



Townlands C of E Primary Academy

Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Approved by: Rachael Johnson

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Next review due by: February 2028

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 Townlands our vision '***A journey of learning in the light of God's love***', is at the heart of our approach to mental health and wellbeing and is an integral part of how we approach teaching and learning. Our school Christian values are ***Faith, Love, Respect, Friendship, Honesty, Hope and Forgiveness***. These values shape all we do and enable Townlands to be committed in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. Our school recognises that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. As a collective school family, we each have a role to play in nurturing positive mental health for all.

At our school we:

- help children to understand their emotions and feelings
- support children in sharing any concerns or worries
- help children socially to develop and maintain relationships
- promote positive self-esteem
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Living our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging
- Encouraging pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Viewing mistakes as opportunities to reflect and learn from
- Facilitating access to appropriate support that meets children's needs

We pursue our aims through universal, whole school approaches accessible to all pupils. In addition, support and signposting is in place for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement and loss. Targeted approaches are also available to help pupils who have complex or long-term difficulties including developmental trauma and attachment difficulties.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to need as it arises. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by mental health and wellbeing difficulties.

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for the whole school community.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a pupil's mental health and wellbeing overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.

The policy aims to:

1. Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in pupils and for the whole school community
2. Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
3. Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
4. Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues
5. Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Staff Responsibility

All staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils. Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Mental Health Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the DSL/Head teacher. If the pupil present 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 the MHST or CAMHS is appropriate (see Appendix 1) this will be led and managed by Mrs Thompson, Senior Mental Health Lead and Mrs Shakespeare, Safeguarding and Welfare officer with the support of Mr Duane. When CAMHS support for a child is being considered, consultation with the designated Education and mental health practitioner will take place in the first instance. Guidance about referring to CAMHS is provided in Appendix 2.

Individual Healthcare Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receives 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 / specific needs
- 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

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort, but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school, in the local and wider community. Appendix 3.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and will highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

- What help is available

- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing difficulties. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with our pastoral team.

Possible warning signs 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
- 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

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

Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively (see Appendix 4). Staff will be clear with pupils that the concern will be shared with the Mental health Lead /Designated Safeguarding Team and recorded in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

Townlands understand Non-Verbal Disclosures by Pupils as highlighted by NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence). This document explains that children's behaviour can often be a sign of an unmet emotional need. In addition, behaviour is often a method of communication by children. When persistent unusual behaviours are present, Townlands staff demonstrate curiosity around a child's behaviour and developmental needs. For example, a child could present with a delay in acquiring, or regression in certain skills such as speech, social ability or physical skills such as self-care and toileting.

Understanding the links between mental health needs and behaviours is further detailed in Appendix 5, chapter 3.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the pupil's confidential file. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the mental health lead, Miss Rudkin who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps which will include liaison with our school's identified NHS Mental Health Practitioner (See Appendix 6).

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass on our concerns about a pupil, 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. Particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm (safeguarding).

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually a member of staff from the pastoral team or safeguarding team. This helps to safeguard the emotional wellbeing of staff, sharing responsibility for the pupil. It ensures continuity of care in case of absence and provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their child's mental health and wellbeing and pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the pupil should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. We should always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

In most cases parent's/ carers will be notified/ involved in their child's interventions, although there may be circumstances where this may not happen, such as if safeguarding/ child protection concerns are apparent. In such cases, staff will immediately notify the DSL or another member of the safeguarding team.

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 a space within the community.

- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, 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 emotional distress/ difficulties and they may initially respond with anger, fear or upset. We will support the family when processing difficult news. We will always highlight further sources of information where possible e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide families with a clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting / phone call. We will finish each meeting with agreed next step(s) and always keep a record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health.

To support parents, in addition to the above 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, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible via the school website
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our school website / meetings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home via knowledge organisers.

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health difficulties, it can be a challenging time for their friends who 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. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. This will be provided either in one-to-one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What 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 (e.g. signs of relapse)

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

Training

Staff will receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their child protection training in order to enable them to keep pupils safe. The MindEd learning portal (Appendix 7) provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about specific matters relating to mental health. 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 where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more pupils.

Appendices

Appendix 1, Referral to CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\) - Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust \(leicspart.nhs.uk\)](#)

Appendix 2, Pathway to CAMHS referrals [Introducing the Mental Health Support Team in Schools - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland \(healthforkids.co.uk\)](#)

Appendix 3, National, Local and community support.

Local support

[Feelings | Health for Kids](#)

[Five Ways to Wellbeing \(leicestershire.gov.uk\)](#)

[Children and Family Wellbeing Service | Leicestershire County Council](#)

[Public health \(school\) nurses - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland \(healthforkids.co.uk\)](#)

National support

[Childline | Childline](#)

[Anxiety UK National charity helping people with Anxiety - Anxiety UK](#)

[OCD UK OCD-UK | A national OCD charity, run by, and for people with lived experience of OCD \(ocduk.org\)](#)

[Eating Disorders Get information and support - Beat \(beateatingdisorders.org.uk\)](#)

[National Self-Harm Network The NSHN Forum](#)

[Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

For general information and support

[YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#) champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

[Home | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#) advice and support on mental health problems

[MindEd Hub \(e-learning\)](#)

[Time To Change | let's end mental health discrimination \(time-to-change.org.uk\)](#) tackles the stigma of mental health

[We are Rethink Mental Illness](#) challenges attitudes towards mental health

Appendix 4, Handling disclosures relating to mental health

[Talking_to_pupils_when_they_make_mental_health_disclosures_FINAL-1-.pdf \(shropshirelg.net\)](#)

Appendix 5, Chapter 3 in [Mental health and behaviour in schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 6, Accessing Mental health support team services -Leicestershire [Introducing the Introducing the Mental Health Support Team in Schools - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland \(healthforkids.co.uk\)](#)

Appendix 7, MindEd learning portal. [MindEd Hub](#)