



# Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing policy

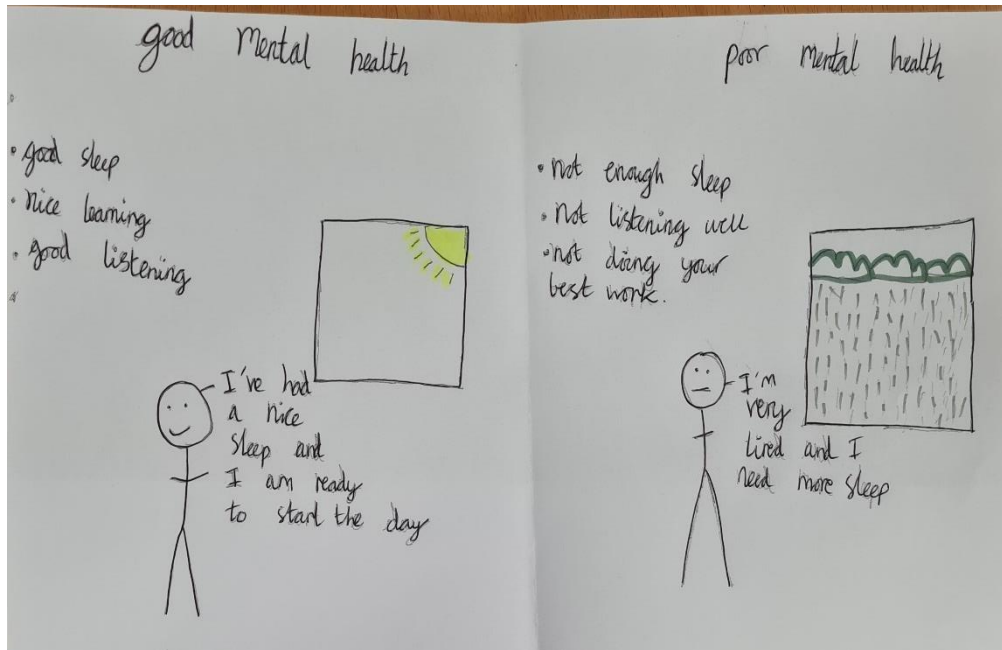
**Last reviewed on:** December 2023

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## Contents

1. Why mental health and wellbeing is important.....	p3
2. Purpose of the policy.....	p5
3. Definition of mental health and wellbeing.....	p5
4. The Impact of poor mental health.....	p6
5. How the policy was developed and who was consulted.....	p7
6. Links to other policies.....	p7
7. A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health.....	p8
8. Staff roles and responsibilities, including those with specific responsibility.....	p9
9. Supporting children’s positive mental health.....	p10
10. Identifying, referring, and supporting children with mental health needs.....	p13
11. Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment.....	p17
12. Involving parents and carers.....	p18
13. Involving children.....	p20
14. Supporting and training staff.....	p21
15. Monitoring and Evaluation.....	p21
16. Appendices.....	p22

## 'Mental Health is everyone's responsibility'



(School  
councillors  
consultation  
meeting 25<sup>th</sup> Jan  
2022)

### 1. Why mental health and wellbeing is important?

At Harbinger Primary School, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, parents, and carers).

We 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.

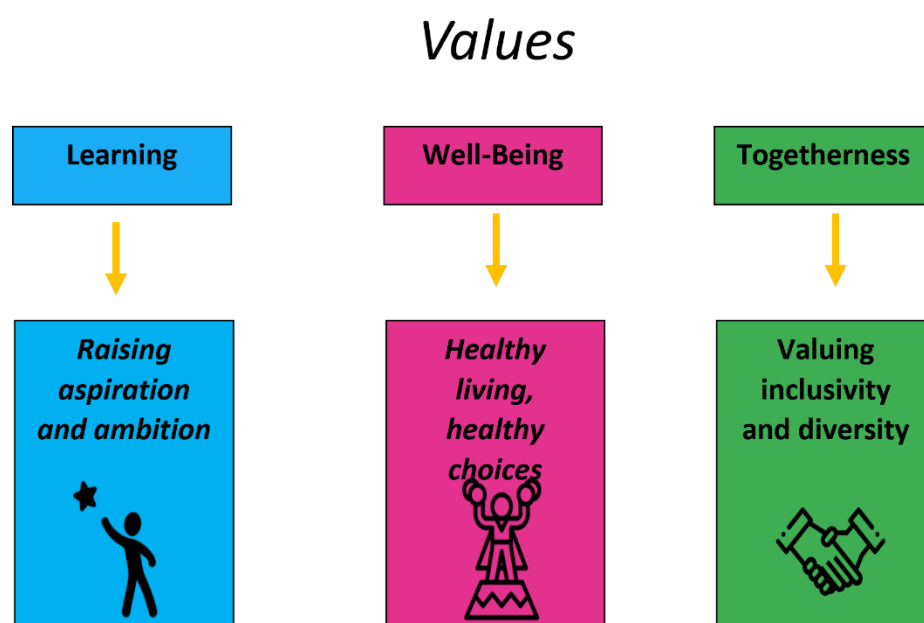
Sometimes children go through difficulties during their school career and some face significant life events. Harbinger School is a trauma informed school and we recognise that difficult life experiences have an impact on children's wellbeing and we seek to support all children in our care. Harbinger school is a nurturing place and in unique position to support children. Our role in school is to ensure that children can 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 are valued.
- Children have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults or peers about their problems without feeling any stigma.
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued.
- Kindness and respect are promoted

This is all in complete harmony with our school's values, which determines everything that we do at Harbinger.



In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff and parent mental health and wellbeing.

## 2. Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out:

- How we promote positive mental health needs
- How we identify and support children with mental health needs.
- How we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health needs
- Key information about some common mental health needs.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support.

Mental health and wellbeing are not just the absence of mental health needs. We want all children 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.

## 3. Definition of mental health and wellbeing

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

***'Mental Health is how you feel and what you think'***

A key stage 1 child's definition

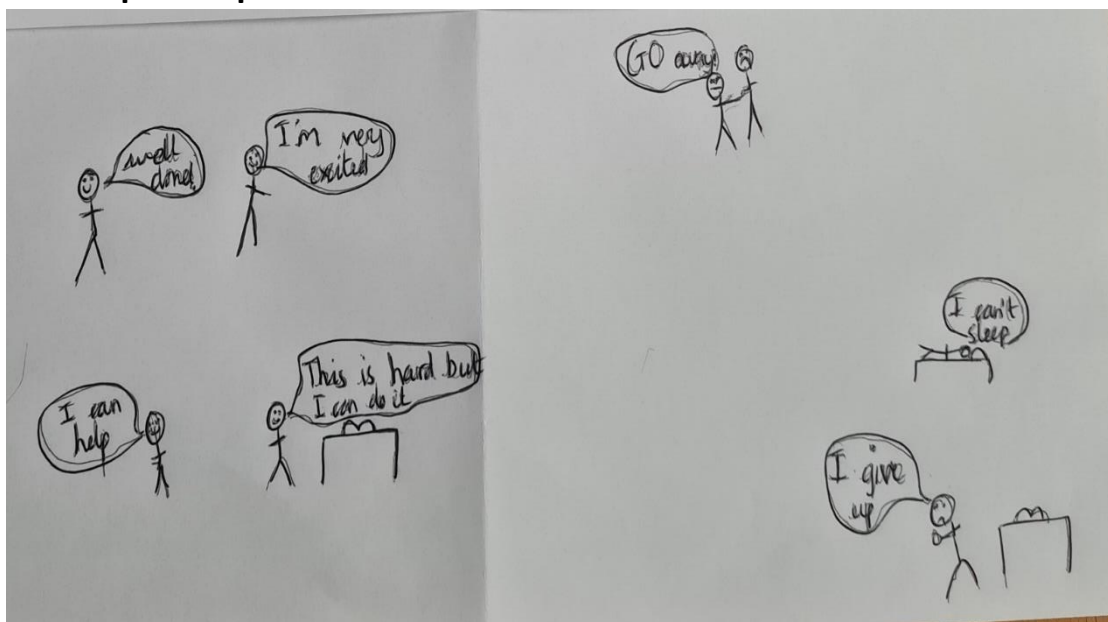
***'Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important. It is about feeling stable and happy with yourself'***

A key stage 2 child's definition

**'Mental Health is confusing; it affects how you feel and everyday can be different'**

Parent definition (Consultation meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2022)

#### 4. The Impact of poor mental health



*(School councillors consultation meeting 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022)*

Poor mental health can impact on all areas of our life. We asked our school councillors for their views and this what they said:

- We may get frustrated easily
- Unable to make good choices
- We cannot sleep well
- Have low self-esteem and confidence
- Cannot concentrate on learning or our work
- May not want to come to school
- It may lead to us hurting ourselves or others - Can lead to eating unhealthy food.

## Impacts



### Body

Muscle tension, tension headaches, clenched jaw, rapid heartbeat, nervousness, panicky, irritability, poor concentration



### Mind

Mood swings, impatience, loss of concentration, frustration, anger indecision, tight chest, stomach churning, heart racing, trembling



### Social

Bossiness, abrasiveness, curt speech, withdrawn, avoiding contact with others, uncommunicative

## 5. How the policy was developed and who was consulted?

The development of this policy was collaboratively led by our Inclusion Lead, Learning Mentor and our Mental Health First Aiders, in consultation with children, staff, parents and carers. A series of consultations were held to gather the views of the whole school community:

- School council gave their views on what mental health is, how it impacts children, what we already do at school to support mental health and wellbeing and what further support is needed.
- Parents and carers were invited to a consultation meeting and gave their views on what their understanding of mental health is, useful strategies they use and what further support would be helpful.
- Mental Health First Aiders identified key information that needed to be included in this policy.
- Staff discussed the draft policy at a staff meeting.

## 6. Links to other policies

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Online Safety, Medical Needs,

Anti-Bullying and SEND. Links with our School’s Behaviour and relationship Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need. We also believe that behaviour is communication.

## 7. A whole school approach to promoting positive mental health

A mentally healthy school is one that adopts a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

At Harbinger we use a whole-school trauma informed approach which involves all parts of the school working together and being committed. It requires partnership working between senior leaders, teachers and all school staff, as well as parents, carers and the wider community.



A whole-school approach is about developing a positive ethos and culture – where everyone feels that they belong. It involves working with families and making sure that the whole school community is welcoming, inclusive and respectful. It means maximising children’s learning through promoting good mental health and wellbeing across the school – through the curriculum, early support for pupils, staff-pupil relationships, leadership and a commitment from everybody.

In addition to the 5 key areas above, we also focus on the seven aspects below:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support 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 awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs 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.

## **8. Staff roles and responsibilities, including those with specific responsibility**

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 needs and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand about 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 need, death, 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.

Our Mental Health First Aiders led by our Inclusion Lead:

- Lead and work with all staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Lead on wellbeing activities with pupils on 1:1 and group sessions about mental health.

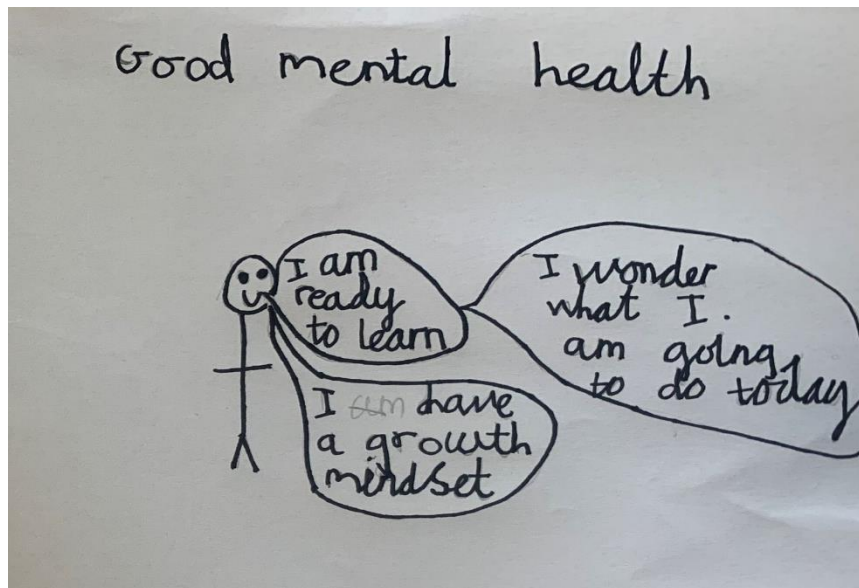
- Provide advice and support to staff and organise training and updates.
- Are the first point of contact with mental health services.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional needs 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.

**Sources of relevant support include:**

- Our Senior Leadership Team
- Our Inclusion Leadership Team
- Our Safeguarding/Child Protection Lead
- Our Phase Leaders
- School support staff employed to manage mental health needs of children
- Our mental health first aiders
- Our SENDCO who helps staff understand their responsibilities to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including children whose mental health problems mean they need special educational provision
- Our School Nurse
- Our Learning Mentor provides 1:1 sessions and group work to children who are referred to manage social, emotional, and mental health needs.

## 9. Supporting children's positive mental health



*(School councillors consultation meeting 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022)*

We believe school has a key role in promoting children positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health needs. Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

### *Pupil-led activities*

- Peer mediation using Restorative practice – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults support and guide the discussion
- Lunchtime wellbeing clubs.

### *Transition programmes*

- Transition Programme to secondary schools which includes all Year 6 children having class teacher support a smooth transition to secondary school
- 1:1 support from Learning Mentor tailored to individual transitional needs

### *Small group activities*

- Friendship group- a group intervention to help promote resilience, empathy, and social skills

- Talk about – a small group intervention with Learning Mentor to improve children’s communication skills around turn taking, dealing with issues, resolving conflict

### *Class activities*

- Weekly nominations - children can be praised for certain duties, tasks, or things they have done and have them celebrated
- Worry boxes - children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class or with Learning Mentor
- Circle times to help children learn personal, social, and emotional, communication and problem-solving skills.

### *Whole school*

- Termly Mental Health breakfasts - Inclusion Lead for Social, Emotional & Mental Health Needs runs breakfasts for staff to talk about mental health issues and do ongoing promotion
- Wellbeing week
- Wellbeing Wednesday – whole school focus on doing things which make us feel good
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Zones of regulation
- Sharing assembly
- Emotional intelligence
- Trauma informed practice
- Restorative practice
- 6 second thought
- Emotional diaries
- Growth mindset – a can do attitude, a positive way of thinking that you may not be able to do something ‘yet’ but will learn to.

### ***Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing***

Through PSHE we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help children to be more resilient, understand about mental health and be less affected by the stigma of mental health needs.

### **EYFS & Key Stage 1 children learn:**

- 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.
- Speaking up and being heard
- Accepting and celebrating differences

### **Key Stage 2 children learn:**

- What positively and negatively affects their mental and emotional health (including the media).
- Positive and healthy coping strategies.
- About good and not so good feelings.
- To describe the range and intensity of their feelings to others.
- To recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of feelings in others.
- To recognise that they may experience conflicting emotions and when they might need to listen to their emotions or overcome them.
- About resilience.
- How to motivate themselves and bounce back if they fail at something.
- How to empathise and be supportive of others.
- About change, including transitions (between Key Stages and schools), loss, separation, divorce, and bereavement.
- assertive - speaking up and being heard
- Accepting and celebrating differences
- About the importance of talking to someone and how to get help.

## **10. Identifying, referring, and supporting children with mental health needs**

### **Our approach:**

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are 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 they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

We rely heavily on an open and transparent environment, built on mutual trust and respect to support our whole school community when a mental health need is identified. We always seek advice from external services to complement what our school can offer.

We encourage our whole school community to talk about mental health needs openly so that we can remove the stigma that has surround mental health for so long.

### **Early Identification**

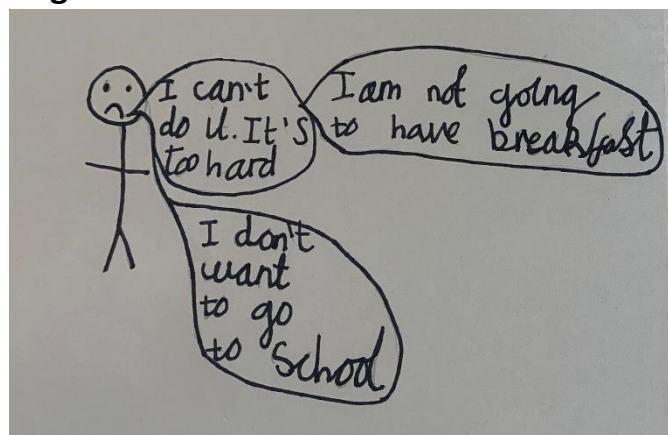
Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- SDQ - Strengths and difficulties questionnaire used to discuss a child's mental health needs (*See Appendix 3*)
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons.
- Worry boxes in each class for children to raise concerns which are checked by the Class Teachers and Mental Health Lead (these are anonymous but give an indication of needs in a particular class regularly).
- Pupil Progress Review meetings
- Termly SEND meetings

- Regular meetings for staff to raise concerns. Including monthly safeguarding meetings and monthly mental health and wellbeing meetings.
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer.
- Parental meetings in EYFS.
- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff. Pupil Voice is important
- Designated Mental Health First Aiders
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff.

Staff at Harbinger School have had training on adverse childhood experiences, understanding low mood and anxiety, the types of mental health needs (see Appendix 2) and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the Mental Health First Aiders or the Inclusion Lead.

#### Some of the Signs might include:



*(School councillors consultation meeting 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022)*

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits.
- Falling academic achievement.
- Not wanting to attend school.
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or loss of hope.

- Secretive behaviour.
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism.
- Not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE.
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental.
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

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 difficulties at home, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development. If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the school's child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency, then the school's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

### **Disclosures by children and confidentiality**

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive, and nonjudgemental 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 Mental Health First Aiders, Safeguarding Lead or Learning Mentor and recorded, to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file, 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 Mental Health First Aiders 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.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Need</b></p> <p>The level of need is based on discussions at the regular Inclusion meetings/panel with key members of staff and involves parents and children</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evidence-based Intervention and Support</b></p> <p>The kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents, and children.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Monitoring</b></p> <p>How we measure the impact and usefulness of interventions</p>
<p><b>Highest need</b></p>	<p>CAMHS-assessment, 1:1 or family support or treatment, consultation with school staff and other agencies Other External agency support other interventions. If the school, professionals and/or parents conclude that a statutory education, health, and care assessment is required, we refer to the SEND policy and SEND School Information Report.</p>	<p>All children needing targeted individualised support will have an Individual Care Plan drawn up setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The needs of the children</li> <li>• How the pupil will be supported</li> <li>• Actions to provide that support</li> <li>• Any specific requirements</li> </ul>

		<p>Children and parents/carers will be involved in the plan. The plan and interventions are monitored, reviewed, and evaluated to assess the impact.</p> <p>The Care Plan is overseen by the Mental Health First Aiders/SENDSCO.</p>
<b>Some need</b>	<p>Access to Mental health first aiders, school learning mentor, school nurse, educational psychologist, 1:1 intervention, small group intervention, wellbeing programmes, circle of friends.</p>	
<b>Low need</b>	<p>General support E.g. School Nurse drop in, class teacher/TA.</p>	

Staff are always encouraged to speak to their line manager and SLT will always support if further referrals to specialist services are needed such as CAMHS, Occupational health or the member of staff's own GP practice.

If we become aware of a parental mental health need then we will always seek to work directly with the parent and either refer onto the borough's Early Help team, CAHMS or liaise directly with the family GP practice.

## **11. Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment**

In some case a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders.

We have access to a range of specialist services and during the support will have regular contact with the service to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the children's Individual Care Plan.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Mental Health Lead or the SENDCO following the assessment process and in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents and carers. Referrals will only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs.

<b>Main Specialist Service</b>	<b>Referral process</b>
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Accessed through school, GP, or self referral
Educational Psychologist	Accessed through the Mental Health Lead or SENDCO
THEWs (Tower Hamlets Education Wellbeing service)	Accessed through Learning mentor
Barnados	Accessed through Learning mentor

## **SEND and mental health**

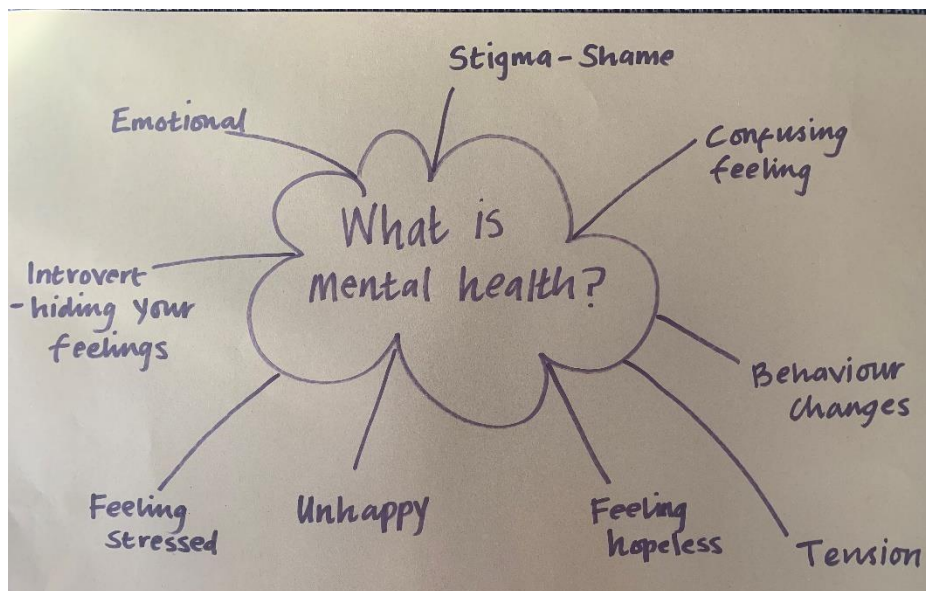
Persistent mental health needs may lead to children having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age. In some cases, the child may benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN).

## **12. Involving parents and carers**

## *Promoting mental health*

We recognise the vital 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.

In our consultation session with Parents, we were able to find out what their understanding of mental health is.



*(Parent consultation meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2022)*

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 mental health needs their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing. It is extremely 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 parents and carers:

- We organise a range of monthly support sessions on different topics in school
- We provide information and websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes and have produced training videos for parents on importance of sleep and establishing routines, which can be accessed on the school website. The information also 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 include the mental health topics that are taught in the PSHE curriculum section, on the school website

### *Supporting parents and carers with children with mental health needs*

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health need and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health needs 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 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.
- Make a record of the meeting.
- Agree a mental health Individual Care Plan 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.

Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger and children may choose to tell their parents and carers themselves. We give children the option of informing their parents and carers about their mental health needs for themselves or of accompanying and supporting them to do so.

We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. In our parent consultation session, parents shared strategies that they use to help improve their mental health (see appendix 6).

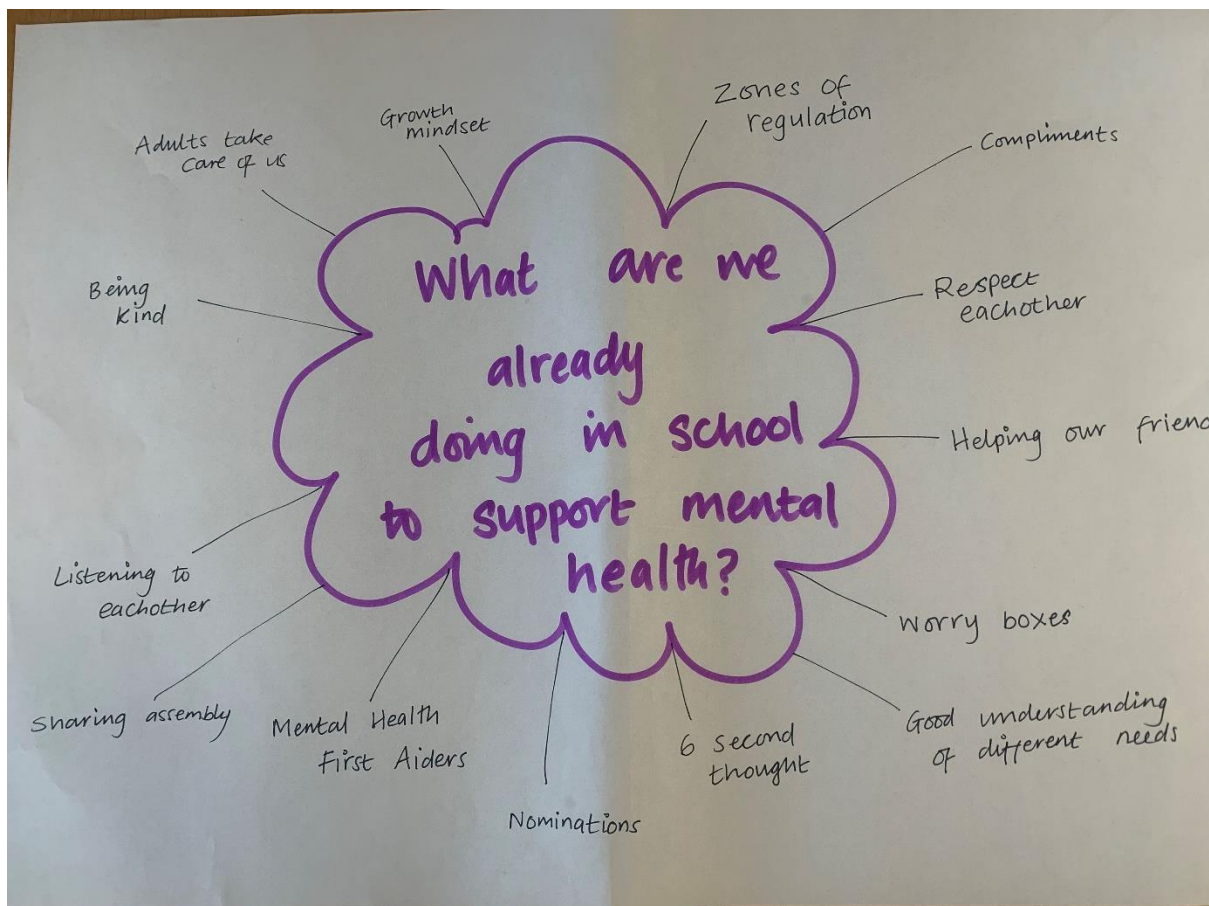
Our primary concern is the children, and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority.

We also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs.

### 13. Involving children

We have wellbeing Wednesdays, where children promote and express their views to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing. We seek pupil's views about our approach, curriculum and in promoting whole school mental health activities.

We always seek feedback from children who have had support to help improve that support and the services they received. The diagram below shows what our children have identified that already happens in school to support mental health.



*(School councillors consultation meeting 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022)*

### 14. Supporting and training staff

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing,

identify mental health needs early in children and know what to do and where to get help. We have several staff who are 'Mental Health First Aiders' and have completed a four-week course on mental health first aid (see appendix 5).

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, such as wellbeing breakfast (every half term) to promote a sense of togetherness and a place to talk. We also organise social events (involving team building, both physical and non-physical). We have 'a low key week' to ensure all staff leave work early for at least one week during the term, to support work-life balance. Staff also have access to Tower Hamlets counselling service. We also do annual staff wellbeing surveys to gather staff opinion on wellbeing and their own mental health.

In addition, we have a staff worry and suggestion box in the staffroom so members of staff can leave anonymised messages for our Mental Health First Aiders. We also follow the 'Ten ways to support school staff wellbeing' suggested by the Anna Freud centre (*see Appendix 4*)

We have a virtual Staffroom (on Microsoft Teams) and we do weekly staff nominations, we share positive, uplifting and motivational quotes each week with all staff on there too. We also use this platform as a social group and virtual staffroom where we recommend good books , films to watch etc.

## **15. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The mental health and wellbeing policy is on the school website and hard copies are available to parents and carers from the school office. All mental health professionals are given a copy before they begin working with the school as well as external agencies involved in our mental health work. The policy is monitored at an annual review meeting led by the Inclusion Lead and involves children and staff with a responsibility for mental health, including specialist services supporting the school and governors.

**Inclusion Lead:** Jubeda Ahmed Learning Mentor: Azmina Vaid

**Mental Health First Aiders:** Jubeda, Fiona, Alima and Jade

**Named Governor with lead on mental health:** Caroline Hurley

## **Appendices Appendix 1 Specific mental health needs most commonly seen in school-aged children**

For information see Annex C Main Types of Mental Health Needs Mental Health and Behaviour in School DfE March 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

Annex C includes definitions, signs and symptoms and suggested interventions for

- Anxiety (including panic attacks, phobias, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD))
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Substance Misuse
- Self-Harm



## **Appendix 2 Where to get information and support**

For support on specific mental health needs

Anxiety UK [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

OCD UK [www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

Depression Alliance [www.depressoinalliance.org](http://www.depressoinalliance.org)

Eating Disorders [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk) and [www.inourhands.com](http://www.inourhands.com)

National Self-Harm Network [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk) [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS:  
[www.papyrusuk.org](http://www.papyrusuk.org)

For general information and support

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) advice and support on mental health problems

[www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk) (e-learning)

[www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk) tackles the stigma of mental health

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org) challenges attitudes towards mental health