



The Quercus Federation

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Hurst Green Church of England Primary
School and Nursery

This policy was adopted on February 2019

This policy is due for review on February 2020

Signed (Chair of Governors)

Signed (Head of School)

Date:



Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Hurst Green Church of England School and Nursery

Last Updated February 2019

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)

In our school our Christian vision below shapes all we do.

“Living Loving and Learning with God”

At Hurst Green we believe that every child has the right to ‘Live, Love and Learn with God’. The vision of our Church school is to discover and develop the full and divinely entrusted talents of each individual within a secure and caring Christian community.

Our six ‘Core Christian Values’ are intrinsic to our school:

Trust – To provide a safe environment where each child (and all members of the school community) knows how to keep themselves safe from harm and can name an adult in school they can talk to and share concerns with.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart”.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Perseverance – We support and educate our pupils and staff to help build their resilience and give them the tools and confidence to never give up and reach their full potential regardless of ability, background and circumstance.

“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him”.
James 1:2

Wisdom – We aim to provide all children with a wide and rich curriculum that enables all children to succeed and help them to develop their unique talents.

“Blessed are those who find wisdom and gain understanding”.
Proverbs 3: 13-20



Forgiveness – To gain the skills to forgive each other and move on just as Jesus did. We encourage making deliberate decisions that release feelings of resentment and allow progress in our relationships within school.

“Forgive no matter what they do to you”.
Luke 6:37

Friendship – All members of the community at Hurst Green School have a sense of belonging and are given the opportunity to flourish, accept and embrace each other.

“Dear friends, let us love one another because love comes from God”
1 John 4:7

Compassion – We respect everyone, showing empathy for all living things and value the qualities of each other.

“When he saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd”
Matthew 9:36

In addition we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil body. 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 and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to need as it arises. 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.

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 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

Lead Members of Staff

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

- Allison Flack - Designated Child Protection / Safeguarding Officer
- Emma Ivil - Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead
- Elizabeth Cruse - Lead First Aider
- Emma Ivil - Pastoral Lead
- Allison Flack - CPD Lead
- Emma Ivil - Head of PSHE

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 Designated Child Protection Office staff or the head teacher. 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 CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Catherine Palmer, SENCo.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receives a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. These will be completed by Catherine Palmer SENCo. 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 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.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're 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 Guidance¹ to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

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 1. There are also links on the school website <https://hurstgreen.e-sussex.sch.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>.

We will 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. 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 Emma Ivil, our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead or Allison Flack Head of School/DSL.

¹ Teacher Guidance: Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing URL= <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and> (accessed 02.02.2018)



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 our 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 Appendix 2.

All disclosures should be recorded on a Pupil Concern form in writing and given Allison Flack or Emma Ivil, these will be filed securely. They will offer support and advice on next steps.

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



Confidentiality

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

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead Emma Ivil or the Head of School Allison Flack, 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 mental health and wellbeing and 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 should not be informed, but the Designated Safeguarding Lead Allison Flack 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 and 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'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 step 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
- 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
- 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

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.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment 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.²

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 twilight 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 Allison Flack, our CPD Coordinator who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy Review

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

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 Emma Ivil or the Head of School Allison Flack through email to hurstgreenoffice@quercusfederation.co.uk.

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

² www.minded.org.uk [accessed 02/02/18].



Appendix 1: Sources or support at school and in the local community

School Based Support

- **Referral to CAMHS (Child and Mental Health Service).** Suitable for all pupils in primary and secondary schools. Access is via a referral from the school with permission and consent from the parents. The HOS/SENCO is able to make a referral and discuss the process with the pupil and parents. Meetings and support can be organised in school time, having access to a room and review meetings planned as appropriate. This is suitable for a range of family experiences and can include family therapy and play therapy together with counselling support.
- **Discussion with the School Nurse.** HOS/SENCO talk together and discuss concerns with school nurse. With consent from the parents, the pupil is able to speak with the school nurse with/without parents present – depending on the needs of the child and request of the parents. This is suitable for dealing with any health issues and managing emotions of the pupil and family.
- **Referral to the Early Help Team.** A Referral form is completed. This can be carried out by the HOS or SENCO in consultation and with parental consent. Meetings can take place on the school site with parents fully involved. Several meetings take place with a review session to discuss the next steps. This is available to pupils in primary schools and can include support on Transition, managing change and issues around anxiety associated with bereavement and separation.
- **In school, members of the Senior Leadership Team are available to support pupils experiencing short term issues.** However, SLT are not trained counsellors and may need to sign post to other agencies for more, long term support. Staff can support with managing behaviour and developing behaviour that fully supports learning. With more challenging behaviour, the school can refer to the ESPAS Team with regards to behaviour issues or the Educational Psychologist if relating to lack of progress with learning.

For information about different intervention support available in school, please see the SCHOOL SEN OFFER on the website.



Appendix 2: Talking to pupils/students when they make mental health disclosures

The advice below is from pupils/students themselves, in their own words, together with some additional ideas to help you in initial conversations with pupils/ students when they disclose mental health concerns. This advice should be considered alongside relevant school policies on pastoral care and child protection and discussed with relevant colleagues as appropriate.

Focus on listening

“She listened, and I mean REALLY listened. She didn’t interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone but I knew quite quickly that I’d chosen the right person to talk to and that it would be a turning point.”

If a pupil/student has come to you, it’s because they trust you and feel a need to share their difficulties with someone. Let them talk. Ask occasional open questions if you need to in order to encourage them to keep exploring their feelings and opening up to you. Just letting them pour out what they’re thinking will make a huge difference and marks a huge first step in recovery. Up until now they may not have admitted even to themselves that there is a problem.

Don’t talk too much

“Sometimes it’s hard to explain what’s going on in my head – it doesn’t make a lot of sense and I’ve kind of gotten used to keeping myself to myself. But just ‘cos I’m struggling to find the right words doesn’t mean you should help me. Just keep quiet, I’ll get there in the end.”

The pupil/student should be talking at least three quarters of the time. If that’s not the case then you need to redress the balance. You are here to listen, not to talk. Sometimes the conversation may lapse into silence. Try not to give in to the urge to fill the gap, but rather wait until the pupil/ student does so. This can often lead to them exploring their feelings more deeply. Of course, you should interject occasionally, perhaps with questions to the pupil/student to explore certain topics they’ve touched on more deeply, or to show that you understand and are supportive. Don’t feel an urge to over-analyse the situation or try to offer answers. This all comes later. For now your role is simply one of supportive listener. So make sure you’re listening!

Don’t pretend to understand

“I think that all teachers got taught on some course somewhere to say ‘I understand how that must feel’ the moment you open up. YOU DON’T – don’t even pretend to, it’s not helpful, it’s



insulting.”

The concept of a mental health difficulty such as an eating disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can seem completely alien if you’ve never experienced these difficulties first hand. You may find yourself wondering why on earth someone would do these things to themselves, but don’t explore those feelings with the sufferer. Instead listen hard to what they’re saying and encourage them to talk and you’ll slowly start to understand what steps they might be ready to take in order to start making some changes.

Don’t be afraid to make eye contact

“She was so disgusted by what I told her that she couldn’t bear to look at me.”

It’s important to try to maintain a natural level of eye contact (even if you have to think very hard about doing so and it doesn’t feel natural to you at all). If you make too much eye contact, the pupil/student may interpret this as you staring at them. They may think that you are horrified about what they are saying or think they are a ‘freak’. On the other hand, if you don’t make eye contact at all then a pupil/student may interpret this as you being disgusted by them – to the extent that you can’t bring yourself to look at them. Making an effort to maintain natural eye contact will convey a very positive message to the pupil/student.

Offer support

“I was worried how she’d react, but my Mum just listened then said ‘How can I support you?’ – no one had asked me that before and it made me realise that she cared. Between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me stop self-harming.”

Never leave this kind of conversation without agreeing next steps. These will be informed by your conversations with appropriate colleagues and the schools’ policies on such issues. Whatever happens, you should have some form of next steps to carry out after the conversation because this will help the pupil/student to realise that you’re working with them to move things forward.

Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues

“Talking about my bingeing for the first time was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking, my teacher looked me in the eye and said ‘That must have been really tough’ – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me.”

It can take a young person weeks or even months to admit they have a problem to themselves, let alone share that with anyone else. If a pupil/ student chooses to confide in you, you should



feel proud and privileged that they have such a high level of trust in you. Acknowledging both how brave they have been, and how glad you are they chose to speak to you, conveys positive messages of support to the pupil/student.

Don't assume that an apparently negative response is actually a negative response

“The anorexic voice in my head was telling me to push help away so I was saying no. But there was a tiny part of me that wanted to get better. I just couldn't say it out loud or else I'd have to punish myself.”

Despite the fact that a pupil/student has confided in you, and may even have expressed a desire to get on top of their illness, that doesn't mean they'll readily accept help. The illness may ensure they resist any form of help for as long as they possibly can. Don't be offended or upset if your offers of help are met with anger, indifference or insolence, it's the illness talking, not the pupil/student.

Never break your promises

“Whatever you say you'll do you have to do or else the trust we've built in you will be smashed to smithereens. And never lie. Just be honest. If you're going to tell someone just be upfront about it, we can handle that, what we can't handle is having our trust broken.”

Above all else, a pupil/student wants to know they can trust you. That means if they want you to keep their issues confidential and you can't then you must be honest. Explain that, whilst you can't keep it a secret, you can ensure that it is handled within the school's policy of confidentiality and that only those who need to know about it in order to help will know about the situation. You can also be honest about the fact you don't have all the answers or aren't exactly sure what will happen next. Consider yourself the pupil's/student's ally rather than their saviour and think about which next steps you can take together, always ensuring you follow relevant policies and consult appropriate colleague