**Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy**

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**Reviewed: November 2024**

**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 Organization)

In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

At Cotton End Forest School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody’s business and that we all have a role to play.

At Cotton End we:

* help children to understand their emotions and feelings better
* help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
* help children socially to form and maintain relationships.
* promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they count.
* encourage children to be confident and ‘dare to be different’
* help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

* Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
* Promote our school ethos using a holistic approach which includes mindfulness sessions.
* Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making.
* Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
* Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
* Providing opportunities to reflect.
* Promoting physical wellbeing by providing opportunities to access activities including forest school on a weekly basis.
* Access to appropriate support that meets their needs.

We pursue our aims through:

* Universal, whole school approaches
* Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
* Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long term difficulties including attachment disorder or significant trauma.
* Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
* 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 students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

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. This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student’s mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

**Lead Members of Staff**

Whilst **all** staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

* Karen Headland – Head teacher, designated child protection safeguarding officer.
* Kylie Grey - Deputy Head/ designated safeguarding officer.
* Diane Catchpole – Assistant Head and SENCo, Mental Health Lead, designated safeguarding officer.
* Rebecca Sohanpal – Assistant Head for KS1, designated safeguarding officer.
* Elizabeth Russell - Assistant Head for EYFS, designated safeguarding officer.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the 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 the designated child protection office of staff or the head teacher. If the student 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 Diane Catchpole.

**Individual Needs Action Plans**

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

* Details of a pupil’s condition
* Special requirements and relevant support
* What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
* Specific targeted support for the individual and their particular needs

**Teaching about Mental Health**

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 will follow

the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms. The school also recognise, and promote, Shine Bright, Wear Bright, children’s mental health week each year and support the CHUMS charity, through involving the children and teachers planning mental health and wellbeing activities throughout the week.

**Targeted support**

The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils or groups of pupils which may include:

* Circle time approaches or ‘circle of friends’ activities.
* Zones of Regulation interventions.
* Managing feelings resources e.g. ‘worry boxes’ and ‘worry monsters’
* Managing emotions nurture sessions across the school.
* Therapeutic activities including relaxation and mindfulness techniques.
* Therapeutic physical activities including forest school.
* Referrals to Mental Health Support Team.
* Emotion Detectives interventions lead by FACES.
* Access to the therapy dog via Canine Concern.

The school will make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing as appropriate including:

* Zones of Regulation
* Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire
* Daily emotional check-ins with vulnerable pupils
* Termly well-being and involvement scores using the Leuvens scales.

**Signposting**

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.

**Identifying Needs and 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 our mental health and emotional wellbeing lead. Possible warning signs include:

* Poor attendance
* Punctuality
* Relationships
* Approach to learning
* Physical indicators
* Negative behaviour patterns
* Family circumstances
* Recent bereavement
* Health indicators
* 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
* Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope

**Working with Parents**

In order to support parents we will:

* Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website
* Share and allow parents to access sources of further support e.g. through parent forums.
* Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their child.
* Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy 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.

**Working with other agencies**

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children’s emotional health and wellbeing including:

* The school nurse
* Educational psychology services
* Behaviour support through Early Help
* Paediatricians
* CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
* Counselling services (CHUMS)
* Therapists
* Mental Health School Support (EMHP’s)

**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 pupil’s emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring ‘Why?’ All disclosures should be recorded on CPOMS.

This 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

This information should be shared with the mental health lead who will offer support and advice about next steps.

**Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we feel 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. It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the mental health lead as this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, 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 and students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. We should always give students 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 child protection officer, Karen Headland must be informed immediately.

**Working with Parents following disclosure**

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 pupil, other members of staff.
* What are the aims of the meeting?

It can upsetting for parents to learn of their child’s difficulties, and it is important to highlight sources of information and support 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 often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a record of the meeting on CPOMS.

**Training**

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 students safe.

The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. 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 pupils.