

Shirley Heath Junior School



Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy February 2023

Approved Date	February 2023
Review Date	February 2026

Policy Statement

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

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students and any staff member in need of support.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, 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 students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. 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 Conditions in School Policy" and "Administration of medicine in schools and settings January 2015" in cases where a pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

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 young people 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 students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Kara Evans- designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Matthew Taylor - designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Geraldine Mills - designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Amy Neale - designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Annabelle Clayton- mental health lead
- Hayley Walshe - lead first aider
- Geraldine Mills - pastoral lead

- Annabelle Clayton - CPD lead
- Annabelle Clayton- Head of PSHE
- Mrs Philippa Liversidge- link governor for safeguarding
- Gill Phipps- link governor for PSHE

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Pastoral Manager 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 child protection officer, the head teacher or the designated governor. 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 SOLAR is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Pastoral Manager in liaison with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the school nurse and/or GP

Risk Assessments

It is helpful to draw up a risk assessment 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 behaviours and/or conditions
- De-escalation strategies and/or special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency

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 PSHE 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 will follow the [PSHE Association Guidance](#)¹ to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing 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.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas on our website and on the school newsletter. We will advertise drop ins with the school nurse and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupils and parents/carers understanding:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

¹ [Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing](#)

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with our Designated Safeguarding Leads

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Managing disclosures

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff, need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend 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 our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be discussed with a DSL and recorded on My Concern DSL. The DSL will speak to the pupil and parents regarding the concern and offer support and advice about the next steps.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on, then we should discuss with the pupils:

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

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent.

This includes when a pupil is under the age of 16 and is in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually a DSL. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support.

If a pupil 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

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about 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 can support positive mental health in their children
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Staff Well-Being

Staff are signposted to a variety of support agencies through posters in the staff room and toilets and through many staff meetings. Staff know that they can approach our two Mental Health First Aiders, Geraldine Mills and Annabelle Clayton, for any personal 1:1 support that they require. Staff can input any concerns or worries about their or others' Well-Being informally, through weekly SLT surveys, through Well-Being surveys and also through the Well-Being working party. Please also refer to our Mental Health and Well-Being Charter which lists all of our strategies to support staff and children in more detail.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe.

The [MindEd learning portal](#)² provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

Supporting Strategies

Safeguarding Team
Mental Health First Aiders
Pastoral Manager
PSHE Curriculum
Assemblies
Peer Mediators
Playtime buddies
Place2Talk
Think Books
'E' Safety assemblies/workshops
Anti-Bullying week
Daily mental health scores in registration
Pupil voice through School Council
Individual, group and class interventions as needed
Newsletter signposting
Staff room signposting for staff

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in March 2026.