if different to child's
- GP details
- What is the ethnicity of the pupil / family?
- Will an interpreter be needed?
- Are there other agencies involved?

Reason for referral

- What are the specific difficulties that you want CAMHS to address?
- How long has this been a problem and why is the family seeking help now?
- Is the problem situation-specific or more generalised?
- Your understanding of the problem or issues involved.

Further helpful information

- Who else is living at home and details of separated parents if appropriate
- Name of school
- Who else has been or is professionally involved and in what capacity?
- Has there been any previous contact with specialist CAMHS?
- Has there been any previous contact with social services?
- Details of any known protective factors
- Any relevant history i.e. family, life events and/or developmental factors
- Are there any recent changes in the pupil's or family's life?
- Are there any known risks, to self, to others or to professionals?
- Is there a history of developmental delay e.g. speech and language delay?
- Are there any symptoms of ADHD/ASD and if so have you talked to the educational psychologist?

For further support and advice:

MK Specialist CAMHS advice line for professionals only: 01908 724544 and ask for the Duty worker

MK Specialist Referral Line: 01908 725372 All referrals from professionals and self-referrals from children and young people. This is not a referral line for parents or carers.

¹ Adapted from Surrey and Border NHS Trust