

Positive Mental Health Policy – Pupils

First approved by Governors	30th June 2021
Policy to be reviewed every 2 years	
Reviewed by Governors	30th March 2022
Reviewed by Governors	4th December 2024

Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own 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. (World Health Organization)

At Ermine Street Church Academy, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of staff and all of our pupils. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for staff and pupils affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Supporting Children In School With Medical Conditions Policy in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Ayellet McDonnell (Headteacher)
- Ashley Martin (Deputy Head) & Hayley Lawrence- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Nicola Baker – Adult Mental Health First Aider
- Katie Watson - Pastoral Lead
- Hayley Lawrence Family Worker & Youth Mental Health First Aider
- Hannah Kidney - PSHE Lead

Warning Signs

School 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 communicate their concerns with the Pastoral Team via CPOMs.

Possible warning signs include:

- Expressing feelings of low self-esteem or not being good enough.
- 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 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

Support & Teaching In School

We offer extensive pastoral support for our children. In the classroom we build strong, trusting relationships with the children so that they know we care and are there for them. All children are encouraged to talk to any adults in school if they have questions, concerns or worries. Positive messages and guidance on well-being and good mental health are shared with the children through The Ermine Street Ethos, our daily Collective Worship, daily Nurture Time and the PSHE curriculum.

The specific content of lessons and activities will be determined by the specific needs and age of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling children

to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil are welcome to have an informal, but private, conversation with a member of the pastoral team and then, depending on the advice they receive, they should record the matter on CPOMs, alerting the Pastoral Team. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting trained first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

With regard to additional pastoral support, Ermine Street Church Academy is proud to have a Pastoral Team in place which includes a Pastoral Lead, a Family Worker and a Pastoral Support worker (Youth Mental Health First Aider). This team prioritise, timetable and plan for additional pastoral support for identified children. They offer programmes of support for a wide range of challenges, from self-esteem to bereavement. The team maintain support records and regularly review the impact of their provision, making changes to content or frequency of support as needed.

Referrals to the NHS Mental Health Support Team should be made via the Mental Health Lead. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Pastoral Lead, Headteacher or Deputy.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition;
- Special requirements and precautions;
- Medication and any side effects;
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency;
- The role the school can play, including the recommendation of any specific pastoral units of work.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. The Pastoral Team provide specific support within our school and either this team, the Safeguarding Team or the Mental Health Lead can signpost to additional support and/or make referrals to a range of organisations if it is considered appropriate. Signposting and referrals may include:

- NHS Mental Health Support Team.
- NSPCC, including Pants and Netaware.
- YOUNited – Mental Health & Emotional Well-Being Service.
- Blue Smile.
- DEMAT SEMH Lead – Denise Woodhouse.
- NHS – Every Mind Matters.

We will display relevant sources of support in classrooms and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum and through pastoral intervention if appropriate.

Managing disclosures

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

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

Such conversations, should take place where the child feels safe and where they can talk openly without others listening in. It should be made clear, that this is not because mental health issues are something to hide, but so that they have privacy and also so that the member of staff can fully focus on the concerns the child has.

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

All disclosures should be recorded on CPOMs at the very earliest opportunity. The pastoral Team and DSL Team should be alerted and they will then take or arrange action or review.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality; confidentiality should never be promised. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on, then we should discuss with the pupil:

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

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent, for example, pupils below the age of 16 who are in danger of harm.

The designated staff will work with the pupil to find the best way forward with informing parents. We always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the child, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets or website addresses to look through in their own time. They may find it hard to take much at the time. These materials will be agreed by the Safeguarding and/or Pastoral Team so that all families receive consistent information. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. We finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential CPOMs record.

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website;
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child;
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible via our website;
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our parents' evenings, Newsletters, the school website and information evenings;
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE/Nurture Time and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

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 the peers of pupils safe, we will consider on a case by case basis 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 our observations of other pupils.

Training

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.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The [MindEd learning portal](#)¹ 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 or colleagues.

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 Headteacher/Deputy Head, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

The [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust](#) provides funded training to schools on a variety of topics related to mental health including twilight, half day and full day INSET sessions.

¹ www.minded.org.uk