New Forest Small School

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Member of Staff Responsible	Marianne Wilberforce
Regularity of Review	Every two years
This Version Dated	February 2019
Next Review Due	February 2021

1. RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a **whole-school approach** in which all members of the school community are encouraged to work together to look after their own mental health and that of others. It aims to promote and strengthen resilience throughout the whole school community and empower everyone to face life's challenges.

The implementation of this policy should enable the school to:
- Take a proactive approach to lifelong mental wellbeing for everyone by adopting the `Reconnecting' model and other strategies for developing resilience skills
- Raise awareness and remove stigma and discrimination around mental health
- Detect and address problems at the earliest stages
- Support people to overcome challenges and fulfil their potential, in partnership with outside agencies where necessary

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Bullying Policy, Equalities and Cohesion Policy, SEND Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Staff Conduct Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy and Medical Conditions Policy.

2. PRINCIPLES

2.1. Features of a Mentally Healthy Environment

A mentally healthy environment has:
- A clear and agreed ethos and culture that emphasises connectedness, focus and purpose, acceptance of emotion, respect, warm relationships, communication and celebrating differences, and recognises that 'mental health is everyone's business'
- A commitment to being responsive to children and young people's needs
- Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals
- Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information
- A Designated Mental Health Lead (DMHL), ideally a staff member with specific training in youth mental health first aid, and a Deputy DMHL when the DHML is unavailable

A mentally healthy environment is a place where **all staff and students**:
- Have a sense of belonging and can participate meaningfully in decision-making
- Are listened to, valued and responded to
- Have their unique talents and abilities identified, valued and developed
- Have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way
- Celebrate and recognise success
- Are encouraged to take time for mindfulness and reflection
- Recognise their feelings and needs and adopt suitable coping strategies

- Recognise when these strategies are no longer enough, and know what to do if they are experiencing difficulties or are in crisis

A mentally healthy environment is a place where **all students**:
- Develop a sense of self-worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Understand the relationship between internet use and mental well-being
- Learn age-appropriate information about specific mental health challenges and risk factors for mental ill-health (see section 3.2)
- Are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating

A mentally healthy environment is a place where **all staff members**:

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- Are well-trained and enthusiastic
- Are provided with opportunities for CPD, both personally and professionally
- Have recognition of their work-life balance
- Feel supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively
- Use positive, experiential and interactive methods
- Teach social and emotional skills, attitudes and values
- Understand risk factors to wellbeing and help students develop resilience
- Base responses on a sound understanding of adolescent development
- Help young people cope with predictable life changes
- Keep on top of new challenges posed by technology
- Respond actively to 'difficult' behaviour with clear consequences, while understanding its deeper roots, and model positive alternatives

A mentally healthy environment is a place where **parents and carers**:
- Are listened to, valued, and responded to
- Are recognised for their contribution to children and young people's mental health
- Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies
- Are provided with opportunities to ask for help when needed
- Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support

A mentally healthy environment is a place where the **whole school community**, including the Governance Advisory Board:
- Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health
- Reduces prejudice and stigma around mental health
- Contributes towards the ethos of the school

2.2. The 'Reconnecting' Model

The New Economics Foundation (NEF)'s `Five Ways to Wellbeing' model, widely adopted by voluntary sector organisations and the NHS, focuses on five simple actions that people can take to improve their own mental (and physical) health: *connect, take notice, be active, keep learning,* and *give*. The `Reconnecting' model developed by Ashley Brockwell extends this approach by acknowledging that mental health is a collective and cultural issue as well as an individual one. Promoting better mental wellbeing is not just about personal actions, but also a systematic approach to building skills, creating supportive communities, and embedding positive coping strategies as standard. The five principles of Reconnecting are as follows:

- *Reconnecting with Creativity* (an extension of 'keep learning')*:* Creative activities are crucial for maintaining wellbeing and productivity on a day-to-day basis, and they can be life-saving for people experiencing a mental health crisis, as illustrated by the popularity of art and music therapies. The development of creative thinking and making skills enhances personal resilience as well as academic and professional achievement.
- *Reconnecting with Community* (an extension of 'connect' and 'give'): Values clarification, conflict transformation and community-building are all core skills for adult life that are rarely taught explicitly in schools. The ability to work together effectively in groups has also been severely neglected in the current examination system, which prioritises individual performance.

- *Reconnecting with Emotions*: Emotional literacy – the ability to recognise needs, feelings, and the relationship between them – is at the heart of non-violent communication. It can also help people to notice the early signs of mental health difficulties and take appropriate remedial action before a 'downward spiral' starts.

- *Reconnecting with the Body* (an extension of 'be active'): Physical activity leads to the release of endorphins and can be very helpful for relieving stress and improving mood. Understanding the mind-body connection is important for maintaining physical and mental health at any age.

- *Reconnecting with Nature* (an extension of 'take notice'): Scientists have shown that humans are 'hard-wired' for interaction with other species and that our mental health suffers when we are denied contact with nature. Organised outdoor activities have shown impressive results in the treatment of mental health difficulties.

3. PRACTICE

3.1. Mental Wellbeing for All: A Proactive Approach

The school will take the following steps to embed the five principles of 'Reconnecting' throughout the curriculum and in staff CPD, in a phased proactive approach from February 2019 to July 2021. This will unfold in parallel with systematic curriculum development leading to an internally or externally assessed one-year course in Sustainability, Wellbeing and Resilience (SWR) offered from September 2021, with the first assessments in June 2022.

3.1.1. Reconnecting with Creativity

● Senior leaders should ensure that all students continue to study all three creative subjects (Design & Technology, Music and Art) throughout the Primary School, at least two of these subjects in Lower Secondary, and [from September 2020] at least one of these subjects throughout the school, whether they enter for the GCSE exam or not
● Teachers of these subjects should raise awareness of the link between creativity and mental wellbeing, in age-appropriate ways, and to encourage students to use their creative skills as a first-line or second-line response to a mental health crisis at school

- The DMHL should ensure that the Wellbeing Room is kept equipped with art supplies that can be used by students and staff to improve mental wellbeing, as required
- [From September 2020] Senior leaders should incorporate creative activities into INSET days, including exercises to stimulate creative thinking and making, or encourage staff to arrange their own CPD in this area

3.1.2. Reconnecting with Community

- All teaching staff should continue to actively promote the 'fundamental British values' (shared by many other democratic countries) of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of people with different faiths and beliefs, in accordance with the Independent Schools Standards and the school's SMSC Policy
- All teaching staff should promote collaborative project-based learning and interpersonal skills, as appropriate to their subject(s) and the ages of the students.
- [From September 2019]: Senior leaders should ensure that staff receive relevant CPD to enable them to identify and assess learning outcomes relating to collaboration skills and group dynamics, or in the case of Secondary students, to help students to self-identify and self-assess these learning outcomes
- [From September 2020] Senior leaders and relevant subject leaders (PSHE, History, Psychology, etc.) should ensure that the curriculum includes age-appropriate education in values clarification, the causes and consequences of interpersonal conflict, and the principles of conflict transformation (see also section 3.1.3. below)
- All staff should emphasise the idea of the school as a community by encouraging students to participate actively in the School Meeting, end-of-term celebrations, school plays and concerts, day trips and residentials, and other community-building activities.
- All staff should be sensitive to students with special educational needs and disabilities, especially those with autistic spectrum conditions, which could make collaborative learning and community-building activities particularly difficult (and may require reasonable adjustments to avoid indirect discrimination, as per the Equalities Policy).

3.1.3. Reconnecting with Emotions

- The DMHL should obtain or create visual aids to be displayed around the school to help pupils to build emotional literacy and NVC skills and apply them when needed
- [From September 2019] Senior leaders should provide all staff with appropriate training in emotional literacy, mindfulness and non-violent communication skills, including the ability to recognise and communicate both needs and feelings, and in applying these skills to conflict resolution, peer mediation and peer mentoring
- Senior leaders and PSHE subject leaders should ensure that the above subjects are incorporated into the PSHE curriculum in age-appropriate ways throughout the school,
- All staff, especially the SENCO and LSAs, should encourage students to use the vocabulary of needs and feelings to identify mental health concerns at an early stage and to communicate them to a trusted adult

● [From September 2020] The DMHL should obtain or create workbooks, activities, etc. to support the development of emotional literacy and NVC skills in students who find it particularly challenging to identify and communicate their needs and feelings (in close collaboration with the SENCO and/or LSAs

3.1.4. Reconnecting with the Body

● Senior leaders should ensure that all students up to and including Lower Secondary level [and, from September 2020, throughout the school] participate in Physical Education classes or another healthy physical activity (e.g. yoga, dance, site maintenance, forest walk) at least once a week, unless there is a medical exemption
● Teachers of these subjects should raise awareness of the link between physical activity and mental wellbeing, in age-appropriate ways, and to encourage students to use supervised exercise as a response to a mental health crisis arising at school
● Science teachers throughout the school should emphasise the mind-body connection and the importance of healthy physical activity as a foundation for good mental health

3.1.5. Reconnecting with Nature

● All teachers at the Primary level, and teachers of relevant subjects at the Secondary level, should make use of the outdoor environment as a teaching space and encourage students to learn in nature, about nature, and through nature
● All students should be encouraged to spend at least part of their lunch break outside every day, weather permitting, and to be mindful of the environment around them
● All staff should raise awareness of the link between nature connection and mental wellbeing, in age-appropriate ways, and to encourage students to use supervised quiet time in nature as a first-line or second-line response to a mental health crisis at school
● All students should be encouraged to engage actively with the outdoor environment through age-appropriate play and/or quiet time, as per the Outdoor Play Policy
● [From September 2020] The DMHL should create or develop targeted ecotherapy resources to support students and staff with mental health difficulties

3.2. Safer Internet Use and Mental Wellbeing

Staff should recognise the connection between internet use and mental wellbeing and should encourage parents/carers to read the guidance issued by the Mental Health Foundation (Appendix A). All staff, but especially PSHE teachers, should take appropriate action to promote healthy internet use, such as:

- Encouraging active rather than passive use: drawing students' attention to the fact that being actively involved in doing things, such as creating or responding to Facebook posts, can have a positive impact on wellbeing, while passive use – like scrolling without interacting – can lower wellbeing and life satisfaction.
- Drawing students' attention to the 'filter bubble' – the fact that online companies use algorithms to show them things similar to what they've seen before, reinforcing current

interests rather than suggesting new topics - and encouraging them to interrupt these algorithms by searching new areas or questions of interest.
- Talking to students about body image, normalising diversity, and pointing out the use of airbrushing and filters in the media (especially social media) to present unrealistic and idealised images of 'perfect' bodies
- Highlighting the positivity bias in social media and pointing out that people's online posts usually reflect moments or aspirations, rather than their day-to-day lives
- Encouraging students to use social media to remove the stigma around mental health, create a culture of openness, and persuade friends to reach out for help if they need it – 'it's OK not to be OK'
- Promoting healthy attitudes towards sex and relationships
- Looking for warning signs such as changes in a student's behaviour (spending more time alone, avoiding friends, shifts in mood) and speaking to them about concerns
- Understanding what help is available (online and offline)

3.3. Supporting Students with Specific Mental Health Needs

The DMHL (in partnership with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and SEN Coordinator) should offer more intense work on social and emotional skill development, which could include one-to-one and/or group work as appropriate, for students with specific mental health needs. The DMHL should work with colleagues, e.g. through staff meetings, to ensure that all teachers are aware of the needs of these students and know how to respond to them effectively on a day-to-day basis or in a crisis. This may include signposting to resources such as those provided by Mentally Healthy Schools and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England.

Where the school is unable to meet the student's needs, the DMHL should develop clear plans and pathways for help and referral, using a coherent teamwork approach (in close collaboration with the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are not the same person), including in the involvement of outside agencies e.g. CAMHS.

Specific mental health needs may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Anxiety or worry
- Attachment disorders
- Autistic spectrum conditions
- Bereavement and loss
- Challenging behaviours
- Depression or low mood
- Eating problems
- Obsessive-compulsive behaviour
- Overactivity and poor concentration
- Self-harming or risky behaviour
- Trauma

The 'Mentally Healthy Schools' website has a lot of useful information, including links to CPD and e-learning resources, relating to each of the above conditions:
https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/

Subject to workload and other commitments, the DMHL (in partnership with the SENCO and Designated Safeguarding Lead) should also consider offering more intense work on social and

emotional skill development, on a preventative basis, for students who do not yet have specific mental health needs but have multiple risk factors. These include, among others:

- **Family factors**: poor parental mental health, parental substance abuse, family breakdown, domestic violence, poverty and/or parental unemployment
- **Current trauma, or a history of trauma**: neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, FGM, bullying (including cyberbullying), etc.
- **Vulnerable groups**: children in care, young carers, children with SEND or chronic illness, migrant and refugee children, children being radicalised or exploited, etc.
- **Prejudice or discrimination** due to protected characteristics, e.g. sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief or the lack of it, race/ethnicity/nationality, etc.
- **Gender dysphoria:** transgender and non-binary students have particularly high rates of mental health problems, often due to a combination of direct prejudice/discrimination or bullying, systemic transphobia in the media, and difficulties in accessing NHS treatment for their dysphoria – resulting in self-harm rates of over 80%, and attempted suicide rates between 40-50%.
- **Lifestyle factors**: misuse or excessive use of social media, body image, sleep problems, poor diet or chronic dehydration
- **School-based factors**: exam stress, transitions between classes, problems with social relationships and belonging, absenteeism

3.4. Promoting Staff Wellbeing

Senior leaders should be aware of the relationship between staff wellbeing and student educational outcomes. A teacher with high job satisfaction, positive morale and who is healthy is more likely to teach lessons which are creative, challenging and effective, leading to students achieving better results in exams. Senior leaders should also recognise the factors that influence teacher wellbeing, such as:

- Demands – such as workload and work environment
- Control – a person's own influence over how their job is carried out
- Support – from colleagues, line-manager and organisation
- Relationships – to reduce conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour
- Role – understanding of the job content and expectations
- Change – how change is managed in the organisation

The senior leadership team should monitor staff wellbeing and [from September 2020] anonymously survey teachers on an annual basis, using the Positive Workplace Survey offered by the Education Support Partnership, which also provides a variety of strategies for responding to the above issues: https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/looking-after-teacher-wellbeing.

The results of the survey should be shared with staff and the Governance Advisory Board. Anonymity must be maintained, but staff should be consulted on the findings and given the chance to suggest improvements to the school culture and environment.

Senior leaders and the DMHL should ensure that all staff are aware of the free, confidential 24/7 helpline offered by the Education Support Partnership, which is staffed by trained

counsellors and can be accessed by phone on 08000 562 561 or by text on 07909 341229. Live chat and email-based support services are also available (see Appendix A).

The Governance Advisory Board should ensure that adequate support is in place for the DMHL and senior leaders, who may be especially vulnerable to mental health challenges of their own, and that any problems are identified and addressed at an early stage.

3.4.1. Supporting Staff Members with Specific Mental Health Needs

Senior leaders are not expected to be mental health experts or to offer medical advice – but they have a legal duty to ensure the health of their staff, as well as a responsibility to make sure that their team is managed in an effective, professional, supportive and non-stigmatising way. Senior staff should lead the development of a school culture and ethos around mental health which allows all staff to be open and honest about their needs and experiences.

Often, the early signs that an individual may be experiencing the beginnings of mental ill-health might be more noticeable to the people around them, rather than to the individual staff member who is experiencing the difficulties. It may be up to their line manager, the DMHL or other colleagues to recognise these early warning signs and take appropriate action.

One of the most common indicators is a general change in a person's 'usual' behaviour. Other signs might include:

- An increase in unexplained absences and sick leave, or conversely an increase in working long hours and staying late.
- Poor timekeeping.
- Physical symptoms such as headaches and back aches; constant tiredness, low energy levels.
- Changes in behaviour such as an increase in the consumption of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes, sedatives, etc.
- Changes in performance – not getting things done, out-of-character errors, indecisiveness, memory problems, conflict with team members and/or manager
- Unusual displays of emotion, irritability, erratic behaviour, anxiousness, tearfulness; changes in sleep patterns.

Senior leaders who feel that a colleague is showing some signs of early mental ill-health should talk to them to find out what they may be struggling with in the workplace (which might include work pressures or relationships with colleagues), and what might help them. It may be appropriate to encourage them to see their GP or look at ways to offer more support at school – perhaps by talking to a charity such as the Education Support Partnership (who offer counselling and support to teachers). The important thing is to use empathy, communication and listening skills to make the staff member feel comfortable and able to be honest and open.

The Mental Health Foundation has eight useful tips on opening up a conversation about mental health with a staff member:

- Set time aside with no distractions.
- Let them share as much or as little as they want to.
- Don't try to diagnose or second guess their feelings.
- Keep questions open-ended.
- Talk about wellbeing.
- Listen carefully to what they tell you.
- Offer them help in seeking professional support; provide information on how to do this
- Know your limits.

The charity Mind highlights three things to remember when supporting someone with a mental health issue:

- Be positive – focus on what employees can do, rather than what they can't.
- Work together and involve them in finding solutions as much as possible.
- Remember people are often the experts when it comes to identifying the support or adjustment they need and how to manage their triggers for poor mental health.

It can be helpful to develop a support plan or healthy work plan with the member of staff. This can be used to facilitate useful conversations about factors that impact on their wellbeing, identify signs that indicate they may be struggling, and highlight things that may help. Mind

has developed their own version of this type of support plan, and more information about WAPs (Wellness Action Plans) can be found on their website (see Appendix A).

A mental health difficulty can qualify as a disability under the Equality Act. This means that a member of staff has the legal right to request reasonable adjustments to be made to their work routine, their work environment or how they do their job. Adjustments for mental health can often be simple, practical and cost-effective measures to help an individual. They could, for example, involve support with managing workload or reducing timetables, or providing a quiet area for staff to use. There may also be a need to support a member of staff to attend medical or counselling appointments. The charity, Rethink, has produced a guide to 'What's reasonable at work' which can be downloaded from their website (see Appendix A). It includes information about mental health and when it would be seen as a disability.

If a staff member needs to take a longer period of time off for their mental health, senior leaders should maintain regular contact if practicable, as keeping communication lines open can help to prevent staff feeling isolated at home. This contact should be made in accordance with the Staff Policy, in association with the individual's union (if appropriate), and with the member of staff's explicit permission.

3.5. Responding in a Crisis

If a student or a member of staff is having a serious panic attack, feeling suicidal or talking about hurting themselves or others, staff members should:
- Try and stay calm
- Really listen to them, in a non-judgemental way
- Try and provide reassurance.
- Call the DMHL or their deputy
- Ask them how you can help or what would help.
- Ask them if there is someone they would like you to contact.
- Keep the conversation going but try not to offer quick solutions.
- If they need immediate help, dial 999 or, if practical, take them to A&E
- If it isn't an emergency, ring the NHS non-emergency number: 111.

The NHS provides additional information on what to do in the event of a mental health crisis: see Appendix A.

4. MONITORING AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENCO and Designated Mental Health Lead, who may invite additional input from colleagues and/or students as they deem appropriate. Concerns about staff and/or student mental wellbeing can also be raised by any staff member in the weekly meetings, which may lead to a review of this policy.

The successful implementation of the steps outlined in this policy could pave the way for creating a new curriculum for a one-year course in Sustainability, Wellbeing and Resilience (SWR) in 2021-22, which may be internally or externally accredited as appropriate. The views

of students, parents/carers and the Governance Advisory Board will be sought in deciding whether to develop this new curriculum.

This policy will be reviewed after two years, or sooner if new legislation is introduced that requires schools to implement specific measures to promote mental wellbeing.

Appendix A: Useful Links and Resources

EMERGENCY INTERVENTION:

NHS guide to what to do in a mental health crisis:

https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency/

GENERAL NON-EMERGENCY RESOURCES:

Education Support Partnership
Information for teachers on finance and other problems that may affect mental wellbeing
Free and confidential 24/7 helpline for teachers, staffed by trained counsellors, can be accessed by phone on 08000 562 561 or by text on 07909 341229.
Live chat and email-based support services are also available.
https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/

Mental Health Foundation
Wide variety of information, publications and resources.
Ten-step plan for looking after your mental health:
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health
Specific guidelines for parents on safer internet use and mental wellbeing:
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/talking-your-children-about-healthy-internet-use

Mentally Healthy Schools
Extensive information and resources for staff, pupils, governors, parents and carers to help them work together to create a whole-school approach to mental wellbeing.
Homepage: https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/
Useful teaching resources, including lesson plans and PSHE resources:
https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/teaching-resources/
Understanding risks and protective factors:
https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/
Specific mental health needs:
https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/
Supporting staff wellbeing:
https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-approach/supporting-staff-wellbeing/

Mind, the mental health charity
Free guides to WAPs (Wellness Action Plans) for staff
https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/

NVC Resolutions
Training for teachers and students in emotional literacy, non-violent communication, conflict resolution, peer mediation and peer mentoring
https://nvc-resolutions.co.uk/

Rethink: guide to reasonable adjustments at work, and when mental health difficulties are classified as disabilities under the Equality Act
https://www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/reasonable-adjustments-at-work

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

MHFA England

Licensed provider of Mental Health First Aid Instructor training accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health (all courses in either Adult or Youth mental health first aid):

- Half-day course in Mental Health First Aid Awareness
- One-day course to become a Mental Health First Aid Champion
- Two-day course to become a qualified Mental Health First Aider
- Seven-day (over six weeks) Instructor Training to become a certified instructor

https://mhfaengland.org/

St John Ambulance

Offers Youth Mental Health First Aid (two-day course only) and Adult Mental Health First Aid (half-day, one-day and two-day courses) in partnership with MHFA England.

Website includes local provision of Youth MHFA training (in Millbrook) and FAQs.

http://sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses/mental-health-first-aid/youth-mental-health-first-aid.aspx