St Alphege CE Infant School

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Date of last review:	November 2025
Staff responsible: Executive Headteacher/ Head of School	Liz Thomas-Friend/ Jacqui Spinks
Date of next review	November 2026 This policy will also be updated as required to reflect personnel changes.

Why is mental health and wellbeing so important?

At St Alphege CE Infant School and Sunbeams Nursery, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers), and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life events.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "in order to help their children succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy". Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. For some, school will be a place of respite from difficult home lives and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a school where:
- All children, parents and staff feel loved and valued.
- Children, parents and staff have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Children, families and staff feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma or judgement.
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued.
- Bullying is not tolerated.
- Aspirations are high and promoted for everyone to live life in all its fullness, thriving and reaching their potential.

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing and will do all we can to support staff wellbeing such as wellbeing sessions and release time for leadership responsibilities or report writing. We ensure that staff feel valued and part of the St Alphege family. Their lives outside the school are recognised and staff are released from their duties, wherever possible, to attend their own children's school events or to respect their individual family circumstances.

This policy sets out:
- How we promote positive mental health and fitness.
- How we do all we can to prevent mental ill health.
- How we identify and support children, staff and families with mental health difficulties.
- How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health difficulties.
- Key information about some common mental health difficulties.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support.

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing: *"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."*

Our Christian ethos and vision shapes all that we do so that our whole school family is enabled to flourish during their time at St Alphege:

Our vision is for:
- Each person to know they are loved as they are by God, flourishing and reaching their potential.
- All our families to live life in all its fullness, inspired to learn through a creative curriculum.
- Our school to "Shine like a star", bringing hope and courage to our community.

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want our whole school family to:
- Feel confident in themselves.
- Be able to express a range of emotions appropriately.
- Be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others.
- Cope with the stresses of everyday life.
- Manage times of stress and be able to deal with change.
- Learn and achieve.

In developing this policy, we have taken account of:
- Children and Young People's Mental Health: State of the Nation 2016.
- Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England 2015.
- Preparing to teach about mental health, PSHE Association 2015.
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE 2014.
- Supporting children with medical conditions, DfE 2014.
- Links to other policies

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 policies on Safeguarding, medical needs, anti-bullying and SEND.

Links with the School's Relationships and Behaviour Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need.

Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of our Staff team:
The school also has policies to support the wellbeing of staff. These policies aim to:
- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues and behaviours.
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing.
- Reduce the stigma around depression and anxiety in the workplace and encourage staff to be open and honest about their feelings.
- To encourage staff to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers.

Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and wellbeing. Staff are signposted to external support and agencies, which includes access to free counselling should this be required.

A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health
We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise. This encompasses seven aspects:
1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support positive mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an age appropriate awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health difficulties and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents and carers.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

Staff roles and responsibilities

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff receive regular training and update to ensure that they understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, such as: physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, attachment needs, bereavement and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown and bullying. They should also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging and emotional literacy.

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include: Head of School and Designated Safeguarding Lead: Jacqui Spinks and our Inclusion Leader: Becky Strike. The school also has a strong Wellbeing team which includes a full time Wellbeing and Learning Mentor and two Attachment Lead trained staff members. The school also commissions a qualified play therapist to work with identified children in need of additional support.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to a member of the Wellbeing team in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal safeguarding 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 the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Becky Strike: Inclusion Lead or Jacqui Spinks: Head of School.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the school environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children with mental health needs and their families.

Supporting children's positive mental health

We believe that the school has a key role to play in promoting children's positive mental health and preventing mental health problems developing in the future. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health, such as mental health awareness day.
- Playground Buddies and the Friendship Bench providing support for pupils at break times.
- Carefully planned transition programmes when children move between different year groups, enter school from Nursery or move onto their junior schools ensure that pupils experience a smooth transition.
- Displays and information are available to support positive mental health.
- The Learning Dinosaurs are utilised in all phases of the school to ensure that resilience and growth mind-set are actively promoted.
- Celebration worship acknowledges positive learning and successes.
- School reward systems recognise and celebrate positive behaviour.

Where required an individualised approach will be taken. This could include:

- Targeted intervention from the Wellbeing staff where needed.
- Targeted work with the Wellbeing and Learning Mentor. Teaching about mental health and wellbeing
- Individualised therapeutic sessions being delivered. This could include: drawing and talking therapies, music therapy or play therapy

Our HeartSmart and PSHE Curriculum teaches children:

- To recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings.
- Simple strategies for managing feelings.
- How their behaviour affects other people.
- About empathy and understanding other people's feelings.
- To cooperate and problem solve.
- To motivate themselves and persevere.
- How to calm down.
- About change and loss and the associated feelings (including moving home, losing toys, pets or friends).
- Who to go to if they are worried.
- About different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable.
- To ensure they always show kindness to others and what to do if they experience unkindness

Our approach:

At St Alphege we:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Involve children in the care and support given to their children.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

Early Identification

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- An in-depth knowledge of our children and families, including an awareness of their backgrounds and individual situations.
- Analysing behaviour, attendance and sanctions.
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
- Pupil Progress Review meetings.
- A parental information and health questionnaire on entry to the school.
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer.
- Meetings and liaison with parents.
- Ensuring a loving and trusting environment where children can raise concerns to any member of staff.
- Enabling parents and carers feel able to raise concerns to any member of staff knowing they will be listened to with respect and compassion.

Signposting

We ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of the sources of support within school and in the local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it.

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil 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 a member of the wellbeing team.

Staff are aware that mental health needs, such as anxiety, might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

Disclosures by children and confidentiality

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil. All disclosures are recorded on CPOMS, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

Assessment, interventions and support

All concerns are reported to the Wellbeing Team and recorded. We then implement our assessment system, which is based on levels of need to ensure that children get the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

Working with Parents and Promoting mental health

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting children who do have mental health needs. On first entry to the school, our parent's meeting includes a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. We ask parents to inform us of any potential anxieties or worries their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing. It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the school so that we can better support their child from the outset. All information will be treated in confidence.

To support our families, we provide information and links to websites related to mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes on newsletters and the school website. The information includes who parents can talk to if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child and where parents can access support for themselves.

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health problems are common, that the school has experience of working with similar issues and that help and advice are available.

When a concern has been raised, the school will:
- Contact parents and carers and meet with them (In almost all cases, parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as where child protection issues are identified).
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information.
- Be available for follow up calls and appointments.
- Make a record of the meeting.

- Agree a plan to support the child including clear next steps.
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support their child.
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions provided.
- Support parents and carers to access services where appropriate.

Our primary concern is the children, but we also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs.

Where to get information and support:
Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk
OCD UK www.ocduk.org
Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org
Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com
National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk and www.selfharm.co.uk
Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and wellbeing www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems www.minded.org.uk (e-learning) www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health