



Irthington Village School Positive Mental Health Policy

Date policy adopted by Governors	
Review date	September 2022
Review schedule	3 years as a minimum
Review responsibility	Curriculum and Pastoral sub-committee
Signed (Head)	Signed (Chair of Governors)

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)

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupils. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a mental health issue, either emotional, behavioural, hyperactive or other. Mental health disorders can develop from an early age. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils and staff affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

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.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

The 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 pupils with mental health issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers

Lead Members of Staff

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

- **Lynn Harrison** – Head teacher
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
- **Fiona Sweetman** - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the DSL in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officer, the head teacher or the designated governor. 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.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the DSL and the relevant class teacher.

Individual Care Plans

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

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 PSHE curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching 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](https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/curriculum)¹ to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms. <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/curriculum>

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We value a nurturing environment which promotes openness and trust between pupils and staff and encourages pupils to share any problems or issues.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as staff rooms 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 pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

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

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil 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 with Fiona Sweetman (DSL).

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or 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
- Signs of alcohol or drug abuse
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Attempting to skip PE or getting changed secretly
- Repeated or increased lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Managing 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.

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 in 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 DSL, Fiona Sweetman, who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If 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
- 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. 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. Staff are aware that if any pupil in our care discloses something of a safeguarding nature then we have a duty to pass this on to the appropriate authorities.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the DSL, Fiona Sweetman or Deputy DSL Lynn Harrison. 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; however, pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. 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 should not be informed, but the DSL [Fiona Sweetman] must be informed immediately.

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?

In some cases, 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 information to take away where possible as they will potentially 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 steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

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 newsletters;
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go 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 newsletters and 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 some cases, for example, 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 with 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 or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need 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 to enable them to keep pupils safe.

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.

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.

Supporting staff wellbeing

Good staff wellbeing is essential for cultivating a mentally healthy school, for retaining and motivating staff and for promoting pupil wellbeing and attainment.

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.

The school's caring ethos and environment has a positive impact on the wellbeing of its staff. The school works hard to promote a culture of trust where school staff, including the head teacher, feel valued, can be open about their health and wellbeing and know how to access support if they need it.

Practical ways in which the school promotes positive mental health in staff are as follows:

- Teacher appraisal is encouraging and concentrates on recognising achievement with realistic targets.
- Staff are encouraged to take breaks, to finish on time, to attend meetings only when necessary.
- Staff are supported in dealing with difficult situations with pupils or parents.

- Staff are consulted about change and involved in decision-making.

Staff mental health difficulties

Early warning signs that the mental health of a member of staff is under threat include:

- An increase in unexplained absences and sick leave, or conversely an increase in working long hours and staying late;
- Poor timekeeping;
- Physical symptoms such as headaches and back aches, constant tiredness and low energy levels;
- Changes in behaviour such as an increase in the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes or caffeine;
- Changes in performance – not getting things done, uncharacteristic errors, indecisiveness, memory problems, conflict with colleagues;
- Unusual displays of emotion, irritability, erratic behaviour, anxiousness, tearfulness and changes in sleep patterns.

If a staff member is displaying warning signs of mental ill-health they will be encouraged to talk about what they may be struggling with in the workplace and what might help them, whilst recognising that they should only share what they want to.

Staff who disclose mental health difficulties should be encouraged and supported, where appropriate, in order to seek help from their GP or other sources of professional help such as NHS Choices, Mind or the Education Support Partnership. Following this, it may be appropriate to develop a support plan with the member of staff.

Where a member of staff needs more urgent help, the normal procedures for emergencies should be followed, including administering First Aid and contacting emergency services or NHS 111 if necessary.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in April 2022.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis.