



**Richard Coates
CE Primary School**



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'Let Your Light Shine'

Mental Health and Well-Being Policy 2024-2025



Our Values

At Richard Coates CE Primary School we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff.

We have a supportive and caring ethos which embraces each person as a unique individual.

We know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable at times and anyone may need additional emotional support. Positive mental health is everybody's business and we all have a role to play.

Good relationships are paramount in creating an environment where wellbeing flourishes. The culture at Richard Coates is built upon positive and respectful relationships in all aspects of school life and between all people: staff to staff, children to children, staff to children/children to staff, parents to staff/staff to parents. This is an essential part of ensuring open and honest communication about mental health.

At our school we:

- Help children to understand their emotions and feelings better
- Help children to feel comfortable sharing concerns and worries
- Help children socially to form and maintain relationships
- Promote self-esteem and let children know they are valued as a unique individual
- Encourage and respect individuality and diversity
- Help children and staff to develop emotional resilience and manage setbacks
- Work together to create an environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

We promote a mentally healthy school environment through:

- Creating a strong sense of self worth through our school motto, "Let your light shine"
- Promoting our Christian school values of love, care and respect
- Creating a sense of belonging and community
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities for children to know they are listened to and have a voice
- Promoting independence self reliance and a sense of res
- Providing opportunities to reflect
- Building opportunities to explore feelings, mental health and wellbeing into the curriculum
- Access to appropriate support that meets individual needs



The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy in cases where a pupil's mental health and wellbeing overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified Special Educational Need or Disability.

Lead Members of Staff

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

Mr James Watson - Designated Safeguarding Lead

Mrs Julie Roys and Miss Laura Tweddle - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Miss Samantha Rutter - SENDCO and Senior Mental Health Lead

Mrs Zoe Wilson, Mrs Sarah Bray and Miss Samantha Rutter - Personal Development Team

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Mental Health Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Headteacher. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Where a referral to Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Miss S Rutter as SENDCO and Senior Mental Health Lead with support from the pupil's class teacher.



Our approach mental health and wellbeing at Richard Coates CE Primary School has three different elements:

1) Teaching and learning about Mental Health in the curriculum

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our school curriculum and delivered through lessons and sessions such as PSHE, Science, PE, Worship. Explicit links are also made through subjects such as English, computing and RE.

An integral part of our core work on wellbeing is built into the routines of the school day such as daily worship, 'Let Your Light Shine' celebrations, Zones of Regulation, positive behaviour system, rewards and praise, emotional literacy, 'Get in the Zone' time etc.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We use the PSHE Association for good practice and guidance in PHSE. This includes advice on delivering mental health and emotional wellbeing lessons in a sensitive manner.

2. Additional Targeted Support

From time to time, children may need an additional layer of support in school. This may be delivered as small group intervention with other children, or through developing a toolkit of strategies individual children may find helpful to use.

For example:

- Circle time
- Zones of Regulation
- Calming corners
- BU therapy work
- Time out as appropriate
- Worry boxes or feelings journals
- Lego Therapy or other group interventions
- 1:1 dedicated talk time



- Mindfulness activities
- Regulation toolboxes
- Individual care plan agreed with parents, child and teacher

3. Signposted External Support

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in the SEND Information Report.

We will display age appropriate and relevant sources of support in communal areas and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum.

Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

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

How do we recognise a child is struggling with their mental health and at risk of developing mental health issues?

It is really important that all professionals in school are alert to the signs and symptoms that a child may be struggling with their mental health. It is also important to remember that some mental health issues may not have visible signs.

Some children may try to hide how they are feeling because they:

- worry they won't be taken seriously
- believe others won't understand
- have had a negative experience talking about their thoughts and feelings in the past
- feel that no one can help them
- fear being dismissed or labeled an attention seeker or 'crazy



(Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation, 2006).

Some children may not recognise that they are struggling, or they may be too young to verbalise how they are feeling. Children may not always have the language or ability to communicate how they feel. They may be unsure who to talk to and how to talk about their problems

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Warning signs include of potential mental health issues:

- sudden mood and behaviour changes
- self-harming or talking about this more
- unexplained physical changes, such as weight loss or gain
- sudden poor academic behaviour or performance
- changes in relationships with peers
- changes in eating/sleeping habits
- changes in classroom presentation, such as withdrawal or work avoidance
- low self-esteem and feeling useless
- complaints of upset tummies or feeling unwell
- absenteeism

These signs are some symptoms that are associated with mental health issues, however, there are also many other reasons a child may display these symptoms. It is important for the child's well being that these signs are discussed with parents/carers and colleagues so that the right kind of support can be identified.

By being attentive to a child or young person's mood and behaviour, you can recognise patterns that suggest they need support.

Don't attempt to diagnose mental health issues yourself or make assumptions about what's happening in a child's life.



Managing disclosures

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

Recognising that a child or young person may be struggling with their mental health is the first step in helping them. The next step is to respond appropriately:

1. Be clear about the behaviours that are causing you concern - make a note so you can see any patterns developing. Keep a note of the date, concern and any actions taken at this point.
2. Discuss - talk to the child, parent and colleagues - find an appropriate time and place to talk through what you have noticed. Consider any history or previous concerns (these may be recorded in CPOMS). Take into account any additional needs that may be triggering a certain behaviour (e.g. sensory response from a child with autism or sensory processing disorder).
3. Help with general wellbeing advice, e.g. talk about online wellbeing and safe internet use, good habits and routines, exercise, healthy eating etc. These are all important factors in establishing general health and wellbeing.
4. Review the planned curriculum and classroom routines: consider making any changes that would support the child. Is there something additional that could be taught/implemented to support the child and also benefit other children e.g. anti-bullying work, talking about discrimination, circle time and work on feelings, working on conflict resolution etc
5. Specific individualised support strategies - sometimes specific strategies (used at home and/or at school) can really help a child: a feelings or worry diary, some mindfulness activities, time out or a calm space, allocated teacher time/TA to talk or check in.



6. If none of the above seem to be having an impact, it may be time to consider referrals to external specialist agencies for therapeutic support.
7. At this point you will need to discuss the concern with: Mr James Watson (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and/or Mrs Julie Roys or Miss Laura Tweddle (Deputy Safeguarding Leads).
8. All disclosures should be recorded in writing and on CPOMS where the record can be securely held. This written record should include:
 - Date
 - The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
 - Main points from the conversation
 - Agreed next steps

This information should also be shared with the Mental Health Leads who will offer support and advice about next steps.

9. They will support you in identifying the right referral pathway and assist you in securing any external agency involvement. This will be depending on a number of factors including any predetermining factors that are contributing to the need (e.g. bereavement, change in family circumstances, crisis event) or whether there are any additional SEN needs or disabilities.

Referral pathways may include:

- School Nurse
- Primary Mental Health worker
- Therapeutic counseling through services such as Kalmer Counseling and ASK Psychology
- Educational Psychology Support with ASK Psychology
- Children and Young People's Service (NHS)
- Charities such as Papyrus, Barnardos, Ifucareshare, Autism Northumberland
- Family Gateway
- Early Help



Confidentiality

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

- Who we are going to talk to;
- What we are going to tell them;
- Why do we need to tell them?

We should never share information about a pupil 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, particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm. It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead and Designated Safeguarding Leads. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Working with Parents - sharing concerns about a child's mental health or wellbeing

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? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, 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're 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 on CPOMs.

Identifying Children at Greater Risk

Any child can develop mental health issues, but there are some factors which make some children more likely to suffer. Children with a greater number of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues. Providing early support for these children can reduce the risk of them suffering from long term mental health problems.

Abuse and neglect

The traumatic impact of abuse and neglect increases the likelihood of children developing a range of mental health issues – both during childhood and in later life. These include anxiety, depression, eating disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Norman et al, 2012; Spatz Widom, 1999)

Additional needs and disabilities

These challenges may lead to lower self-confidence, difficulty forming peer networks and social exclusion, putting them at higher risk of developing mental health issues (Falcounbrige, Hunt and Laffan, 2019).

Children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities

The children may experience racism, discrimination and prejudice. In some communities there may be an increased stigma around mental health issues. This can lead to inequalities and issues in accessing appropriate care and support for mental health needs (Race Equality Foundation, 2020).

Family Patterns/History of Mental Illness

Children who have parents or close family members who experience mental health issues, (including drug and alcohol addiction) are more likely to suffer from mental health issues throughout their life.

Life events

Stressful or traumatic situations and experiences, such as bereavement or sudden changes in family circumstances or their environment, can trigger mental health issues.



Living in care

Children in care are more likely than their peers to have a mental health difficulty (NSPCC, 2019c). This can be due to isolation and loneliness. Children in care may also have experienced abuse or neglect, which increases the likelihood of developing mental health issues (National Youth Advocacy Service, 2019)

LGBTQ+ children and young people

LGBTQ+ children and young people may experience:

- prejudice, discrimination and bullying
- a fear of or an actual rejection from family and/or friends
- feeling excluded or like an outsider.

They may also experience gender dysphoria: the distress when someone's assigned gender does not match their identity.

These factors and experiences mean they are more likely than their heterosexual and cisgender peers to experience a range of mental health problems (Chakraborty et al, 2011; Becerra-Culqui, et al 2018).

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order 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 get 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 our regular information evenings
- 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



Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult 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 from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend can look out for (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Staff Mental Health

It is important as adults we look after our own mental health and recognise when we may be experiencing difficulties.

Just as with children, there are many reasons why adults too may need additional help from time to time, due to significant life events, changes in family circumstance, bereavement or stress related to work or other pressures outside of your control.

Staff at Richard Coates are also encouraged to look out for signs and symptoms of mental health issues with colleagues and support them. Indications may be:

- A change in demeanor or physical presentations (changes to self-care)
- Lateness or attendance problems
- Increased requests for leave or support
- Change in mood - either low mood, angry/aggressive mood swings or sudden "over happiness"
- Anxiety and worrying too much
- Not achieving work targets or carrying out duties effectively



We wholeheartedly embrace the concept. “Every conversation is an intervention” and knowing your colleagues are there for you to support through difficulties is an important part of recovery.

If you have concerns about the mental health of a colleague, talk to them and let them know you are there to listen. Validate their feelings - it is important the individual knows you understand and empathise. Check in with them to let their line manager know they are having a difficult time (respect confidentiality). Sometimes supporting people with general wellbeing may help them move towards better mental health, for example, encouraging them to exercise or carry out self help strategies such as mindfulness activities. If you think they need additional support or help, encourage them to see their doctor and to talk to the headteacher.

If you think someone is at risk of harm, you must raise the alert by talking to the headteacher. A risk assessment will be carried out to ascertain the appropriate channels to seek support.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in November 2027.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated when there is a change of personnel.