

Millfields Community School Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Wellbeing is all about our holistic health, including the physical and emotional. When we have good levels of wellbeing, we feel that life is in balance and that we can generally cope well. We feel motivated and engaged, we're resilient and able to deal effectively with daily troubles.

Good Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health helps children to:

- Feel, label, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions
- Form and maintain good relationships with others
- To explore the world around them and learn new things
- Develop and thrive
- Cope with, and manage change and uncertainty

Building strong mental health early in life can help children build their self-esteem, learn to settle themselves and engage positively with their education. This, in turn, can lead to improved academic attainment, enhanced future employment opportunities and positive life choices.

At Millfields Community School, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil community. We aim to help pupils to develop essential social and emotional skills. Bespoke teaching sessions, assemblies, curriculum opportunities and enrichment opportunities will cultivate these skills and understand and manage thoughts, feelings and behaviour. We will pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

In addition to promoting positive emotional wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to arising emotional and mental health needs. We recognise that in an average UK classroom, three children may be suffering from a mental health need. By developing and implementing practical, relevant, and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly, by mental health.

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. At Millfield's we take a holistic and contextually sensitive view of emotional wellbeing. We understand that children's wellbeing is connected to the multiple contexts in which they exist; school, home and family, community and our wider society. We understand that adversity within childhood affects emotional and physical wellbeing within the present as well as across the lifespan (Felitti et al. 2019).

This policy is therefore interconnected with other important school policies, namely our equality and diversity policy which focuses upon addressing racism and discrimination in all forms, our SEND policy, our bullying policy, our child safeguarding policy, and our behaviour policy.

This Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and pupils
- 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 pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Jane Betsworth – Head teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Debi Cookhorn – Deputy head, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), Mental Health Lead

Kingsley Fry - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) SENCO

Chris Belgrave –Pastoral Support/Learning Mentor (LM)

Finian Neary – Art Therapist (Self-Space)

Dr Philippa Harbidge – First Steps Clinical Psychologist, Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools Project

When emotional wellbeing needs are met we have progressive levels of intervention. The first level of support is provided by teachers and teaching & learning assistants within the classroom when an emotional wellbeing need is identified by a staff member or a parent . Millfield's Staff receive regular training focused upon supporting children's emotional wellbeing, for example understanding attachment and trauma. When an emotional need is identified, staff are trained to respond through gaining an understanding of what the problem might be, offering and trying out possible solutions and utilising resources available.

The second level of support involves referring to the Mental Health Lead at school who can offer further support, liaison and consultation in order to establish a plan forward. This might be offering different perspectives around ways to support a child, considering accessing support available within the school such as the Art Therapy Provision or interventions available through the Mental Health in Schools Team, or a referral on to further external support services such as First Steps, CAMHS, Children's Social Care, Young Hackney.

The third level of support involves drawing support from the CAMHS Worker in School who offers support to the Mental Health Lead. Staff have access to support from the CAMHS worker in school who offers consultation sessions, advice, and guidance around supporting children within school and considering onward referrals (See flow chart 1.1).

If there is concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the DSL/DDSL. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Mental Health Log

The school has a mental health referral form that can be accessed by staff and parents on the website. The school keeps a log of staff and pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their emotional wellbeing or mental health. This can include:

- Details of a staff's/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

The log will be kept securely by the mental health lead.

Teaching about Mental Health

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 developmental PSHCE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the curriculum and the specific needs of the cohort being taught 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. Mental Health and wellbeing will also feature as part of assemblies and there will be a designated place where children can post a note if they need help but feel they cannot/don't want to approach an adult. A number of parenting sessions will be available annually to ensure there is a supportive space to discuss common issues parents face.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of what sources of support within school and in the local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it. We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and on our Millfields Website.

Warning Signs

School staff will be trained on recognising warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing difficulties around their emotional wellbeing. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns using the orange form.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed

Reporting Disclosures

All disclosures should be written on CPOMS or an orange form (if no access to a computer) and 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 SENCO and mental health lead, who will decide on the appropriate next steps and store the record. A briefing between key leaders will take place fortnightly to discuss active and new cases.

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

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the SENCO, 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, 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, parents may not be informed depending on the individual case, but the DSL must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

As highlighted within the beginning of this policy, we know that children's wellbeing is multi-faceted and influenced by the multiple contexts in which they live. At Millfields we believe that sustaining good communication between home and school is an important aspect of promoting children's emotional wellbeing. If a child is experiencing difficulty in an aspect of their school life it may impact upon how they present at home. In the same way if a child is experiencing changes or challenges within their home life it can impact upon their behaviour in school. We consider challenging behaviour to be a form of emotional communication and because of this understanding a child's context (school, learning needs, home and family, leisure contexts) is often the most helpful first step towards supporting a child who is experiencing difficulty or emotional distress. If there are concerns about a child's emotional wellbeing it is common for us to open dialogue with parents around this, to try to understand fully what's going on, explore different understandings of the problem and in turn consider possible solutions. Within these meetings we might ask questions along these lines:

- Are the concerns also shared by parents?
- Are the difficulties experienced at home as well as at school, vice versa or within one context only?

- Do you have any ideas about what's going on that would help us to support your child?
- If you experience these difficulties at home too, what have you found helpful so far?

We try to offer meetings where these ideas can be discussed openly and further support may be sought from relevant members of the Millfields team such as Debi Cookhorn, Mental Health Lead, and Kingsley Fry, SENCO.

During and since the pandemic we have experienced a significant increase in emails from parents. There may be times when we try to offer a direct meeting to explore concerns because the capacity of teaching staff to respond to emails is limited. For regular updates brief check in's at the school gate can often be sufficient to maintain ongoing communication and offer updates.

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 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 through our regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHCE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home
- Provide workshops for discussion around themes suggested by parents

Training

As a minimum, 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 will host relevant information on our website for staff 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 (please register as an individual) 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 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.

Staff Wellbeing

As school staff juggle a multitude of different tasks and demands, it is important that everyone is given the right emotional and practical support so that they can, in turn, support their pupils. In addition to having a positive impact on colleagues and children, staff wellbeing can improve performance and job satisfaction, which can lead to reduced staff turnover. It can also help to reduce absence (both short and long term), increase productivity and promote staff engagement. We hope that Millfields caring ethos and environment will have a major impact on the wellbeing of its staff and pupils. The leaders define that culture and vision of

the school and make it clear what behaviours, values and beliefs underpin it. The leaders of the school work hard to build a culture of trust where staff feels valued, can be open about their health and wellbeing and know how to access support if they need it. Staff are signposted to the SAS medical and wellbeing support service where necessary and staff can self-refer (posters are displayed in the communal areas). Performance management meetings ensure there is a specified time for staff to discuss their responsibilities with members of the SLT and to share any issues they are having and their plans for the future which school endeavours to support. Millfields ensures that a number of activities to support wellbeing are provided for staff during each academic year. Regular staff voice will be taken to ensure the provision matches the needs of the staff.

Policy Review & Action Planning

The school will commit to writing an action plan each year to audit and improve the school's wellbeing responsibilities. We will talk to children and our stakeholders to collect meaningful information using a validated toolkit. This policy will be reviewed bi-annually. It is next due for review in September 2025. Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to our mental health lead.

Further useful reading:

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728892/government-response-to-consultation-on-transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health.pdf

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/4612/mwb-toolki-final-draft-4.pdf> (toolkit)

Debi Cookhorn

Last reviewed November 2022

References

Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, Koss MP, Marks JS. Am J Prev Med. 2019 Jun;56(6):774-786.