The Meadows Primary School

Mental Health Policy

Version Control

Version	Date	Purpose	Author
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Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of wellbeing 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 the Meadows Primary School and Resource Base, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our community; pupils, parents, families and staff. We pursue this aim using both universal, specialised, targeted approaches and whole school approaches.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective wellbeing policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for every member of our community 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 including non-teaching staff and governors.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive emotional wellbeing for all members of our community
- 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 and families with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health, their peers and parents/carers
- Provide support to staff who might be experiencing their own mental health difficulties

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the emotional wellbeing of pupils, families and staff, there are key members of staff with a specific, relevant remits including:

- **Carly Blair (DSL) - Senior Mental Health Lead/SENDCo**
- **Rebecca Martin – Mental Health Champion**
- **Mark Kings (DSL), Rebecca Jeffers (DSL), Claire McFall – Pastoral Team**
- **Rena Ali (DSL) – Assistant headteacher/Safeguarding and Behaviour Lead**
- **Laura Lewellyn – Attendance Officer**
- **Kate Watkins – Safeguarding Governor**

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or emotional wellbeing of a student should speak to the Pastoral Team/Mental Health Lead 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 a designated safeguarding lead (DSL), the Headteacher or the designated governor. If the pupil presents as 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 Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by one of the above staff members. Guidance about referring to FTB is can be found at www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk.

The safeguarding team meet weekly, to discuss vulnerable children within the school. Children may be identified as vulnerable for a number of reasons, including; safeguarding and child protection concerns, poor attendance, family breakdown or domestic abuse, homelessness. Where a wellbeing concern is raised, the child will be supported through the graduated response identified at the end of this document. Where a child is supported and the concerns must be recorded on CPOMS, and may be escalated further.

Individual Care Plans

It may be helpful to discuss an individual care plan, with health professionals and parents, for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents/carers 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 plays

Teaching about Emotional Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum. We follow the 'Jigsaw' PSHE curriculum.

Jigsaw is a planned programme of learning through which children and young people acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives – now and in the future. As part of a whole-school approach, PSHE Education develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society.

In the latest government guidance says that schools need to have a broad and balanced curriculum that;

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life
- promotes British values

Schools also have statutory responsibilities to promote pupil wellbeing and pupil safeguarding (Children Act, 2004) and community cohesion (Education Act, 2006). PSHE Education plays an important part in fulfilling all of these responsibilities.

In order to fulfil its duties relating to; social/moral/spiritual/cultural development (SMSC), behaviour and safety, and to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which meets pupils' needs and prepares them for the challenges and opportunities of adult life, 'a school's best approach is to ensure that a comprehensive programme of PSHE Education is in place' – according to the PSHE Association (2014).

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 students 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[1] to ensure that we teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner, which helps rather than harms.

In addition to our PSHE curriculum, the ethos of the school is based within a Restorative Approach. When conflict or difficulties arise within the life of the school, staff, parents and pupils are encouraged to undertake a restorative conversation in order to improve and repair relationships. The purpose is to build healthy communities, increase social capital, decrease crime and antisocial behaviour, repair harm and restore relationships. It enables our learners to become emotionally literate, and to recognise the place and impact they have on their own community.

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 on our school website.

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 DSL staff members above.

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
- 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 secretively
- 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 student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in writing (and shared with a DSL), on CPOMS and held on the student'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

[1] Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing

This information should be shared with a DSL who will review the record and offer support and advice about next steps. See www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk for guidance about making a referral to FTB.

Confidentiality

We should 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/carer. For example; 'I can listen to what you want to share, but I cannot keep secrets. I may need to share what you tell me with someone else, who can give me advice.'

Disclosures should always be shared with a DSL. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil and 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 (unless there is an associated safeguarding concern) and pupils may choose to tell their parents/carers themselves. Staff should provide support when required. 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. A DSL must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents/carers, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents/carers 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 pupils, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be upsetting for parents/carers to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We will be accepting of this and give the parent/carer time to reflect.

We will highlight further sources of information 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/carers 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/carer 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 (CPOMS).

Parents/Carers are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. In order to support parents/carers, 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 through information sessions
- 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 experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing difficulties, 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 with 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 may need 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

Supporting Each Other

When you are caring for the emotional wellbeing of others, it easy to forget your own. But to fully support the pupils in our care, we need to make sure staff are cared for too.

The high demands of teaching/working in a school, have been shown to result in stress among staff. Therefore, addressing the wellbeing of staff is a vital step to addressing the wellbeing of pupils, because engaged, cared for teachers are better able to care for pupils.

At The Meadows, we aim to promote a supportive environment. All staff should be able to share their concerns with others, so that potential issues can be addressed. All DSLs have access to supervision time and can share concerns with their line manager. Confidentiality will be respected, unless there is a safeguarding issue that needs to be addressed.

Staff are given access to counselling services through Birmingham County Council and signposted to further support for other issues. Staff are also given opportunities to share any concerns through appraisal meetings.

Staff wellbeing meetings are also scheduled annually.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive annual training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students 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 to developing situations with one or more students. 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.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in February 2026.