

Mental Health Policy 2023

Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy:

Cath Thomas Headteacher

Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Cath Thomas Headteacher

Ellie Long Learning Mentor

Named Governor with lead responsibility:

Date written:

February 2023

Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body :

April 2023

Date of next review:

February 2024

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and following any concerns and / or updates to National and Local guidance or procedures

Mental Health Policy 2023

Policy Statement

At Porter Croft Church Of England Academy, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We have a supportive 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.

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 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

We pursue our aims through:

- Universal, whole school approaches
- Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
- Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties including attachment disorder.

Aim

This policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff, children, parents and members of the community.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in

children.

- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to children with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop self-regulation and resilience amongst children and raise awareness of self-regulation and resilience building techniques.
- Instil a culture of staff and children's welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

Staff Members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the positive mental health of students. If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child, in the first instance, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If there is a concern that the child is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed. If the child presents a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

Individual Care Plans

When a child has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support through either CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the pupil, parents, and relevant professionals.

This plan should include:

- Details of the child's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school and specific staff

Teaching About Mental Health

Teaching and learning about mental health and wellbeing and understanding our own thoughts and feelings is a daily part of classroom life. This is reflected in activities such as:

- Daily check-ins using the 'Zones of Regulation
- Use of a Trauma Informed approach by all staff members
- Meet and Greets for every child
- Engaging in restorative practice conversations
- Our '6 steps to wellbeing' whole school project
- 'I wish my teacher knew' worry boxes

In addition to this, mental health and wellbeing is more formally taught in PSHE lessons, celebrating Children's Mental Health Week and through whole school assemblies on varying different topics.

Some children will also have access to 1:1 sessions with our Learning Mentor or an EAA (emotionally available adult) learning about their own mental health and strategies that could support them.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, children and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them including how they can access these services. Within the school (fortnightly parent 'Tea and Talk' sessions) and through our communication channels (newsletters, school website, text messaging service), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

Support at School

All staff have completed 'Trauma Informed Approach', 'Restorative practice' and 'Zones of regulation' training to ensure a whole school ethos of 'Mental health/wellbeing and relationships first'. Building relationships with children and making them feel safe is the heart of our practice, leading to children who are ready to learn and succeed.

To support this we:

- Meet and greet every child into our school/classroom
- Check-in with the children using the Zones of Regulation
- Enable access to 'I wish my teacher knew...' activities and worry boxes
- Ensure vulnerable students have access to an EAA (emotionally available adult)
- Enable access to the sensory room for times of emotional regulation
- Run 1:1 sessions with our Learning Mentor for students who require this
- Run LEGO therapy sessions
- Run Theraplay sessions
- Hold restorative practice conversations in times of disagreement
- Make adaptations to the classroom environment
- Have Healthy Minds Champions in each class (2 per class)
- Have playground 'buddies' in the yard to support the development of friendships
- Run regular whole school assemblies to educate children on different areas of mental health and wellbeing
- Teach a comprehensive PSHE curriculum

Warning Signs

A range of circumstances could be early indicators to help the school identify a child may be having difficulties. Staff may become aware of warning signs, which indicate a child 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 alert the designated safeguarding officers.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of 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
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
Avoiding PE or getting changed secretly
Lateness to, or absence from school
Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
An increase in lateness or absenteeism
Behaviour difficulties/an increase in disruptive behaviours

Targeted Support

We recognise some children are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We ensure timely and effective identification of children who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working with Children's Services, CAMHS and other agencies services to follow protocols including assessment and referral
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers.
- Agreeing an Individual Care Plan
- Provide children with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns.
- Provide children with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it;
- Any support offered will take account of Academy policies regarding confidentiality;
- Providing a range of interventions may include:
 - ❖ Circle time approaches or 'circle of friends' activities.
 - ❖ Managing feelings resources e.g. 'worry boxes'
 - ❖ Managing emotions resources such as 'Zones of regulation'
 - ❖ Therapeutic activities including 'LEGO therapy' and 'Theraplay' sessions
 - ❖ Involvement from the Inclusion Leader
 - ❖ 1:1 support from our Learning Mentor
 - ❖ Adaptations to the classroom environment
 - ❖ Support from an EAA

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a child to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the child. It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. Safeguarding supervision between the named persons relieves the burden of

concerns and ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur. It also provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents would be informed if concerns were raised about a child's mental health. If a child gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

Working with parents/carers

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing concerns about their child can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and process the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. Lines of communication will be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. A record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to safeguarding documents and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

Supporting Parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters, text message etc. in other);
- Ensure communication is accessible to all, e.g. translated into other languages and communicated by different means where appropriate.
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills, through fortnightly 'Tea and Talk' sessions and workshops.
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing.

Supporting Peers

When a child is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by 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

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 to enable them to keep pupils safe. Members of staff (Inclusion Leader) is also a nominated Senior Mental Health Lead and Deputy Head teacher (CAMHS Healthy Minds- Sheffield).

The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. 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.

Working with other agencies and partners

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 o Family support workers

Therapists

Staff Mental Health

We recognise that anyone can experience mental health issues for various reasons, which may be out of their control. There may also be work related factors that could contribute to poor mental health such as work life imbalance, work load pressure, poor working conditions. To every extent possible, we aim to recognise and address cases of workplace pressures that contribute to mental health issues.

We aim to:

- Treat staff mental illness seriously.
- Proactively support resolution of issues causing concern.
- Support staff members who face mental health problems.
- Create pleasant workplaces
- Encourage communication