
Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy **Offwell C of E** Church of England School

Last Updated **June 2025**

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)

In our school our vision acknowledges our understanding that secure mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing provides the foundation of good learning and enables us to live well, in harmony with others.

Be well; Learn well; Live well: Offwell!

Our vision also commits us to promoting positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to need as it arises. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures we promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by mental health and wellbeing issues.

Scope

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with: our Healthy Relationships Education Policy (PSHE and SRE); our medical policy in cases where a pupil's mental health and wellbeing overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue; our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where there are concerns for safety and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues

- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues by clarifying mental health issues and our approach.
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their parents/carers and peers.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of all pupils, **Lorna Legg**, as Headteacher, is responsible for ensuring the following responsibilities are met:

- Designated Child Protection / Safeguarding Officer
- SENCo
- Lead First Aider
- Pastoral Lead
- Emotional Wellbeing Lead
- CPD Lead

Amy Phillips – Leads Mental Health as part of PSHE and PE.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Head, or Amy Phillips, as Mental Health Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal **Child Protection** procedures as outlined in policy and training should be followed with an immediate referral to the Headteacher or the Deputy Child Protection Leads (Mr Thomas or Mrs Davey). If the pupil 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 (EPIpens are held in the office)

Where a referral to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Headteacher and SENCo.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receives 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

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our curriculum, through PSHE and PE (both led by Amy Phillips). **See Appendix A**

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we teach, but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils 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**¹ (as in **Appendix A**) to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner, built on the principle of doing no harm. It is available to all staff, covering:

- Why it is important to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Key principles in teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing safely and confidently
- Building teaching on mental health into a planned PSHE programme
- Addressing challenging mental health issues such as eating disorders, self-harm and suicide

Underpinning this is our **Whole School Mental Health Strategy** which simply sets out our shared, developmental approach to identifying, discussing and addressing our mental health needs, stemming from our vision (Be Well; Learn Well; Live Well).

We use the Incredible Five Point Scale as a common language for all to follow, with approaches suggested by the Boxall Profile as our tool for identifying and addressing more complex emotional needs.

Signposting

When mental and emotional health needs are persistent or severe, requiring additional support, we ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. Some support available is outlined in **Appendix B**.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupils seeking help by ensuring pupils understand:

¹ Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing URL= <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and> (accessed 02.02.2018)

- What help is available for different needs
- How, when and where to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Early Indicators:

School staff are well placed to notice the warning signs which may indicate someone is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. Behaviour is usually an external indicator of an internal need: we eat because we are hungry; sleep when we are tired and may react in many different ways, when we undergo a range of life experiences and consequently experience strong emotions. Signs of emotional or mental difficulty should always be taken seriously and appropriate actions considered. Staff observing any of these warning signs should consider why a child may be behaving a certain way and communicate their concerns to the Head and Mental Health Lead, and the parents, as appropriate. Staff noticing such changes in another adult should offer the appropriate emotional support (give the person time to talk, listen empathetically, share sources of support) and always share when this is in the best interests of children (See Head as Emotional Wellbeing Lead).

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Lateness to or absence from school
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol

Managing disclosures

These warning signs may also be linked to a safeguarding concern. A pupil 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 pupil 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 concerning the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than exploring 'Why?' For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively the **PSHE Association Guidance**² (link to document available at end of policy).

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the pupil's confidential file. 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, who will provide and store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

External Support:

See guidance about making a referral to CAMHS for:

- Consultation (to a professional, or parents/carers of the child)
- Individual therapy or talking therapies
- Young people's groups
- Family therapy
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Art or play therapy
- Diagnostic assessment
- Consultant psychiatry
- Groups for young people and parent/carers

<https://childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk/camhs/professional/>

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we feel it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on then we should discuss with the pupil:

- Who we are going to talk to

² Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing URL= <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and> (accessed 02.02.2018)

- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them, but equally, we cannot promise confidentiality where there may be a need to share to safeguard the child. 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. Particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead/ Headteacher; this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil; it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their mental health and wellbeing and pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the pupil should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. We should always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, the child protection officer: Headteacher, Lorna Legg, or her deputies: Chris Thomas, Senior Teacher, or Judy Davey, Administrator, must be informed immediately and parents should be informed, unless there is reason to think this may harm the child.

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 pupil, 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 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 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 step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Working with all parents and the school community:

In general, parents welcome support and information from the school about their children's emotional and mental health. It is also important to communicate, more widely, our approaches to 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 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 pupil 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 pupil 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 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 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.

We provide relevant information as part of this policy for all staff and parents/carers, who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.³

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 developing situations with one or more pupils.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight 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 Lorna Legg, our CPD Coordinator who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Staff Wellbeing

Everyone will experience some challenges to their mental health. Working within a school can be rewarding and fulfilling, but can also demand enormous emotional resilience, when dealing with children and families at different stages of life.

Caring, conscientious and committed teaching staff will act in the best interests of children. To protect those in their charge, adults working with children need to be able to notice their own causes and symptoms of emotional distress, and be able to access support, in order to continue to care successfully for others.

In our school, staff are encouraged to share their concerns, both in the best interests of the children, and also because we value each person and their quality of life. Our vision and school wide strategy is designed to give us a common understanding and language to ease discussion, remove any stigma and break down barriers to accessing support.

External sources of support are also available:

³ www.minded.org.uk [accessed 02/02/18].

Talkworks – Improving your mental health and physical wellbeing – is a free, confidential NHS talking therapy service. Access online: talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk or telephone: 0300 555 3344

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in **June 2028**.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis e.g: to reflect policy or personnel changes. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to **Lorna Legg**, Headteacher, via phone **01404 831417** or email admin@offwell-primary.devon.sch.uk

Appendix A: Teaching and Learning about Mental Health

Teacher Guidance: teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing - PSHE Association 2019

Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing - Public Health England – March 2015

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414908/Final_EHWP_draft_20_03_15.pdf

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/system/files/Mental%20Health%20guidance%20online%20version%20%28Updated%20July%202019%29.pdf> (See below for extract)

By the end of primary school

Mental wellbeing	Pupils should know: - that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life, in the same way as physical health. - that there is a normal range of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences and situations. - how to recognise and talk about their emotions, including having a varied vocabulary of words to use when talking about their own and others' feelings. - how to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate. - the benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, voluntary and service-based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness. - simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests. - isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it is very important for children to discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support. - that bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing.
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Mental wellbeing (Continued)	- where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including whom in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online). - it is common for people to experience mental ill health. For many people who do, the problems can be resolved if the right support is made available, especially if accessed early enough.
Internet safety and harms	- about the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing. - that the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health.

Appendix B: Sources of Support and further information

Support on all of the issues below can be accessed from Young Minds (www.youngminds.org.uk), Mind (www.mind.org.uk)

and — for e-learning opportunities — Minded (www.minded.org.uk):

Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Beat – the eating disorders charity: <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

National Self-Harm Network: www.nshn.co.uk and Harmless: www.harmless.org.uk

OCD UK: www.ocduk.org/ocd

On the edge: ChildLine spotlight report on suicide: www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/research-andresources/on-the-edge-childline-spotlight/

Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/dsva/domestic-violence-and-abuse/>