

Mental Health Policy at the Willows Primary School

At Willows, we recognise that good mental health is as important as good physical health. Our pupils are taught self-care techniques, including recognising and managing emotions, exercise, relaxation and how to build relationships through a rich and varied curriculum. We teach our children how they can help others with their mental health in age-appropriate ways.

We use the DfE's guidance, '*Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*', as a guide and work to their ideals:

1. **Prevention:** creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and well-being of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This will include teaching pupils about mental well-being through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos.
2. **Identification:** recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible.
3. **Early support:** helping pupils to access evidence based early support and interventions.
4. **Access to specialist support:** working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.

We recognise the importance of having designated members of the school community to promote Mental Health education in school. Mrs Hirst is the Designated Mental Health Lead, a qualified counsellor, trained ELSA and Nursery Nurse. Miss Peak is an EYFS teacher and EYFS ELSA.

CURRICULUM

Whole School Provision - The foundation for our mental health offer is our **Whole School Provision**. Learning about mental health is part of our Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum for all children. This teaching and learning for all is part of the **Prevention** phase of mental health. Children receive one hour of dedicated PSHE teaching each week. Beyond lesson time, our school culture embeds good mental health. For example, Henry's Garden is an area of nature and reflection, pupils have access to this area at playtimes. We have dedicated Feel Good Fridays once a term when we promote and celebrate good social, emotional and mental health for all through The Children's Health Project.

A CULTURE OF WELLBEING

Across the school, you will see staff leading pupils through the Zones of Regulation; when pupils' emotions are causing them distress, we use this so that our children can learn to self-regulate whenever they need to. Y5 Wellness Ambassadors are on duty at lunchtime in the playground to listen to any child's troubles and support them to use a strategy to self-regulate.

RECOGNISING NEEDS

- This is the Identification phase, from the DfE model. Our staff are constantly monitoring pupils so they can identify when they may need extra support. Parents can

Speak to their child's class teacher, Mrs Warren or Mrs Hirst if they have any concerns about their child's mental health. A worry box is located in the library where children can write any worries that they would like to share with a member of staff.

We use Leuven's Scale and ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) questionnaires to help us identify what types of support we could offer, we also listen to teachers' and parents' observations and listen to the child to understand their frame of reference.

Miss Pickering runs a gardening club where the children benefit enormously from being outdoors and seeing growth in the garden. On Tuesday's Lunch Club is open in The Nest where children can enjoy quieter and calmer activities such as colouring, Lego, board games and reading. Mrs Hirst is on duty for children to talk to.

- **Individualised Support** for our pupils who may be experiencing mental health and well-being difficulties. After identifying and talking to parents, providing some support for the pupil is the next step. This is the 'Early Help' phase. Getting support in a timely fashion can stop a mental health issue from developing further. There are lots of ways we can support children in school, which can range from a simple chat, organising a playtime buddy or a daily check-in to see how they are feeling, to a series of individual or group sessions with a trained staff member using recognised support programmes and interventions such as [Drawing and Talking](#).

Mrs Hirst and Miss Peek (EYFS ELSA) are trained ELSAs - Emotional Literacy Support Assistants - meaning they can develop and deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of children. Our new sensory room is available to use (with an adult) to provide students with the individualised sensory input they need to self-regulate, so they can be better prepared for learning and interacting with others.

- **Signposting to External Support** - occasionally, some children may benefit from expert mental health professionals. We can help families to access this support. We will work with these agencies to provide support in school as best we can.

- **Keep an eye out for warning signs** that might indicate a pupil is suffering with a mental health issue. The acronym MASK can help you to look for the signs. Action for Children has more information.

M = Mood – a change in mood, They may be irritable, argumentative, withdrawn.

A = Actions – change in eating and sleeping habits, signs of drugs, alcohol, bullying or self-harm

S = Social - easily bored, lonely or withdrawn, getting into trouble. Losing interest in friends, missing school.

K = Keep Talking – refusing to talk about how they feel. Keep listening and keep asking how they are.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS

You can seek advice from Mrs Warren or our Mental Health Lead Mrs Hirst. If your concerns involve safeguarding you should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Mrs Warren. Mrs Kelly and Mr Byrne and Mrs Hirst are also trained DDSL's and can support you. If a child makes a safeguarding disclosure, the Safeguarding Policy must be followed.



CAPTURING CHILDREN'S VOICE

- It's important to us that our children get a say in our mental health and well-being offer.
- We have Well Being Ambassadors and School Councillors who meet with Mrs Hirst regularly to express the views of classes.
- In addition, our regular Pupil Mental Health Survey gives all children an opportunity to tell staff how they feel about their mental health and wellbeing.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Parents are an integral part of our Mental Health offer at Willows. We actively promote good mental health for all and make it part of our mission to further educate our parents/carers and families about the benefits of good mental health.
- Parents/carers are always included in any concerns we have about a pupils' health. We ensure that parents have a voice and recognise their contribution.
- We try to support parents who are concerned about their children's mental with opportunities to talk face to face or via phone calls and emails with staff in school and facilitating links to external agencies.

THE ENVIRONMENT

- Classrooms have timetables, rules and procedures displayed so that pupils can feel secure in the expectations within the room. Adults understand the importance of creating spaces that are conducive to good mental health.
- Appreciating Nature & Beauty – we've created places to nurture mental health in our extensive grounds. Our gardening area, Henry's Garden and wide green open spaces are used to foster children joy and wonder.
- Our website page, Mental Health Offer is a good source of further information and ideas.

Up dated October 2023