

Dovecote Primary School

MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING POLICY



Date approved by Governing Body: (Insert date)

Revision Due: (Insert date)  December 2024

Ref: Insert Name (Title)

Policy Completion Guidance:

Based on the Liverpool Schools Policy, this Policy Framework has been put together in consultation with Education colleagues, for the use of Nottingham City Schools. It is designed to be customised to reflect each schools own priorities. Schools should therefore edit each section, paying particular attention to text in bold and/or italics, in order to reflect their own provision and circumstances.



Nottingham
City Council

Dovecote Primary School
Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Contents

- 1.0 Policy Statement
- 2.0 Policy Aims
- 3.0 Scope
- 4.0 Key Staff Members
- 5.0 Whole School Approach
- 6.0 Teaching about Mental Health
- 7.0 Identifying Need
- 8.0 Universal sources of support
- 9.0 Targeted support
- 10.0 Disclosures and Confidentiality
- 11.0 Supporting and Training Staff
- 12.0 Working with Parents
- 13.0 Supporting Peers
- 14.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Policy statement

'Mental Health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community' (World Health Organisation)

At Dovecote we aim to promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for our whole school community; pupils, staff, parents and carers and governors and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We have a supportive and caring ethos where each individual and contribution is valued and all individuals can be supported whether affected directly or indirectly by mental ill health.

2. Policy Aims

Our school aims to:

- Create an environment where all children have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- Enable children to feel they can talk openly with a trusted adult about their problems without feeling any stigma
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their confidence and self-esteem
- Develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience building techniques
- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in pupils, including types of support and how and when to access this support for children and their parents/carers
- Support staff in relation to looking after their own emotional wellbeing

3. Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining our school's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies and statements. Eg. Safeguarding, Disability and Medical Needs, SEND, Behaviour and Attendance, Anti-bullying, PSHE (including RSHE).

This policy supports the Nottingham Emotional Health and Resilience Charter.

<http://www.nottinghamschools.org.uk/teaching-and-learning-support/emotional-health-and-wellbeing/>

4. Key staff members

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health in children. There are also key members of staff who have specific roles to play including contributing to the School Mental Health Team: (see appendix A for named individuals)

- Senior Mental Health Lead
- Nurture Unit staff
- Designated Safeguarding Leads
- SENCO
- Mental Health First Aiders
- RSHE Lead
- ELSA Practitioners
- Learning Mentors

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil, in the first instance they should speak to the **Senior Mental Health Lead**. If a member of staff has a conversation with a parent who indicates their child may have issues with their mental health, or that they are receiving external support the **Senior Mental Health Lead** must be informed.

If there is a concern that the student is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's safeguarding procedures should be followed.

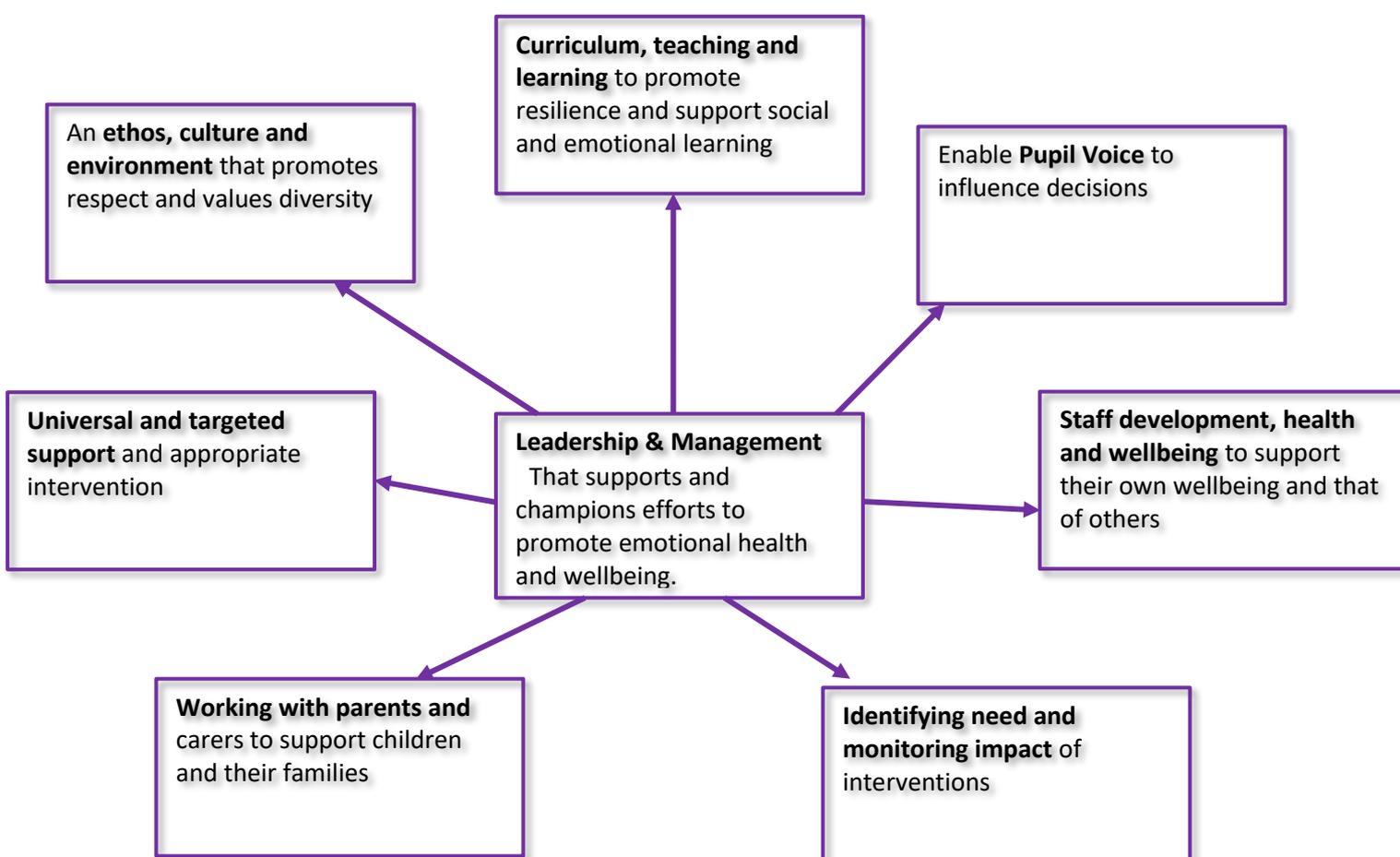
If the child presents a high risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

5. Whole School Approach

We will follow a whole school approach towards promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing across the whole school community.

This forms the basis of our work on the local Emotional Health and Resilience Charter and follows 8 whole school areas.

1. Leadership and management
2. Identifying need and measuring impact
3. Ethos, Culture and Environment
4. Pupil Voice
5. Curriculum, teaching and learning
6. Staff development, health and wellbeing
7. Support
8. Working with parents



6. Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our pupils need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our Jigsaw (PSHE) curriculum. This includes the Statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education orders.

Incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages provides good opportunities to promote pupils' wellbeing, including resilience through the development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of pupils' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we use such lessons as a vehicle for providing pupils who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

Our school also promotes positive mental health through campaigns, assemblies, transition programmes, circle times, worry boxes, nurture groups and a self-regulation approach to emotional control.

7. Identifying Needs and Warning Signs

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. Eg.

Daily check-ins, staff observations and vigilance, liaising with parents.

Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 alert the **Senior**

Mental Health Lead

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of 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

8. Universal Sources of Support

Signposting - We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them (via TEAMS, newsletters, website) and how they can access these services.

Within the school (displays, toilets, assemblies) we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at

- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next.

School Based Support –

MHST- Mental Health Support Team

MHST is a Local Authority initiative provided to support children and young people with mild to moderate mental health needs eg anxiety, behavioural issues, phobias. They offer parent-led sessions both individually or part of a group, some 1:1 programmes dependant on the age of the child, specific workshops eg Anger, self-esteem.

Practitioners work very closely with our school and sessions take place within school but also can continue throughout school holidays but at an alternative venue. This support is available to pupils from the age of five. Referrals are made as a result of concerns being raised to the Senior Mental Health Lead. Parental consent must be gained first. Parents may also make a referral directly to MHST or via their child's GP.

Nurture Unit (Treehouse)

Treehouse is a dedicated safe space within school with 2 key practitioners to support pupils with their specific emotional needs eg attachment, either individually or as part of a small group.

It is suitable for any pupil from year 1 to year 6. It can be accessed via referrals made by class teachers.

Learning Mentors

Our learning mentors work with pupils who need emotional support with their resilience, readiness to learn to help them overcome their barriers. They work with any pupils from year 2 to year 6 either individually or in small groups to aid them to have a more positive approach to learning. Pupils are selected based on discussions with class teachers and their resilience assessments.

Play Therapy

Play therapy is a form of therapy that can be used with children who may not be able to process their own emotions or articulate problems to parents or other adults.

The therapist can then help the child explore emotions and deal with unresolved trauma. Through play, children can learn new coping mechanisms and how to redirect inappropriate behaviours. At Dovecote, this support may be accessed for pupils who are exhibiting a high level of need.

Gardening Therapy

We have a gardener who works with our pupils in school 2 days a week. She is trained in social and therapeutic horticulture which is the process of using plants and gardens to improve physical and mental health. This is available to all children throughout the school who are selected in consultation with the class teachers based on who would benefit most. The children usually work in small groups, but this can also be on an individual basis too.

Local Support

In Nottingham City, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including, Kooth, MHST (see above) and Targeted CAMHS and community CAMHS a group of providers specialising in children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. (See appendix A for named contacts)

These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

Kooth (age 11-25) - <https://www.kooth.com/>

MHST (age 5-18) - www.asklion.co.uk/mhstnottingham

Targeted CAMHS (age 0-18) - <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-residents/children-and-families/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs/>

Community CAMHS (0-18) - <https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/pebble-bridge>

9. Targeted support

We recognise some children are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with MHST in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children who are equipped to work at family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

Our Mental Health Team meets regularly to ensure timely and effective identification of pupils who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Assessing appropriate action/referral pathway for children with more complex needs
- Working closely with Nottingham City Council Children's Services, Nottingham CAMHS, MHST and BST, BEHT and other services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. Agree an Individual Provision Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach.
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs;
- Ensure children have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Nottingham CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide children with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;

- Provide children with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it;
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

10. Managing disclosures and Confidentiality

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental. All disclosures should be reported first to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and then recorded confidentially on the student's personal file on My Concerns, including:

- Date/time
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with the Senior Mental Health Lead and DSL's.

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a pupil to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the pupil where appropriate

Ideally, consent will be gained from the pupil first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared for pupils who are in danger of harm.

We also believe it is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible for the pupil. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents will always be informed unless this would put the pupil at immediate risk.

11. Supporting and Training Staff

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 to enable them to keep students safe. Nominated members of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

We will host relevant information on our website 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.

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.

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 **The Senior Mental Health Lead** who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is essential. We undertake regular staff surveys to monitor their wellbeing. There is a dedicated wellbeing room for staff to use if needed. Staff have access to key contact numbers to support their wellbeing and mental health.

12. Working with parents/carers

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we will consider these questions first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place? – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – students, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

We will signpost parents to other sources of information and offer support in these instances. At the end of the meeting, we will keep lines of communication open should the parents have further questions or concerns and we will suggest a follow-up meeting or phone call.

We will ensure a record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems;
- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group or individual programmes run by our Family Support practitioners
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing

help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

13. Supporting Peers

When a student is experiencing mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student and their parents/carers 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 needs 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

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is November 2024.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. This is the responsibility of the Senior Mental Health Lead.

Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.

Appendix A

School based staff:

- Senior Mental Health Lead – Ruth Guy-Clark

- Nurture Unit staff – Larissa Perkins, Hayley Wallace
- Designated Safeguarding Leads – Ruth Guy-Clark, Becky Godfrey, Karen Roberts, Mel Whittington, Larissa Perkins
- SENCO - Becky Godfrey
- Mental Health First Aiders – Mel Whittington, Larissa Perkins, Hayley Wallace
- RSHE Lead – Catherine Harris
- ELSA Practitioners – Larissa Perkins, Hayley Wallace
- Family Support Workers – Larissa Perkins, Sarah Wilson