



Sutton CE (VC) Primary School

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

June 2026



Policy Statement

At Sutton CofE (VC) Primary School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We have a supportive and caring ethos encompassed by our core school values of STRIVE (safety, togetherness, respect, integrity, valued and excellence).

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play.

Part one: Mental Health and Wellbeing of our students

Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and children.

At our school we:

- Help children to understand their emotions;
- Support children to feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries;
- Help children socially to form and maintain relationships;
- Promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they count;
- encourage children to be confident and embrace diversity;
- Help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks.
- Apply trauma sensitive approaches through the use of Thrive online

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging;
- Providing a safe environment;
- Enabling staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in children;
- Promoting 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;
- Providing opportunities to reflect;
- Access to appropriate support that meets their needs;

We pursue our aims through:

- Universal, whole school approaches;
- Targeted support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement;
- Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties.

Scope

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Medical policy and our SEND policy in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies for Behaviour, Anti-bullying, and PSHE policies. This policy also sits alongside our child protection procedures.

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Ruth Garbutt – Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Sam Wallace- SENCO, Deputy Headteacher, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Mental Health and Emotional wellbeing lead
- Kirsten Marriott – PSHE lead
- Ruby Camper – Family Liaison, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Thrive Practitioner
- Tracy Kent – Thrive practitioner
- Sally Braybrooke - Emotional Literacy Support assistant - ELSA and Young Carer's Champion

Universal support (for all our children)

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our personal social emotional development (PSED) developmental PSHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but we will also use the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner.

In addition, all our children are taught to recognise their own and others emotions using 'The Zones of Regulation.' Every child from Year 1 upwards considers the 'tools' they need to stay in the green zone and has access to visual reminders throughout the day.

Every class in the school also has their own Worry outlet and Peaceful Place where they are able to share their worries and have a quiet space to reflect throughout the day.

All children in our school are encouraged to regularly identify trusted adults that they have both in school and home.

Targeted support

All children at some point in their schooling are likely to need some additional short-term support with issues impacting their mental health. The approach used will be individualised to each pupil in discussion with the Mental Health Lead, key adult, Class teacher, parents and pupil. The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils or groups of pupils which may include:

- Emotional Literacy Support using our trained support assistants (ELSA);
- Thrive support using our trained Thrive practitioners

An Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) is a trained, school-based learning support assistant. Their role is to support the emotional wellbeing of pupils. They are trained by a team of Educational Psychologists and receive ongoing group supervision.

A Thrive practitioner takes part in a 12-week course through Thrive online to become a licensed practitioner. They receive ongoing support and must continually engage in CPD to retain their licence.

Children may have specific support with an ELSA or Thrive practitioner for any of the following reason:

- Managing and identifying through the use of ‘Zones of Regulations’;
- A key adult to check in at agreed intervals;
- Therapeutic activities including art, Lego and relaxation and mindfulness techniques;
- Friendship support;
- Support with self-esteem, anger or a loss/change;
- Low Thrive score at their current Thrive strand - identified by class teachers;

Thrive strands:

Skills and Structure 7–11 years	Developmental tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation for developing skills • Developing morals and values • Understanding the need for rules 	Healthy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys diversity, difference and acquiring new skills • Possesses internal/external structures: values; rules • Is developing a confident gender identity 	Interrupted development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is anti authority and anti-rules • Shows mismatch between expectations and skills • Is over casual; does not complete tasks 	Adult role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging and supporting the extension of skills • Introducing the child to diverse experiences and people • Acting as a role model for the exploration of values 	Parents' role: <p>Parents acknowledge children's emerging values and morals and individual ways of doing things. Parents teach the children the significance of rules and regulations and help with the development of their negotiation skills. Children enjoy sharing their opinions and using their skills.</p>
Power and Identity 3–7 years	Developmental tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an identity • Distinguishing fantasy from reality • Exploring power with responsibility 	Healthy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a positive sense of self and individual identity • Adapts to different roles and relationships • Understands consequences and contexts 	Interrupted development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatens, bullies and lies • Has low self-esteem; discounts self • Uses reputation to bolster self 	Adult role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating the child's individuality • Helping the child to learn responsibility for their behaviour and to distinguish between fantasy and reality • Role-modelling how to use power in relationships 	Parents' role: <p>Parents support children to find out who they are, what they like to do and to separate fantasy from reality. With this comes growing independence and responsibility, with children learning that they can still ask for help and care. Children enjoy being who they are and being responsible.</p>
Thinking 18 months – 3 years	Developmental tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing a view • Learning about cause and effect • Feeling, thinking and problem-solving 	Healthy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names, expresses and handles feelings • Understands rules and cause and effect • Thinks for themselves; can say 'no' 	Interrupted development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is oppositional; acts tough • Directs others; overreacts • Is demanding and pushy; or acts powerless 	Adult role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as a co-creator of meaning • Naming and creating opportunities for the safe expression of feelings • Lending their adult thinking brain to help the child develop language and make sense of what is happening 	Parents' role: <p>Parents stay in control as they listen, enjoy and support the development of their toddler's independent thinking. Parents help to establish understanding of cause and effect while the toddler begins to think for themselves, test limits and push boundaries. Children feel competent and can make sense of their experience.</p>
Doing 6–18 months	Developmental tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring and experimenting • Experimenting options • Initiating, engaging and doing 	Healthy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is curious and creative; takes initiative • Is active and easily stimulated; seeks sensory experiences • Enjoys investigating and getting involved 	Interrupted development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is passive, quiet; hangs back • Is unable to settle or focus • Displays extreme responses 	Adult role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as a co-adventurer, inviting the child into sensory exploration • Accompanying the child in seeking and exploring • Ensuring safe boundaries for physical play 	Parents' role: <p>Parents encourage their infant to explore and experiment safely, while at the same time giving meaning to her/his feelings and discoveries and explaining about the world. Children feel capable and good in their bodies, and they enjoy physical activities.</p>
Being 0–6 months	Developmental tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling safe • Being special • Having needs met 	Healthy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is confident and appropriately trusting • Is receptive to new experiences and relationships • Is aware of needs; is able to signal distress and ask for help 	Interrupted development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is timid and fears change • Is out of touch with own needs • Demonstrates repetitive oral behaviours; is easily distracted 	Adult role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as a co-regulator/container • Providing a positive experience of dependency • Mediating the child's experience of the world 	Parents' role: <p>Parents experience joy and delight in their new baby and are ready to keep them safe, meet their needs and get to know them as a new unique person. Children feel lovable and begin to trust themselves and others.</p>

Specific support

There will be times when the preschool and school will need to seek support from outside professionals to support children with their mental health and wellbeing.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our specific and targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including:

- The Mental Health Support Team (MHST)
- The school nurse or Educational psychology services
- Community Paediatricians
- YOUNited including CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Family workers, Education Family Advisors and Home Start
- Counselling charities including: - Acorn Project, Stars bereavement counselling, Nessie and Centre 33

Identifying needs and Warning Signs

All staff are aware of possible signs a child is experiencing difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the designated child protection and safeguarding officer or the emotional wellbeing lead as appropriate. Possible warning signs include

- Poor attendance;
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits;
- Becoming socially withdrawn;
- Changes in activity and mood;
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide;
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope;
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause;
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism.

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of what support is available within our school and how to access further support.

Tracking Wellbeing

All staff are trained to identify early warning signs and monitor the wellbeing of the children they work with. Teachers assess and track pupils' wellbeing and progress through the Thrive strands on a termly basis. This information informs discussions and decision-making during half-termly wellbeing allocation meetings involving the wellbeing team.

For children receiving targeted or specialist support, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs may also be monitored termly using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). In addition, these pupils will have an Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) document in place, in line with our SEND provision, to ensure that support is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet their needs.

Children receiving Thrive support will have an individual-assessment before and after the intervention, conducted by the Thrive practitioner

Working with Parents

In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website and with regular updates on the dojo school page;
- Make parents aware of wellbeing support in place for their child and offer further discussion around this;
- Share and allow parents to access sources of further support e.g. contacting our Education Family Advisor or Mental Health Support Team
- Ensure that all parents are aware of staff members that they can talk to, if they have concerns about their own mental health or that of their child;
- All staff will be able to signpost parents to support if approached by a parent for support;
- Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents;
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children;
- 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.

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep students safe. 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 it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupils.

Our Mental Health Lead, has completed the DfE Mental Health Lead training and attends half termly Emotional Health and Wellbeing forums. Information from this training is shared through staff meetings.

As part of staff induction, all new members of staff receive Cambridgeshire Steps training from in-school qualified trainers (Sam Wallace, SENCO). The Cambridgeshire Steps methodology prioritises the pro-social feelings of everyone within a dynamic. This means understanding the feelings and thoughts behind behaviour and considering the effect it has on all individuals' experiences and emotions within a particular group. Staff will also be expected to take Thrive online's introductory course to support them with Thrive theory and assessing a class using Thrive-Online.

Part two: Staff Mental Health

We recognise that anyone can experience mental health issues for various reasons which may be out of their control. There may also be work related factors that could contribute to poor mental health such as work life imbalance, workload pressure and poor working conditions.

To every extent possible, we aim to recognise and address cases of workplace pressures that contribute to mental health issues.

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;
- Follow the school's policy on out-of-school hours working, including guidance when it is and is not appropriate to expect a response to communication;
- 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.

Role of Senior Leaders

Senior Managers and Leaders are expected to:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills, not their working pattern;
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations. Staff wellbeing will form part of Performance Management meetings;
- 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;
- 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 led to their resignation;

- Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff;
- Ensure there is a clear behaviour policy that promotes a calm and safe school. Both staff and children are clear on rewards and sanctions that are used at the school. Senior Leaders will support staff where a child's behaviour cannot be managed with the policy alone;
- Make sure job descriptions are kept up-to-date, with clearly identified responsibilities and staff being consulted before any changes are made;
- Communicate new initiatives effectively with all members of staff to ensure they feel included and aware of any changes occurring at the school;
- Understand that all teachers have different working patterns to suit their lives out of school. Establish clear guidance that staff do not need to respond during out-of-school hours working and have at least 48 hours to act on any directive;
- Staff are encouraged to not have access to school emails or class dojo on their mobile phones;
- Efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated;
- Weekly briefings accompanied by written notes to be available every week so all staff are aware of upcoming events;
- Provide resources to promote staff wellbeing, such as training opportunities;
- Promote information about, and access to, external support services, and make sure that there are clear routes in place to escalate a concern in order to access further support.

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.

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.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Appraisal policy
- Behaviour policy
- Capability procedure
- Staff code of conduct