

St John's Highbury Vale CE Primary School



'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' **Philippians**
4:13

Mental Health Policy

Review date: Feb 2027

A Rights Respecting School **(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)**

Article 3: The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 29: Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.



All Saints Partnership

Excellence and Enjoyment for All

An Introduction to All Saints Partnership

All Saints' Partnership Statement of Intent

The All Saints' Partnership, comprising St Mary Magdalene & St Stephen's in Westminster, St John's Highbury Vale in Islington, St Andrew's (Barnsbury) in Islington and St Paul's in Hammersmith & Fulham, is committed to providing a nurturing and inspiring environment where every child is empowered to reach their full potential. Grounded in our Christian ethos and guided by our values, we strive to create a vibrant and dynamic educational experience that prepares our pupils to lead fulfilling lives and contribute positively to society.

Through our Partnership vision of 'Excellence and Enjoyment for All', we aim to provide a holistic education that fosters spiritual growth, academic excellence, and personal development. Each school is dedicated to being anti-racist institutions by promoting equity & equality, challenging discrimination and celebrating diversity in all its forms.

We believe that Collaboration is the heart of educational excellence. Combining our strengths and resources to provide innovative opportunities and an overall better quality of education for all our pupils. Together, we are stronger!

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1. Aims

At St John's Highbury Vale CE Primary School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders.

This policy focuses on pupils' mental health and wellbeing. It aims to:

- Set out our school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils across our school
- Provide guidance to staff on their role in supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing, including how they can foster and maintain an inclusive culture in which pupils feel able to talk about and reflect on their experiences of mental health
- Support staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental health issues
- Inform pupils and their parents/carers about the support they can expect from our school in respect of pupils' mental health and wellbeing, and provide them with access to resources

We recognise that positive mental health is fundamental to pupils' academic achievement, personal development and safeguarding. We further recognise that mental health difficulties can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has experienced or is at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. All concerns relating to a pupil's mental health will therefore be considered in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance.

Strategic oversight of mental health and wellbeing is the responsibility of the Head of School, Hasina Khan, who fulfils the role of Senior Mental Health Lead. Safeguarding oversight is delivered through the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) arrangements.

It should be read alongside:

- › SEND policy
- › Behaviour policy
- › Child protection and safeguarding policy
- › Attendance policy
- › Equality policy

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy was written with regard to:

- › [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- › [The Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- › Articles 3 and 23 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- › The Children Act 1989
- › The Children Act 2004
- › Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance)
- › Working Together to Safeguard Children
- › Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools
- › Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education
- › Working Together to Improve School Attendance

3. Roles and responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across our school and for understanding risk factors. If any members of staff are concerned about a pupil's mental health or wellbeing, they should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) without delay.

Mental health concerns, including self-harm or suicidal ideation, may be indicators that a child is at risk of harm and will always be managed in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is:

Petra Slater – Assistant Headteacher

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) are:

Hasina Khan – Head of School

Arielle Slack – Assistant Headteacher

Certain members of staff have extra duties to lead on mental health and wellbeing in school. These members of staff include:

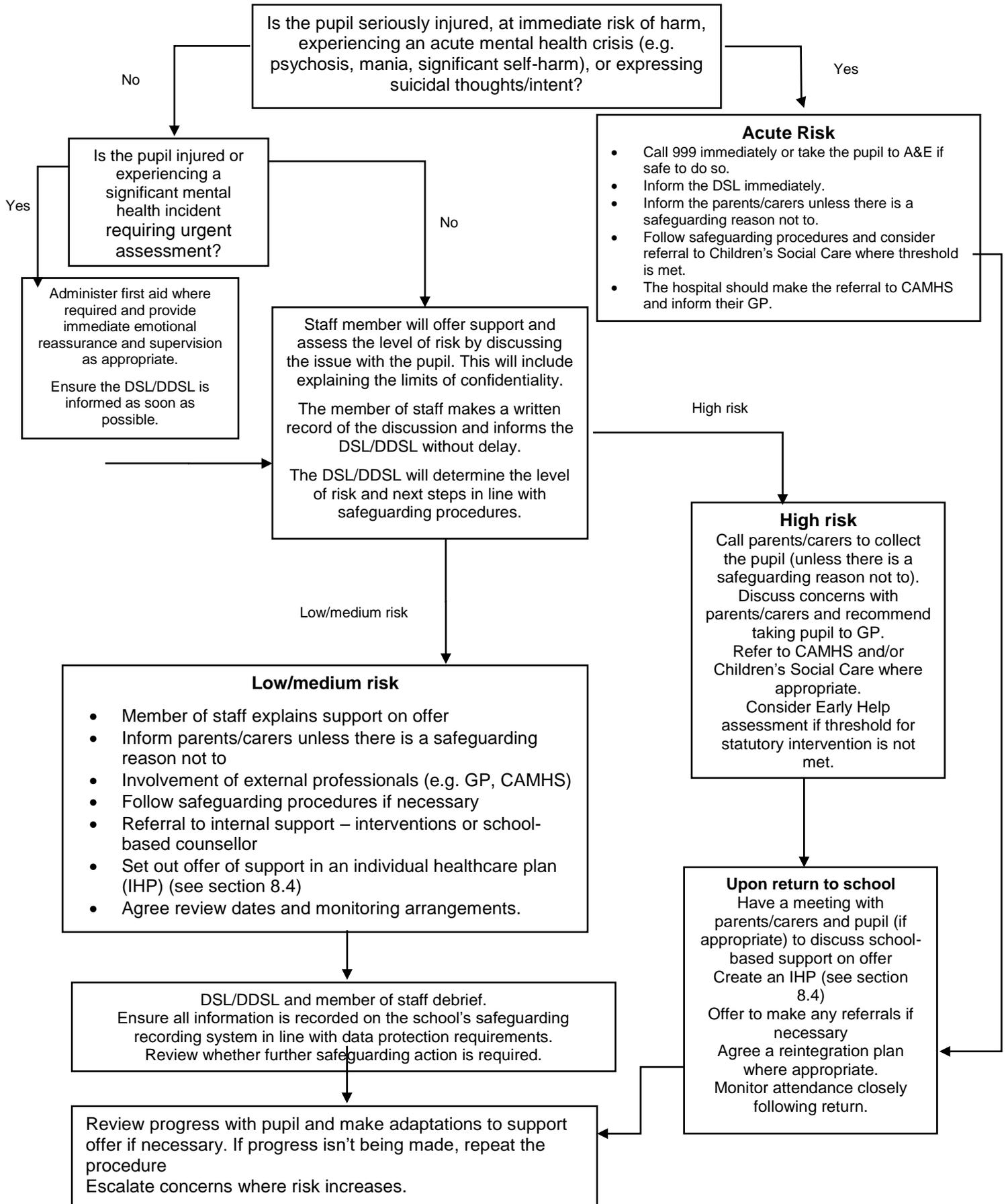
- › Head of School / Senior Mental Health Lead – Hasina Khan
- › Assistant Headteacher – Arielle Slack and Petra Slater
- › Family Support Advisor – Clare Thomson

The Senior Mental Health Lead (Hasina Khan) has strategic oversight of the school's whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. This includes:

- › Embedding mental health within safeguarding, SEND, behaviour and attendance systems
- › Overseeing early identification, graduated support and referral pathways
- › Working in partnership with the DSL and DDSL team on safeguarding-related mental health concerns
- › Liaising with governors, parents/carers and external agencies where appropriate
- › Supporting staff to access appropriate guidance and training relating to mental health and wellbeing

The Head of School retains overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding and mental health arrangements are in place, while the DSL leads on day-to-day safeguarding practice.

4. Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis



5. Warning signs

All staff will be on the lookout for signs that a pupil's mental health is deteriorating. Staff understand that these signs do not in themselves confirm a mental health difficulty, but may indicate that a pupil needs additional support or safeguarding intervention.

Staff recognise that mental health concerns can sometimes be indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding risks and must therefore be reported to the DSL/DDSL in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Some warning signs include:

➤ Changes in:

- Mood or energy level
- Eating or sleeping patterns
- Attitude in lessons or academic attainment
- Level of personal hygiene

➤ Social isolation

➤ Poor attendance or punctuality (including persistent absence or emotionally based school avoidance)

➤ Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure

➤ Abuse of drugs or alcohol

➤ Rapid weight loss or gain

➤ Secretive behaviour

➤ Covering parts of the body that they wouldn't have previously

➤ Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes

➤ Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause

➤ Physical injuries that appear to be self-inflicted

➤ Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

➤ Sudden changes in behaviour, friendship groups or online activity

➤ Evidence of bullying (including online bullying), peer conflict or social withdrawal

➤ Increased risk-taking behaviour

6. Managing disclosures

If a pupil makes a disclosure about themselves or a peer to a member of staff, staff should remain calm, non-judgmental and reassuring. Staff will not investigate, promise confidentiality or ask leading questions.

Staff will focus on the pupil's emotional and physical safety, rather than trying to find out why they are feeling that way or offering advice.

Staff will always follow our school's safeguarding policy and pass on all concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) without delay.

Mental health disclosures, including expressions of self-harm or suicidal thoughts, will always be treated as potential safeguarding concerns and referred to the DSL/DDSL immediately.

All disclosures are recorded and stored in the pupil's confidential child protection file on the school's safeguarding recording system in line with data protection legislation.

When making a record of a disclosure, staff will include:

- The full name of the member of staff who is making the record
- The full name of the pupil(s) involved
- The date, time and location of the disclosure
- The context in which the disclosure was made
- Any questions asked or support offered by the member of staff
- The exact words used by the pupil where possible
- Any immediate actions taken

Records must be factual, objective and completed as soon as possible after the disclosure.

7. Confidentiality

Staff will not promise a pupil that they will keep a disclosure secret – instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality.

Staff will explain that information may need to be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) in order to keep the pupil safe.

The school has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Concerns about a pupil's safety or wellbeing must be shared with the DSL/DDSL so that appropriate action can be taken.

Information sharing is essential to ensure effective safeguarding and coordinated support.

Staff should always share disclosures with at least 1 appropriate colleague. This will usually be the DSL or a DDSL. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis.

Before sharing information disclosed by a pupil with a third party, the member of staff will discuss it with the pupil and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will share
- Why they need to share that information

Staff will attempt to receive consent from the pupil to share their information, but consent is not required where there is a safeguarding concern. The safety and welfare of the pupil will always take priority.

Parents/carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern or doing so would place the pupil at risk of harm. In such cases, advice will be sought from the DSL/DDSL and safeguarding procedures will be followed.

All information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Safeguarding concerns override data protection barriers where a child is at risk of harm.

7.1 Process for managing confidentiality around disclosures

1. Pupil makes a disclosure
2. Member of staff offers support
3. Member of staff explains the issues around confidentiality and rationale for sharing a disclosure with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). Member of staff will attempt to get the pupil's consent to share – however, consent is not required where there is a safeguarding concern. If no consent is given, explain to the pupil who the information will be shared with and why
4. Member of staff will record the disclosure factually and as soon as possible and share the information with the DSL/DDSL without delay, in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.
5. The DSL/DDSL will assess the level of risk and determine next steps, including informing the parent/carers (if appropriate and safe to do so).
6. Any other relevant members of staff or external professionals will be informed on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

8. Supporting pupils

8.1 Baseline support for all pupils

As part of our school's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils, our school offers support to all pupils by:

- Raising awareness of mental health during assemblies, tutor time, PSHE and mental health awareness week in line with statutory Health Education requirements
- Signposting all pupils to sources of online support on our school website
- Having open discussions about mental health during lessons
- Providing pupils with avenues to provide feedback on any elements of our school that is negatively impacting their mental health
- Using age-appropriate tools and pastoral systems to identify pupils who may require additional emotional or mental health support (for example, strengths and difficulties questionnaires or teacher observations). These tools do not constitute a clinical diagnosis but support early identification and intervention.
- Designating a Senior Mental Health Lead (Hasina Khan, Head of School) with strategic oversight of the school's whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- Making classrooms a safe space to discuss mental health and wellbeing through interventions such as:
 - Worry boxes
 - Circle time

All universal provision operates alongside the school's safeguarding systems. Any concerns arising from baseline support activities will be reported to the DSL/DDSL in line with safeguarding procedures.

8.2 Assessing what further support is needed

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), will take a graduated and case-by-case approach to assessing the support our school can provide, further to the baseline support detailed above in section 8.1.

Where appropriate, the Senior Mental Health Lead (Hasina Khan) will provide strategic oversight of this process.

All identified mental health needs will be considered alongside safeguarding, SEND and Equality Act duties.

Our school will offer support in cycles of:

- Assessing what the pupil's mental health needs are (drawing on staff observations, pupil voice, parental input and, where appropriate, external professional advice)
- Creating a plan to provide support
- Taking the actions set out in the plan
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered

This follows the Assess–Plan–Do–Review model and ensures that support is responsive, proportionate and regularly monitored.

Where concerns escalate or risk increases, the DSL/DDSL will consider whether further safeguarding action, Early Help intervention or referral to external services is required.

8.3 Internal mental health interventions

Where appropriate, a pupil will be offered support that is tailored to their needs as part of the graduated approach detailed above. The support offered at our school includes:

- Art therapy
- Weekly talking therapy
- ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) interventions
- Nurture groups

ELSA support is delivered by a trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistant and focuses on developing emotional awareness, emotional regulation, resilience and social skills. Interventions are targeted, time-limited and reviewed regularly as part of the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle.

All school-based interventions are supportive and preventative in nature. They do not replace clinical assessment or specialist treatment delivered by qualified health professionals.

Parental knowledge and, where appropriate, consent will be obtained before a pupil engages in targeted mental health interventions.

All interventions operate alongside the school's safeguarding procedures. Where concerns escalate or risk increases, the DSL/DDSL will review the case and determine whether further safeguarding action, Early Help intervention or referral to external services is required.

All interventions and referrals are recorded and monitored in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

8.4 Individual healthcare plans (IHPs)

A pupil will be offered an individual healthcare plan (IHP) where targeted or ongoing mental health support is required.

IHPs are written in collaboration with the pupil (if appropriate), their parent/carer, and any other relevant professionals. The plan will be proportionate to the pupil's needs and reviewed regularly.

The pupil's IHP will contain the following details:

- A clear description of the pupil's identified mental health needs, including known triggers and early warning signs
- The pupil's needs resulting from the condition
- Specific support for the pupil's educational, social and emotional needs
- The level of support needed
- Who will provide the support
- Who in our school needs to be aware of the child's condition
- What to do in an emergency
- Any reasonable adjustments required to prevent the pupil from being placed at a substantial disadvantage
- Clear review dates and monitoring arrangements

IHPs are working documents and form part of the school's Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle.

All IHPs operate alongside the school's safeguarding procedures. Where concerns escalate or risk increases, the DSL/DDSL will review the plan and determine whether further safeguarding action or referral to external services is required.

8.5 Making external referrals

If a pupil's needs cannot be met by the internal offer our school provides, our school will make, or support parents/carers to make, a referral for external support.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, the referral will be made by the DSL/DDSL in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

A pupil could be referred to:

- Their GP or a paediatrician
- CAMHS
- Mental health charities (e.g. [Samaritans](#), [Mind](#), [Young Minds](#), [Kooth](#))
- Local counselling services
- The London Borough of Islington Children's Services (Early Help or Children's Social Care)

Referrals will be made with parental knowledge and consent unless there is a safeguarding concern that requires immediate action.

The DSL/DDSL will determine the most appropriate referral pathway and ensure that information sharing is proportionate and compliant with data protection legislation.

9. Supporting and collaborating with parents/carers

We will work with parents/carers to support pupils' mental health by:

- Asking parents/carers to inform us of any mental health needs their child is experiencing, so we can offer the right support
- Informing parents/carers of mental health concerns that we have about their child at the earliest appropriate opportunity, unless doing so would place the pupil at risk of harm
- Engaging with parents/carers to understand their mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as that of their child, and support them accordingly to make sure there is holistic support for them and their child
- Highlighting sources of information and support about mental health and wellbeing on our school website, including the mental health and wellbeing policy
- Liaising with parents/carers to discuss strategies that can help promote positive mental health in their child
- Providing guidance to parents/carers on navigating and accessing relevant local mental health services or other sources of support (e.g. parent/carer forums)
- Keeping parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their child is learning about in PSHE, and sharing ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

When informing parents/carers about any mental health concerns we have about their child, we will endeavour to do this face-to-face or via an appropriate secure communication method where this is not possible.

In cases where there is a safeguarding concern, decisions about parental contact will be made by the DSL/DDSL in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

These meetings can be difficult, so our school will ensure that parents/carers are given time to reflect on what has been discussed, and that lines of communication are kept open at the end of the meeting.

A record of what was discussed, and action plans agreed upon in the meeting will be recorded and added to the pupil's confidential record in line with data protection requirements.

If appropriate, an individual healthcare plan (IHP) will be created in collaboration with parents/carers (see section 8.4).

Where a pupil's mental health condition meets the definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010, parents/carers will be involved in agreeing reasonable adjustments.

10. Supporting peers

Watching a friend experience poor mental health can be very challenging for pupils. Pupils may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other or feeling responsible for their peer's safety or wellbeing.

We will offer support to all pupils impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. We will review the support offered on a case-by-case basis. Support might include:

- › Strategies they can use to support their friends safely and appropriately
- › Things they should avoid doing/saying
- › Warning signs to look out for
- › Signposting to sources of external support

Pupils will be reminded that they are not responsible for managing or resolving a peer's mental health difficulties and that concerns should always be shared with a trusted adult.

Where peer concerns raise safeguarding issues (for example, disclosure of self-harm, suicidal thoughts or abuse), staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and inform the DSL/DDSL without delay.

Support for peers will be delivered in a way that protects confidentiality and does not disclose personal information about another pupil.

11. Signposting

Sources of support are displayed around our school and linked to on our school website, so pupils and parents/carers are aware of how they can get help.

Signposting materials are age-appropriate and regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Pupils will be reminded that accessing external support does not replace speaking to a trusted adult in school where they are worried about their own or another pupil's safety.

The Family Support Advisor will be available to provide further information to pupils and parents/carers if they want to learn more about what support is available.

The DSL/DDSL and Senior Mental Health Lead will oversee the appropriateness of external services signposted by the school.

Where a pupil discloses a safeguarding concern while accessing signposted information, staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures without delay.

12. Whole school approach to promoting mental health awareness

12.1 Mental health is taught in PSHE

We follow the [PSHE Association Guidance teaching mental health and emotional wellbeing](#) in line with statutory Health Education requirements.

Pupils are taught to:

- › Develop healthy coping strategies
- › Challenge misconceptions around mental health
- › Understand their own emotional state
- › Keep themselves safe

Teaching is age-appropriate and builds progressively across year groups.

Mental health education forms part of the school's wider safeguarding and personal development curriculum and supports pupils in understanding when and how to seek help.

For more information, see our PSHE curriculum which you can access via the school office or on the school website.

PSHE education does not replace targeted pastoral or safeguarding support. Where concerns arise during lessons, staff will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and inform the DSL/DDSL as appropriate.

12.2 Creating a positive atmosphere around mental health

Staff will create an open culture around mental health by:

- › Discussing mental health with pupils in order to break down stigma
- › Encouraging pupils to speak to a trusted adult if they are worried about their own or another pupil's wellbeing
- › Modelling respectful and inclusive language when discussing mental health
- › Promoting help-seeking behaviours and reinforcing that asking for support is a strength
- › Ensuring pupils know who the DSL/DDSL and other key adults in school are
- › Responding to disclosures calmly, sensitively and in line with safeguarding procedures

Staff will ensure that classroom discussions are handled sensitively and that pupils are not required to share personal experiences.

13. Training

All staff will be offered training so they:

- Have a good understanding of what pupils' mental health needs are
- Know how to recognise warning signs of mental ill health
- Know a clear process to follow if they identify a pupil in need of help

Mental health awareness forms part of the school's safeguarding training programme. All staff receive safeguarding training at induction and regular updates thereafter, including how mental health concerns may be indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Staff are trained to follow the school's reporting procedures and to refer concerns to the DSL/DDSL without delay.

The DSL and DDSLs undertake enhanced safeguarding training in line with statutory requirements.

The Senior Mental Health Lead will access appropriate professional development to maintain strategic oversight of the school's mental health provision.

Training needs are reviewed regularly as part of the school's monitoring arrangements.

14. Support for staff

We recognise that supporting a pupil experiencing poor mental health can affect that staff member's own mental health and wellbeing. To help with this we will:

- Treat mental health concerns seriously
- Offer staff supervision sessions
- Support staff experiencing poor mental health themselves
- Create a pleasant and supportive work environment
- Offer an employee assistance programme
- Provide opportunities for debriefing following serious incidents or safeguarding cases
- Encourage staff to raise concerns about their wellbeing with senior leaders without stigma
- Ensure staff are aware of internal and external wellbeing support available to them

Leaders recognise their duty of care to staff and will consider workload, emotional demands and wellbeing as part of leadership and management responsibilities.

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by Hasina Khan, Head of School annually (or sooner if there are changes to statutory guidance, safeguarding procedures or school practice).

At every review, the policy will be approved by the Governing Body.

The Governing Body will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy as part of its safeguarding and leadership oversight responsibilities.

The DSL/DDSL and Senior Mental Health Lead will contribute to the review process to ensure that safeguarding and mental health procedures remain effective and up to date.

The policy will be made available to staff, parents/carers and published on the school website.