

# POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY SUMMERHILL



<b>Member of Staff Responsible for Policy</b>	Mrs Sarah Jane Sprouting – Designated Senior Mental Health & Safeguarding Lead		
<b>Review Committee</b>	Full Governors		
<b>Approving Body</b>	Full Governors		
<b>Review Cycle</b>	Annually		
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July 2024	Revised (added section on Reeva and named mental health team)		

***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 Organisation)***

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## 1. Policy Statement

At Summerhill School, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all students, their families, members of staff and governors. We recognise that a student's mental health and emotional wellbeing are equally as important as their physical wellbeing. Our open culture allows students' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected – both directly and indirectly – by mental health issues. By implementing practical, relevant, and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students, thereby ensuring the best possible educational outcomes for every student.

## 2. Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching and governors – outlining our approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies including Safeguarding, Medical Needs, Anti-Bullying and SEND. Links with the school's behaviour policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need.

## 3. Legislation

This policy is in line with The Schools (Mental Health and Wellbeing) Act 2020. This sets out the following requirements for governing bodies:

- Promote student mental health
- Support mental ill health
- Make statements of policy in relation to their promotion of student mental health, and prevention and support for mental ill health
- Promote training and information for school staff on the subject of mental health
- Have regard to student mental health in joint working arrangements with:
  1. Other governing bodies
  2. Local authorities
  3. Commissioners and providers of the National Health Service

#### **4. Statement for the Senior Mental Health Lead**

The long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted to us the importance of prioritising the mental health of our students, families, and staff. This policy aims to embed this commitment to promoting and monitoring wellbeing within our culture. It also aims to set out a clear stepped approach to supporting students and staff during times when their emotional wellbeing is less than optimal.

We as a school aim to promote protective behaviours to safeguard the wellbeing of all. We believe that all members of the community have the right to feel safe, for our wellbeing to be prioritised, and that nothing is too small or insignificant to talk about with a trusted adult in our school support network.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. We aim to use a common framework to encourage everyone within the community to recognise mental health early warning signs within themselves as well as others, and a common strategy to connect and seek support whenever these signs arise, as well as clear guidance as to how we manage disclosures so that we can safeguard the individual.

#### **5. Promoting Positive Mental Health**

Summerhill School will:

- work to help students to understand their emotions and experiences better
- ensure our students feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries
- help students to form and maintain relationships
- encourage students to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem
- help students to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks

Summerhill School will promote a healthy environment by:

- promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff
- celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements
- promoting our CARE values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community
- providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect
- promoting our students' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making
- adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any student who needs additional help through school-based interventions or referrals to external interventions

- educating students through PSHE and SMSC throughout the year, including Global Learning lessons, form time activities and the use of other technologies
- raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms
- enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in students
- supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health

## 6. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some students 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 students with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of the regular staff CPD as well as the safeguarding training and is a requirement **to keep children safe**.

Summerhill School will post all relevant information and additional information, on our school website so staff can learn about children mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff, and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with students.

As a school community, we all have a specific responsibility to promote the wellbeing and mental health of students, however, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Mrs Sarah Jane Sprouting	Senior Mental Health Lead & DSL
Mr Tim Harris	Headteacher and DSMHL Line Manager
Mr Chris Randle	Deputy Head & Deputy DSL
Mr Adrian Cresswell	Deputy Head & Deputy DSL
Ms Stephanie Gordon	Deputy DSL & Family Support Officer
Mr Kevin Quirke	Deputy DSL
Mr Oli Douch	Deputy Mental Health Lead
Mr Chris Findon	Deputy Mental Health Lead
Mrs Vicki Poole	HR & Staff Wellbeing
Miss Rachel Checkley	Lead for Global Learning (PSHE)
Miss Anna Mohamed	SENDCo
	Link Governor for Mental Health
<b>All House Tutors are Primary Mental Health Champions to their students</b>	

Any member of staff who is concerned about the wellbeing or mental health of a student should speak to the Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL) in the first instance.

If there is a fear that the child is in danger of immediate harm then the normal safeguarding and child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Headteacher or designated Governor for Safeguarding.

If the student presents a medical emergency, then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the family support officer, first aid staff and contacting emergency services if required.

Where a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the DSL/SMHL.

## **7. Individual Support Plans**

When a student has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHs or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Support Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the student, parents, and relevant professionals. This can include:

- Details of the student's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Specific requirements or strategies and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

## **8. Reeva**

Reeva is our new mental health and wellbeing hub in school. This space will allow students who have concerns with their mental health and wellbeing to access individualised support. Some of these students may have high levels of anxiety, eating disorders, emotional based school avoidance etc. Whilst working in Reeva they will have access to internal and external support, interventions and an alternative working environment. Reeva has been designed to support a trauma informed approach. If you feel a student would benefit from additional support with their mental health or wellbeing please speak to the relevant head of house who can refer them. Students who either currently or have previously accessed Reeva will have SEMH passports for staff to access.

## **9. Teaching about Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing**

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally safe are included as part of our Global Learning curriculum. This

curriculum is reviewed and refined annually. Where necessary, additional elements might be added through the academic year to respond to specific needs.

Our Global Learning curriculum has a sustained focus on wellbeing issues and encourages a person-centred approach to exploring these. A spiral curriculum which connects the facets of Health and Wellbeing Education with Relationships Education encourages students right from the beginning of their time at school to create and evaluate their support networks, understand how to approach people in our support networks to have a mental health conversation and how to read our own emotions and communicate them. We use distancing techniques and case studies when covering content so that any negative impact upon a student experiencing mental ill health is minimised. Our curriculum is featured on the school website so that parents can anticipate topics which could impact on the student's wellbeing.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing students who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting students to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

## **10. Signposting**

We will ensure that staff, students, and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined on our school website and wellbeing hub.

We will display relevant sources of support in social spaces, form rooms, staff room and toilets, and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum, in assemblies and in House time. We will also ensure that our Safe at Summerhill Wellbeing Hub is regularly updated and is accessible to all.

Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chances of students help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why should they access it
- What is likely to happen next

The Summerhill newsletter and Safe at Summerhill (Safeguarding) Newsletter can be used to update parents and carers about mental health issues and sources of support.

Following a disclosure, Summerhill school may choose to signpost/refer to sources of support, where appropriate. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Educational Psychologist
- School Counsellor
- External Counsellors
- CAMHs
- Local Government Agencies
- Social Care Support
- Family Support Workers
- Family Centres

## **11. Identifying, Supporting and Referring Students with Mental Health Needs**

In 2004 1 in 10 UK children and young people aged 5 - 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder - that is around three children in every class (Green, et al., 2005). This figure has now increased to 1 in 6, due to the negative impact the pandemic has had on the wellbeing of children and young people.

Early Intervention is crucial to ensure that our students and families are supported and receive appropriate interventions.

Summerhill will:

- Provide a safe environment to enable students to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of students are paramount
- Identify appropriate support for students based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support if it is appropriate to do so and does not place the student at additional risk
- Involve students in the care and support they have
- Continually monitor and review the support available to students and their families.

As part of their Global Learning lessons, students reflect on the physical, social, and behavioural early warning signs that indicate that it would be positive to seek support.

All school staff will receive 'ALGER' training so that they can identify students who may be in a heightened state of emotional arousal and use a common language with which to discuss this with them, revising strategies to manage this at the same time.

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental



health or emotional wellbeing issues. These concerns or warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate with the safeguarding team and SMHL in line with the school's safeguarding policy.

Possible warning signs include but are not exclusive to:

- 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

## **12. Managing Disclosures**

It is important that staff remain calm, supportive, and non-judgemental to students who disclose a concern about themselves or another student. Staff should be clear with students that their concern will be shared with a member of the safeguarding team.

If a student discloses that they feel suicidal or are planning to take their own life, staff should ask if they have a plan to kill themselves and explore the details of that plan. If they say they have a plan the student should be taken to a member of the safeguarding team. If they say no this must be reported immediately to a member of the safeguarding team through CPOMs. Any such disclosures should be reported immediately to a member of the safeguarding team.

All members of the school community should be encouraged that they can start a wellbeing conversation no matter how small they may deem their concern to be. Students will be reminded in their Global Learning lessons of their support network and how to approach these individuals should they wish to share a mental health concern about themselves or others.

When approaching a person to start a wellbeing conversation, the student or adult may express that their mental health is not optimal but may not be able to describe how they are feeling. We should use our two filtering questions as a starter to this conversation;

- 1) Are you still able to enjoy the things you usually do?
- 2) Is there anything you are looking forward to?

A student 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 student 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 student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

Any mental health discussion with a student which is considered to be low risk with no immediate safety concerns should be referred to the student's House tutor/House Officer.

The form tutor will contact parents/guardians/carers to arrange a meeting (face-to-face/over video call if possible) and will remind the young person of their support network as well as the importance of seeking support no matter how small their concern may seem to them. The form tutor will signpost to appropriate sites for self-care support and guidance. The form tutor will oversee a period of 'watchful waiting' over a period of no longer than four weeks. If after this period it is deemed that the student continues to need support, a referral should be made to a mental health professional.

All disclosures should be recorded on CPOMS and if there is a fear for the immediate safety or wellbeing of the young person, an immediate referral should be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Senior Mental Health Lead.

### **13. Confidentiality**

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass on concerns about a student, then we should discuss with the student:

- 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 student 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, for example, for students who are in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague usually the mental health lead. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents must always be informed if;

- A child has self-injured or disclosed that they have considered self-injuring
- A child suggests or expresses they are having suicidal thoughts or have attempted suicide
- A child discloses disordered eating behaviours

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but a Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately.

## **14. Working With Parents/Carers**

Summerhill School will support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and always offering our support. We will, where deemed appropriate, inform parents/carers of any disclosures made by students regarding their health and wellbeing.

To support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.
- Share and allow parents/carers to access further support.
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents/carers guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents/carers on the academy website

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/via video call? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the student, 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 issues and many may respond with anger, fear, or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g., parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next steps and always keep a brief 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, 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, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through information evenings and webinars
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in Global Learning and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

## **15. Supporting Peers**

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a challenging time for their friends. Friends 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. Support will be provided to individuals, or groups on a case-by-case basis. Where a member of staff has concerns about any child, these should be reported to the safeguarding team in line with the safeguarding policy.

## **15. Training**

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 to enable them to keep students safe.

All staff will receive annual training on how to manage and support wellbeing conversations, how to recognise the early warning signs that an individual needs wellbeing and mental health support and how to manage disclosures.

We will host relevant information on our website which will provide information on a range of mental health issues as well as signposting as to where we can seek support.

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 developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group, or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Senior Mental Health Lead who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

## **16. Staff Wellbeing**

'Wellbeing' is the condition of feeling that our lives are balanced with good physical, mental and emotional health. When we experience positive wellbeing, we feel engaged and motivated, connected to others and better able to cope with life's difficulties. When we feel this positive connection to our loved ones and to our community more broadly, as well as towards our work and to our wider responsibilities, we can show resilience and 'bounce back' from inevitable setbacks.

School staff are frequently juggling a multitude of tasks for several different stakeholders in a quick-paced and often reactive environment where there are huge pressures on time and resources. Knowing this, it is imperative that staff are taken care of, both emotionally and physically so that they can support students, families, and colleagues more effectively. When staff feel valued, nurtured, and understood, they are more able to talk about their wellbeing free of judgement or stigma, meaning that any mental health issues which arise are

addressed more quickly with better outcomes for that person's personal and clinical recovery.

Staff Wellbeing is a priority in our school because;

- Staff who feel valued and who are invested in are more likely to be retained
- Enthused and engaged staff are more likely to have a positive impact on students and their educational outcomes
- Staff with positive wellbeing are more likely have improved job satisfaction and be more productive
- When staff can manage stress better and have developed healthy coping strategies, the likelihood of illness is reduced, as are absences from work