



Straits Primary School

Children's mental health and well-being policy 2026

Senior Mental Health Lead: Paul Freear
Governor with lead on mental health: Claire Jones

Good mental health and wellbeing helps children and young people:

- attend school
- develop key life skills, particularly social and emotional skills
- engage in learning
- achieve academically

Schools and colleges contribute to wellbeing by providing:

- an ethos and environment that promotes respect, and values diversity
- leadership and management that supports and champions efforts to promote emotional health and wellbeing
- staff development to support their own wellbeing and that of pupils and learners
- curriculum teaching and learning to promote resilience and support social and emotional learning
- enabling student voice to influence decisions
- targeted support and appropriate referral
- working with parents and carers

(Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges – DfE, 2021)

Why mental health and well-being is important

At Straits Primary School, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers), and recognise how important mental health and emotional well-being 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 well-being and can affect their learning and achievement. All children go through difficulties during their school career and some face significant life events. Statistics show that in 2023, about 1 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 25 years had a probable mental disorder. This was 20.3% of 8 to 16 year olds, 23.3% of 17 to 19 year olds and 21.7% of 20 to 25 year olds. *(latest data from NHS report - Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023).*

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "*Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and well-being of children by developing whole school approaches tailored to their particular needs, as well as considering the needs of individual pupils.*" 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 well-being 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 that develops key principles:

- All children are valued, have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma.
- Positive mental health is promoted and valued.
- Bullying is not tolerated.

In addition to children's well-being, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being.

Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out our key aims:

- How we promote positive mental health.
- How we prevent mental health problems.
- 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 problems.
- Where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support.

Definition of mental health and well-being

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and well-being, "*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 and well-being is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people 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.

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Anti-Bullying, SEND and Equalities. Links with the School's 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.

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 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.

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 problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need. All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems: physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown, having SEND 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 Senior Mental Health Lead (Paul Freear):

- Leads and works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and well-being.
- Leads on PSHE teaching about mental health.
- Provides advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.
- Works closely with the DDSL and SENCO to contact mental health services, and makes individual referrals to them.

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.

Sources of relevant support include:

- Our own Senior Leadership Team
- Our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)
- Our Phase Leaders
- School support staff employed to work with particular children (ELSA)
- Our SENCO 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
- Family support workers
- Specific well-being groups such as *Bee Well*
- Specific external organisations such as *Phase Trust*
- CAMHS - where support is offered at an external venue (now known as Children and Young People's Mental Health Services - or CYPMHS)

Supporting children's positive mental health

Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches:

Class activities may include:

- Praise boxes - a mechanism where children can be praised for certain duties, tasks or things they have done and have them celebrated in class.
- 'WOW' boards or 'Show and Tell' sessions.
- Worry boxes - a mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class.
- Feelings boards
- Circle time sessions
- PSHE lessons to help children learn personal, social and emotional, communication and problem-solving skills.

Whole school activities include:

- Our *Pathways to the Future* delivered through our day-to-day ethos and our assemblies.
- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health: we take part in World Mental Health day and Children's Mental Health week.
- Playground Buddies – supporting younger children at lunchtime.
- A lunchtime nurture club.
- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support - <https://www.straitsprimaryschool.com/childrens-mental-health/>
- Mental health and well-being assemblies.

Small group or 1-1 activities

- Well-being interventions (1-1 or small group) in class such as to help with anxiety or worries.
- Our ELSA programme led by a member of school staff.
- Specific well-being groups such as *Bee Well*.
- Specific 1-1 work with external organisations such as *Phase Trust*, *Hugglepets*, *AOC*
- CAMHS/ CYPMHS - where support is offered at an external venue.

Teaching about mental health and emotional well-being

Through the PSHE curriculum, 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 problems.

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.
- About different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable.
- How to resist teasing or bullying, if they experience or witness it, whom to go to and how to get help.

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.
- About the consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including online bullying, prejudice-based language), as well as how to respond and ask for help if they are victims of this themselves.
- About the importance of talking to someone and how to get help

Early Identification

We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. Staff report concerns about individual children to a member of the Leadership Team (which includes our Senior Mental Health Lead, DSLs and SENCO). We also gain information from parents through parental meetings and have an open-door policy for all members of our community. All staff at Straits have had training on the protective and risk factors, types of mental health needs 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 Senior Mental Health Lead, a DSL or the SENCO.

These signs might include different things:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits.
- Falling academic achievement.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- 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.
- Wearing long sleeves in hot weather.
- Drugs or alcohol misuse.
- 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 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. 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 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 Senior Mental Health Lead or the Safeguarding Lead and recorded, in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil. All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file (CPOMS), including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

Support for friends

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing mental health problems it can be challenging for their friends, who often want to help them but are not sure the best thing to do and can also be emotionally affected. In the case of eating disorders and self-harm, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping strategies from each other, and we will consider on a case-by-case basis what support might be appropriate including one to one and group support. We will involve the pupil who is suffering and their parents and consider what is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told, how they can best support, things they should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset and warning signs that their friend needs help. We will also make information available about where and how to access information and support for themselves and healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling.

Support and advice for parents

If a parent or carer is worried about their child's mental health or wellbeing, they can speak to any member of staff (class teacher, Teaching Assistant, Senior Mental Health Lead, SENCO or a DSL). Staff will treat these concerns with confidence and will either refer the parent to a senior leader or support the parent in accessing a range of resources on our website.

<https://www.straitsprimaryschool.com/childrens-mental-health/>

<https://www.straitsprimaryschool.com/early-help/>

Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment

In some cases, 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 child's Individual Care Plan.

School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Senior Mental Health Lead or the SENCO 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.

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is accessed through school, GP or self-referral (now known as Children and Young People's Mental Health Services - or CYPMHS).
- Educational Psychologist is accessed through the SENCO.

SEND and mental health

Persistent mental health problems 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). We have ISPs and Graduated Responses in place for these children which are reviewed termly.

Supporting and training staff

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and well-being and to be able to promote positive mental health and well-being, identify mental health needs early in children and know what to do and where to get help. Our Senior Mental Health Lead has received DfE funded training and provides regular training/updates for all staff members in line with our safeguarding training plan.

Monitoring and Reviewing Procedures

The Senior Mental Health Lead will provide staff and governors with necessary information and summaries of the impact of the policy on the practice of the school. The Curriculum Committee of the Governing body will monitor the implementation and impact of this policy.

Signed by:

Chair of Curriculum Committee: Date:

Head teacher: Date:

Agreed at the Curriculum Committee Meeting on: