



# Eastry Church of England Primary School,

*Learning and growing, side by side, in God's Love*

## Developing Emotional Well-being and Promoting Positive Mental Health Policy

**June, 2023**

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## **Introduction**

As a Church School, we aim to provide a happy, safe, secure and welcoming environment for our pupils, families and staff. The ethos of our school and our values of compassion, perseverance, respect, welcoming and joy are based on the Christian faith and enable us to recognise the dignity of each human being. We also aim to develop in each child self-esteem, a sense of responsibility, an understanding of the needs of others and a respect for their way of life.

This policy sets out our school's approach to developing emotional well-being and promoting positive mental health. It is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors and should be read in conjunction with our SEND policy where a child's emotional and mental health needs overlap with their special educational needs.

## **Definition of Mental Health and Well-being**

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and well-being:

"a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her 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."

## **Objectives**

The core intentions of this policy are:

- To promote positive emotional well-being and mental health in pupils and staff
- To train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs of mental ill health
- To identify and support children with emotional well-being and mental health needs, together with their parents and carers.
- To signpost children, parents, carers and staff for further advice and support

## **A Whole School Approach to developing emotional well-being and promoting positive mental health**

We take a whole school approach that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise.

We will do this by:

- Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support emotional well-being and positive mental health, that everyone will understand
- Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and ask for help when they need it
- Helping children to be resilient learners
- Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health

- Early identification of children who have emotional and mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services
- Effectively working with parents and carers
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience
- Creating an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of emotional well-being and mental health issues that affect children, families and staff

### **Lead Members of Staff**

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote emotional well-being and positive mental health, the following have a specific role:

- Head Teacher – To monitor progress and ensure incorporation within the School's Development Plan and teaching curriculum. To keep the Governing Body informed
- Assistant Head Teacher and SEND Coordinator – Coordinate with SEND, Medical and Safeguarding Practices. PSHE Lead and CPD Lead.
- PSHE Lead – Work with other staff to coordinate whole school activities and learning that promotes emotional well-being and positive mental health
- Family Liaison Officer – Coordinate specific activities and training for staff and children. Coordinate the implementation of the HeadStart Action Plan which includes support for emotional well-being and positive mental health of staff, children and their families.

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff should understand about the possible risk factors that might affect a child's emotional well-being and mental health and which could lead to long term issues if early support is not offered. These risk factors might include a family bereavement, parents suffering from ill-health, family break down and bullying. Any member of staff who is concerned about a child should speak to the SEND Coordinator or Family Liaison Officer so that appropriate support can be explored and offered to the child and their parents or carers. If the child is at immediate risk of harm, then the usual Child Protection Procedures should be followed.

### **Warning Signs**

School Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional well-being issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Assistant Head Teacher/SEND or the Family Liaison Officer. They should also record their concern using the MyConcern database.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in mood and activity
- 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
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- Lateness to or absence from school
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

## **Managing Disclosures**

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend or member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own emotional well-being or mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and first thoughts should be of the child's emotional and physical safety rather than exploring 'Why?'.

All disclosures should be recorded on MyConcern and held on the pupil's confidential file. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Assistant Head Teacher who is the DSL or the Family Liaison Officer (Assistant DSL) who will offer support and advice about the next steps.

## **Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on, then we should discuss it with the pupil:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

Information should never be shared about a pupil without first telling them. Where possible the pupil's consent should be received though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and/or a parent. Every pupil must be reminded that information will need to be shared if there is a safeguarding concern.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). This helps to safeguard personal emotional well-being as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support.

If the child gives reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSL must be informed immediately.

### **Involving Parents and Carers and working with them**

We recognise the importance of involving parents and carers and ensuring that they become part of the school community. This begins before the children start at school with school visits, attendance at an informal presentation by key staff and a home visit so that the class teacher can meet the child and parents in the familiarity of their own home. Members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Family Liaison Officer are available at the school gate when children are dropped off and parents and carers are encouraged to talk to the staff if they have any concerns about their child.

It is important that pupils feel happy and cared for from their first day at Eastry Primary School and our pre-school induction programme has been established to allow pupils to settle quickly and cope confidently with new demands.

As the children move through the school, Parent Consultation Meetings are held twice a year and there are Open Days and school events where parents and carers are welcomed into school. Regular contact is encouraged between parents and teaching staff, with a home link book being one example and parents are able to make an appointment to see teaching staff if they have particular concerns or worries.

Parents are also encouraged to share concerns about home circumstances and/or medical matters that might affect the child's behaviour.

In some instances, the child may need a Pastoral Support Plan or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and this will be developed and reviewed by the SEND Coordinator and Teaching Staff in close consultation with the child's parents or carers.

### **Ways that we support parents and carers**

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about ways that they can support their children's emotional and mental health.

In order to support parents and carers, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website and through our weekly newsletters
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about it, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our Developing Emotional Wellbeing and Promoting Positive Mental Health Policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how our parents can support emotional well-being and positive mental health in their children
- Keep parents informed about emotional well-being and mental health topics that their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

### **Supporting the Parents and Carers of children with emotional or mental health needs**

We aim to be sensitive and supportive towards parents and carers to reassure them that emotional and mental health needs can be common among children and that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that advice and support is available.

The appropriate staff (this might be the Teacher, SENCo or Family Liaison Officer depending on the circumstances) will meet with parents to talk about the child's needs and circumstances and agree what support might be helpful. This could include a plan to offer extra support in school, such as one to one teaching support or a therapeutic approach such as Drawing and Talking.

It may be agreed that a referral for support from a service outside of school would be helpful, such as Counselling, Early Help Support or the Specialist Teaching Service.

Information will be offered on helpful resources such as specialist websites or organisations. Parents might be interested in attending Support Groups or special courses, to help them understand and support their child's needs.

The school will make a record of the meeting and actions that we have agreed to take and we will make sure that there are follow up meetings or telephone calls to keep parents and carers updated and fully informed of how the support is progressing.

### **Supporting Children with Emotional Well-being or Mental Health Needs**

The school has been part of the HeadStart programme and we continue to follow the latest good practice in supporting emotional well-being and developing positive mental health for our children, parents, carers and staff.

As mentioned above, if there are concerns about a child's emotional well-being or mental health, we will discuss their needs with parents and carers. Here are some examples of ways we can support children in school:

- Some children will have an Education Health Care Plan or Pastoral Support Plan which will set out in some detail, ways that the child will be supported
- Where a child is having a difficult time, such as experiencing a bereavement, staff will be sensitive to the child's feelings and arrangements can be made for quiet time away from the class if they need it, such as in the Reflection Space.
- One to one support can be offered by staff who are trained to facilitate a number of programmes such as Drawing and Talking Therapy or Starving the Anxiety Gremlin, where the child is able to have some regular quiet time away from class with a familiar trusted adult.
- The Resilience Conversation takes place in a one to one situation and the child is able to colour in the Resilience Wheel in green, amber or red. This acts as a helpful prompt for children to talk through what is going well in their lives as well as talking about what is not going so well.
- Peer Mentoring – Buddy Scheme where children are able to talk about their worries with their peers.

## **Supporting Peers**

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, consideration on a case by case basis should be made as to which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What is helpful for friends to know and what should they not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which might inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need 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 difficult emotions they may be feeling

## **Training**

As a minimum, all staff receive regular training about recognising and responding to emotional well-being and mental health issues as part of their annual safeguarding training to enable them to keep pupils safe.

Staff will be regularly signposted to all relevant online Mental Health Training and a record of training will be held by the CPD lead.

Training opportunities for staff that require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of the performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, twilight training sessions will be hosted 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 CPD Lead, who may also highlight sources of relevant training for individuals as needed.