



## Vernham Dean Gillum's Church of England Primary School Mental Health and Well-being Policy



### Policy Statement

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)

In our school our Christian vision shapes all we do. Our Christian values are; Compassion, Courage and Creativity.

In addition 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 pupils.

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 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.

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

### Lead Members of Staff

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

Holly Bulpitt - Designated Safeguarding Lead

Fliss Davis and Sharon Pole - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

Helen Silver- SENDCO/Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Flo Nicoll- ELSA

Holly Bulpitt- Lead First Aiders

Paul Nicoll- Chair of Governors/Safeguarding Governor/Mental health and well-being Governor

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 child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their Deputy, staff 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, Mental Health Lead. Guidance about referring to CAMHS is provided in Appendix A of this Policy.

### **Individual Care Plans**

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receives 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 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 Health and Citizenship 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 appropriate guidance 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. 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.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and toilets 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 to the Headteacher Cheryl Hawkings, our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead.

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?' Staff members must act according to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and not promise anything to the child such as keeping their disclosure secret as this could be of detriment to the safety and well-being of the child.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the pupil's confidential file. The proforma for this is on the child Safety board in the staff room. 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 mental health lead and Designated safeguarding lead Cheryl Hawkings who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. See Appendix C Hampshire Children's Safeguarding Board Thresholds chart for guidance about making a

referral to CAMHS. Each member of staff has a copy of this and there is one on the Pupil Safety board in the staff room.

## **Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality and not making any promises. 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

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.

It is vital to share disclosures with the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead/Designated safeguarding lead Cheryl Hawkings, 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 support. We should explain this to the pupil.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their 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 issues, parents should not be informed, but children's services must be informed immediately.

## **Working with Parents**

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following (on a case by case basis):

- The meeting should happen face to face
- Who should be present? Parents, the pupil, 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.

If relevant outside agencies should be contacted by school or the parents to support the child. Provision must be planned in school with Pastoral Care to support the child.

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 book 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.

### **Working with All 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 get 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 on our school website
  - Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our parent consultation evenings
  - Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE/Health and Citizenship lessons 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)

This will be managed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Flo Nicoll ELSA

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 yearly child protection training as well as in weekly staff meetings in order to enable them to keep pupils safe.

**Policy Review**

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