Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being Policy

Approved at Learning & Development committee meeting on 12th May 2024

Review Period: Every 2 years

Date for next review: Summer 2026

Positive Mental Health Policy

Policy Statement

At Thorndown Primary School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and well-being of our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers). We recognise how important mental health and emotional well-being are to our lives, and the effects on the learning and achievement of our children. In 2020, The All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood, revealed that one in every seven primary school-aged children had a diagnosable mental illness. At our school, we know that everyone experiences life challenges and may need additional emotional support at some time in their lives.

Our role in school is to ensure that children are able to manage in times of change and stress, and that they are supported to access help when they need it. The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "in order to help their children succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy".

By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for people in our community affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in our whole school community.
- 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 those suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and well-being. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff, including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.
We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

A Whole School Approach to Teaching about Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

At Thorndown Primary School, we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health. We aim to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to

work in a pro-active way to avoid problems arising.

We do this by:

- Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and well-being
- Adhering to a positive, restorative approach to behaviour management
- Helping children socially to form and maintain relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it
- Helping children to feel comfortable about sharing any concerns or worries.
- Teaching children emotional skills and an awareness of mental health, so that they understand their emotions and feelings better.
- Promoting self-esteem and ensuring children understand their importance in the world
- Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks
- Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services, parents and carers
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience
- Developing an open culture where it's normal to talk about mental health
- Employing a Child and Family Pastoral Support Worker to provide support for children and their families.
- When needed, using outside agencies to provide therapeutic support for children and their families
- Training staff to become Mental Health First Aiders.
- Arranging workshops to support children and parents, e.g. Supporting Children with Anxiety.

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children 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 cohorts being taught. There will always be an emphasis on enabling children to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, for themselves or others.

We follow the Cambridgeshire's PHSE Scheme of Work to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional well-being issues in a safe and sensitive manner.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

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
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Therapists
- Early Intervention Family Worker
- Mental Health and Support Team

Staff 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. All staff should have the skills to look out for any possible early signs of mental health problems.
- Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:
    - Designated Safeguarding Lead
    - Mental Health Lead
    - Deputy Mental Health Lead
    - Pastoral Child & Family Support Worker
    - PSHE Lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or well-being 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 Safeguarding Lead. Concerns should be logged using MyConcern. If the student presents a medical emergency, then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Mental Health Lead and Deputy Mental Health Lead.

Individual Care Plans

Sometimes, it is helpful to draw up an Individual Care Plan for pupils who needed extra support 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

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and the local community, and how to access it.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the staffrooms and toilets, and on notice boards in the playground. We will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum and through the displaying of posters. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of 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 student is experiencing mental health or emotional well-being issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to our Mental Health and Emotional Well-being Lead and Deputy.

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
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretively
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

NB: This is not an exhaustive list.

Managing disclosures

A student 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 student 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 student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in writing using MyConcern. 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 should be shared with the Mental Health Lead and Deputy, 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 on our concerns about a pupil, 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

In line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, staff will make it clear with children that they cannot promise to keep secrets. Depending on the situation and age of the child, we may ask their consent to share information with another member of staff and/or a parent.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health Lead; this helps to safeguard our own emotional well-being, as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil. This also ensures continuity of care in the event of absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support.

Any concerns about a child and their mental health and emotional well-being should be discussed with the child's parents. If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately and a log made on MyConcern.

Informing and Supporting 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.
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the child, 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 support and, where possible, will provide leaflets to take away as parents will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful, 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 brief record of the meeting.

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 go 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 regular information evenings
- 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

Supporting Peers

When a student 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 with the child 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 needs 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 regular training or updates 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.

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 provided 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.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Senior Leadership Team.