Mental Health Policy A9

Dolphin School Trust

inc. Noah's Ark Nurseries

Reviewed by:	Lucy Price (Headteacher)
Last reviewed:	March 2025
Next review:	March 2027

1. Policy Statement

Dolphin School seeks to equip children with the values, skills and knowledge that they need to manage their lives and to flourish. It encourages thinking, discussion and reflection, preparing them to lead safe, healthy and purposeful lives, both now and in the future.

We are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers).

We endeavour to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress and aim to ensure that they are supported to reach their potential or to 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. 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.

2. Ethos and environment

At Dolphin School we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health. Our school is a community where all its members, on a daily life-journey together, discover more of what it means to relate with love in the context of family, school, friendships, the wider community, and online. Pupils consider, for example what it means to be kind and patient, friendly and understanding, honest and forgiving, thankful and hopeful.

We teach pupils to listen to other perspectives and to be respectful of different views from their own. We believe that school is a safe place for pupils to explore, to make mistakes, and to develop the skills of communication, thoughtfulness and resilience in their relationships.

We do this by:

•   Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and well-being.

•   Adhering to a positive, restorative approach to behaviour management.

•   Helping children socially to form and maintain relationships.

•   Spending lots of time outdoors, including physical exercise

•   Helping children to feel comfortable about sharing any concerns or worries.

•   Teaching children emotional skills and an awareness of mental health so that they understand their emotions and feelings better.

•   We promote the biblical understanding that each person is uniquely and wonderfully designed and created by God, and without exception is worthy of being treated with dignity, respect and love.

•   Every morning starts with Relationship Time, where the children settle into the day through a morning prayer and encouragement to build relationships and share anxieties. This ensures they are well set up for their academic studies

- Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks.

- Adopting a family approach to education – where parent involvement is encouraged and supported

- Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services, parents and carers.

- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

- Developing an open culture where it's normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

• Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.

• 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.

• Enabling access to appropriate support.

• Mental Health included in Relationship Time for all year groups

• Year 5 and 6 specific sessions on Power Thoughts

We pursue our aims through:

• Universal, whole school approaches

• Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.

• Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties

3. Leadership and Management

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

Named Mental Health Leads – Rumana Choudhury, Year 2 class teacher

Lucy Price, Headteacher

Named Deputy Mental Health Lead - Adam Woodcraft, DSL

Named Mental Health Governor – Jess Hopkins

One of our Mental Health Leads is a member of the Senior Team, and as such is able to

• Ensure that emotional health and wellbeing is always part of school development plans and is embedded in the school's ethos

• Lead and work with all staff to co-ordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

• Work with the Director of Ethos re: teaching about mental health.

• Provide advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.

• Liaise with mental health services and makes individual referrals to them.

4. Teaching about Mental Health

Mental Health Education, part of our wider Life Education, is taught in a PSHE type lesson called Relationship Time (RT), which also includes aspects of faith, which we understand as belief based on a relationship with God that also has ramifications for the way we value both ourselves and others.

Beyond RT, the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included into every subject, and is infused in the 'hidden' curriculum: for example, the way staff interact with pupils and with one another, the reception of parents and visitors, and the warm and welcoming 'corridor culture'. Please also refer to Relationships, Health & Sex Education Policy for specific content examples of our PSHE curriculum.

Weekly whole school assemblies, which are open to parents and families, encouraging a broader concept of relationships and wellbeing in our school community. A Bible verse, brought to life by either a staff member or a class, is the springboard for the learning which advances character development and focuses the whole community on looking after one another and themselves.

Participating in small group discussions daily during Relationship Time and weekly whole school assemblies ensures that all members of the learning community have a voice and regularly get the opportunity to discuss their wellbeing and ownership of this.

Doodleblah is a weekly club where the focus is to understand our different feelings and emotions in a calm, relaxing environment. It is a safe space for children to learn about, and begin to understand, the different emotions we may experience. We do this through stories and playing alongside each other with construction, craft, board games etc or by being quiet and listening to instrumental music whilst expressing their feelings through writing, drawing or colouring.

5. Student voice

Dolphin School sees emotional wellbeing as a key factor in enabling students to achieve their full educational potential and to become responsible individuals well prepared for life beyond school. The school believes that involving students in decisions that impact on them can benefit their mental health and wellbeing by helping them to feel part of the school and wider community and to have some control over their lives.

We achieve this involvement through

- Election to and participation in the School Council
- Provision of ask it baskets in classrooms to ensure everyone's voice is heard
- Peer mentoring where pupils in year 6 spend dedicated time with pupils in the Lower school and Nursery
- Annual Pupil Wellbeing Survey, including follow up from class teachers

6. Staff development, health & wellbeing

Promoting staff health and wellbeing is an integral principal of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. Dolphin School does this by providing support to enable staff to reflect on and to take actions to enhance their own wellbeing and by promoting a good work-life balance for staff.

It is important for staff to access training to increase their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to equip them to be able to identify mental health difficulties in their students and know what to do should they have a concern. Our mental health lead is able to provide advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.

Staff have access to the [MindEd Hub](), specifically for adults working with, or caring for infants and children. All the information provided is quality assured by experts and aims to give adults who work with young people
- The knowledge to support their wellbeing
- The understanding to identify a child at risk of a mental health condition
- The confidence to act on their concern and, if needed, signpost to services that can help

Staff also have access to [Education Support](), a UK charity dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and education staff in schools, colleges and universities

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.

Some staff may elect to train as Mental Health First Aiders

Annual Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire including feedback letter from Headteacher.

7. Identifying need and monitoring impact

All staff have had training on the protective and risk factors (see Appendix 1), 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 SENCO or Designated Safeguarding Team.

These signs might include:

· non-verbal behaviour

· isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn

· changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits

· lowering academic achievement

· talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

· expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope

· an increase in lateness or absenteeism

· not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE

· drug or alcohol misuse

· physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental

· wearing long sleeves in hot weather

· 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 home problems, 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. Please refer to Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

Class teachers and Teaching Assistants, who spend the first 30 minutes of the day in relationship time with their class are vital to the continual monitoring of the mental health of the pupils. The wider staff team, including SENDCo, Office team and Senior Team ensure that teachers have up to date information about wider issues affecting specific children/families and the whole staff team are kept up to date with impacts of social media/ wider culture on the mental health of our pupils.

8. Working with Parents, Family and Carers

The family plays a vital role in influencing children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Parents or carers can approach their child/children's class teacher if they have mental health concerns. This will be cascaded to the Mental Health Lead for assessment.

To support parents and carers we will:

• Provide information online on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes.

• Share ideas about how parents and carers can support positive mental health in their children.

• Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents.

• Keep parents informed about the mental health topics taught in Relationship Time and share ideas for extending and exploring this at home.

• Organise workshops and presentations on mental health, anxiety, resilience and steps to wellbeing (for example Power Thoughts series in year 5 and 6)

9. Targeted support and appropriate referrals

The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils where necessary

When a concern has been raised, teachers or the Mental Health Lead and SENDCO will:

• Contact parents to discuss the outcome of any assessment (Although there may be cases, parents and carers cannot be involved due to child protection issues.)

• Discuss any relevant referrals to external agencies.

• Signpost parents to further information or provide resources to take away.

• Agree mental health care and protection plan where appropriate including clear next steps.

• Discuss how parents can support their child through strategies or signposts to parenting support groups.

As part of our targeted provision, the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing. Children may be referred to one of the following services for additional support.

• Pediatrician

• Educational Psychology Services

• CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)

• Children's and Family Services

• Family support workers

• Counselling

Appendix 1 Protective and Risk factors (adapted from [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#) DfE November 2018)

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors
In the Child	· Genetic influences - Low IQ and learning disabilities · Specific development delay or neuro-diversity · Communication difficulties · Difficult temperament · Physical illness · Academic failure · Low self-esteem	· Secure attachment experience · Outgoing temperament as an infant · Good communication skills, sociability · Being a planner and having a belief in control · Humour · Problem solving skills and a positive attitude · Experiences of success and achievement · Faith or spirituality · Capacity to reflect
In the Family	· Overt parental conflict including domestic violence · Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) · Inconsistent or unclear discipline · Hostile and rejecting relationships · Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs · Physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect · Parental psychiatric illness · Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder · Death and loss – including loss of friendship	· At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) · Affection · Clear, consistent discipline · Support for education · Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord
At School	· Bullying including online (cyber) · Discrimination · Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships · Deviant peer influences · Peer pressure · Peer on peer abuse · Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships	· Clear policies on behaviour and bullying · Staff code of conduct · 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems · A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health · Good pupil to teacher / school staff relationships · Positive classroom management · A sense of belonging · Positive peer influences · Positive friendships · Effective safeguarding and Child Protection policies · An effective early help process · Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working · Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to can raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively

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In the Community	· Socio-economic disadvantage · Homelessness · Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events · Discrimination · Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation · Other significant life events	· Wider supportive network · Good housing · High standard of living · High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying · Opportunities for valued social roles · Range of sport/leisure activities