Victoria Road Primary School

Mental Health and Well-Being Policy

Signed:…………………………………… **Head Teacher**

Signed:…………………………………… **Chair of Governors**

Reviewed and Amended: September 2024

This Policy will be reviewed: September 2026

Definitions of Mental Health

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing:

"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."

Mental health and well-being is not just the absence of mental health problems; we want all of the children at Victoria Road Primary School to demonstrate positive mental health by showing that they, 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 and transitions.

Aims

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues (Appendix One)
- Make staff aware of risk factors and early warning signs (Appendix Two)
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health, their peers and parents/carers
- Help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and be a school where all pupils are valued, have a sense of belonging and feel safe.

We pursue these aims using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

Why is Mental Health and Well being Important?

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole school community; pupils, staff, parents and carers, and recognise how important mental health and emotional well-being 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. Persistent mental health problems may lead to pupils

having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age. The Department for Education (DfE) 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. 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.

Links to Other Policies

This policy links to:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Looked After Children Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Personal Social Health Education Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.

Links with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need. We consider behaviour to be the communication of need.

A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help pupils become more resilient, happy and successful and prevent problems before they arise. This encompasses seven aspects:

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

- Helping pupils to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to
- Helping pupils to be resilient learners
- Teaching pupils social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
- Early identification of pupils who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services
- Effectively working with parents and carers
- Supporting and training staff to develop their own skills and resilience

We also 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. We aim to be a 'Talking School' with an 'Open Door Policy'.

Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand protective factors and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help; all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems, ensuring that pupils with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand 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. Staff 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.

The school's Senior Mental Health Lead (Mrs Gemma Neal,) works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health, provides advice and support to staff, organises training and updates to keep staff up-to-date with information about what support is

available, is the first point of contact and communicates with mental health services and leads on and makes referrals to services.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the school environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to pupils with mental health needs and their families.

Supporting Pupils' Positive Mental Health

We believe we have a key role in promoting pupils' positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including;

- The use of a whole school mentor approach.
- The use of the Edinburgh Wessex Wellbeing Scale to identify children at risk of experiencing poor mental health and to identify those in need of support or interventions.
- Monthly consultation with the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) who provided direct and indirect support and interventions when this is deemed necessary.
- The use of 'Talking and Drawing' and 'Lego Therapy.'
- The use of 'Zones of Regulation' and a daily check-in. (This is adapted so that identified children are able to 'check-in' more frequently).

Supporting and Training Staff

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in pupils and know what to do and where to get help. Those staff with a specific responsibility have more specialised training.

APPENDIX ONE

What mental health problems commonly occur in children?

According to The Mental Health Foundation, the most common mental health problems for children are:

Depression

Self-Harm

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Eating disorders

To find out more about each of these mental health conditions, click on the links to visit mentalhealth.org.uk.

APPENDIX TWO

Are some children and young people more likely to experience mental health problems?

According to The Mental Health Foundation, certain risk factors can make some children and young people more likely to experience mental health problems than others. However, experiencing them doesn't mean a child will definitely – or even probably – go on to have mental health problems.

These factors include:

- Having a long-term physical illness
- Having a parent who has had mental health problems, problems with alcohol or substance misuse or a history of criminality.
- The death of someone close to them
- Parents who separate or divorce or living in a home where there is conflict or domestic abuse.
- Experiencing severe bullying or physical or sexual abuse
- Poverty or homelessness
- Experiencing discrimination
- Being a young carer