

# Emotional Health & Wellbeing Policy



## Conifers Primary School



Approved by: Full Governing Body Date: January 2022

Last reviewed on:

Next review due by: January 2023

**Conifers Primary is a Rights Respecting School and a THRIVE school – which means our ethos is driven by putting the rights of the child at the heart of everything we do and everything we do is based around supporting the social and emotional development of every child using the THRIVE approach. We are committed to improving the children’s well-being and nurturing their abilities, to ensure every one of our pupils flourishes.**

## **Policy Intent**

At Conifers Primary School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all children, their families and members of staff and governors. Our open culture allows pupils’ voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures, we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues.

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining Conifers Primary Schools approach to promoting Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

## **Policy Aims**

- Promote positive Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing in all staff and children.
- Remove any stigma and discrimination associated with mental health issues
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in children.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to children with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst children and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Instil a culture of staff and children’s welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.
- Ensure a physical environment that supports good mental health

## **Key Staff Members**

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of students, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mr Johnson)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Ms Roper, Mrs Fry and Mrs Newport)

Named Person (LAC) (Ms Roper)

Senior Mental Health Lead (Mrs Newport)

Inclusion Lead (Ms Roper)

Emotional Health and Family Liaison Lead (Mrs Fry)

PSHE lead (Mrs Newport)

ELSA Support (Ms Why & Mrs Cleaver)

THRIVE Base (Ms Evans, Mrs Stavrianos, Mrs Chapman (maternity Leave))

Licenced THRIVE Practitioners (Mr Johnson, Ms Roper, Mrs Newport, Mrs Fry, Mrs Hutchinson, Mrs Davies, Mrs Stavrianos, Mrs Mitchell)

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child, in the first instance they should speak to the Safeguarding Team. If there is a concern that the child is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school’s child protection 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.

## 1. Teaching About Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our children need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum which includes our THRIVE & RRS work. Additionally, we will use such lessons to provide children who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting children to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

## 2. Signposting

We will ensure that staff, children and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services. Through our communication channels (newsletters, website), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

## 3. Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a child 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. 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*  
*Being tearful*  
*Difficulty in making decisions*  
*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*  
*Avoiding 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*

## 4. Targeted Support

We recognise some children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing poor 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 ensure timely and effective identification of children who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Identifying children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;
- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems;
- Working with Children's Services, CAMHS and other agencies to follow protocols including assessment and referral

- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers.
- Providing a range of interventions
- Provide children with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns.
- Provide children with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it;
- Any support offered will take account of school policies regarding confidentiality;

## **5. Support at School**

Nurture support is available for children identified as being vulnerable to mental health issues. Children who are going through difficulties such as family illness, separation, bereavement, or other stressful situations are supported by our Inclusion team (Emotional Health and Family Liaison, ELSA team, THRIVE staff, Inclusion Lead and Safeguarding team).

## **6. Managing Disclosures**

If a child chooses to disclose concerns about themselves, or a friend, to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental using TED. All disclosures will be recorded confidentially on My Concern.

## **7. Confidentiality**

Parents would be informed if concerns are raised about a child's mental health. If a child gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents/carers will be informed in line with Dorset Safeguarding procedures.

## **8. Supporting Parents & Carers**

We are mindful that for a parent/carer, hearing concerns about their child can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent/carer to reflect and process the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. Lines of communication will be kept open should the parents/carers have further questions or concerns. A record of the meeting and points discussed/agree are added to My Concern

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
- 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.

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 appropriate.

## **9. Supporting Peers**

When a child is suffering from 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 by the child who is suffering and their parents 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

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

## **10. Training**

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

## **11. Staff Mental Health**

We recognise that anyone can experience mental health issues for various reasons linked to home and/or work. Work related factors that could contribute to poor mental health such as work life imbalance, work load pressure, poor working conditions. To every extent possible, we aim to recognise and address cases of workplace pressures that contribute to mental health issues.

We aim to promote wellbeing at all times by:

- Supporting the wellbeing of all staff to avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health
- Provide a supportive work environment for all staff
- Acknowledge the needs of staff, and how these change over time
- Allow staff to balance their working lives with their personal needs and responsibilities
- Help staff with any specific wellbeing issues they experience
- Ensure that staff understand their role in working towards the above aims

### **11.1 Role of all staff**

All staff are expected to:

- Treat each other with empathy and respect
- Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff
- Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let other members of staff know when they need support
- Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit
- Use shared areas respectfully, such as the staff room or offices
- Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing

## **11.2 Role of line managers**

Line managers are expected to:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern
- Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system to their staff
- Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the school's policies
- Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress, and regularly talk to staff about their work/life balance
- Make sure new staff are properly and thoroughly inducted and feel able to ask for help
- Understand that personal issues and pressures at work may have a temporary effect on work performance, and take that into account during any appraisal or capability procedures
- Promote information about and access to external support services
- Help to arrange personal and professional development training where appropriate
- Keep in touch with staff if they're absent for long periods
- Monitor staff sickness absence, and have support meetings with them if any patterns emerge
- Conduct return to work interviews to support staff back into work
- Conduct exit interviews with resigning staff to help identify any wellbeing issues that lead to their resignation

## **11.3 Role of senior staff**

Senior staff are expected to:

- Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff and adhering to agreed working hours
- Manage a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- Make sure accountability systems are based on trust and professional dialogue, with proportionate amounts of direct monitoring
- Regularly review the demands on staff, such as the time spent on paperwork, and seek alternative solutions wherever possible
- Make sure job descriptions are kept up-to-date, with clearly identified responsibilities and staff being consulted before any changes
- Listen to the views of staff and involve them in decision-making processes, including allowing them to consider any workload implications of new initiatives
- Communicate new initiatives effectively with all members of staff to ensure they feel included and aware of any changes occurring at the school
- Make sure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated
- Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload
- Provide resources to promote staff wellbeing, such as training opportunities
- Promote information about and access to external support services
- Organise extra support during times of stress, such as Ofsted inspections

## **11.4 Role of the governing board**

The governing board is expected to:

- Make sure the school is fulfilling its duty of care as an employer, such as by giving staff a reasonable workload and creating a supportive work environment
- Monitor and support the wellbeing of the Headteacher
- Ensure that resources and support services are in place to promote staff wellbeing

- Make decisions and review policies with staff wellbeing in mind, particularly in regards to workload
- Be reasonable about the format and quantity of information asked for from staff as part of monitoring work
- Ensure that staff are clear about the purpose of any monitoring visits and what information will be required from them

## **12. Managing specific wellbeing issues**

The school will support and discuss options with any staff that raise wellbeing issues, such as if they are experiencing significant stress at school or in their personal lives.

Where possible, support will be given by line managers or senior staff. This could be through:

Giving staff time off to deal with a personal crisis

Arranging external support, such as counselling or occupational health services

Completing a risk assessment and following through with any actions identified

Reassessing their workload and deciding what tasks to prioritise

At all times, the confidentiality and dignity of staff will be maintained.

## **13. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.