**Old Hall Primary School**

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**Policy for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

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**Definition of Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Mental Health is the psychological, emotional and social wellbeing of each individual which affects how we think, feel and behave. It determines the choices that we make and how we manage our feelings. Signs and symptoms of those feelings may vary from each individual but may include feelings of stress, anxiety, extreme mood changes, depression, withdrawal from family and friends, tiredness, low energy, sleep difficulties, lack of concentration, lack of motivation, excessive dieting, over-exercising and over eating.

Wellbeing is a state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. The Mental Health Foundation emphasises the importance to realise that “*wellbeing is a much broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness. While it does include happiness, it also includes other things such as; how happy people are with their life, their sense of purpose and how in control they feel*.”

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England recognises that “*untreated, a mental health issue may cause major changes in a young person’s thinking, emotional state and behaviour. It can disrupt the young person’s ability to function i.e. to work or maintain personal relationships. The importance of early detection and intervention cannot be over-estimated*.”

**Aims and objectives of this policy**

At Old Hall Primary School, we recognise the impact that mental health can have on a young person or adult and our aim is to maintain positive mental health and wellbeing throughout the school community for children, staff, parents and carers. Old Hall Primary recognises that;

 A mentally healthy environment has:

* A clear and agreed ethos and culture that accords value and respect to all
* A commitment to being responsive to children and young people’s needs
* Clearly defined mental health links in school policies
* Clear guidelines for internal and external referrals
* Strong links with external agencies to provide access to support and information
* A named lead for mental health promotion

A mentally healthy environment is a place where children and young people:

* Have opportunities to participate in activities that encourage belonging
* Have opportunities to participate in decision making
* Have opportunities to celebrate academic and non-academic achievements
* Have their unique talents and abilities identified and developed
* Have opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
* Have opportunities to reflect
* Have access to appropriate support that meets their needs
* Have a right to be in an environment that is safe, clean, attractive and well cared for
* Are surrounded by adults who model positive and appropriate behaviours, interactions and ways of relating at all times

A mentally healthy environment is a place where staff:

* Have their individual needs recognised and responded to in a holistic way
* Have a range of strategies that support their mental health, eg a named person to speak to, signposting
* Have recognition of their work-life balance
* Have the mental health and well-being of the staff reviewed regularly
* Feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision making processes
* Celebrate and recognise success
* Are able to carry out roles and responsibilities effectively
* Are provided with opportunities for CPD both personally and professionally
* Have their unique talents and skills recognised and opportunities are provided for development
* Have time to reflect
* Can access proactive strategies and systems to support them at times of emotional needs in both the short term and the long term

A mentally healthy environment is a place where parents/carers:

* Are recognised for their significant contribution to children and young people’s mental health
* Are welcomed, included and work in partnership with schools and agencies
* Are provided with opportunities where they can ask for help when needed
* Are signposted to appropriate agencies for support
* Are clear about their roles and expectations of their responsibilities in working in partnership with schools
* Opinions are sought and valued and responded to

A mentally healthy environment is a place where the whole school community:

* Is involved in promoting positive mental health
* Is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health
* Contributes towards the ethos of the school

A healthy learning environment provides opportunities that promote positive mental health, through the standard curriculum, eg Circle Time, play, differentiated learning activities, individual timetables, parents/carers groups, challenging stereotypes, etc.

The implementation of the policy for promoting positive mental health in schools:

* Will give schools a cohesive and coordinated approach to mental health
* Should underpin all policies and practices currently used in schools
* Will raise awareness as to how the whole school community can look after their own mental health and that of others
* Will provide opportunities that enable everyone to reach their potential
* Will strengthen relationships
* Will provide foundations for life-long learning
* Will promote and strengthen resilience throughout the whole school community

**Who is this policy for?**

All staff and governors

Lead members of staff are

* Designated Safeguarding Lead - Deborah Ainscoe
* SENCO/ Safeguarding - Robert Cooley
* Mental Health Lead/ Pastoral Care Lead - Melissa Maguire

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the pupil in a kind, calm, non-judgmental manner and inform the pupil that any information disclosed may need to be passed on to the designated Mental Health Lead/ SENCO/Safeguarding Team. All disclosures must remain confidential and information **MUST NOT** be passed on to anyone other than lead members. Disclosures must be written as it was verbally communicated, in the pupil’s own words and should not be rephrased. Should any member of staff fear that a pupil is at risk of immediate harm then the normal safeguarding procedures should apply.

This policy promotes positive mental health. It is a working document which has been developed by the school SENCO & Mental Health Lead. This policy sets out the framework for a clear and consistent Mental Health and Wellbeing provision by:

* Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing to all staff, students, children and parents
* Increasing the understanding and awareness of mental health difficulties
* Alerting staff to early warning signs of mental health difficulties
* Providing support to staff working with young people with mental health difficulties
* Providing support to parents and carers of a young person with mental health difficulties
* Providing support to children of parents and carers with mental health difficulties
* Providing support to staff with mental health difficulties
* Providing support to students with mental health difficulties
* Providing confidential, non-critical support

This policy has been written in parallel to the Department for Education (DfE) *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* and should be read in conjunction with Old Hall’s Safeguarding policy, SEND policy, Equality policy and PSHE policy.

**Warning signs**

School staff who work closely with pupils may become aware of warning signs which indicate that the pupil is experiencing mental health and wellbeing difficulties. It is important to staff that they inform the Mental Health Lead/ SENCO/ Safeguarding Team of any concerns and understand that any warning signs should **always** be taken seriously. Many possible warning signs raise safeguarding issues and therefore whenever necessary, the safeguarding policy must always be followed first. **If you are concerned that the child is in immediate danger telephone 999.**

Possible warning signs

* Decline in grades
* Sudden lack of engagement
* Changes in mood/ peer friendships
* Expressing feeling of failure
* Engage in risk taking behaviour (drugs/alcohol misuse)
* Demand extra time from teachers
* Complain of sudden physical illness (particularly when exams and assessments are scheduled)
* Visibly appear to be anxious (sweating/ agitated)
* Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
* Changes in clothing (eg long sleeves in warm weather)
* Lateness or absent from school
* Skipping PE
* Getting changed secretively

**Safeguarding**

Occasionally, some aspects of negative mental health may surround safeguarding issues. Pupils who experience negative mental health or/ and have parents/ carers who suffer from negative mental health are more at risk of being neglected, abused and bullied. Staff must **always** adhere to the safeguarding policy should they have any concerns surrounding abuse and/ or neglect and speak immediately with the designated safeguarding team.

**Early intervention**

Early intervention of identifying risk factors, mental health issues and providing effective support is crucial. Teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the curriculum, reinforcing mental wellbeing throughout the classroom, creating a safe and calming environment and equipping pupils to be resilient can encourage the prevention of mental health difficulties.

Risk Factors

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Child Characteristics | Parents and their parenting style | Family factors and life events | Community and societal factors |
| -Low birth weight/birth injury-Learning difficulty/ low IQ-Academic failure/exclusion-Disability/ delayed development-Long term illness-Early behavioural difficulties-Poor social skills-Poor attachment-Substance use-Experience of violence and abuse-Bullying, peer rejection | -Single parent-Young maternal age-Parental mental Health issues-Drug and alcohol abuse-Harsh or inconsistent discipline-Lack of stimulation of child-Lack of warmth and affection-Rejection of child-Abuse or neglect | -Family instability, conflict or violence-Marital disharmony/ divorce-Poor intergenerational contact-Large family size/ rapid successive births-Absence of father-Very low level of parental education-Unsupported bereavement-Young carer-Genetic makeup | -Socioeconomic disadvantage-Unemployment-Poor housing conditions and access to open space-Poor education-Poor health care provision-Isolation-Poor neighbourliness-Discrimination-Bullying-Personal safety |

 \*Risk Factors Chart by MHFA England

Protective Factors

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Child Characteristics | Parents and their parenting styles | Family factors and life events | Community and societal factors |
| -Social skills-Balanced, easy temperament-No less than average intelligence-Attachment to family-Independence-Good problem solving skills-Capacity to reflect -Experiences of success and achievement | -Competent, stable care-Breast feeding-Positive attention and affection from parents-Supportive relationship with other adults-Faith or spirituality-Clear, consistent discipline | -Family harmony-Positive relationships with extended family-Small family size-Spacing of siblings by more than two years | -Positive social networks (e.g. peers, teachers, neighbours)-Access to positive opportunities (e.g education)-Good housing-High standard of living-Participation in community activities-Range of sport/ leisure activities |

\*Protective factors Chart by MHFA England

It is possible to reduce emotional and behaviour issues for young people. This can be achieved by helping children develop resilience such as having supportive families, positive expectations, a sense of self-worth and belonging, participation, positive friendships, positive relationships with adults, problem solving and communication skills. Old Hall Primary School will promote positive mental health throughout the curriculum, particularly during PHSE and Physical Education lessons.

**Assessment, Interventions and Support**

Old Hall Primary School will follow the Mental Health First Aid action plan: ALGEE

* **A**pproach the young person, assess and assist with any crisis
* **L**isten and communicate non-judgementally
* **G**ive support and information
* **E**ncourage the young person to get appropriate professional help
* **E**ncourage other supports

Old Hall staff will not speak about their conversations or concerns to any other pupil or casually to another member of staff.

Old Hall staff and mental health first aiders are not medical professionals and therefore cannot and should not diagnose any young person who is experiencing any mental health difficulties.

Old Hall staff will be made aware if a pupil has an Individual School Support Plan (ISSP) put in place to ensure that the correct support is implemented throughout their education.

Old Hall staff will begin a cycle of assess, plan, do, review (APDR) for pupils after liaising with the school SENCO and/ or Social Emotional Mental Health Coordinator. The APDR cycle will run for two cycles, after which a referral to outside agencies will be made.

In some cases, a pupil may require support from a specialist service for mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders and self-harm. School referrals will be made by the Mental Health Lead and/ or school SENCO after consultation with the pupil and their parents and carers. Parents/ carers must consent to any referrals made and any information that needs to be passed on.

* Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)- Accessed through school or GP
* Educational Psychologist- Accessed through SENCO or Mental Health Lead
* SEMH Partnership- Accessed through SENCO or Mental Health Lead

**A Whole School Approach**

“At Old Hall Staff and Governors, in partnership with parents, are committed to providing a high quality education which encourages each child to develop to his/her fullest potential within a happy, caring and challenging environment.” (Old Hall Primary School Ethos)

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health. It is important that all staff have the required skills to identify any early warning signs and that the pupil receives the early intervention and support that they need.

Old Hall Primary School will document evidence when needed to ensure that early intervention and pupil referrals are effective. Documentation of evidence may be done through observations, discussions and Boxall profiles.

**Working with parents and carers**

At Old Hall Primary we understand that mental health difficulties can sometimes be quite intimidating but our parents and carers are vital to the process of sustaining positive mental health among children. Working with parents and encouraging parents to support their children at home has a greater likelihood in improving the child’s difficulties. At Old Hall we have:

* A designated Mental Health Lead (Mrs. M. Maguire)
* Made families aware of mental health support in school
* Encouraged parents/carers to attend meetings regarding their child’s mental health difficulties (this may be an ISSP meeting)
* Made ourselves available should any parents/carers have concerns that they wish to discuss

**Training**

Staff will be kept up to date with mental health regulations and will complete safeguarding and child protection training where mental health falls under the category.

**Coronavirus (Covid-19)**

This section was implemented during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

It is even more prevalent that positive mental health is promoted and supported throughout education. School staff must be aware that changes to the current climate has had an effect on everybody involved. School staff will follow mental health guidelines to promote positive mental health throughout school.

School staff will promote mindfulness in the classroom to support positive mental health. This will be reviewed alongside government guidelines and activities may change as a result.

“*Schools will need to provide the safe and nurturing haven that children need. Ensuring those that are most vulnerable have the wrap-around care they need will be paramount, but so too will be the need to ensure that* ***all*** *in the community feel safe and held. Building resilience does not happen by accident. We need to make it happen*”. *Tina Rae, 2020.*

Mindfulness is a great way of allowing a child and yourself to focus on where you are and what you are doing without allowing other intrusive thoughts, worries and fears fill your mind. It also allows you to become **sensory aware, gain cognitive control, regulate your emotions and regulate your attention.**

Dr Tina Rae’s 6 tips for teaching mindfulness to children are:

1. Practice mindfulness yourself- before you can teach mindfulness to somebody else, you need to have a working understanding of the concept.
2. Get the children involved as much as possible- set aside some time to explain what mindfulness is and why it is important. The more children involved, the better.
3. Start Small- mindfulness does not have to be a long elaborate affair and are most likely to gain children’s interest if you start small.
4. Make it a habit- Outline the days and times you are going to be doing mindfulness activities.
5. Get moving- mindfulness activities should not only be about sitting quietly with your eyes closed. However, due to current circumstances, mindfulness exercises that involve movement should not be performed in a classroom.
6. Be patient- mindfulness can be extremely beneficial but remember that changes can also take a long time.

Activities for young children

1. My beautiful place - Visualise a peaceful and beautiful place which makes you happy and calm. Close your eyes and picture this. Go to this place when you feel anxious and sad.
2. The squish and relax activity- Whilst the children are lying down with their eyes closed, ask them to squish and squeeze every muscle in their bodies as tight as they can. Ask them to start with their toes and feet, squish the muscles in their legs, squeeze their stomachs, then their hands into fists and raise their shoulders up to their heads. Ask them to hold themselves squished up for a few seconds and then fully release and relax.
3. Personal weather report- Ask the children to best describe their feelings now. Are they sunny, rainy, stormy, windy, calm etc? How do they know? Where do they feel them in their bodies? Which feeling do they like best? Ask them what can they do to make themselves feel better?
4. Mindful game- Simon Says- Designate one child to be ‘Simon’ and ask them to give commands to other children. Remember they can only move when they say “Simon says…”
5. Mindfulness Labyrinth- mazes are very effective in helping children to calm down. Use some mazes which are printed out on paper for children to complete. They could even be a 3 step challenge or a challenge to get an object to the other side.
6. Mindfulness colouring- Encourage the children to use both their dominant and non-dominant hands. Whilst encouraging a child to colour, you could have some calm relaxing music in the background. You could be mindful in the way they colour- focus on how long it takes, how does it affect your shoulders? How does it affect your arms?

School staff must also follow and adhere to risk assessment guidelines. Where support staff need to work with children in different bubbles, they must wear a dome shield and/or face mask. Hand washing and sanitizing must be strictly followed both in and out of each bubble. School staff need to be mindful of the needs of some pupils as wearing both a shield and mask together may impact on the quality of support, for example, a pupil with a hearing impairment and/ or special educational needs. In this case, a dome mask is suggested.

Where a family has suffered a bereavement, appropriate support will be given and school’s SENCo and/ or mental health lead will refer the family to an external agency- ‘Sunflower Support Group’ for advice and support.

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| **Approved: 7.9.20** | **Review: October, 2020** |