



**Values Education' is about understanding what is important to us individually, within our families and as a whole school community.**

## **Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy**

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**Where possible we offer translation or explanation of written communication. Please contact the school office if you require forms/paperwork in any other format.**

## **Policy Statement**

In our school, our Christian vision shapes all we do because we aim to ensure everyone in our school community is able to enjoy life in all its fullness:

**‘Our vision is to be an excellent, God-centred, values-based, community-focused school where everyone is welcomed, encouraged and included. Our children will develop as creative, determined learners and responsible citizens inspired to achieve their God-given potential and live life in all its fullness. We will foster understanding, tolerance and forgiveness within our caring Christian community’.**  
**(John 10:10)**

We are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. Our supportive and caring ethos, where each individual and contribution is valued strengthens this commitment.

*“Mental health influences how we think and feel about ourselves and others and how we interpret events. It affects our capacity to learn, to communicate and to form, sustain and end relationships. It also influences our ability to cope with change, transition and life events.” (Dr Lynne Friedli 2004)*

At our school we:

- help children to understand their emotions and feelings better
- help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- help children socially to form and maintain relationships.
- promote self esteem and ensure children know that they count.
- encourage children to be confident
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- promoting our school Christian values and encouraging a sense of belonging
- promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
- celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
- providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- providing opportunities to reflect
- access to appropriate support that meets their needs

We pursue these aims through:

- universal, whole school approaches
- specialised, targeted approaches for vulnerable pupils

- specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long term difficulties including attachment disorder
- support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to need as it arises. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by mental health and wellbeing issues.

### **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 needs policy in cases where a pupil's mental health and wellbeing overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies for Behaviour and Anti-bullying, and PSHE and SMSC policies. It should also sit alongside Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers
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### **Lead Members of Staff**

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

Sonia Shires – Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Head of Inclusion / Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead

Sarah Boyle – Head teacher and Deputy DSL

Siobhan Wright – SENCO and Medical Needs Lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the DSL/Deputy/SENCO 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/Deputy or the Head Teacher. 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 Sonia Shires Head of Inclusion supported by Siobhan Wright SENCO. Guidance about referring to CAMHS can be sought from Mrs Shires/Mrs. Wright.

### **Teaching About Mental Health and Wellbeing**

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. As our PSHE curriculum is adapted from the PSHE Association, we use their Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner, appropriate to the age and aptitude of our pupils.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching 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.

### **Targeted Support**

The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils or groups of pupils which may include:

- Circle time approaches or 'circle of friends' activities.
- Targeted use of SEAL resources.
- Managing feelings resources e.g. 'worry boxes' and 'worry monsters'
- Managing emotions resources such as 'the incredible 5 point scale'
- ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) support groups targeted at specific, vulnerable children or small groups of children
- Therapeutic activities including Theraplay, Lego and mindfulness techniques.

The school will make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing as appropriate including:

- Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire

- The Boxall Profile
- Emotional literacy scales

### **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 can be discussed with our Head of Inclusion and our SENCO.

We will display relevant sources of support for staff and pupils in communal areas 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 pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

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

### **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 the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputies or SENDCO as appropriate.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / 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 recorded on CPOMS. This record should include:

- Date
- 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, Head Teacher (Deputy DSL), SENCO and class teacher. DSL or Deputy will offer support and advice about next steps.

### **Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regards 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 pupil:

- 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. Particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm.

All members of staff must share disclosures with a colleague, usually the 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. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their child's mental health and wellbeing and pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. We should always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection concerns, parents should not be informed, but the DSL or Deputy (Sonia Shires / Sarah Boyle) must be informed immediately.

### **Informing Parents**

When informing parents about concerns over their child's mental health, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, and other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?
- 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 step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record on CPOMS. See below for further information on supporting parents.

## **Working With Parents**

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 by 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 / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend needs 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

## **Working With Other Agencies and Partners**

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including:



- The school nurse
- Educational psychology services
- Behaviour support through The Jigsaw Centre
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Therapy service such as Brown Box

## **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 in order to enable them to keep pupils safe.

We will signpost staff who wish to learn more about mental health to the MindEd learning portal which provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.<sup>1</sup>

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 pupils.

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

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with Sharon Keely our CPD Coordinator who can also investigate sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

## **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to Sonia Shires

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)