

DEANSBROOK INFANT SCHOOL

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy

Contents

Policy Statement

Rationale

Aims of the Policy

Dissemination

Lead Members of Staff

Responsibility

Managing Pupil Disclosures

Warning Signs

Realistic Expectations

Individual Care Plans

Confidentiality

Working with Parents/Carers

Supporting Peers

Training

Signposting

Teaching about Mental Health

Policy review

Appendix A Further information and sources of support about common mental health issues:

- Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias; Depression; Eating problems; Obsessions and Compulsions; Self Harm; Suicidal Feelings

Appendix B Sources of support at school and in the local community

Appendix C Talking to pupils/students when they make mental health disclosures

February 2020

Review: February 2023

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 Organisation)

RATIONALE

At Deansbrook Infant School we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupils. We pursue this aim using workplace practices, universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health.

By developing and implementing a practical, relevant and effective mental health policy and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for staff and pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. It is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

It should be read in conjunction with our:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Needs Policy (where a pupil has an identified special educational need)

AIMS

At Deansbrook Infant School we aim to create an environment that promotes positive mental health in all staff and pupils by:

- Increasing understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Providing opportunities for staff to look after their mental wellbeing
- Alerting staff to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils
- Providing support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Providing support to pupils suffering from mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

Dissemination

Deansbrook Infant School will share the policy with staff, governors, pupils and parents/carers via the following methods:

- Introducing the policy to staff, with time for questions and review
- A copy or direct link to the policy will be emailed to all staff
- New staff will receive a copy of this policy during the induction process
- A copy of the policy will be available on the school server
- Salient points from the policy will be shared with pupils via the PSHE curriculum
- A copy of the policy will be uploaded on the school website
- Updates in the school newsletter

Lead Members of Staff

Staff with a specific remit include:

- Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) - Carole Catley
- Mental Health Lead - Nikki Simon
- Occupational Health and Safety Lead - Carole Catley
- Lead First Aider - Sejal Shah
- Pastoral Lead - Jenny Francis
- Head Teacher - Carole Catley
- Deputy Head - Nikki Simon
- CPD Lead (for staff training) - Nikki Simon

Responsibility

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the DSL 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 head teacher. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the School Nurse and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the DSL.

All school staff are encouraged to:

- Understand this policy and seek clarification from management where required
- Consider this policy while completing work-related duties and at any time while representing the school
- Support fellow staff in their awareness of this policy

- Support and contribute to Deansbrook Infant School's aim of providing a mentally healthy and supportive environment for all staff.

All school staff have a responsibility to:

- Take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, including physical health
- Take reasonable care that their actions do not affect the health and safety of other people in the workplace
- Raise concerns with their line manager if they feel there are work issues that are causing them stress and having a negative impact on their well-being

Managers and Senior Leadership have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that all school staff are made aware of this policy
- Actively support and contribute to the implementation of this policy, including its goals
- Manage the implementation and review of this policy
- Champion good management practices to establish a work ethos within Deansbrook Infant School which discourages assumptions about long term commitment to working hours of a kind likely to cause stress and which enables staff to maintain a reasonable "work life balance"
- Promote effective communication and ensure that there are procedures in place for consulting and supporting employees on changes in the organisation, to management structures and working arrangements at a school-wide level
- Encourage initiatives and events that promote health and well-being
- Ensure there are arrangements in place to support individuals experiencing stress, referring them to the school's Occupational Health advisers where appropriate.
- Collate management information which will enable the school to measure its performance in relation to stress management and employee well-being, such as:
 - Sickness absence data
 - Staff turnover
 - Number of self-referrals to the counsellor service
 - Number of referrals to Occupational Health support
 - Numbers of grievance and harassment cases
- Seek the views of employees on the effectiveness of the School's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy and stress management arrangements using staff surveys and other appropriate questionnaires.

Managing Pupil 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, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen, rather than advise and first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety, rather than of exploring 'Why?', staff should avoid asking any leading questions.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held in a central file. This should include:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom it was disclosed
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the DSL, who will store the record appropriately and offer advice about the next step.

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 communicated to the DSL

Possible warning signs to look out for in pupils or their immediate family:

- 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 or mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol in the family
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE/Games or getting changed secretly
- Lateness or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- Increase in lateness or absenteeism

Realistic Expectations

Mental health issues can be ongoing for a long time. They can be highly impactful on a pupil's ability to access school. We need to ensure that all members of staff are realistic in their expectations of affected pupils, to ensure those pupils are not placed under undue stress which may exacerbate their mental health issues.

Expectations should always be led by what is appropriate for a specific pupil at a specific point in their recovery journey rather than by what has worked well for others, so some degree of flexibility is essential.

Expectations to consider addressing include:

- Academic achievement
- Absence and lateness
- Access to extra-curricular activities including sport
- Duration and pace of recovery
- Ability to interact and engage within lessons

Individual Care Plans

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

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements or precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Emergency procedures
- The role the school can play

Confidentiality

We should be honest with pupils about confidentiality. We should let them know this and discuss with them that it might be necessary to pass the information on:

- 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 letting them know. Ideally, we should receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another staff member and/or a parent/carer. This would always include pupils up to the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

If acting to safeguard a pupil against harm or look out for their welfare it is imperative to share any information you deem important.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, the DSL must be notified immediately.

Working with Parents/Carers

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parent/carers, we need to be sensitive in our approach. It can be shocking and upsetting for parent/carers to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset. We should therefore give the parent/carers time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information as parents/carers will often find it hard to take in much of the news that we are sharing. We should always provide clear means of how contact can be made with the school regarding further questions and the school should consider booking in a follow up meeting right away as parents/carers may have many questions as they process the information. We should keep a record on each meeting in the child's confidential record.

In order to support all parent/carers of our children at Deanbrook Infant School we will:

- Ensure all parent/carers know who to talk to if they have any concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parent/carers
- Keep parent/carers informed about the topics their children are learning about in PSHE

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. 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 might need additional support. It is important to consider:

- What friends should and should not be told
- How friends can support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying
- Warning signs to look out for
- How friends can access further support for themselves from the school
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be facing

Training

All staff will receive regular training or guidance about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of the regular child protection training.

Suggestions for individual, group, or whole school CPD should be discussed with Nikki Simon.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parent/carers are aware of sources of support within school and in the 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 such as staff rooms, library, notice boards and lavatories.

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 the PSHE curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort being taught 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 ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through:

- feedback from staff, pupils and parents
- review of the policy by SLT and governors to determine if objectives have been met and to identify barriers and enablers to ongoing policy implementation.

Appendix A

Further information and sources of support about common mental health issues:

Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed.

Online support

Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Depression

Ups and downs are a normal part of life for all of us, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months, and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

Online support

Depression Alliance: www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression

Eating problems

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people. This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

Online support

Beat – the eating disorders charity: www.b-eat.co.uk/about-eating-disorders

Eating Difficulties in Younger Children and when to worry: www.inourhands.com/eating-difficulties-in-younger-children

Obsessions and compulsions

Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter our minds which are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they don't turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by

repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms – it is not just about cleaning and checking.

Online support

OCD UK: www.ocduk.org/ocd

Self-harm

Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.

Online support

SelfHarm.co.uk: www.selfharm.co.uk

National Self-Harm Network: www.nshn.co.uk

Suicidal feelings

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings though they may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide apparently out of the blue.

Online support

Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

On the edge: ChildLine spotlight report on suicide:

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/research-and-resources/on-the-edge-childline-spotlight/

Appendix B

Sources or support at school and in the local community

School Based Support

- **Referral to CAMHS (Child and Mental Health Service).** Suitable for all pupils in primary and secondary schools. Access is via a referral from the school with permission and consent from the parents. The HT/DHT/SENCO is able to make a referral and discuss the process with the pupil and parents. Meetings and support can be organised in school time, having access to a room and review meetings planned as appropriate. This is suitable for a range of family experiences and can include family therapy and play therapy together with counselling support.
- **Discussion with the School Nurse.** HT/DHT/SENCO talk together and discuss concerns with school nurse. With consent from the parents, the pupil is able to speak with the school nurse with/without parents present – depending on the needs of the child and request of the parents. This is suitable for dealing with any health issues and managing emotions of the pupil and family.
- **Referral to the Early Help Team.** A Referral form is completed. This can be carried out by the HT, DHT or SENCO in consultation and with parental consent. Meetings can take place on the school site with parents fully involved. Several meetings take place with a review session to discuss the next steps. This is available to pupils in primary schools and can include support on Transition, managing change and issues around anxiety associated with bereavement and separation.
- **In school, members of the Senior Leadership Team are available to support pupils experiencing short term issues.** However, SLT are not trained counsellors and may need to sign post to other agencies for more, long term support. Staff can support with managing behaviour and developing behaviour that fully supports learning. With more challenging behaviour, the school can refer to the TBAP Team with regards to behaviour issues or the Educational Psychologist if relating to lack of progress with learning.

For information about different intervention support available in school, please see the SCHOOL SEN OFFER on the website.

Appendix C

Talking to pupils when they make mental health disclosures

The advice below is from pupils themselves, in their own words, together with some additional ideas to help you in initial conversations with pupils/ students when they disclose mental health concerns. This advice should be considered alongside relevant school policies on pastoral care and child protection and discussed with relevant colleagues as appropriate.

Focus on listening

"She listened, and I mean REALLY listened. She didn't interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone but I knew quite quickly that I'd chosen the right person to talk to and that it would be a turning point."

If a pupil has come to you, it's because they trust you and feel a need to share their difficulties with someone. Let them talk. Ask occasional open questions if you need to in order to encourage them to keep exploring their feelings and opening up to you. Just letting them pour out what they're thinking will make a huge difference and marks a huge first step in recovery. Up until now they may not have admitted even to themselves that there is a problem.

Don't talk too much

"Sometimes it's hard to explain what's going on in my head – it doesn't make a lot of sense and I've kind of gotten used to keeping myself to myself. But just 'cos I'm struggling to find the right words doesn't mean you should help me. Just keep quiet, I'll get there in the end."

The pupil should be talking at least three quarters of the time. If that's not the case then you need to redress the balance. You are here to listen, not to talk. Sometimes the conversation may lapse into silence. Try not to give in to the urge to fill the gap, but rather wait until the pupil does so. This can often lead to them exploring their feelings more deeply. Of course, you should interject occasionally, perhaps with questions to the pupil to explore certain topics they've touched on more deeply, or to show that you understand and are supportive. Don't feel an urge to over-analyse the situation or try to offer answers. This all comes later. For now your role is simply one of supportive listener.

Don't pretend to understand

"I think that all teachers got taught on some course somewhere to say 'I understand how that must feel' the moment you open up. YOU DON'T – don't even pretend to, it's not helpful, it's insulting."

The concept of a mental health difficulty such as an eating disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can seem completely alien if you've never experienced these difficulties first hand. You may find yourself wondering why on earth someone would do these things to themselves, but don't explore those feelings with the sufferer. Instead listen hard to what they're saying and encourage them to talk and you'll slowly start to understand what steps they might be ready to take in order to start making some changes.

Don't be afraid to make eye contact

"She was so disgusted by what I told her that she couldn't bear to look at me."

It's important to try to maintain a natural level of eye contact (even if you have to think very hard about doing so and it doesn't feel natural to you at all). If you make too much eye contact, the pupil/student may interpret this as you staring at them. They may think that you are horrified about what they are saying or think they are a 'freak'. On the other hand, if you don't make eye contact at all then a pupil/student may interpret this as you being disgusted by them – to the extent that you can't bring yourself to look at them. Making an effort to maintain natural eye contact will convey a very positive message to the pupil/student.

Offer support

"I was worried how she'd react, but my Mum just listened then said 'How can I support you?' – no one had asked me that before and it made me realise that she cared. Between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me stop self-harming."

Never leave this kind of conversation without agreeing next steps. These will be informed by your conversations with appropriate colleagues and the schools' policies on such issues. Whatever happens, you should have some form of next steps to carry out after the conversation because this will help the pupil/student to realise that you're working with them to move things forward.

Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues

"Talking about my bingeing for the first time was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking, my teacher looked me in the eye and said 'That must have been really tough' – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me."

It can take a young person weeks or even months to admit they have a problem to themselves, let alone share that with anyone else. If a pupil chooses to confide in you, you should feel proud and privileged that they have such a high level of trust in you. Acknowledging both how brave they have been, and how glad you are they chose to speak to you, conveys positive messages of support to the pupil.

Don't assume that an apparently negative response is actually a negative response

"The anorexic voice in my head was telling me to push help away so I was saying no. But there was a tiny part of me that wanted to get better. I just couldn't say it out loud or else I'd have to punish myself."

Despite the fact that a pupil/student has confided in you, and may even have expressed a desire to get on top of their illness, that doesn't mean they'll readily accept help. The illness may ensure they resist any form of help for as long as they possibly can. Don't be offended or upset if your offers of help are met with anger, indifference or insolence, it's the illness talking, not the pupil/student.

Never break your promises

“Whatever you say you’ll do you have to do or else the trust we’ve built in you will be smashed to smithereens. And never lie. Just be honest. If you’re going to tell someone just be upfront about it, we can handle that, what we can’t handle is having our trust broken.”

Above all else, a pupil wants to know they can trust you. That means if they want you to keep their issues confidential and you can't then you must be honest. Explain that, whilst you can't keep it a secret, you can ensure that it is handled within the school's policy of confidentiality and that only those who need to know about it in order to help will know about the situation. You can also be honest about the fact you don't have all the answers or aren't exactly sure what will happen next. Consider yourself the pupil's/student's ally rather than their saviour and think about which next steps you can take together, always ensuring you follow relevant policies and consult appropriate colleagues.

