



MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Date: August 2026	Next review: August 2027
Ratified by: Melissa Gillespie	

POLICY STATEMENT

At the Susi Earnshaw Theatre 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.

POLICY AIMS

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students.

We will always:

- Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better.
- Ensure our pupils 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 encourages 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 pupil 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 pupils. • 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:

- **Mental Health Lead:** Melissa Gillespie
- **Our Designated Safeguarding Officers:** Katherine Tyler (Designated Safeguarding Lead) Melissa Gillespie (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) and Megan McNamara (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- **Pastoral Staff:** Julia Hammond, Megan McNamara and Melissa Gillespie. • **SENCO:** Megan McNamara

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a pupil, then in the first instance they should speak to: Katherine Tyler

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFEGUARDING

The school recognises that mental health and safeguarding are closely connected. While most mental health difficulties will not be safeguarding concerns, some circumstances may indicate that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, harm.

This may include concerns relating to self-harm, suicidal thoughts or behaviour, eating disorders, abuse, neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse, bullying, child-on-child abuse or other circumstances affecting a child's safety and wellbeing.

Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions or provide specialist mental health treatment. Their role is to recognise concerns, respond appropriately, provide appropriate support within their role and training, and seek advice or make referrals where necessary.

Any concern that may constitute a safeguarding concern must be reported to the DSL or

Deputy DSL without delay and managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The school will maintain a child-centred approach and will consider the child's individual circumstances, wishes and feelings alongside its safeguarding responsibilities.

TEACHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The school's PSHCE, Relationships Education/RSE and Health Education curriculum will provide pupils with age-appropriate knowledge and skills to support their physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Teaching will support pupils to:

- understand and manage emotions;
- develop resilience and coping strategies;
- develop healthy relationships;
- understand where and how to seek help;
- recognise when they or someone else may need support;
- understand how mental health can affect wellbeing, behaviour and relationships; and • develop confidence, self-esteem and positive wellbeing.

Curriculum content will be delivered in an age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate manner and will have regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education, including the revised guidance in force from 1 September 2026.

The curriculum will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains appropriate for pupils' needs and reflects current statutory guidance.

SIGNPOSTING

We will ensure that all staff, pupils, 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.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS

Staff will receive appropriate safeguarding training and regular updates in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and current DfE guidance. Staff will also receive appropriate information, guidance and/or training to help them recognise and respond to concerns relating to pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Training will support staff to:

- recognise possible indicators of mental health difficulties;
- understand the relationship between mental health, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding;
- respond appropriately to disclosures;
- understand when concerns should be referred to the DSL;
- understand the limits of their role and avoid attempting to diagnose or treat mental health conditions; and
- know how and where pupils and families can access further support.

The school will maintain appropriate records of safeguarding and relevant mental health training undertaken by staff and will identify further training needs through ongoing review and supervision.

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 education attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems.

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.

Finally, the school recognises that mental health difficulties may affect attendance, punctuality, engagement and behaviour. Changes in attendance or patterns of absence will therefore be considered alongside other information about the pupil's wellbeing and circumstances. The school will seek to identify underlying needs and provide appropriate support in accordance with its attendance, safeguarding and pastoral procedures.

MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a pupil discloses a concern about themselves or another person, staff will:

- remain calm, supportive and non-judgemental
- listen carefully and allow the pupil to speak
- take the concern seriously
- avoid leading questions or attempting to investigate the matter themselves
- explain that they cannot promise confidentiality
- report the concern to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay
- record the concern accurately, using the pupil's own words where appropriate; and
- follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and any relevant referral procedures

Staff must not attempt to diagnose a mental health condition or provide treatment beyond their role and training.

Where a mental health concern indicates that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering, harm, the concern will be treated as a safeguarding matter and appropriate action will be taken.

Records will include the concern, actions taken, decisions made, the rationale for those decisions and relevant outcomes.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

We will respect pupils' privacy and handle personal information sensitively and appropriately. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information needs to be shared to safeguard or protect a child or young person.

If a pupil discloses a concern about their mental health, wellbeing or safety, staff will listen calmly and non-judgementally and will not promise to keep information secret.

Where a concern may constitute a safeguarding concern, staff will report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL without delay, in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, the pupil will be informed that information needs to be shared, what information will be shared and with whom. However, staff will not delay reporting or sharing information where doing so could increase risk to the pupil or another person.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding requirements, data protection legislation and the school's safeguarding procedures.

Where a pupil is at immediate risk of serious harm or requires emergency medical assistance, appropriate emergency services and/or safeguarding agencies will be contacted without delay.

All concerns, actions taken, decisions made and relevant outcomes will be recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding and record-keeping procedures.

EARLY HELP AND REFERRAL

The school recognises the importance of identifying and responding to mental health and wellbeing concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Where a pupil requires additional support, the school will consider the most appropriate response based on the individual circumstances and level of need. This may include pastoral support, SEN support, working with parents or carers, early help services, school or community-based mental health provision, health professionals or specialist services.

Where appropriate, the school will work with local safeguarding partners and relevant agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the right help at the right time.

Where a concern indicates that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering, significant harm, safeguarding procedures will take precedence and an appropriate referral will be made without delay.

The school will work with parents and carers wherever this is appropriate and safe, while recognising that there may be circumstances in which information cannot be shared with parents in advance where doing so could place a child or another person at increased risk.

SEND, EQUALITY AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

The school recognises that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, neurodivergent pupils and pupils experiencing other forms of disadvantage may have different mental health and wellbeing needs. Support will therefore be individualised and delivered in a way that takes account of the pupil's communication needs, developmental

stage, disability, neurodiversity, background and individual circumstances. The school will promote an inclusive, respectful and anti-discriminatory environment.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our pupils. 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.

WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS

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

- The school nurse.
- Paediatricians.
- Educational psychology services
- Family support services
- Early help services
- Children's social care
- CAMHS, Counselling and therapeutic Services
- Behavioural support workers.

SUPPORTING PEERS

We understand that, when a pupil 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 class setting, and when needed, one-to-one will be offered. 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.

TRAINING

All staff will receive appropriate information, training and guidance to help them recognise possible indicators of mental health difficulties and understand how to respond within their

role. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. Training records will be held in staff files.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our school website so staff can learn more about child mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with pupils.