

‘Growing together, Learning forever’



**Woodstone Community
Primary School
Positive Mental Health
Policy**

Date: January 2019

Date for review: January 2022

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Positive Mental Health Policy

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)

At Woodstone, we aim to promote the positive mental health of every pupil. We pursue this aim using whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for all pupils.

This document describes our 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 pupil's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.

The Policy Aims to:

- ♣ Promote positive mental health in all pupils
- ♣ 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 pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Lead Members of Staff

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

- ♣ Pat Mullins/Simone Fellows - Designated Child Protection / Safeguarding Officer (DSL)
- ♣ Kelly Barnes – Well-being Lead
- ♣ Geraldine Clark/Elaine Edwards - lead first aider
- ♣ Denise Shepherd - ELSA

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to Pat Mullins or Simone Fellows 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 designated child protection officer - DSL (Patrick Mullins or Simone Fellows). If the pupil 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.

Individual Care Plans (ICP)

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 pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals.

This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

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 our developmental PSHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching 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 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.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the staff room, parent notice board, corridors and the newsletter.

Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

- ♣ What help is available
- ♣ Who it is aimed at
- ♣ How to access it
- ♣ Why to access it
- ♣ What is likely to happen next

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 Patrick Mullins or Simone Fellows.

Possible warning signs include:

- ♣ 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
- ♣ 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
- ♣ Missing PE lessons or getting changed secretly
- ♣ Lateness to or absence from school
- ♣ Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- ♣ An increase in lateness or absenteeism

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 in writing and held in a confidential file. This written 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, where appropriate, should be shared with the mental health lead (Kelly Barnes).

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we think 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 the relevant colleague, 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.

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 office (Patrick Mullins/Simone Fellows) must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

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.
- ♣ Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- ♣ Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil and other members of staff.
- ♣ What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect. We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing.

Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too 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 step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- ♣ Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- ♣ Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- ♣ Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- ♣ Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our new starters meeting.
- ♣ Keep parents informed about the mental health 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. Friends often want to support but do not know how. 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 may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- ♣ What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- ♣ How friends can best support
- ♣ Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- ♣ Warning signs that their friend help (e.g., signs of relapse) Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:
 - Where and how to access support for themselves

- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep pupils safe. All staff will also receive basic mental health first aid training which concentrates mainly on recognising symptoms.

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 developing situations with one or more pupils.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

This Policy will form part of the induction process for new staff, students and volunteers.