Mental Health Policy

Policy number 46

Key Manager	Director of Primary Education (DoPE)
Ratified by TB	June 2021
Review Dates:	Spring 2023
Location of Policy:	Trust wide
Access to Policy:	Open
Policy Context:	This Policy applies to all staff of the Trust and to those others offered access to such resources.

Revision History

Revision Date	Description	Sections Affected	Revised By	Approved By
20/06/2021	New Policy		DoPE	H R Committee
Summer 2023				

This policy is written in line with the Christian values and ethos of our school.

"Let Your Light Shine" Matthew 5:16.

Why mental health & well-being is essential

Throughout the Nene Education Trust, our aim is to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole community; for children, staff, parents and carers. We recognise how significant mental health and emotional well-being is to our everyday lives, in the same way that physical health is. We realise that children's mental health is a vital component to overall wellbeing and may affect potential to learn and achieve. A 2017 NHS report on mental health summarised that: *'One in eight (12.8%) 5 to 19 year olds had a least one mental disorder when assessed'*.

Mental health issues can have a fundamental impact on quality of life, relationships and achievement. For vulnerable children these challenges can be both traumatic and life limiting.

Ours schools are a place for children and young people to experience a caring ethos, one in which every individual is wholeheartedly valued and listened to. We are committed to providing a nurturing and supportive environment that encourages children to develop self-esteem, to become resolute and have the potential to overcome adversity.

Staff across our Trust will help to ensure that children learn about, and maintain, positive mental health, that they are aware of what affects their own mental health and are able to recognise designated members of staff to approach if additional support is needed.

Our schools aim to help children develop resilience to mental health issues and be an organisation where:
- All children are valued;
- Children feel safe & part of a community;
- 'Voice of the child' is promoted, providing the opportunity for children to speak with trusted adults about their challenges;
- Appropriate support to meet needs is accessed;
- Positive mental health is encouraged;
- Academic and non-academic achievements are celebrated;
- Bullying (or any derogatory behaviour towards others) is not tolerated.

In addition to children's welfare, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being and throughout our trust opportunities are available for all staff to access support should the need arise.

Definition of mental health & well-being

The World Health Organisation states:
'Mental health is defined as 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'.

In promoting positive mental health and well-being within our schools we want all children to:
- Have the ability to build personal confidence;
- Have the ability to reflect;
- Realise self-worth and importance;
- Express their emotions appropriately;
- Build and maintain positive relationships with others;
- Cope with the anxieties of everyday life;

- Manage periods of stress and deal with episodes of change;
- Learn, achieve and reach their potential.

In developing this policy the following have been taken account of:
- Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools, DfE 2018
- Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England, 2015
- State of the Nation: Children and Young People's Mental Health, DfE 2019

Purpose of this policy

The Nene Education Trust wants to share how children are supported to understand mental health, to build personal resilience and to manage times of stress or anxiety.

This policy covers:
- How we promote positive mental health;
- How we prevent mental health challenges;
- How we identify and support those children with mental health needs;
- How we train and support staff to develop an understanding of mental health problems, to identify those children showing early warning signs and how they can help address mental health challenges;
- Provide information for parents to gain further advice and support.

A whole Trust approach to promoting positive mental health

We take a Trust-wide approach to promoting positive mental health alongside the provision for effective social and emotional competencies associated with greater health, well-being and better achievement. Our main criteria for this are to:
- Create an ethos and environment that supports mental health and which everyone understands;
- Create learning environments that encompass social and emotional skills whilst providing an awareness of mental health;
- Help children to develop social relationships, to support peers and to encourage that they seek help when needed;
- Early identification of children who may have mental health needs and establish pathways to support their needs; this may include referral to specialist services;
- Effectively working alongside parents and carers to provide appropriate support;
- Regular staff training to develop and progress knowledge of mental health issues.

Staff roles and responsibilities towards supporting mental health

We believe that all people in our organisation have a responsibility to promote positive mental health throughout our schools and to understand the protective factors and risks associated with mental health. Those children that require additional support will be identified by staff using skills to recognise the early warning signs of mental health. This will ensure that children suffering mental health challenges can gain the appropriate early intervention.

All staff understand the factors that may render some children more vulnerable to mental health challenges and these could be:

- Bereavement and loss;
- Physical long term illness or disability;
- Looking after family members, taking on the role of young carer;
- Parents with mental health issues;
- Friendship issues;
- Parental separation;
- Bullying;
- Challenges within the home environment.

Staff will also realise that protective factors exist that can safeguard children from adversity, such as:
- Promoting self-esteem;
- Developing communication skills;
- Problem solving skills;
- Self-worth and a sense of belonging;
- Emotional literacy;
- Resilience.

There are designated staff members in each of our schools that hold the relevant skills to manage support pathways for children. These individuals will aim to:
- Lead school activities that work to highlight positive mental health and well-being;
- Provide mental health advice and support to staff;
- Arrange training sessions and information updates for staff;
- Be the first point of contact with mental health services;
- Make referrals to professional agencies.

Whilst we recognise that many behaviours and challenges can be supported within the school environment, others may need more intensive support. We are fortunate that a range of organisations exist that afford support to children with mental health issues and their families.

Identifying, referring and supporting children with mental health needs

Our Trust approach:
- Provide a safe environment to enable children to share their concerns and be listened to;
- Ensure the safety and welfare of children;
- Identify appropriate support packages for children, dependent on needs;
- Fully involve parents and carers with any interventions for their child;
- Ensure children are involved in the care and support they receive;
- Monitor, review and evaluate any support and ensure parents and carers are updated.

Early identification

Within our Trust schools, we aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible, as a means to preventing issues getting worse. This can be done in a variety of ways:
- Termly Pupil Progress Review meetings;
- Receiving information from previous school;
- Enabling children to share any concerns with a member of staff;
- Staff reporting of concerns to designated teams within school;
- Analysing behaviour, exclusions and attendance;
- A parental information and health questionnaire on entry to the school;

- Strengths & Difficulties questionnaire, a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people; a tool used to capture the perspective of children and young people. This is completed by parents or carers and teachers
- The Boxall Profile, a resource for the assessment of children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural development. It is a two-part checklist, which is completed by members of staff who are most familiar with the pupil. It identifies the levels of skills the pupil possess to access learning

All Trust staff are trained to understand and recognise protective and risk factors, types of mental health needs, (Appendix 1) and signs that may mean a pupil is experiencing mental health issues (Appendix 2). Any member of staff will pass their concerns to the school's SENCO, Lead for Inclusion, Designated Safeguarding Leads or Pastoral/Welfare Departments.

These signs may include:
- Becoming socially withdrawn and isolating from friends and family;
- Changes in mood or eating/sleeping habits;
- Falling academic levels;
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and failure;
- An increase in school lateness and absenteeism;
- Withdrawing from physical education or a reluctance to change for P.E. lessons;
- Wearing long sleeved clothing during warm periods;
- Talking about self-harm;
- Secretive behaviours;
- Substance misuse;
- Complaining of physical pain, headache or stomach ache, with no evident cause.

If there is a concern regarding a child being in danger of immediate harm, the school's designated safeguarding team will follow Northamptonshire County Council's child protection procedures. Any medical emergencies will adhere to school's medical emergency procedures.

Disclosures by children and confidentiality

When a child discloses a concern about themselves or a friend, our staff recognises the need to remain calm, supportive and non-judgemental. During any disclosure, staff will listen rather than advise, they will make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the school's safeguarding team so an appropriate level of support can be offered to the pupil/s.

All disclosures are recorded confidentially, the details will include: name of child, date and time of incident, details of disclosure, member of staff that received the disclosure and next steps recommended.

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing mental health issues it can be challenging for their friends who can become emotionally affected. These circumstances will be reviewed on a case by case basis to assess the level of appropriate support that can be offered to friends.

Involving parents and carers

As a trust we recognise the need to take an open and honest approach with parents and carers regarding their children's mental health and well-being and will always involve them when discussing support pathways.

To support parents and carers:
- We can provide information and websites on mental health and well-being;
- We host parenting programmes that are available to all parents and carers;
- We provide information on support pathways that can be accessed;
- We can facilitate regular family meetings, through an Early Help Assessment plan, to consider support and potential next steps, (Appendix 3).

When a concern has been raised, the school will:
- Contact parents and carers and arrange to meet;
- Offer information of places to seek additional support;
- Be available for follow up calls;
- Make a record of any meetings;
- Discuss how the parents and carers can best support their child;
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about support and interventions offered.

Working with specialist services, gaining access to be assessed for support

In some cases a child's mental health needs will require specialist support due to more severe challenges, such as ongoing anxiety, depression or self-harm.

Our Trust schools have access to a range of support services and once a child has been accepted by an agency, we will have regular contact with the service to review the support package offered and to consider next steps. 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.

SEND and mental health

Persistent mental health challenges could lead to children having significantly greater difficulty in learning than those of the same age. In some cases the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need.

Staff welfare

Supporting and promoting the mental health and well-being of staff is essential to the continuance of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and well-being, such as the introduction of the Staff Charter and mindfulness sessions. Our staff can also access a counselling service.

1) Conduct a confidential annual staff wellbeing survey

If you want to conduct a staff wellbeing survey, you may want to consider the following activities:

- Encouraging staff participation in drawing up the survey – what questions would they like to see asked?
- Holding the staff survey periodically (annually, at a minimum) to explore what the key issues are when it comes to staff wellbeing and to monitor change over time.
- Allocating time for staff to complete the survey, at a scheduled meeting or INSET day. This shows commitment to staff wellbeing and will help maximise response rates.
- Reviewing response rates to measure how well staff have been engaged in the process.
- Sharing findings with staff and discussing them openly at a meeting. Allowing time for safe reflection and encouraging contributions from staff to identify both problems and solutions.
- Providing feedback to staff and governors – what were the findings, and what changes have been made in response to the findings?
- Considering how the findings can contribute to your school planning process.

2) <u>Provide training for staff with responsibilities for mental health and wellbeing</u>

Identifying training needs

Training is most effective when it meets an identified need. An integrated whole-school policy on mental health and wellbeing could combine findings from staff and pupil surveys to identify needs, a clear strategy in the school or college improvement plan about how to meet those needs, and a training plan to ensure those plans are put into practice.

Training is not just for teachers. All school staff – from administrative staff to caretakers and catering staff to headteachers – are all part of a whole-school culture to promote mental health and wellbeing. The Anna Freud Centre has developed a free short animation and set of resources on the 'CARE' principle to encourage all staff to be Curious and Approachable; to Refer when necessary; and to show Empathy.

3) <u>Promote staff mental health and wellbeing</u>

Taking action

Schools may wish to bear these in mind when approaching staff wellbeing. For example:

- Is there a staff mental health lead or champion who is responsible for coordinating the school's approach to staff mental wellbeing, and ensuring it remains on the agenda?
- How does the ethos of the school promote openness about mental wellbeing and encourage staff to feel comfortable sharing concerns?
- Are there opportunities for supervision to help staff feel confident they are taking the right decisions when supporting pupils experiencing complex issues (including safeguarding and mental health, for instance)?

Embedding a plan

With actions in place, it is to embed these changes so that they become part of the school culture. Here are some ways you can do this:

- If you have a school mental health policy, review it to check that it supports staff mental health;
- Hold regular meetings on staff wellbeing and discuss questions raised in this strategy document;
- Collate the findings from these discussions and identify practical steps forward;
- Embed these steps in your strategic plan.

4) <u>Ensure support structures are clearly identified and signposted</u>

Communicating support for staff

Communicating support structures for staff can be done in a variety of ways, for example:

- ensuring that signage in your setting is clear and accessible, for example a noticeboard or screen in your staff areas;

- signposting to mental health and wellbeing support in staff inductions, trainings, bulletins, and on staff intranet pages;
- having clearly signposted areas for additional support and advice.

Universal support for all staff can include:

- Mental health and wellbeing policy;
- Feedback boxes where staff can share anonymously ideas for improvement of school ethos and model good working practices;
- Drop-in sessions with the senior leadership team for staff who have any concerns about their mental health;
- Dedicated space for staff to take some time out;
- Encouraging a sense of community with non-work-related social activities;
- Senior leadership modelling good working practices and self-care to encourage work/life balance.

Targeted support for staff, particularly for those with responsibility for mental health, can include:

- Supervision;
- Professional coaching;
- Mental health training;
- Regular mandatory wellbeing check-in meetings for all staff using a peer-support model;
- Wellbeing events for staff, for example, regular yoga sessions;

Specialist support staff (particularly for those who may be struggling with their mental health) can include:

- Employee Assistance Programmes;
- Crisis support;
- Referrals to occupational health.

Appendix 1: Risk and protective factors (taken from the Mental Health and Behaviour, DfE 2018)

	Risk factors	Protective factors
In the child	- Genetic influences - Low IQ and learning disabilities - Specific development delay or neuro-diversity - Communication difficulties - Difficult temperament - Physical illness - Academic failure - Low self-esteem	- Secure attachment experience - Outgoing temperament as an infant - Good communication skills, sociability - Being a planner and having a belief in control - Humour - A positive attitude - Experiences of success and achievement - Faith or spirituality - Capacity to reflect
In the family	- Overt parental conflict including domestic violence - Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) - Inconsistent or unclear discipline - Hostile and rejecting relationships - Failure to adapt to a child's changing need - Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect - Parental psychiatric illness - Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder - Death and loss – including loss of friendship	- At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) - Affection - Clear, consistent discipline - Support for education Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord
In the school	- Bullying including online (cyber) Discrimination - Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships - Deviant peer influences - Peer pressure - Peer on peer abuse - Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships	- Clear policies on behaviour and bullying - Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct) 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems. - A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Good pupil to teacher/school staff relationships - Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging - Positive peer influences - Positive friendships

		• Effective safeguarding and Child Protection policies. • An effective early help process Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working • Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to can raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively
In the community	• Socio-economic disadvantage • Homelessness • Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events • Discrimination • Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation • Other significant life events	• Wider supportive network • Good housing • High standard of living • High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying • Opportunities for valued social role • Range of sport/leisure activities

Appendix 2 Mental health needs most commonly seen in school aged children

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE November 2018
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools__.pdf

This covers aspects of mental health, such as:
- Anxiety and depression
- Attachment disorder
- Eating disorder
- Emotional disorders
- A.C.E. Adverse Childhood Events, (or other life changing events)

Appendix 3 Where to get information and support

For support on specific mental health needs:
Anxiety UK – www.anxietyuk.org.uk
OCD UK – www.ocduk.org
Eating Disorders – www.beatearingdisorders.org.uk
National Self Harm Network – www.nshn.co.uk
Suicide prevention – www.papyrus-uk.org
Changing Minds - www.nhft.nhs.uk/iapt

For general information and support:
Young people's mental health and well-being support – www.youngminds.org.uk
Advice and support for mental health issues – www.mind.org.uk
Tackles the stigma on mental health – www.time-to-change.org.uk
Challenges attitudes towards mental health – www.rethink.org
NHFT 0-19 Live chat - www.nhft.nhs.uk/0-19

Local agencies:
Counselling support service for children – www.servicesix.co.uk
NHFT School nurse Chat health – 07507 329 600
Support for children and parents - www.asknormen.co.uk
For children living with or caring for someone who is addicted to drugs and/or alcohol - www.familysupportlink.co.uk
Used in conjunction with school, the Early Help Assessment process can support families with help from different appropriate agencies – www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Pages/early-help.aspx