



WyreForestSchool

Communication Specialist

# Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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<b>Signature:</b>			

## **Policy Statement**

At Wyre Forest School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for all pupils, their families and members of staff and governors. Our school culture promotes a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that is underpinned by good relationships as well as the promotion of effective and timely mental health and wellbeing support systems.

Children and adults with learning disabilities are not exempt from experiencing mental health problems, and are:

- 33 times more likely to have an autistic spectrum condition
- 8 times more likely to have ADHD
- 4 times more likely to have an emotional disorder
- 3 times more likely to experience schizophrenia
- Nearly 2 times more likely to have a depressive disorder

(Young Minds, 2015)

This policy is a guide for all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining our approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies, including:

Safeguarding (Including Child Protection) Policy

Behaviour Policy

Suicide-safer Policy

Wyre Forest Curriculum/Progression Steps

## **Definition**

The World Health Organisation defines mental wellbeing as

**“a state of mind in which an individual is able to realise his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”**

It can be helpful to understand wellbeing as being made up of two key elements;

**Feeling Good-** This means experiencing positive emotions such as happiness, contentment and enjoyment. It also includes feelings such as engagement, safety and curiosity.

**Functioning Well-** This refers to how a person is able to function in the world. It includes having positive relationships and social connections, as well as feeling in control of life and having a sense of purpose.

## **Policy Aims**

- To develop a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, using the Anna Freud Centre's "5 steps to mental health and wellbeing" as a framework.
- To promote a culture amongst staff, pupils and stakeholders of the importance of emotional wellbeing, resilience and good mental health as foundations for learning
- To increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- To enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils.
- To provide support to pupils with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific input.

## **Lead Members of Staff**

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

- The Headteacher (Also our Deputy DSL)
- The Safeguarding Team
- The Designated Senior Mental Health Lead (Also our Deputy Head and DSL)
- The Mental Health Working Party
- Mental Health First Aiders

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the DSL or Senior Mental Health Lead in the first instance. If there is a safeguarding concern, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate online referral to the DSL. If a pupil presents with a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

In 2022 Wyre Forest School set up a Mental Health Working party that meets termly. It consists of senior leaders, teaching and support staff, as well as stakeholders, so that a positive approach to mental health and wellbeing is a key priority for our setting.

### **3. 'Mental health difficulty'**

3.1 The term 'mental health' describes 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. A mental health difficulty is one in which a person is distracted

or unable to engage with ordinary life due to upsetting, disturbing thoughts and/or feelings. These problems may distort or negatively impact a person's view of the world and produce a variety of symptoms and behaviour likely to cause distress and concern.

#### **4. Legal Considerations**

4.1 Under The Equality Act (2010) a person with a mental health difficulty is covered if their condition leads to an adverse impact on their ability to carry out their normal day- to-day activities. This will include pupils with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, self-harm and disordered eating.

4.2 The Act also covers those who have had a mental illness or difficulty in the past, even if they have recovered, and those whose condition meets the definition but is successfully controlled by treatment (for example psychiatric medication such as anti- depressants) or therapy.

4.3 Under The Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against pupils with a diagnosed mental health condition, and 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made to ensure they can access education. The general principal of 'reasonable adjustments' is that wherever possible, schools should make practical adjusts to enable a pupil to continue their education. Mental health problems are often variable and pupils may only need adjustments for a limited period of time whilst they receive treatment or until they are better able to function.

4.4 Under the Data Protection Act (DPA), all information regarding pupils with mental health difficulties is regarded as sensitive and personal information. Any and all information about pupil mental health is shared on a 'need to know' basis, and is align with defined procedures on sharing of information about pupils.

4.5 Duty of Care - All staff need to be aware of the concept of the 'Duty of Care'. This is a legal obligation which requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all our pupils, staff and visitors. If a school knows (or should know) that a pupil is experiencing mental health difficulties, the pupil and parent/carer should be advised to seek appropriate help and reasonable measures to support them need to be in place. This is particularly important in regard to passing on personal information where mental health difficulties occur.

#### **5. Mental Health Emergency**

A Mental Health Emergency is defined as:

'you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. You may feel great emotional distress or anxiety, cannot cope with day-today life or work, think about suicide or self-harm, or experience hallucinations and hearing voices.' NHS, 2019.

5.1 There may be instances where a pupil's behaviour and mental state are concerning and may lead to immediate danger through harm to themselves or others. The following situations or symptoms classify as a mental health emergency:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal ideation
- Hearing voices
- Psychosis: Experiencing hallucinations and/or delusions.
- Extreme emotional distress

5.2 If a pupil presents with any of the above problems, emergency services should be contacted, along with a designated First Aider, where appropriate, and the Designated Senior Mental Health Lead/DSL. If the pupil requires being sent home or is advised to go to A&E, this will be directed by a member of SLT.

5.3 Mental health crisis or emergencies are often not spontaneous and the pupil may have been experiencing symptoms for a length of time. Therefore, it is essential that pupil mental health concerns are communicated to the DSL / Senior Mental Health Lead to ensure the school is focusing on preventative strategies, and is carefully monitoring and supporting vulnerable pupils. These incidents will be logged on CPOMS, under mental health.

## **6. Warning Signs**

6.1 Pupils who are showing signs of mental distress do not always express problems directly or ask for help, even where there are clear signs that they are having difficulties and could be due to a number of reasons. Pupils may still feel stigma around mental health problems, or may be concerned about the consequences of telling someone. They may be unaware that they have a problem, or be aware but feel that they have to cope with it on their own.

6.2 Adolescence can be a difficult developmental time and this period of change can result in the gradual onset of mental illness. It is important that warning signs are recognised and an appropriate, supportive response is put in place as soon as possible. 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 using our recording tool, CPOMS, and notify the DSMHL and Safeguarding team. Pupils at Wyre Forest School also have their individual additional needs to consider.

Possible warning signs include:

- The pupil has told you there is a problem, for example, they have been feeling low or anxious recently
- Significant changes in the pupil's appearance, for example: weight loss/gain, decline in personal hygiene, noticeable signs of self-harm
- Changes in mood, for example: mood is very up and down, miserable, tired, withdrawn
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating patterns or sleeping habits
- Concerns expressed from friends, family, other staff members
- Changes in behaviour. For example, not socialising as much as usual, withdrawn, not attending school, being late
- Increased isolation from friends, family.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide- additional support around suicide can be found in our "Suicide Safer Policy"
- 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
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

## **7. Internal Support**

7.1 Pupils requiring internal support will be discussed during safeguarding meetings and Supporting Families meetings, where appropriate.

7.2 Where a referral to Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Designated Senior Mental Health Lead in conjunction with the class teacher.

7.3 Where a referral to the Children with Disabilities Team (CWD) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the DSL for Safeguarding in conjunction with the senior family support worker and the class teacher

7.4 The following are examples of interventions used internally with pupils who may be experiencing mental health difficulties:

- One-to-one intervention with Alice Westbury Coaching, Mentor Link
- Weekly drop ins with our Family Support Workers
- Time with one of our trained Mental Health First Aiders
- Thrive activities, overseen by our Assistant Head for Behaviour and delivered by our trained practitioners

- Early Help Meetings, overseen by the Deputy Head and usually delivered by the Senior Family Support Worker

Due to the nature of Wyre Forest School being a special school, particular attention must be made to those pupils who are non-verbal and therefore are unable to articulate their feelings in a conventional manner. Pupils with severe learning difficulties, speech and language disorders and other complex needs will communicate their anxiety through their behaviour. Staff must consider all possible triggers and causes for behaviour, and liaise with the school leader for Pathway One (Assistant Head), Assistant Head for Behaviour, and our Communication Lead.

## **8. External Support**

8.1 Pupils experiencing mental health difficulties are often best supported both in and outside school. There are various mental health charities and other external agencies who are able to provide information for parent/carers, and who offer tools to assist young people with their mental health outside school.

8.2 In order to fully support parent/carers with the mental health of their child we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues
- Direct parent/carers to resources on the school website
- Ensure that all parent/carers are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parent/carers/carers via the school website
- Share ideas about how parent/carers can support positive mental health
- Keep parent/carers informed about the themes their children are learning about in Mental Health and Wellbeing and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

8.3 Parent/carers and staff members may also struggle with their mental health. Caregiving and teaching can both be emotionally demanding jobs and it is important to ensure that care is taken around personal wellbeing. The following resources can be helpful for parent/carers and staff members to support with their own mental health;

- GP – The NHS offers a variety of therapeutic interventions to assist with mental health
- Schools Advisory Service (staff)

## **9. Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy are included as part of our bespoke WFS curriculum. It is taught explicitly as part of a planned curriculum, and, in addition to this, staff maintain a flexible, responsive approach in order to meet mental/emotional health needs that arise throughout the academic year.

The specific content of lessons is determined by the needs of the pupils being taught and the pathway that they are in. Where appropriate, there will be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, communication and confidence to learn self-awareness and ask for help, when required.

We will teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

## **10. Managing mental health concerns**

A pupil may choose to disclose mental health concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, therefore, all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

Following a disclosure, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

10.1 Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety. Staff should be sympathetic and understanding, and remember to be sensitive to issues relating to sexuality, race, religion, culture and gender or any communication, physical or sensory impairment or condition that they might have.

10.2 Staff should be prepared to listen and give the pupil time if possible. The situation may only require active/ empathic listening. Simply asking a pupil how they are may provide them with an opportunity to discuss their concerns.

10.3 Pupils should be made aware that information will be passed onto the Designated Mental Health Lead, as a duty of care.

10.4 All information should be logged on CPOMS, under the category of safeguarding/ sub- category of mental health.

10.5 Staff should be very clear about boundaries in the instance of a serious threat by a pupil to harm themselves. Staff responsibility to the pupil in a crisis is limited to listening, being supportive, and passing the information onto the relevant professional - The Headteacher and Senior Mental Health Lead/DSL are ASIST trained.

10.6 Staff should always be clear 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 this with the pupil:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
  
- Why we need to tell them

10.7 Parent/carers will almost always be informed if a child presents with a mental health difficulty or illness. This communication would normally be made by the class teacher or member of SLT. If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, the safeguarding team must be informed immediately, who will decide if parent/carers are to be informed.

## **Resources and Support**

**CAMHS-** Herefordshire and Worcestershire child and young adult mental health support

<https://camhs.hacw.nhs.uk/>

**Place2Be-** Organisation dedicated to improving children's mental health

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

**Anna Freud-** National Research Centre for Children and Families

<https://www.annafreud.org/>

**Mentally Healthy Schools-** Extensive Resources for schools

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/>

**Worcestershire County Council-** The Local Offer for Families with SEND

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer>

**Partnership for Children-** Zippy's Friends for Children with SEND

A programme promoting the mental health and Emotional  
Wellbeing of young children, including those with SEND

<https://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-for-schools/pupils-with-special-needs.html>

**Child Bereavement UK-** Supporting children with Learning disabilities through a bereavement

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

**Winston's Wish-** Bereavement support for children and young people

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

**Kooth-** an online mental wellbeing community

<https://www.kooth.com>

**Healthy Minds-** <https://www.healthyminds.whct.nhs.uk/>

**Papyrus-** Suicide prevention and support

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

