



EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH POLICY FOR HOLT FARM INFANT SCHOOL

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At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable to poor emotional wellbeing and mental health. This is no different to our physical health where anyone can all catch a cold, have a sore throat or any other infection or illness.

We take the view that supporting positive emotional wellbeing and good mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play. It is an important part of the pastoral care of our whole community – this includes both the children and young people (CYP) in our care as well as our own staff and the families within our community.

Importantly, at our school we believe that those experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties should not face discrimination and the school is committed to helping to identify these difficulties and supporting people to overcome them. Anyone may need some additional emotional support.

This policy is intended for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors. It describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. It sets out our approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health for all.

If you wish to define Mental Health so that there is clarity as to what is meant, then a couple of suggested definitions that can be used

From the World Health Organisation

"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 Organisation

From MIND

"In many ways, mental health is just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it. Good mental health means being generally able to think, feel and react in the ways that you need and want to live your life. But if you go through a period of poor mental health you might find the ways you're frequently thinking, feeling or reacting become difficult, or even impossible, to cope with. This can feel just as bad as a physical illness, or even worse."

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Policy Statement

At our school, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our CYP and staff. We have a supportive culture and caring ethos which embraces our core values of *Happy, Friendly, Incredible, Safe*

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- promoting our school values throughout all that we do
- listening to the voice of CYP and create opportunities to participate in decision-making
- celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
- providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- providing opportunities to reflect
- accessing appropriate support that meets the needs of the individual.

At our school our aim is also to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to emotional wellbeing and mental health problems and to be a school where we:

- help CYP to understand their emotions and feelings better
- ensure CYP have a sense of belonging and feel safe, so they are comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- help CYP socially to form and maintain healthy respectful relationships as the evidence is that these provide strong protective factors
- promote self-worth and ensure CYP know that they are valued and respected
- encourage CYP to be confident and 'think and feel that it is okay to be different' without feeling any stigma
- help CYP to develop emotional resilience so that they can manage setbacks
- value and promote positive emotional wellbeing mental health.

We pursue our aims through:

- universal, whole school approaches
- support for CYP going through recent difficulties including bereavement, family separation or other trauma
- specialised, targeted approaches aimed at CYP with more complex or long-term difficulties
- not tolerating bullying, harassment, sexism, racism, or any other types of discrimination.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with our other policies;

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Medical Policy
- Safeguarding and/or Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy

Whole School Approach to Mental Health

At our school we adopt a whole school approach to promoting positive emotional wellbeing and mental health that aims to help all CYP become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise. This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Having an ethos and creating a culture that supports emotional wellbeing and mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping CYP to develop healthy and supportive social relationships. Enabling the support for each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping CYP to be resilient learners by using co-regulation to support self-regulation.
4. Teaching CYP social and emotional skills and an awareness of the importance of their own emotional wellbeing and mental health.
5. Early identification of CYP who have emotional wellbeing and mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents, families and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of emotional wellbeing and mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

Staff Wellbeing

In addition to the CYP's emotional wellbeing and mental health, we recognise the importance of promoting staff emotional wellbeing and mental health. Staff wellbeing is not only important due to its impact on health and staff absences, it also plays an important part in providing children and young people with quality education, as it affects employee performance and how they carry out their duties. For this reason, our leadership team and governing board ensures that the environment in which our staff work supports their wellbeing.

Raising Concerns

If a staff member has concerns about the emotional wellbeing or mental health of a colleague, they should try and speak to them. If they remain concerned, they can talk in confidence to either the Designated Mental Health Lead.

Support for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

Staff who feel they need support are able to access the following services:

- The Education Support Partnership – a free service for all those working in education in the UK, 08000 562 561, <https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/>

Lead Members of Staff:

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the emotional wellbeing and mental health of CYP, staff with a specific, relevant responsibilities include:

- Sue Jackson Senior Mental Health Lead

Role of the Designated Mental Health Lead

The school has a Designated Lead for Mental Health. They act as a champion for mental health and wellbeing, reporting to the Leadership Team.

Their role is not to necessarily provide interventions, but to have a whole school overview and to coordinate the school's approach to positive mental health and wellbeing.

As endorsed by the Department for Education, they will:

- Oversee the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, including how it is reflected in the writing of behaviour policies, curriculum and pastoral support, how staff are supported with their own mental wellbeing and how pupils and parents are engaged
- Support the identification of at-risk children and children exhibiting signs of mental ill health
- Knowledge of the local mental health services and working with clear links into children and young people's mental health services to refer children and young people into NHS services where it is appropriate to do so
- Coordination of the mental health needs of CYP within the school or college and oversight of the delivery of interventions where these are being delivered in the educational setting
- Support staff in contact with children with mental health needs to help raise awareness, and give all staff the confidence to work with young people
- Oversee and monitor the outcomes of interventions, on children and young people's education and wellbeing.

Identification

Children and young people with mental health needs are often identified by those closest to them: their parents/carers/family members or the school staff closest to them. These concerns can then be discussed with either the Designated Mental Health Lead or SENCo depending on their nature.

All staff receive training on helping them recognise the symptoms that an emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulty is affecting their daily lives

Warning signs

All staff will be on the lookout for signs that a pupil's mental health is deteriorating. Some warning signs include:

Changes in:

Mood or energy level

Eating or sleeping patterns

Attitude in lessons or academic attainment

Level of personal hygiene

Social isolation

Poor attendance or punctuality

Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure

Abuse of drugs or alcohol

Rapid weight loss or gain

Secretive behaviour

Covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously

Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes

Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause

Physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted

Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

Raising Concerns

If a staff member has concerns about the emotional wellbeing or mental health of a CYP, they will initially speak to their class or form teacher, the SENCo or the Designated Mental Health Lead (or one of the Mental Health trained First Aiders).

Staff may also become aware of warning signs which indicate someone is experiencing emotional wellbeing or mental health issues. These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs will communicate their concerns with the designated child protection and safeguarding officer or the emotional wellbeing lead as appropriate.

Procedure to follow in a case of high-level dysregulation and/or distress

If a CYP is exhibiting physical and or psychological risk within their presentation, such as extreme distress, self-harm or feeling suicidal, we will refer to:

- Let's Talk: Managing Risk to Support Children and Young People's Mental Health in Schools/Settings

If there is no immediate physical risk but there is concern about the emotional distress and wellbeing of the child, we will keep the pupil safe whilst we call their parents/carers. We will discuss concerns with parents/carers, including recommending appropriate next steps, such as taking pupil to GP, referring to CAMHS or social care team (if appropriate).

The child may be allowed to go home if it is deemed appropriate and agreed by all for the purposes of keeping them safe and accessing co-regulation from their parent/carer. Attendance in this circumstance will be recorded as CODE I – Illness (not medical or dental appointments).

Upon return to school, we will have a meeting with parents/carers and pupil (if appropriate) to discuss school-based support on offer, create a plan and offer to make any referrals if necessary.

Managing Disclosures

Children and young people may disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, therefore, staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a CYP chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health/wellbeing or that of a friend to a member of staff, the response will always be calm, supportive, and non-judgemental.

Our staff will always listen rather than give advice to ensure the CYP's emotional and physical safety rather than exploring the reasons by

1. Letting the CYP know that they are there for them
2. Reassuring them
3. Offering to help them find support
4. Not making any promises about keeping information confidential if it is clear the CYP is in immediate danger or requires medical attention. Action is necessary if their safety is at risk.

Regular training is provided for staff regarding handling mental health disclosures and seeking the advice of the safeguarding team.

Any information which may constitute a potential child protection concern will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Wherever possible, parents/carers will be informed about any concerns, particularly if these are referred to another agency.

Working with Parents and families

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has an emotional wellbeing or mental health need and we will be sensitive and supportive.

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, a sensitive approach will be adopted.

Before any discussions take place, consideration will be given to:

- Can the meeting happen face to face? (this is preferable)
- Where will the meeting happen?
- Who will be present? (consider parents, the CYP, other members of staff)
- What are the aims of the meeting?

Further sources of information and leaflets will be provided where possible as parents may find it hard to take on board all the details and advice alongside the concerns being shared.

In order to support parents and families we will:

- *School to add own support here – below are some examples*
- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website
- Share and allow parents to access sources of further support e.g. through parent forums.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their child.
- Make our emotional wellbeing and 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 Relationships and Sex Education and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.
- Organise a range of activities such as workshops on protective and risk factors, craft clubs, computer skills club, and English as an additional language classes.
- Provide information and websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produced leaflets for parents on mental health

and resilience, which can be accessed on our School website. The information includes who parents can talk to if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child and where parents can access support for themselves.

- Include the mental health topics that are taught in the Relationships Sex Education curriculum section, on our School website
- When children start school, all parents and carers are given our emotional wellbeing and mental health and resilience leaflet that includes information on how parents can support their child's mental health and where to go for help and support.

Supporting Friends and Peers

At our school we recognise that when a CYP is experiencing mental health problems it can be difficult and maybe sometimes a challenging time for their friends, who often want to help them but are not sure the best thing to do and can also be emotionally affected.

In the case of eating disorders and self-harm, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping strategies from each other, and we will consider on a case-by-case basis what support might be appropriate including one to one and group support.

We will involve the CYP who is in need and their parents to consider what is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told, how they can best support, things they should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset and warning signs that their friend needs help.

We will also make information available about where and how to access information and support for themselves and healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

In order to keep friends safe, it is important to consider, on a case-by-case basis, which friends might need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student 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 (eg signs of relapse)

Additionally, peers will be provided with information on:

- 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 emotional wellbeing and mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training.

(Essex CC provide information and training opportunities: [Social, Emotional and Mental Health Portal for Schools, Colleges and Settings](#))

The MindEd learning portal also provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. Training can be formal and informal through coaching, consultation, skill development etc as well as school INSET days and twilight delivery.

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.

Support

At our school we endeavour to tailor the support for our children and young people according to their needs. As a school we have access to the following services, provided by ourselves or externally:

- A public health England and NHS site to help people take simple steps to look after their mental health, improve their mental wellbeing and support others: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- **The Little Book of Sunshine** The book offers lots of practical and useful advice and aims to help children and young people by sharing tips on how to deal with problems, such as anxiety, stress, relationships and anger. It also includes information about where to get help when they need it. <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/168458/little-blue-book-of-sunshine.pdf>. Dealing with anxiety-<https://tutorful.co.uk/guides/the-expert-guide-to-help-your-child-with-anxiety>
- **CAMHS**
CAMHS stands for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. CAMHS is the name for the NHS services that assess and treat young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. For more information visit: [Guide to CAMHS](#)

youngminds.org.uk) CAMHS also have some excellent resources for parents: [DOWNLOADS | CAMHS Resources \(camhs-resources.co.uk\)](http://downloads.camhs-resources.co.uk)

Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our CYP to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the needs of the cohort we are teaching.

We will also use the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner. [Guidance overview \(pshe-association.org.uk\)](http://guidance.overview.pshe-association.org.uk)

Targeted support

We believe our school has a key role in promoting CYP's positive emotional wellbeing and mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems.

The school will make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing as appropriate including:

- Six Core Strengths
- STAR Analysis
- Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire
- The Boxall Profile
- Emotional literacy scales
- Thrive assessment

In addition to:

- Analysing behaviour, suspensions, visits to the medical room/school nurse, attendance and consequences
- Staff report concerns about individual CYP to the relevant lead persons
- Worry boxes in each class for CYP to raise concerns which are checked by the class teachers and Designated Mental Health Lead (these are anonymous but give an indication of needs in a particular class regularly).
- Review meetings (eg One Planning/TAF) termly
- Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns
- A parental information and health questionnaire on entry to the school
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer

- Parental meetings in EYFS
- Enabling CYP to raise concerns to any member of staff
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.

Class activities

- Worry boxes - a similar mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class
- Circle times

Whole school

- Wellbeing week – whole school focus on doing things which make us feel good
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Every year we train up a group of CYP as our health Champions who lead on whole school campaigns on health and wellbeing.
- We seek CYP's views about our approach, curriculum and in promoting whole school mental health activities.
- We always seek feedback from CYP who have had support to help improve that support and the services they received.

Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

Working with other agencies and partners and signposting

We will ensure that staff, CYP and parents are aware of what support is available within our school and how to access further support.

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including:

- Family support workers
- School nurse / GP
- Educational Psychology services
- Mental Health Support Team (where available)
- Paediatricians
- SET CAMHS (Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)
- Counselling services
- Therapists
- Social Care

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 1 year as a minimum for the first 3 years of the development of the policy.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate, on a 'need to' basis. Any questions or suggestions should be directed the Healthy Schools and Student Well-being Coordinator.

*this version January 2024

Social, Emotional Mental Health Strategy Team
SEND Strategy and Innovation
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Essex County Council

Appendices

1. Helpful links and training
2. Identifying needs and warning signs
3. The ALGEE approach

Appendix 1

[Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance: effective practice examples \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Helpful Links:

For more information on all aspects of SEMH please go to the Essex CC info link: [Social, Emotional and Mental Health Portal for Schools, Colleges and Settings](#)

For support on specific mental health needs:

Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk

OCD UK www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk and www.selfharm.co.uk

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support:

www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems

www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)

www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health

www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health

Training

Essex CC provide information and training opportunities: [Social, Emotional and Mental Health Portal for Schools, Colleges and Settings](#)

The MindEd learning portal also provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. Training can be formal and informal through coaching, consultation, skill development etc as well as school INSET days and twilight delivery.

Appendix 2

Identifying needs and Warning Signs

Indicators that the child may need support or is experiencing stress:

- Attendance / Punctuality
- Relationship and/or attachment difficulties
- Approach to learning/falling behind academically
- Physical/health indicators
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Changes in behaviour
- Family circumstances, recent bereavement or other form of adverse experience
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Becoming socially withdrawn, changes in activity and mood
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- Drugs or alcohol misuse.

Appendix 3

Guidance on listening and talking to children and young people when they make mental health disclosures

ALGEE APPROACH

At our school we have members of staff that have been trained by the 'Mental Health First Aid England' group which is a nationally accredited to deliver CPD for people working in all areas of the community. They have a very simple guide on how to work with students in particular.

A= approach the person, assess and assist with any crisis

L= Listen and communicate non-judgmentally

G= Give support and information

E= Encourage the young person to get appropriate professional help

E= Encourage others support.