

# **Boughton-under-Blean & Dunkirk Methodist Primary School**



## **Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy**

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**Lead Governor: Mrs Kerry Petts**

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**Date to be Reviewed: May 2025**

# **Boughton-under-Blean & Dunkirk Methodist Primary School**

## **Mental Health & Well-Being Policy**

### **1. Why Mental Health and Well-Being is 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 well-being 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 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice identifies Social, Emotional and Mental Health as one of the four areas of Special Educational Need.

All children go through ups and downs through their school career and some face significant life events. About 10% of children aged 5 to 16 have a diagnosable mental health need and these can have an enormous impact on their quality of life, relationships and academic achievement.

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. 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 well-being and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that they 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

In addition to children's well-being, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being.

### **2. Purpose of the Policy**

This policy sets out

- how we promote positive mental health
- how we prevent mental health problems

- how we identify and support pupils with mental health needs
- how we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent mental health problems getting worse
- key information about some common mental health problems
- where parents, staff and pupils can get advice and support

### 3. Definition of Mental Health and Well-Being

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.***

Mental health and well-being is not just the absence of mental health problems. 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

### 4. Links to other Policies

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Inclusion, Looked After Children, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour and Discipline, Personal Social Health Education (PSHE), Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and 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 a message***.

### 5. 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, be happy and successful and prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience that everyone understands
2. helping pupils to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to
3. helping pupils to be resilient learners
4. teaching pupils social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
5. early identification of pupils who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services
6. effectively working with parents and carers
7. supporting and training staff to develop their 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'.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

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.

The school's Wellbeing Team (*SENCO / Inclusion Manager, Designated Safeguarding Team, Family Liaison Officer, Senior Mental Health Lead*):

- leads on and works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health
- provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates
- keeps staff up-to-date with information about what support is available
- liaises with the PSHE Leader on teaching about mental health
- is the first point of contact and communicates with mental health services
- leads on and makes referrals to services

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

- Simon Way - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Jo Cottenden– Senior Mental Health Lead, Youth Mental Health First Aider
- Laura Jakob- Family Liaison Officer, Youth Mental Health First Aider
- Jo Cottenden – PSHE Subject Leader
- Kay Lewis- Inclusion Lead
- Debbie Munro- KS2 Lead
- Sam Holness- EYFS and KS1 Lead

## 7. 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;

### *Pupil-led Activities*

- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing

### *Transition Support*

- Support for vulnerable children, for example, Speech and Language (SALT) support small group work such as Lego Challenge or Social Communication groups
- Transition meetings with parent/carers, pupils and relevant staff
- Yearly Transition Passports for vulnerable children
- Transition Passports available for all staff to be aware of vulnerable children's needs
- Key Adults might support secondary school visits with vulnerable pupils

### *Class Activities*

- Worry boxes
- Kindness/Compliment displays
- Mindfulness activities in class
- Classroom scripts and signposting

### *Whole School*

- Wellbeing Week, established in 2019
- PSHE Association PSHE Scheme of Work
- Anna Freud *Schools in Mind* resources
- Assembly themes
- Anti-bullying Post Box
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support both within the school and outside the school

### *Small Group Activities*

- Small friendship, social skills groups
- Wellbeing Room available to all pupils in KS2 at lunchtimes
- Library available for KS2 pupils during lunchtime

### *Teaching about Mental Health and Emotional Well-being*

- Through PSHE we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help pupils to be more resilient, understand about mental health and help reduce the stigma of mental health problems.

### **Our approach is to:**

- provide a safe environment to enable pupils to express themselves and be listened to
- ensure the welfare and safety of pupils as paramount
- identify appropriate support for pupils based on their needs
- involve parents and carers when their child needs support
- involve pupils in the care and support they have
- monitor, review and evaluate the support with pupils and keep parents and carers updated

## **8. Early Identification**

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:

- Identify individuals that might need support
- being an Attachment Aware School
- working with the School Office staff who are often the first point of contact with families seeking support
- home visits before children join us in YR to identify needs
- induction meetings for pupils / families joining after the Reception year
- analysing behaviour, exclusions, attendance and Anti-Bullying Forms
- pupil surveys annually
- staff report concerns about individual pupils to the Senior Mental Health Lead and Designated Safeguarding Team
- worry boxes in each class for pupils to raise concerns which are checked by the class teacher
- weekly staff briefing for staff to raise concerns about individual children
- gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
- parental meetings

- enabling pupils to raise concerns to class teacher and support staff
- enabling parents and carers to raise concerns through the school class teacher or to any member of staff - we have an 'Open Door Policy'

All staff have had training on the protective and risk factors, types of mental health needs and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the SENCO/Inclusion Manager or Designated Safeguarding Team.

These signs might include:

- non-verbal behaviour
- isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- lowering academic achievement
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- an increase in lateness or absenteeism
- not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE
- drug or alcohol misuse
- physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

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. A risk assessment and plan will be made.

### **Verbal Disclosures by Pupils**

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgmental to pupils who verbally disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of pupils is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff are clear to pupils that the concern will be shared with the Inclusion Manager/Designated Safeguarding Team and recorded in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

### **Non-Verbal Disclosures by Pupils**

Staff also recognise persistent and unusual non-verbal disclosures in behaviours in line with the NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) recommendation that behaviour may be an unmet need or message.

### **Confidentiality**

All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

### **Assessment, Interventions and Support**

All concerns are reported to the Senior Mental Health Lead/Designated Safeguarding Team and recorded. We then implement our assessment system based on levels of need to ensure that pupils get the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

We recognise that just like physical health, mental health and emotional well-being can vary at any given time and is fluid and changes, there are no absolutes.

## **9. Working with Parents**

The school will endeavour to work with parents in a sensitive and supportive manner. The main point of contact for parents is Laura Jakob (Family Liaison Officer). If a face to face meeting is arranged, the aim of the meeting will be clear, a point of contact from the school will be named, agreed next steps will be recorded and reviewed together.

In addition, the school will

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on the school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to
- Make the school' mental health policies easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through regular FaceBook posts and on the school website
- 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

## **10.Supporting Peers**

The school will support peers who have a friend with a mental ill health difficulty in the following ways

- Manage disclosure - what it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Their role in disclosing signs of relapse
- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

## **11.Involving Pupils**

We seek pupils' views and feedback about our approach and whole school mental health activities through Pupil Voice, surveys, class questions from school council representatives and suggestion boxes.

We have a large number of trained Anti-bullying Ambassadors in Years 3 to 6 to support vulnerable children in school.

## **12.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. Mental Health and wellbeing forms part of our annual safeguarding training for all staff.

Those staff with a specific responsibility have more specialised training and where possible access to supervision from mental health professionals.

Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and wellbeing.

Staff have access to Employees Assistance Counselling and Advice Service through [wearewithyou.org.uk](http://wearewithyou.org.uk) and Schools UK. Information about this is displayed in the staffroom and the staff toilets.

### **13. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in May 2025. It will be reviewed sooner if deemed necessary.

If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to Jo Cottenden, the Senior Mental Health Lead by contacting the school office.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.