



Fingringhoe

Church of England (VA) Primary School

Fingringhoe Church of England Voluntary
Aided Primary School

Mental Health Policy

Approved by Governors: March 2023

Review: March 2024

Policy statement

At our school, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff. Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage students to be open and we want each student to have their voice heard.

At our school, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our school, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

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 Policy
- Policy for children with Medical Needs including First Aid and Administering Medicines
- Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy

Policy aims

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students. At our school, we will always:

- Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better.
- Ensure our students feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.
- Help children to form and maintain relationships.
- Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.
- Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks.
- We will always promote a healthy environment by:
 - Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
 - Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.
 - Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
 - Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
 - Promoting our students' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
 - Celebrating each student for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected.
 - Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any student that needs it.
 - Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
 - Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in students.
 - Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

Key staff members

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

- Our Designated Safeguarding Officers: Ms Donna Parker, Mrs Ruth Connell
- Pastoral Staff: Mrs Alison Trew
- SENCO and Mental Health lead teacher: Mrs Rhiann Marchant

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, then in the first instance they should speak to: Ms Donna Parker or Mrs Ruth Connell (Interim Headteachers)

If a child presents a medical emergency, then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

Teaching about mental health

Our PHSE curriculum is developed to give students the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training.

We will regularly review our PHSE curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they're meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We'll also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide students with strategies to help keep them mentally well.

Support at school and in the local community

In addition to our therapeutic curriculum, we also have a therapeutic nurture room in the school designed to meet child's social and emotional needs whilst supported by Mrs Trew (lead wellbeing learning support assistant). Individual children who require this level of support will have a plan of support designed for them and delivered weekly for a minimum of 6 weeks.

As a whole school, we offer circle time, peer discussion time, emotional support activities, therapeutic activities like mindfulness sessions as well as pupil wellbeing groups.

There is also a lot of support networks available for children in the local community. This includes places such as:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Youth working service
- Chat 1st Youth Programme
- CAVS Ways to Wellness
- Home-Start Essex
- YoungMinds

Signposting

We will ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the support that's available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

Managing disclosures

If a student discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgmental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it's necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Child Protection Policy.

Identifying needs and warning signs

All of our staff will be trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to students who need it, when they need it. These

warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead as appropriate.

Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in mood.
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer.
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.
- Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:
 - Attendance and absenteeism.
 - Punctuality and lateness.
 - Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.
 - Family and relationship problems.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

The disclosure record will contain:

- The date of the disclosure.
- The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.
- The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.
- Agreed next steps.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff thinks it's necessary to pass on concerns about a student, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the student. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell.
- What the staff member is going to disclose.
- Why it's necessary for somebody else to be told.
- When the contact will be.

However, it may not be possible to gain the student's consent first, such as in the case of students who are at immediate risk. Protecting a student's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

Whole school approach

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our students. This means working with parents and carers and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

Working with parents and carers

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.
- Share and allow parents to access further support.
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health training our school staff receive and how mental health is covered in our school curriculum.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our students' emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- The school nurse.
- Paediatricians.
- CAMHS.
- Counselling services.
- Therapists.
- Family support workers.
- Behavioural support workers.
- Supporting peers

We understand that, when a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case-by-case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

We will provide support in a one-on-one or group setting. These sessions will be guided by the student, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

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.

We support staff wellbeing through/by:

- Offering a positive and calm working environment
- Opportunities to share concerns with line manager.
- Working from home opportunities - during PPA time.

- Menopause Policy

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 or their line manager.

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/>
- SAS - Schools Advisory Service - SAS Whole School Wellbeing Support, complimentary to your SAS insurance, offers a range of comprehensive physical and mental health support to staff.
- Visit their GP and request support self-referral to local mental health services.
- Speak with Trade Unions for advice on managing mental health needs and access to services of support.
- Essex Outreach Support offers a short-term support service to people who are experiencing a range of problems that are impacting their health, financial and housing wellbeing.
- Futures in Mind helps people suffering from substance or alcohol misuse and mental ill health.
- Healthwatch Essex offers information, advice and guidance on accessing health and wellbeing services in Essex.
- Mind - The Mental Health Charity has local branches across Essex.
- Rethink Mental Illness offers several support groups in Essex.
- NAPAC (the National Association for People Abused in Childhood) offers support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse.
- NHS Every Mind Matters has advice and tips to help you look after your mental health.
- NHS Mental Health offers information and support to help with stress, anxiety, depression.
- NHS Get help from a mental health charity provide a list of mental health charities.
- Samaritans offer support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.

- Juniper Occupational Therapy for schools - Speak with Line Manager for referrals to this service to be made.
- Essex Local Authority: mental health support through The Essex Wellbeing Service. You can self-refer on the website or call 0300 303 9988.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy changes.