



Alsager Highfields Primary School

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Prepared by: Lisa Henshall

September 2022

Updated by Rachel Woollam September
2023

Chair of Governing Board:

Signature:

Date created: September 2022

Date to be reviewed: 2025

Definition of Mental Health

“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 her or his community.” (World Health Organization)

Policy Statement

At Alsager Highfields Primary School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

In addition to promoting emotional resilience and positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. 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.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody’s business and that we all have a role to play.

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 values
- 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 our aims through:

- universal, whole school approaches such as Hearts and Minds Strategy
- support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement
- specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex difficulties

Our vision...

At Alsager Highfields Primary School we will promote, develop, equip and prepare healthy learners for life. We are committed to making it our mission to promote resilience, positive wellbeing and mental health for all our pupils and staff. We understand wellbeing to be a state of being comfortable, healthy and happy. We aim to drive this message forward, and to ensure that mental health and wellbeing is “everyone’s business” across the whole school community. We will strive to create an environment that has a whole school approach, in providing effective mental health support, understanding and intervention. Through our whole school approach we will promote positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and aim to prevent problems before they arise.

Lead Members of Staff

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

- Mrs Rachel Woollam – Senior Mental Health Lead
- Mrs Marianne Dyde– Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Mrs Rachel Woollam, Mrs Julie Harrison, Mrs Rachel Mililchap, Mrs Joanne Riley and Mrs Liza Ryde– Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Mrs Sara Leopold - Emotional Literacy Support Assistant -ELSA
- Mrs Rachel Millichap– PSHE/RSE Subject Lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the mental health lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal safeguarding and child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated safeguarding lead 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 Rachel Woollam, the Mental Health and Wellbeing lead.

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 Hearts and Minds PHSE/RSE Curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we’re 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.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Wellbeing Champions are trained and developed within Year 5 every year to help to equip them to champion wellbeing and positive mental health across school. This training is delivered by One Goal and Marianne Dyde or Rachel Woollam.

Targeted support

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

- Circle time approaches or 'Friendship Terrace' activities.
- Managing feelings resources e.g. 'worry boxes' and 'worry shelves'
- Managing emotions resources such as 'the incredible 5 point scale'
- Mental health and wellbeing groups
- ELSA support groups.
- Therapeutic activities including art, lego and relaxation and mindfulness techniques
- Cool Connections/Resilient Classroom Interventions

As a school we 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 what support is available within our school and how to access further support. Information is shared by;

- Regular assemblies throughout the year
- A Mental Health and Wellbeing wall display in school linked to the Art of Brilliance
- Annual Mental Health training for our year 5 children delivered by One Goal with a whole school assembly with Mental Health Champions
- Wellbeing and mental health section on our website regularly updated with signposts to support
- ELSA page with direct contact details on our website
- Emotionally Healthy Children resources on our website

Identifying Needs and possible Warning Signs

Possible warning signs include:

- changes in eating / sleeping habits
- becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity and mood
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

- an increase in lateness or absenteeism

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil may be experiencing mental health difficulties. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with Rachel Woollam, our mental health lead.

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
- 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

It is important to note that any change in the usual behaviour or presentation of a pupil may indicate poor mental health and this should be considered as a possible explanation.

Managing discussions

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

If a pupil chooses to share 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 using CPOMS and held on the pupil's confidential file. This written 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead/Senior Mental Health Lead, Marianne Dyde or Rachel Woollam, who will review the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

We should always 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 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; in line with our safeguarding and child protection policy and where there is a risk of harm to the pupil themselves or others.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually Designated Safeguarding Lead/Senior Mental Health Lead.

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 must always be informed if there is considered to be a risk to the young person or others, in line with usual safeguarding procedures. 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 safeguarding or child protection issues, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Marianne Dyde, or any of the Deputy Designated Safeguard Leads who must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

When working with parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before talking 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 information 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.

In order to support parents we will:

- highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website.
- share and allow parents to access sources of further support e.g. through parent forums.
- ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get support, if they have concerns about their child.
- make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents on our website with printed copies (large text and other languages available on request).
- share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children.

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 nursing team
- GP
- Educational psychology team
- CEAT Autism Team
- Community Paediatric Team

- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Therapists
- Family Ties
- CLASP
- Dove

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 students safe.

The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

All teachers have completed the Mental Health Awareness Course.

Conclusion

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 Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, Bullying Prevention policy, 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.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in September 2025

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 Rachel Woollam our Senior Mental Health Lead email at head@alsagerhighfields.cheshire.sch.uk