



St Matthew's CE Primary School

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Introduction

At St. Matthew's CE Primary School, our school vision shapes all that we do. We understand that in order for staff to enable children to flourish, they must first have positive well-being and mental health themselves. At St Matthew's we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all pupils, their families and members of staff and governors. We recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health and we invest heavily in ensuring this is a high priority and have clear strategies to promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing. As a school, we are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes: “preventing impairment of children's health or development”, and “taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes”. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2024). We are committed to following the non-statutory guidance laid out in “Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools” (DfE November 2018). Our open culture allows pupils' voices to be heard, and using effective policies and procedures, we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and pupil welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.
- Follow advice given in statutory government documentation to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all pupils, while considering the importance of safeguarding.

Definition

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing “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 her or his community". Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people to:

- feel confident in themselves.
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately.
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others.
- develop resilience to cope with the stresses of everyday life.
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change.
- learn and achieve.

Staff roles and responsibilities, including those with specific responsibility

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need. Whilst we ensure that all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Saira Malik
- Deputy Safeguarding Officers: Lisa Maher, Julie Dempsey, Elliott Small, Laura Dewar, Corrina Blake
- Governor for Safeguarding: Richard Jones
- Well-being and Citizenship Lead: Megan Greenwood
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator: Pashmeeney Sabir
- Children's Wellbeing Leads: Mark Nelson, Megan Greenwood, Sara Nasir
- Learning Mentor: Sarah O'Callaghan

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the SENDCO in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead via the Edukey safeguarding dashboard. If the student 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.

Individual Care Plans

When a pupil has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the pupil's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency

Depending on how the mental health issue affects the child's behaviour and actions, an individual Appropriate Response Plan (ARP) may also be implemented to support the child and staff in dealing with this.

Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our pupils need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHCE curriculum using the SCARF scheme of work.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHCE Association to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively. Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote pupils' wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing pupils who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting pupils to support any of their friends who are facing challenges. If any specific issues arise within a class, class teachers will work with SLT, parents and children to address these.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure pupils understand:

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

The school may also use its social media page on Facebook and the weekly Friday News to inform parents of any services available in regards to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Sources or support at school and in the local community to Support Pupil's Positive Mental Health

We believe the School has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

- Pupil-led activities
- Peer mediation and Peer mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child
- Buddies – a lunchtime group supporting younger children a lunchtime.
- Transition Programmes to secondary schools, supported by St Matthew's Church
- Access to Learning Mentors where needed

- Circle times
- Displays and information around the School about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Restorative sessions a small group intervention to improve children's communication skills around turn taking, dealing with issues, resolving conflict on the playground or classroom
- Self-esteem groups
- Friendship-circle of friends groups
- Zones of Regulation
- Regular surveys for pupil voice to be heard
- Voice of the child work obtained during all EHA (Early Help Assessment), Stronger Families, CIN (Child in Need) and CP (Child Protection) work
- Two members of staff who are mental health first aid trained
- Restorative behaviour sanctions such as 'contemplation time', allowing children the chance to reflect upon their actions and decide upon more appropriate future behaviour

Local Support

In Hillingdon, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including Hillingdon **CAMHS** (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) specialising in children and young people's mental health wellbeing. They provide community mental health services to children, young people up the age of 18, with complex mental health difficulties, and their families in a range of different ways depending on their needs. For more information on the service see:

<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/service/hillingdon-child-family-and-adolescent-consultation-service/>

Early Identification

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- Completion of school internal referral form
- Boxhall TM Profiling Tool
- SDQ (Social Difficulty Questionnaires)
- Analysing behaviour, exclusions, accident and medical records, attendance and sanctions
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons
- Pupil Progress meetings
- Regular Inclusion meetings for staff to raise concerns
- A parental information and health questionnaire
- Pupil surveys
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer
- Ethos that enables children to raise concerns to any member of staff
- Ethos that enables parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff

All staff at St. Matthew's CE Primary School have had training on the protective and risk factors types of mental health needs and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the Inclusion Lead.

These signs might include:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- Falling academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE
- Wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Drugs or alcohol misuse
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Staff are aware that mental health needs - such as anxiety - might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development. If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the School's child protection procedures are followed.

If there is medical emergency then the School's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with school nurses and their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems
- Working closely with Hillingdon Council Children's Services, Hillingdon CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems

- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Hillingdon CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

Managing disclosures

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures will be recorded confidentially on the pupil's personal file, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation, listed as accurately as possible with factual information only

This information will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a pupil to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the pupil. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained from the pupil first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as pupils up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague, this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the pupil. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents must always be informed, but pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, a timescale of 24 hours is recommended to share this information before the school makes contact with the parents/carers.

If a pupil gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Working with parents/carers

At St. Matthew's CE Primary we strive to foster close working relationships with parents and carers. If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – pupils, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

The school will ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

Supporting parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in 1:1 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 or 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

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 pupils safe. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal 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 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.

Many of our staff have completed the Place2Be Mental Health Champions foundation programme to gain a better understanding of children's mental health issues. This training supports staff in strategies that can be used to support children in the classroom.

Staff Mental Health and Well-being

At St Matthew's, our staff are highly valued and their positive mental health and well-being is important to leaders. Initiatives in school are in place to support staff in having positive mental health and well-being, and the well-being team is focused on creating a culture of staff supporting and valuing one another. The 'Health Assured' service is available to all staff, and this is promoted in staff training, in advertising around the school, and in return to work interviews where needed. The school's approach to well-being is based on the 'Five Ways to Well-being' strategy, and this is promoted regularly through displays and weekly emails.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is September 2026. In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes.