Mental Health Policy

Date: October 2023
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Reviewed Annually

Mental Health Policy

Policy Statement

'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 Bramford Primary School, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and the student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health.

In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It should be read in conjunction with our SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

The Policy Aims to:
- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- 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 students 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 students.
Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:
- Mr Scott- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Mrs Moss - SENDCO
- Mrs Haffner-Smith - Pastoral Lead/Mental Health Lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing 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 DSL, DDSL or the Headteacher. If the student 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. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Mrs Moss, SENDCO.

Individual Care Plans

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 would be led by Mrs Moss.

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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 students 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 students 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, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined at the end of this policy.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the staffroom and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum.

Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student engagement by ensuring students 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 wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to Mrs Haffner Smith, our Mental Health Lead.

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 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
- 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

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?'

Mental Health Concerns should be recorded in the same manner as our safeguarding concerns.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing on CPOMS and should include the main points from the conversation and the agreed next steps.

This information will be shared with both the Mental Health Lead and DSL, who will provide and offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we deem it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:
- 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 student 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 as our students are under the age of 16. This especially applies to any student who is in danger of harm.

Parents must always be informed. Students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the school will contact parents and ask them to come into school and the Mental Health Lead will meet with the student and parents. If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, and the DSL 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 student, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

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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 a 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 on the child's confidential record on CPOMS.

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 regular information events.
- 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 by the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:
- What 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

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As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep students safe.

The 'MindEd learning portal2' provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. Staff also have access to a range of courses and webinars on mental health via National Online Safety.

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 to developing situations with one or more students.

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

Managing Expectations

Mental health issues can be ongoing for a long time. They can influence a student's ability to access learning. We need to ensure that all members of staff are familiar with students who are suffering from mental health and provide information that helps manage expectations of affected students in order to ensure those students are not placed under undue stress which may exacerbate their mental health issues.

In addition to the Mental Health Lead, Safeguarding & Pastoral Team, Teachers will play a significant part in monitoring these identified students, taking a holistic approach which may include considering issues addressing:

- Academic achievement
- Absence and lateness
- Access to extra-curricular activities including sport
- Duration and pace of recovery
- Ability to interact and engage within lessons

Further Information and Sources of Support about Common Mental Health Issues

Prevalence of Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Issues
- 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 - 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder- that is around three children in every class.
- Between 1 in every 12 and 1 in 15 children and young people deliberately self-harm. There has been a big increase in the number of young people being admitted to hospital because of self-harm. Over the last ten years this figure has increased by 68%.
- More than half of all adults with mental health problems were diagnosed in childhood. Less than half were treated appropriately at the time.
- Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression.
- The number of young people aged 15-16 with depression nearly doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s.
- Over 8,000 children aged under 10 years old suffer from severe depression.
- 3.3% or about 290,000 children and young people have an anxiety disorder.
- 72% of children in care have behavioural or emotional problems - these are some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Further support/guidance:
Young Minds (https://www.youngminds.org.uk),
https://www.mind.org.uk

Types of Mental Health

Self-Harm
Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.
Online support includes: www.selfharm.co.uk/National www.nshn.co.uk/ Books: Pooky Knightsmith (2015) Self-Harm and Eating Disorders in Schools: A Guide to Whole School Support and Practical Strategies. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Keith Hawton and Karen Rodham (2006) By Their Own Young Hand: Deliberate Self-harm and Suicidal Ideas in Adolescents. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Carol Fitzpatrick (2012) A Short Introduction to Understanding and Supporting Children and Young People Who SelfHarm. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Depression
Ups and downs are a normal part of life for all of us, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.
Online support includes: www.mind.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/depression-alliance/ Books: Christopher Dowrick and Susan Martin (2015) Can I Tell you about Depression? A guide for friends, family and professionals. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Anxiety, Panic Attacks and Phobias
Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed. Online support includes: www.anxietyuk.org.uk Books: Lucy Willetts and Polly Waite (2014) Can I Tell you about Anxiety? A guide for friends, family and professionals. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Carol Fitzpatrick (2015) A Short Introduction to Helping Young People Manage Anxiety. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Staff Support and Well-Being

Support and guidance Schools in Mind is a free network for school staff and allied professionals hosted by the AFNCCF. Recent resources include a booklet: Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Schools. https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/

All staff have access to a free helpline for educational professionals and have information cards on lanyards.
Mentally Healthy Schools is a site providing quality assured resources on children's mental health for primary schools. Funded by the Royal Foundation, it is a legacy project of the Heads Together campaign and is run by the AFNCCF, Place2Be and Young Minds with expert guidance from the Centre for Mental Health and NAHT. mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk

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Mental Health at Work is an online gateway to resources, training and information aimed at transforming mental health in the workplace in the UK.

*Mental health at Work has been developed by Mind and is supported by The Royal Foundation with Heads Together.
https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/
*Mindful Teachers is an international community of educators and helping professionals committed to mindfulness and compassion. https://www.mindfulteachers.org
*NHS Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing:
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/

Education Support Partnership is a charity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of teachers and the entire education workforce. It offers a free, confidential helpline to all those working in education in the UK.
https://educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/helpingyou/telephone-support-counselling