WHITE HOUSE SCHOOL

Pupil Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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CAVENDISH EDUCATION

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1. Context

The White House School is an independent specialist school for children and young people with additional and complex needs. We are part of Cavendish Education and are committed to transforming lives through highly personalised education, therapeutic support and ambitious teaching.

Our vision is **"Making Learning Possible Again."** We create a school where pupils feel safe, belong, achieve and thrive. Through removing barriers to learning, rebuilding confidence and fostering positive relationships, we empower every pupil to realise their potential and prepare for successful and fulfilling lives beyond school.

Our mission is to provide a nurturing, ambitious and mindful education that supports both academic progress and personal growth. Guided by our whole-school ethos of **Healthy Minds, Happy Hearts**, we create the conditions for every pupil to become **Ready to Learn and Prepared for Life**.

Everything we do is underpinned by our core values:

- **Ambition** – developing curiosity, courage and aspiration.
- **Resilience** – developing confidence, character and perseverance.
- **Community** – demonstrating kindness, integrity and respect.

We believe that pupils thrive when they feel safe, understood and valued. Our culture is built upon strong relationships, high expectations and a commitment to seeing the strengths and potential in every child. We are deeply nurturing without lowering expectations and remain unashamedly ambitious for every pupil.

Our practice is informed by the National Autistic Society's **SPELL Framework**, which promotes:

- Structure and predictability;
- Positive approaches and expectations;
- Empathy and understanding;
- Low arousal environments;
- Strong links between school, home and professionals.

Alongside this, we adopt a trauma-informed, relational and therapeutic approach across all aspects of school life. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and believe that pupils do well when they can. Our role is to understand the barriers they face and provide the support, strategies and relationships that enable them to succeed.

At The White House School:

- Every interaction is viewed as an intervention.
- Every adult is an emotionally available adult.
- Relationships come first.
- Emotional readiness is the foundation for learning.

We support pupils to develop emotional regulation, communication, independence and social understanding through consistent relational practice, personalised support and integrated therapeutic approaches. Emotional regulation is explicitly taught through co-regulation, sensory support, movement opportunities and personalised regulation strategies. Pupils are encouraged to understand themselves, develop resilience and build the skills needed to navigate life successfully.

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do. We recognise the additional vulnerabilities that many pupils with special educational needs may experience and maintain a culture of vigilance, care and advocacy. We place the child at the centre of decision-making, listen to pupil voice in all its forms and work closely with families and external agencies to promote safety, wellbeing and positive outcomes.

Through ambitious and adapted teaching, meaningful relationships, therapeutic support and a culture of belonging, we help pupils feel safe, build confidence, achieve success and thrive both in school and beyond.

2. Introduction

At The White House School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, parents, carers, guardians, staff and other stakeholders.

We have a supportive, nurturing and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play.

We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life events.

The World Health Organisation recently stated that by 2030, mental health issues will form the biggest burden on health care resources including heart conditions and cancer.
– British Mindfulness Institute

In response to promoting positive mental health, wellbeing and self-esteem, we adopt mindful practice at the heart of our provision. We believe that mindfulness is an essential aspect of our pupil's lives at school, in order to help them cope and manage the challenges of today's society. An increasing number of today's pupils face challenges that affect their ability to focus attention, regulate difficult emotions, build inner resilience and form healthy and supportive relationships.

Our focus at The White House School is to help our pupils to develop effective ways to help calm their anxious nervous systems while providing them with supportive relationships, nurturing experiences and positive learning environments.

At our school we:

- help children to understand their emotions and feelings better.
- help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries.
- help children socially to form and maintain relationships.
- promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they count.
- encourage children to be confident and 'dare to be different'
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting and implementing mindful practice throughout our school community.
- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- Providing opportunities to reflect.
- Access to appropriate support that meets their needs
- Celebrating annual Mental Health Awareness Week

We pursue our aims through a graduated approach:

- Universal, whole school approaches
- Specialised approaches and interventions aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties.
- Personalised and focused support for pupils experiencing crisis or difficulties including bereavement.

3. Scope

This policy is intended to:

- Provide guidance to school staff on our school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across all communities in the school
- Inform pupils and parents, carers and guardians about the support that they can expect from the school in respect of supporting mental health and wellbeing

4. Aims

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the whole school
- Create a culture of wellbeing and inclusion
- Foster a positive atmosphere in school, where pupils feel able to discuss and reflect on their own experiences with mental health openly
- Celebrate all the ways pupils achieve at our school, both inside and outside the classroom
- Allow pupils to participate in forming our approach to mental health by promoting pupil voice
- Give pupils the opportunity to develop their self-esteem by taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Spread awareness of the varieties of ways mental health issues can manifest
- Support staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental health issues
- Provide support to staff working with pupils with mental health issues
- Provide support and access to resources to pupils experiencing mental ill health alongside their peers, their families and the staff who work with them

5. Legislation and Guidance

This policy was written with regard to:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Articles 3 and 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

6. Roles and responsibilities

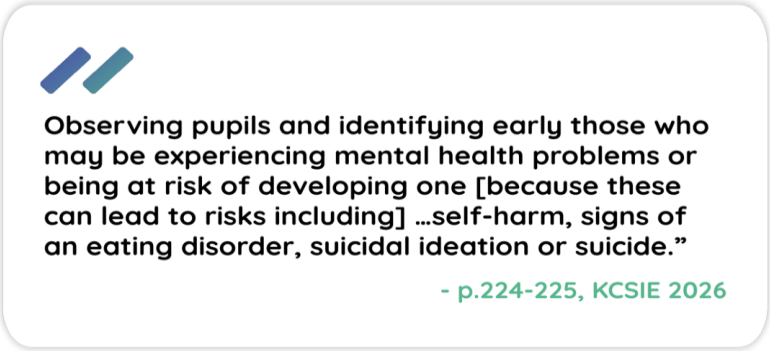
All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across the school and for understanding risk factors. If any members of staff are concerned about a pupil's mental health or wellbeing, they should inform the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

Certain members of staff have extra duties to lead on mental health and wellbeing in school. These members of staff include:

- Elle Vinall – Headteacher
- Marci Osborn – Deputy Headteacher, Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and Designated Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing lead
- Shereen Woodrow – Pastoral Manager

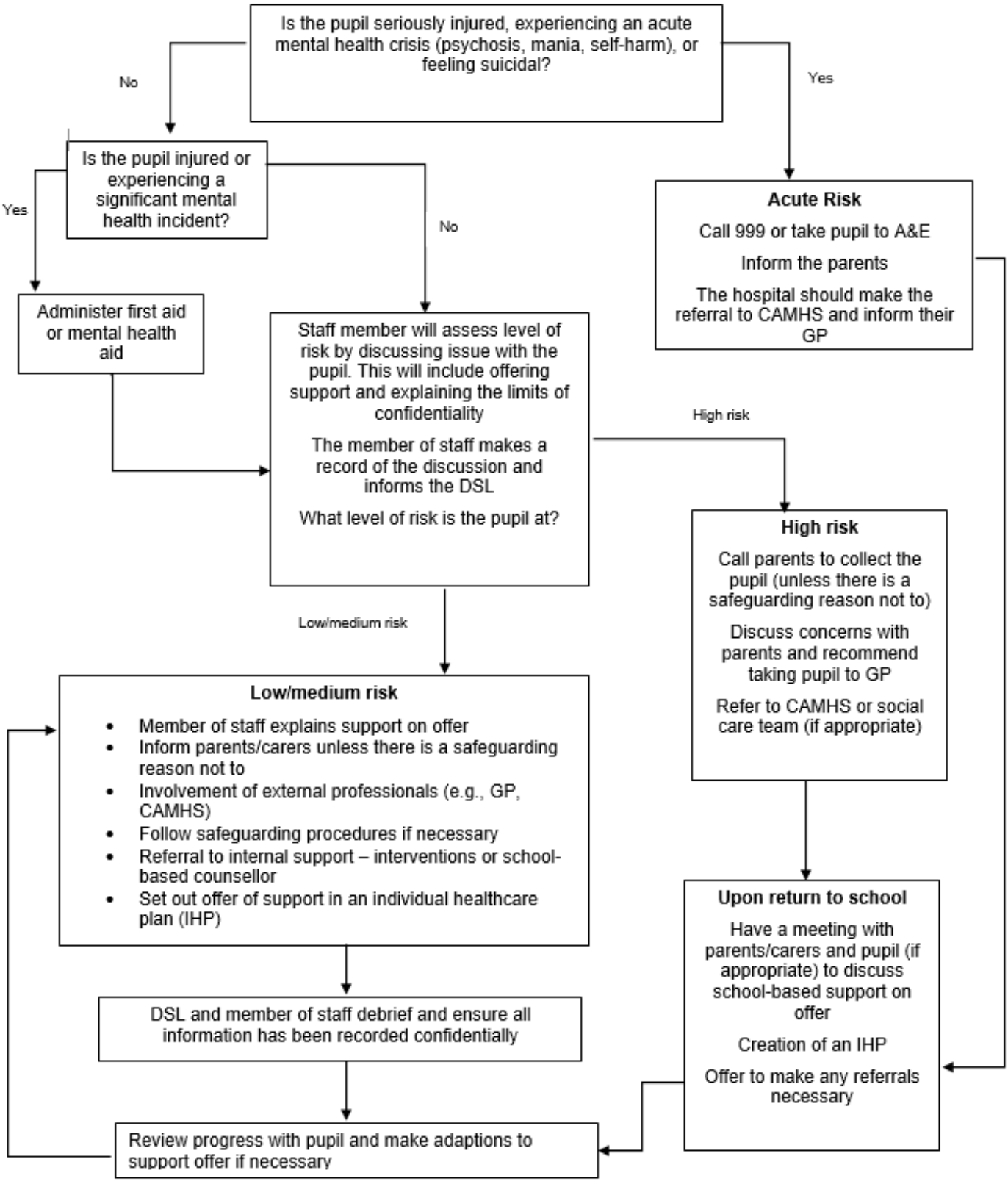
- Lisa Weldon – Mental Health First Aider

KCSIE 2026 outlines a new “key role” for education staff:



That's a meaningful shift in responsibility.

7. Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis:



All staff will be trained and aware of the warning signs that indicate a pupil's mental health is deteriorating. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the designated safeguarding lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in mood or energy level
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Changes in attitude in lessons or academic attainment
- Changes in level of personal hygiene
- Social isolation
- Poor attendance or punctuality
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Weight loss or gain
- Secretive behaviour
- Covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously
- Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes
- Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause
- Physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

8. Managing disclosures

If a pupil makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgmental and reassuring.

Staff will focus on the pupil's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow the school's child protection and safeguarding policy and pass on all concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, by logging the concern on 'My Concern'.

When making a record of a disclosure, staff will include:

- The full name of the member of staff who is making the record
- The full name of the pupil(s) involved
- The date, time and location of the disclosure
- The context in which the disclosure was made
- Any questions asked or support offered by the member of staff

9. Confidentiality

Staff should not promise a pupil that they will keep a disclosure secret, instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

A disclosure cannot be kept secret because:

- Being the sole person responsible for a pupil's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing.
- The support put in place for the pupil will be dependent on the member of staff being at school.
- Other staff members can share ideas on how to best support the pupil in question.

Staff should always share disclosures with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Before sharing information disclosed by a pupil with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the pupil and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will share
- Why they need to share that information

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the pupil to share their information, but the safety of the pupil comes first.

Parents/carers/guardians will be informed unless there is a child protection concern. In this case the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy will be followed.

Process for managing confidentiality around disclosures

1. Pupil makes a disclosure
2. Member of staff offers support
3. Member of staff explains the issues around confidentiality and rationale for sharing a disclosure with DSL.
4. Member of staff will attempt to get the pupil's consent to share – if no consent is given, explain to the pupil who you will share the information with and explain why you need to do this.
5. Member of staff will record the disclosure on My Concern.
6. The DSL will inform the parent/carer/guardian (if appropriate).
7. Any other relevant members of staff or external professionals will be informed on a need-to-know basis.

10. Supporting pupils

Baseline support for all pupils

As part of the school's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils, the school offers support to all pupils by:

- Raising awareness of mental health during assemblies, emotional literacy, PSHE and mental health awareness week
- Signposting all pupils to sources of online support on the school website
- Having open discussions about mental health during lessons
- Providing pupils with avenues to provide feedback on any elements of the school that is negatively impacting their mental health
- Monitoring of all pupils' mental health through assessments e.g. a strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Appointing a senior mental health lead with a strategic oversight of our whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing
- Offering pastoral support through class teachers
- Circle time approaches or 'circle of friends' activities.
- Therapeutic activities including art, Lego and relaxation and mindfulness techniques.
- Making classrooms a safe space to discuss mental health and wellbeing through interventions such as:
    - Worry boxes
    - Circle time

Assessing what further support is needed

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the DSL will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to making an assessment and providing tailored support, further to the provision of the baseline support as detailed in section above. The school will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the pupil's mental health needs are
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

WHITE HOUSE
SCHOOL
Mental Health, Wellbeing & Emotional Understanding
Supporting Every Pupil to Feel Safe, Regulated and Ready to Learn
OUR GRADUATED RESPONSE
STABILITY
Using class support and strategies to remain regulated.
ESCALATION
Escalation of incidents requiring differentiated interventions and strategies.
CRISIS
In crisis. Requires period of personalised and focused input and multi-agency support.
UNIVERSAL SUPPORT FOR ALL PUPILS
We provide...
Class Structure
Visual Timetable
Visual Support
Behaviour Support
Zones of Regulation (ZoR) Profile
Anti-bullying Work
PSHE Curriculum
Total Communication
Social Skills Groups
Self-Esteem Work
Sensory Diet (as appropriate)
Weekly Emotional Literacy Lesson
Daily Emotional Literacy Check
Adaptive Teaching
SPELL Principles
Trauma Informed Practice
TARGETED SUPPORT WHEN ADDITIONAL NEEDS ARISE
We provide...
Positive Behaviour Support Plan
5 Point Scale
SALT Support
Group Work with Lego
Therapy Assistant Sessions
Sensory OT
1:1 Support in Class
PEIC D
ELSA (Targeted or Individual)
Targeted ZoR Work
Think Bricks
Drawing and Talking
Close liaison with Carers and relevant agencies
SPECIALIST SUPPORT DURING PERIODS OF CRISIS
We provide...
Individual ELSA Support
CAMHS
Paediatrician
Bespoke Timetable / Offsite Provision
Reduced Timetable
Personalised Emotional Literacy Package
PACE Approach
Multi-Agency Support
Reports to Leadership Essential
We work in partnership with families, carers and external agencies to understand every child, meet their needs and support their wellbeing.
Families
School
Therapeutic Support
External Agencies
Community
Support is dynamic and responsive. Pupils may move between levels of support as their needs change.
Our goal is always the same: helping every pupil feel safe, connected and ready to learn.
Safe. Understood. Ready to Learn.

Internal mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a pupil will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our school includes:

- Nurture groups
- Mindfulness Buddies
- Reduced timetable
- Talkabout sessions
- Access to on-site therapy services

Individual healthcare plans (IHPs)
A pupil will be offered an individual healthcare plan (IHP) if staff, parents or other outside agencies, have concerns about a pupil's mental health.

IHPs are written in collaboration with the pupil (if appropriate), their parent/carer/guardian and any other relevant professionals.

The pupil's IHP will contain the following details:

- The mental health issue (and its triggers, signs, symptoms and treatments)
- The pupil's needs resulting from the condition
- Specific support for the pupil's educational, social and emotional needs
- The level of support needed
- Who will provide the support
- Who in the school needs to be aware of the child's condition
- What to do in an emergency

Making external referrals
If a pupil's needs cannot be met by the internal offer the school provides, the school will make, or encourage parents to make, a referral for external support.

A pupil could be referred to:

- GP or paediatrician
- CAMHS
- Mental health charities (e.g. Samaritans, Mind, Young Minds, Kooth)
- Local counselling services

11. Supporting and collaborating with parents, carers and guardians

We will work with parents, carers and guardians to support pupils' mental health by:

- Asking parents/carers/guardians to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support.

- Informing parents/carers/guardians of mental health concerns that we have about their child.
- Engaging with parents/carers/guardians to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child.
- Highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on our school website, including the mental health and wellbeing policy.
- Liaising with parents/carers/guardians to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child.
- Providing guidance to parents/carers/guardians on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g. parent forums).
- Keeping parents/carers/guardians informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

When informing parents/carers/guardians about any mental health concerns we have about their child, we will endeavour to do this face to face.

These meetings can be difficult, so the school will ensure that parents are given time to reflect on what has been discussed and that lines of communication are kept open at the end of the meeting.

A record of what was discussed, and action plans agreed upon in the meeting will be recorded and added to the pupil's confidential record.

If appropriate, an individual healthcare plan (IHP) will be created in collaboration with parents/carers/guardians.

12. Supporting peers

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be extremely challenging for pupils. Pupils may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

We will offer support to all pupils impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- Strategies they can use to support their friends
- Things they should avoid doing/saying
- Warning signs to look out for
- Signposting to sources of external support
- How to manage their own emotions/ dysregulation

13. Signposting

Sources of support will be displayed around the school and linked on the school website, so pupils and parents are aware of how they can get help.

The DSL/Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead will be available to provide further information to pupils and parents/carers/guardians if they want to learn more about what support is available.

Posters and leaflets will be placed around the school, signposting to mental health support and who pupils can talk to.

Mental health support will also be discussed and promoted through the PSHE curriculum.

The following are examples of the places we recommend pupils, parents, carers, guardians and staff can get support:

For support on specific mental health needs

Anxiety UK - www.anxietyuk.org.uk

OCD UK - www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance - www.depressoinalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk www.selfharm.co.uk

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support

www.youngminds.org.uk - champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

www.mind.org.uk - advice and support on mental health problems

www.minded.org.uk - (e-learning)
www.time-to-change.org.uk - tackles the stigma of mental health

www.rethink.org - challenges attitudes towards mental health

www.place2be.org.uk - children's mental health charity working with pupils, families and staff in UK schools

www.annafreud.org - mental health support to infants, children, young people, their families, their communities

14. Whole school approach to promoting mental health awareness

Mental health is taught in PSHE

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance teaching mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Pupils will be taught, through the Jigsaw curriculum, to:

- Develop healthy coping strategies
- Challenge misconceptions around mental health
- Understand their own emotional state
- Keep themselves safe

For more information, see our PSHE curriculum and policy.

Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:

- Discussing mental health with pupils in order to break down stigma
- Encouraging pupils to disclose when they think their mental health is deteriorating

15. Training

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 pupils safe. All staff receive training in emotional understanding and regulation also.

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 pupils.

All staff will be offered training so they:

- Have a good understanding of what pupils' mental health needs are.
- Know how to recognise warning signs of mental ill health.
- Know a clear process to follow if they identify a pupil in need of help.

16. Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a pupil experiencing poor mental health can be distressing for staff. To combat this, we will:

- Treat mental health concerns seriously
- Offer staff supervision sessions
- Support staff experiencing poor mental health themselves

- Create a pleasant and supportive work environment

See our separate Staff Wellbeing Policy for further information.

17. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and School Board at least annually. At each review, the policy will be sent to the School Board for approval.

18. Links with other policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- First Aid Policy (in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these)
- SEN and Inclusion Policy (in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these)
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- PSHE Policy
- SMSC Policy
- Staff Wellbeing Policy

Approval & Policy Review

This Policy has been reviewed and approved by:

Policy Approver(s)	Elle Vinall - Headteacher
Storage Location	Online
Effective Date	September 2026
Next Review Date	July 2027

Revision History

Version	Change	Author	Date of Change
1	First published	Elle Vinall	July 2024
2	Review and update resources	Marci Osborn	July 2026