

What do we do to support good mental health at school

At our schools, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community; pupils, staff and parents, and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. We recognise that mental health and wellbeing is not the absence of mental health problems. *The majority of children and young people have good mental wellbeing most of the time. The starting point should therefore be teaching pupils the factors that contribute to and help us maintain wellbeing.* DfE Teaching mental well-being guidance – June 2020

The Department for Education recognises that: "in order to help their pupils succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy". Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. For some, school will be a place of respite from difficult home lives and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting pupils' wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that the children are able to manage times of change and stress, be resilient, are supported to reach their potential and access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that pupils learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues and where they can go if they need help and support.

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and be a school where

- All pupils are valued
- Pupils have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- Pupils feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued
- Bullying is not tolerated

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing "*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*".

We want all children/young people to

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve

“Mental health is not extracurricular” – Mental Health Foundation. This forms the foundation for the way that our schools support good mental health. We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help pupils become more resilient, be happy and successful and prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses 7 aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience that everyone understands.

- Our behaviour policy sets out to ensure that everyone; pupils, their families, staff and visitors to our school understands and adheres to school rules and expectations, and positively contributes towards making the school a pleasant, safe and productive place to learn. We recognise the effect a calm, organised and productive atmosphere has on a child’s learning, self- esteem and health. We are an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and where all members of our community are of equal worth.
- Behaviour expectations are consistent throughout the school. The behaviour policy is implemented across all year groups and children understand what is expected of them at all points throughout the school day.
- All staff are asked to treat children fairly and sensitively, to listen to them, to hear both sides of any disagreements and help children sort problems out in a reasonable way. Staff should aim to organise life in the classroom in such a way that children always know what they should be doing and are able to work successfully at tasks appropriate to their level of ability. Within such a secure structure we are able to ensure that all children understand and can adhere to what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour.
- We have clear routines throughout the school day. These are shared with the children and support their well-being by providing a straightforward schedule to their week.

2. Helping pupils to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to

- Our PSHCE curriculum provides children with the tools to build positive relationships and respect people’s differences.
- The curriculum nurtures a supportive environment and demonstrates to children how to be a good friend to somebody if they need help.

- All children are encouraged to speak to an adult if they need support and are given descriptive praise for doing so.

3. Helping pupils to be resilient learners.

- Staff create a learning environment where children are not deterred by mistakes and are confident to persevere in their learning.
- Children are told how to ask for help in their learning and how to correct mistakes.
- Teachers provide clear feedback on children's work and model ways to up-level or correct elements of it.

4. Teaching pupils social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.

- This is supported by our PSHCE curriculum.
- A high quality and structured provision for PHSCE will give children knowledge, understanding, and skills and help them explore and develop attitudes and values to live healthy, safe, fulfilled and responsible lives. Our PHSCE curriculum supports children to manage feelings, learn about how to be healthy and safe and understand about relationships. It covers physical health, emotional health and well-being, drug education (including medicines, alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances and illegal drugs), sex and relationship education, citizenship, anti-bullying, safety (including e-safety and anti-bullying), personal finance education , careers and the environment .
- We also organise themed weeks which are mapped across the curriculum which complement and enrich our planned PSHCE teaching programme. For example, Peace week, Equalities week, Anti-bullying week, Social Justice Week, Safety Week.
- We set ground rules, particularly when teaching sensitive topics such as Relationships and Sex Education, to ensure that pupils discuss topics with respect and listen to the views of others, as well as ensuring that pupils and staff do not disclose personal information.
- We recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues and aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of mental health issues.

5. Effectively working with parents and carers

- We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting their children with mental health needs.
- On first entry to the school, our parent's meeting includes a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. We ask parents to inform us of any mental health needs their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing, based on a list of risk

factors pertaining to the child or family. It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the school so that we can better support their child.

- We provide information and websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produced leaflets for parents on mental health and resilience, which can be accessed on the school website. The information includes who parents can talk to if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child and where parents can access support for themselves
- We organise weekly coffee mornings for parents, during which we invite professionals from various fields to train parents on elements of their children's learning. A large proportion of these are based on ways to promote positive mental health and what to do if a parent has any concerns.

6. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and resilience

- Our staff receive regular mental health training, including Mental Health First Aid and guidance from the Department for Education on the health element of the PSHCE curriculum.
- We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that pupils with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.
- All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems; such a physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown and bullying. They also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging and emotional literacy.

7. Early identification of pupils who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services

- Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:
 - Analysing behaviour, exclusions, visits to the medical room/school nurse, attendance and sanctions
 - Staff report concerns about individual pupils to the Senior Leadership Team and the SENDCo
 - Weekly inclusion meetings for staff to raise concerns
 - Gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
 - Induction meetings for parents of pupils in EYFS

- Regular meetings between SENDCo and external agencies such as the speech and language therapist or behaviour outreach team to identify potential mental health needs
- Staff are aware that mental health needs such as anxiety might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.
- If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the school's child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency then the school's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

In some case a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders.

We have access to a range of specialist services. These include:

- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)
- Mental Health Support Team (CAMHS)
- Educational Psychologist

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the SENDCo following the assessment process and in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers. Referrals will only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs.

Once support is in place from a specialist service, school has regular contact with the external agency to review the support and regularly consider next steps. This forms part of the pupil's support plan and this is reviewed on a termly basis with parents/carers. Persistent mental health problems may lead to pupils having significantly greater difficulty in learning, than the majority of those of the same age. In some cases, the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN).

If you're looking for good resources to support this...

<https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/depression-anxiety-mental-health/>

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

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/supporting-your-childs-mental-health/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>

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

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/children-young-people-and-families>

How to talk to your child about coronavirus:

Although it's tempting to try and protect children from difficult topics, they are more likely to worry when they're kept in the dark. Children and teenagers will be aware of what is happening but may not have all the facts they need to understand it. These tips will help you communicate about Coronavirus with your child:

- Take time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that they have. Be led by your child as they may not be that interested or want to know everything all at once. Try to answer any questions honestly but keep things in context.
- Reassure them that their own risk is very low but that we all need to 'do our bit' to look after people who might be very unwell. Underline how helpful they are being by following the rules about hygiene and social-distancing.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.
- Keep explanations developmentally appropriate. Key Stage 1 children will need very simple explanations that relate to their own experiences. Explain that, like other germs, Coronavirus can spread between people and make them ill. But because Coronavirus is a new germ that we don't know everything about, we need to take more care and so things might be a bit different for a while.
- Key Stage 2 children will want to know more. They may have heard partial explanations and 'filled in the gaps' themselves with their own ideas, so check what they already think they know about it.
- Give them an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Our instinct might be to 'make it all better', but it is normal to feel scared, sad and angry in the face of what's happening. Tell them that what is happening is not normal but that their feelings are.
- Highlight the helpers - Highlight the good things that people are doing to help each other - at international, national, local and neighbourhood levels.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51877454>

Useful phrases to use with children when you talk about Covid

- Coronavirus is not dangerous to most children.
- Scientists are working hard to learn more about the virus. They are developing a vaccine, which will protect people from catching it.
- A vaccination is a treatment which makes the body stronger against a particular infection, by actually introducing a tiny bit of the virus or bacteria into your body. It's not enough to give you the disease, but it helps the body's defences - the immune system - to recognise the virus as an invader and learn how to fight it in the future.
- Scientists around the world are also doing lots of research to learn about how it is spread and what we can do to look after ourselves.
- The scientists are looking for ways to look after people when they have coronavirus so that they can find ways to help people recover. All of this research will help to make
- We already know that some ways to keep safe - washing our hands properly, covering your mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze and avoiding close contact with people who are unwell.
- If you do get sick, it doesn't mean you have coronavirus. People can get sick from all kinds of germs. What's important to remember is that if you do get sick, the adults at school and at home will get you the help that you need. Sometimes, that might just be a tissue, sometimes it might mean getting some medicine and sometimes it might mean staying at home to make sure you can't pass any germs on to other people.
- Coronavirus can sometimes be dangerous to adults. It is only dangerous to a very small number of adults.
- The doctors, nurses and other staff at hospitals are prepared to treat people with coronavirus.