



Governing Body of the Wallisdean Federated Schools

Positive Mental Health Policy

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 Organisation)

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our school community. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. We know we are 'first class' at supporting children with social emotional and mental health needs, but there is always more we can do. This policy helps aid consistency of approach and equality of provision for our children.

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 the age of fourteen, a half of all mental health problems are established in a person, (*1 The five year forward view for mental health. Mental Health Task Force*). By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for children affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff and governors. This policy should be read in conjunction with our supporting pupils with medical conditions policy in cases where a child's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a child has an identified special educational need and using the knowledge gained from being an Attachment & Trauma Sensitive School.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and children
- 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 children suffering mental ill health, their peers and parents/carers

Key Members of Staff for mental health and inclusion

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of children. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include: Mental Health and Well-Being Strategic Team:

- DSLs and Deputy DSLs
- Inclusion Leaders
- Designated teacher for looked after children
- SENDCo
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)/Therapeutic Active Listening Assistant (TALA)
- Parent Support Worker

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child should speak to a member of the Strategic Team lead team in the first instance or raise the concern through CPOMs. If there is a fear that the child is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officers. If the child 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 the Inclusion Leaders and the EHT.

Mental Health Champion

All staff should be mental health champions, but it is important for the staff to have a named person to maintain the importance of mental health issues and to champion their interest. This role is held by Mrs Marum and Mrs Smith who will champion mental health for the school community. Their role will include promotion of well-being materials; being a 'listening ear'; acting as a signpost for other services or professionals (along with the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategic Team); relaying ideas and information to senior staff that could further improve wellbeing in school; having oversight of school improvement plans to ensure that mental health promotion has a key place; help to reduce barriers to mental health in school by promoting positive language in relation to mental health.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for children causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the child, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a child's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Advice for staff on managing any associated behaviours
- 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

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 we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling children to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We will use guidance and resources from Dragonfly, Stormbreak, Heads Together; Mentally Healthy Schools website 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, children 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.

We will display relevant sources of support around the school and will regularly highlight sources of support to children within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of children help-seeking by ensuring children 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 child, or a parent/carer 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 a member of our Inclusion Leaders, or our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Team.

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 – eg 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

Managing disclosures

A child or parent 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 child or parent 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 child's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded on CPOMs. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made (if you are recording it for someone else)
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Executive Head Teacher, who 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 child on then we should discuss with the child:

- 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 child without first telling them. Parents must always be informed if a child is self-harming, talking of self-harm, saying they are being bullied, bullying others, or expressing low mood. If appropriate, we should always give children 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 the EHT (DSL) 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 questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the child, 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 eg 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.

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 eg Wake up Wednesdays
- 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 strategy 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.

Sources of support for children with mental health needs, outside of school professionals, may include:

- CAMHS
- MHST
- Young Carers
- Simon Says (Bereavement support) 023 80647550

Supporting Peers

When a child 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 child 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 help (eg 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 in Peer Support

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.

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/Inset training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Concerns for immediate welfare of a parent and/or child

If the school's DSLs are unavailable then contact the Children's Services Professional Line or complete the Inter Agency Referral form.

Adopted September 2025; Reviewed 2026

This policy will be reviewed by SLT/MHT every three years