



WILLOW
BROOK
PRIMARY

Well Being & Mental Health Policy

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Next Review: September 2024

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1. Aims

Policy Statement

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as *‘a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community’*. At Willow Brook, it is our intent to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff, the pupils we teach and our wider school community. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable individuals.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. Recent studies show that within an average classroom three children may be suffering from a mental health issue and we recognise that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been significant for our whole school community. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for those affected both directly, and indirectly, by mental ill health.

In response to the government’s recent green paper ‘Transforming children and young people’s mental health provision’ we have partnered with the Anna Freud Centre to implement a five step plan that responds to the individual needs of our community. We also provide opportunity counselling for staff, children and families with our in-house counsellor at no extra cost to those who need it.

Alongside our pupils and families, we recognise a duty of care to all staff at Willow Brook. We want all staff to feel valued and safe at work and understand that through creating an ethos of support and connection we can all work together as a collaborative professional learning community. We believe that happy and fulfilled members are key and this policy is written with this in mind.

This policy aims to:

- Support the wellbeing of all staff to avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health
- Provide a supportive work environment for all staff
- Acknowledge the needs of staff, and how these change over time
- Allow staff to balance their working lives with their personal needs and responsibilities
- Help staff with any specific wellbeing issues they experience
- Ensure that staff understand their role in working towards the above aim

2. Promoting wellbeing at all times

At Willow Brook, we believe that promoting a safe and supportive culture around mental health is everyone’s responsibility. This is why we are taking a wider school approach, following the five steps framework which was developed by the Anna Freud centre in collaboration with mental health experts, medical professionals and teachers.

The 5 steps are:

- Leading Change:
 - Preparing the community for change
 - Commitment to development
 - Signpost information for governors, staff, pupils, parents and carers
- Working Together
 - Establishment of a Wellbeing Action Group
 - Strengthen working and collaboration with mental health services
 - Include all school community in decision making
 - Parent & carer engagement

- Understanding Need
 - Identify and support pupils at risk
 - Measure pupil wellbeing
 - Develop and measure interventions
- Promoting Wellbeing
 - Integrate mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum and culture
 - Establish a peer support system
 - Create a safe environment for pupils and staff
- Supporting Staff
 - Conduct an annual staff wellbeing survey
 - Provide training for staff with responsibilities for mental health and wellbeing
 - Promote staff mental health and wellbeing
 - Ensure support structures are clearly identified and signposted

2.1 Wellbeing Action Group

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of those within the school community, there are staff within the wider team that have a specific remit to this work. They include:

Wider Mental Health and Wellbeing Team

- Gemma Smith – AHT
- Eleanor Agozino – Nursery Teacher
- Scott Hartley – DHT

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to a member of the SLT safeguarding team at the first instance. If any child is in danger of immediate harm then the regular child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the DSL/DDSL.

With regards to the day to day running of the school, all staff are expected to:

- Treat each other with empathy and respect
- Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff
- Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let other members of staff know when they need support
- Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit
- Use shared areas respectfully, such as the staff room or offices
- Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing

2.2 Teaching about wellbeing and mental health

Our curriculum is carefully sequenced across the entire school to ensure that our children are equipped with the knowledge and skills to develop a successful habit of becoming ‘mentally hygienic’. The curriculum is delivered mainly through the *Lifewise* programme, and this is supported by a range wider whole school events that raise the profile of the importance of strong mental health and wellbeing. Examples of this include our commitment to annual events such as National Mental Health Awareness week.

3. Roles of staff

3.1 Role of Senior Leaders & Line managers

Senior Leaders and line managers are expected to:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern
- Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system to their staff
- Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the school's policies
- Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress, and regularly talk to staff about their work/life balance
- Make sure new staff are properly and thoroughly inducted and feel able to ask for help
- Understand that personal issues and pressures at work may have a temporary effect on work performance, and take that into account during any appraisal or capability procedures
- Promote information about and access to external support services
- Help to arrange personal and professional development training where appropriate
- Keep in touch with staff if they're absent for long periods
- Monitor staff sickness absence, and have support meetings with them if any patterns emerge
- Conduct return to work interviews to support staff back into work
- Conduct exit interviews with resigning staff to help identify any wellbeing issues that lead to their resignation

3.2 Role of senior staff

At Willow Brook, the senior leadership team, working together with the Hub operations manager give strategic leadership in this area. The senior leadership Team meet regularly to evaluate, plan and implement successful strategies to ensure that the wellbeing and mental health of the staff, pupils and wider school community is prioritised.

SLT Wellbeing and Mental Health team

- Lucie Dawn – Head of School
- Gabrielle Ezekiel - Deputy Head
- Scott Hartley – Deputy Head
- Mari Chivers – AHT & Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Rebecca Rensten – AHT
- Gemma Smith – AHT

Senior staff are expected to:

- Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff and adhering to agreed working hours
- Manage a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- Make sure accountability systems are based on trust and professional dialogue, with proportionate amounts of direct monitoring
- Regularly review the demands on staff, such as the time spent on paperwork, and seek alternative solutions wherever possible
- Make sure job descriptions are kept up-to-date, with clearly identified responsibilities and staff being consulted before any changes
- Listen to the views of staff and involve them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives
- Communicate new initiatives effectively with all members of staff to ensure they feel included and aware of any changes occurring at the school
- Make sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated
- Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload
- Provide resources to promote staff wellbeing, such as training opportunities
- Promote information about and access to external support services

- Organise extra support during times of stress, such as Ofsted inspections

3.3 Role of the governing board

Anne Powel is our link governor for safeguarding.

The governing board is expected to:

- Make sure the school is fulfilling its duty of care as an employer, such as by giving staff a reasonable workload and creating a supportive work environment
- Monitor and support the wellbeing of the headteacher
- Ensure that resources and support services are in place to promote staff wellbeing
- Make decisions and review policies with staff wellbeing in mind, particularly in regards to workload
- Be reasonable about the format and quantity of information asked for from staff as part of monitoring work
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of any monitoring visits and what information will be required from them

4. Managing specific wellbeing issues

The school will support and discuss options with any staff that raise wellbeing issues, such as if they are experiencing significant stress at school or in their personal lives.

Where possible, support will be given by line managers or senior staff. This could be through:

- Giving staff time off to deal with a personal crisis
- Arranging external support, such as counselling or occupational health services
- Completing a risk assessment and following through with any actions identified
- Reassessing their workload and deciding what tasks to prioritise

At all times, the confidentiality and dignity of staff will be maintained.

4.1 Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of the sources of support that are available to them within school and the wider local community.

This will include: what support is available within our school; who it is aimed at and how to access it. This will be discussed and arranged with those who need it by the SLT.

To promote staff wellbeing, all staff have access to a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme run by marigold-health.

All relevant resources and sources of support are displayed in the communal areas for staff. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of our community seeking help by ensuring everyone understands:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

In the first instance, support for pupils with Emotional Health Difficulties are referred to the SENCO.

4.2 Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil or colleague 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 the Mental Health team.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental (eg self-harming)
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family
- 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 behavior
- Skipping 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

4.3 Disclosures

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 (in line with the Child Protection procedures).

Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held by the Mental Health First Aider/ Pastoral Support Manager.

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 - at each level of discussion

This information should be shared with the Mental Health First Aider who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

4.4 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 would normally, if age-appropriate, discuss this with the pupil:

- 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 pupil without first telling them, although an age appropriate approach is required here. 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.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with the Mental Health First Aider/ DSL or DDSL, as 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 must always be informed in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

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 DSL must be informed immediately, who will take appropriate action.

4.5 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 provide information to read, as they will often find it hard to take much in, whilst coming to terms with the news.

Sharing sources of 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 to discuss further questions, as they process the information and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call.

Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

4.6 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 and provide opportunities for them to talk with our Pastoral Support Manager.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get help 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.
- 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.

4.7 Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends, who often want to support but do not know how. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis what support is appropriate.

4.8 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, in addition to annual child protection training.

The MindEd learning portal (<https://www.minded.org.uk>) 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. 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 Mental Health Lead/ Head.

4.9 Working with external 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

5. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the SLT, mental health awareness action group and the wider school community. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

6. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Appraisal policy
- Positive Behaviour policy
- Capability procedure
- Staff code of conduct