



*Be courageous; Be strong. Do everything in love
(1 Corinthians 16:13-14)*

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Bitterley C E Primary School

Policy Statement

At Bitterley C E Primary School, it is our vision that we place positive mental health and wellbeing at the centre of school life. Our Christian Vision 'Be courageous. Be strong. Do everything in love', shapes all we do and underpins all our thoughts and actions, it highlights the importance we place on supporting every child's mental health and wellbeing.

'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)

We aim to promote positive mental health for every child, parent/carer and all members of staff. We pursue this aim using whole school approaches as well as specialised and targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to children's needs as they arise. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental health and wellbeing issues.

The department for Education recognises that, in order to help pupils succeed, schools have an important role to play in supporting children to be resilient and mentally healthy. It is widely recognised that a child's emotional health and wellbeing influences cognitive development and learning, as well as their physical health and mental wellbeing into adulthood.

See Appendix 1 for information and additional support about mental health illnesses.

Scope

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a pupil's mental health and wellbeing overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue 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
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Two key elements to positive mental health are:

- **Feeling Good** – experiencing positive emotions like happiness, contentment and enjoyment. Including feelings like curiosity, engagement and security.
- **Functioning Well** – how a person is able to function in the world. This includes positive relationships and social connections, as well as feeling in control of your life and having a sense of purpose. We aim to support children in making ‘good choices’ as well as fostering self-regulation.

The following diagram from ‘*Promoting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing: A whole school or college approach*’, Public Health England working with the Department for Education (Sept 2021) presents eight principles to promote emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

Figure 2. Eight principles to promoting a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.



The eight identified principles will underpin the approaches used to support the development and integration of wellbeing strategies within Bitterley School.

The policy and curriculum delivery will be tailored to promote the key aspects of promoting and improving mental health and wellbeing. It will focus on creating a social, emotional and physically rich environment, where key relationships can thrive and children can feel secure in their learning. School based programmes which are linked to the curriculum, will promote

'the pupil voice' by fostering their independence, promoting 'good choice making' and actively encouraging our pupils to recognise feelings, whilst learning to express them appropriately. Staff will have access to training and signposting to approaches and resources that will support their own emotional health and wellbeing. Clear identification, impact and outcomes measures will feed into school- based programmes and the target interventions that will be offered to pupils.

Lead Members of Staff

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

Mr M Halstead – Head of School and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL),

Mrs K Parry – Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Miss B Jones – SENDCo

Mrs J France – PHSE co-ordinator

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the 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 should be followed with an immediate referral to the DSL. 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.

Where a referral to BeeU is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Mrs B Jones SENDCo.

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

Pupils with diagnosed mental health needs will receive bespoke intervention packages delivered by trained staff who have undertaken the relevant training.

Virtual School Heads in the LA will be made aware of information about all Looked After children's physical, emotional or mental health, that may have an impact on his or her

learning and educational progress. This will be indicated in their Personal Education Plan (PEP) and the school policy will be shared with the virtual school head.

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 developmental PSHE curriculum.

We use JIGSAW programme for PSHE. This includes units of work about mental health and wellbeing and ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms. Bitterley School also follows statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2020) which supports mental health and wellbeing.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by 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.

In addition to regular PSHE lessons, every class has a mindfulness session at the start of each day. This gives children the opportunity to reflect, compose, think and prepare for the day ahead. It is also a time when children may seek the support of their class teacher, teaching assistant or peers. Teachers will sometimes use it as an opportunity to address whole class issues or needs as well as any topical/news items that may have caused distress.

The school celebrates Children's Mental Health Week with a week of activities focussing, promoting and educating children about mental health.

Members of the School Council and Pupil Safety Group will produce some child-friendly guidance to support other children with understanding mental health and wellbeing.

Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing

We support the mental health and wellbeing of all pupils through:

- A strong school ethos which empowers tolerance and respect, including respect for difference and diversity
- Establishing clear rules, routines and expectations about behaviour
- Encouraging positive, caring and constructive relationships
- Having active listeners, including teachers, teaching assistants and other adults in school to whom a child may turn
- Enhancing school and classroom layout and use of resources with pupil's mental health in mind
- Recognising the background of individual pupils and their physical, social and emotional needs
- Having consistent support for vulnerable children and those with SEND from trained teachers, teaching assistants and other agencies where appropriate.

- A broad and balanced curriculum with opportunities for intellectual, physical and expressive development
 - Using a range of teaching styles such as Circle Time appropriate to pupils' age, ability and level of maturity.
 - Opportunities for pupil leadership through school council, pupil safety group, the buddy system and other roles and responsibilities in school eg setting up for assemblies
 - Opportunities for reflection and spiritual development through art, literature and the RE curriculum
 - Having nurture groups when required for general wellbeing as well as specific mental health, such as interventions dealing with anxiety or emotions
- Bramble the school dog to help with their anxieties

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in Appendix 2

We also 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. We recognise the need to talk frequently about the help we can offer and this is planned into assemblies through the year. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupils 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 Mrs Karen Parry our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead. All staff enter any incidents or concerns onto My Concern which helps to build a chronology, identify patterns of behaviour and alerts key staff to take appropriate action.

Possible warning signs 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
- 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

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 their first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively see the school's *safeguarding policy*.

All disclosures should be recorded on My Concern and held on the pupil's confidential file. This 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead Mr M Halstead and Mental Health Lead, Mrs K Parry, who will provide store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary 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. Particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with the DSL and/or the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, 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 child's mental health and wellbeing and older 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. Parents should be informed as soon as possible and it would be decided on an individual basis whether it is appropriate to include the child in the conversation.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSL 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?

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, such as relevant websites and/or 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 are 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 record the meeting on My Concern.

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 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 and newsletters
- 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

Staff Training and CPD

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 students safe.

We will update staff about any new resources or updated schemes of work which relate to the Scarf scheme of work as they arise. Any other helpful or topical resources available will be shared by the PSHE coordinator as they become available.

The MindEd www.minded.org.uk learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. This might include: attachment separation and loss, managing challenging behaviour, social and communication difficulties, attentional difficulties, anxiety, stress and phobias, habit disorders, eating disorders, depression and low mood.

Training opportunities for staff that 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.

Staff meetings will include pupil matters on every agenda to share any updated information about mental health or any relevant issues for pupils which staff would benefit from knowing.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every year as a minimum. It is next due for review in January 2023.

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

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.

Appendix 1 Additional Information and guidance about mental health illnesses.

Here you will find information and guidance about the issues most commonly seen in school-aged children. The links will take you through to the most relevant page of the listed website. Some pages are aimed primarily at parents but they are listed here they are useful for school staff too.

Support on all of these issues can be accessed via Young Minds (www.youngminds.org.uk), Mind (www.mind.org.uk) and (for e-learning opportunities) Minded (www.minded.org.uk).

Self-harm

Self-harm describes any behaviour where a young person causes harm to themselves in order to cope with thoughts, feelings or experiences they are not able to manage in any other way. It most frequently takes the form of cutting, burning or non-lethal overdoses in adolescents, while younger children and young people with special needs are more likely to pick or scratch at wounds, pull out their hair or bang or bruise themselves.

Online support SelfHarm.co.uk: www.selfharm.co.uk National Self-Harm Network: www.nshn.co.uk

Depression

Ups and downs are a normal part of life for all of us, but for someone who is suffering from depression these ups and downs may be more extreme. Feelings of failure, hopelessness, numbness or sadness may invade their day-to-day life over an extended period of weeks or months, and have a significant impact on their behaviour and ability and motivation to engage in day-to-day activities.

Online support Depression Alliance: www.depressionalliance.org/information/what-depression

Anxiety, panic attacks and phobias

Anxiety can take many forms in children and young people, and it is something that each of us experiences at low levels as part of normal life. When thoughts of anxiety, fear or panic are repeatedly present over several weeks or months and/or they are beginning to impact on a young person's ability to access or enjoy day-to-day life, intervention is needed.

Online support Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Obsessions and compulsions

Obsessions describe intrusive thoughts or feelings that enter our minds which are disturbing or upsetting; compulsions are the behaviours we carry out in order to manage those thoughts or feelings. For example, a young person may be constantly worried that their house will burn down if they don't turn off all switches before leaving the house. They may respond to these thoughts by repeatedly checking switches, perhaps returning home several times to do so. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can take many forms – it is not just about cleaning and checking.

Online support OCD UK: www.ocduk.org/ocd

Suicidal feelings

Young people may experience complicated thoughts and feelings about wanting to end their own lives. Some young people never act on these feelings though they may openly discuss and explore them, while other young people die suddenly from suicide apparently out of the blue.

Online support

- Prevention of young suicide UK – POPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org
- On the edge: Child Line spotlight report on suicide:
www.nspcc.org.uk/preventingabuse/researchand-resources/on-the-edge-childline-spotlight/

Eating problems

Food, weight and shape may be used as a way of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours that a young person experiences day to day. Some young people develop eating disorders such as anorexia (where food intake is restricted), binge eating disorder and bulimia nervosa (a cycle of bingeing and purging). Other young people, particularly those of primary or preschool age, may develop problematic behaviours around food including refusing to eat in certain situations or with certain people. This can be a way of communicating messages the child does not have the words to convey.

Online support

- Beat – the eating disorders charity: www.b-eat.co.uk/about-eating-disorders
- Eating Difficulties in Younger Children and when to worry:
www.inourhands.com/eatingdifficultiesin-younger-children

Appendix 2 - Early Help

At BitterleySchool, we recognise the importance of supporting our children and their families. Often a little support put in place quickly is most effective. To do this we need to work together. This process is called Early Help.

If you or your child needs some support, you can access early help provision by contacting the school and speaking to the Headteacher, SENCo or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

We are able to access the wide range of agencies and support networks provided by Shropshire Council as outlined on their website – click here for further information <https://shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/#>

You can contact some agencies yourself if you wish and sometimes they will ask the school for a referral or more information. Examples of the help available can be found here – [click](#) on the title to access the website.

1. **Family Information Directory**

Information on local, regional and national services and organisations for children, young people and families. It also includes information on registered childcare and things to do and places to go.

2. **Shropshire Local Offer**

Information about the help and support available for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families.

3. **Shropshire Youth Association**

A directory of youth clubs and groups in Shropshire, some of which are affiliated to Shropshire Youth Association

4. **Shropshire Community Directory**

Information on community groups, clubs, societies and organisations.

5. **Healthy Shropshire**

Designed to help anyone wanting to make a change in their lifestyle and improve their health. It provides information on support available and covers, stopping smoking; keeping physically healthy, eating healthily, drinking sensibly and feeling positive.

6. **Shropshire Choices**

Shropshire Choices is a website that pulls together information from Adult Social Care, Housing and Health that can assist you in finding the information, advice and support that adults, or the person they care for, need to remain independent and keeping well.

7. **Shropshire School Library Service activities listing**

Shropshire School Library Service works with a wide range of schools, organisations and partners. We often visit and share their research and information to inform our own practice. This listing includes useful links that we have found beneficial and we wanted to share them with you!