



# Comberton Primary School Mental health and well-being policy

Senior Mental Health lead: Paul Freear

Teaching and Learning mental health and well-being lead: Tamsin Poyner

Named governors with lead on mental health: Kylie Bates and Emma Lander

**Our Intent:** Our role at Comberton is to spark curiosity, creating a world of opportunity, awe and wonder for our children and staff. We aim to equip our children with the knowledge, skills and values to lead productive, healthy and inspired lives in modern day Britain.

## Our Values

Our core values, supported by the British Values of: <i>democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; and the mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs</i> , are:	
Respect	<i>for all members of the school community; for the beliefs and ideas of others and the environment we create.</i>
Responsibility	<i>for our own actions, our own learning, and our pursuit of excellence.</i>
Tolerance	<i>celebrating and understanding differences, and learning from each other.</i>
Collaboration	<i>working together with different people for a common goal.</i>
Perseverance	<i>never, ever giving up. To be the best we can be.</i>
Determination	<i>to do the right thing and wanting to succeed.</i>

## Why mental health and well-being is important

*While rates of mental ill health do increase as children get older, early intervention is key to giving young people the best start in life. Primary schools have a vital role to play in supporting children’s mental health – teaching them the skills they need to recognise and deal with their emotions, and helping those with difficulties get the support they need. - “Mentally Healthy Schools.”*

*We believe that everyone working in education should have the opportunity to enjoy the highest possible standard of wellbeing and mental health. We are united in our view that improved wellbeing among staff is a key outcome for education policy. Our staff are a precious resource: valuing them, and their wellbeing and mental health, is a duty we all share. – The Education Staff well-being charter, November 2021.*

At Comberton Primary School, we recognise how important mental health and emotional well-being is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. Therefore, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers).

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. Research tells us that more than one in 10 primary school children aged five to 10 has an identifiable mental health condition – that’s around three children in every class.

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 and staff 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 and staff 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.

This policy has been created with regard to the following DfE guidance:

- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2016) 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disabilities code of practice: 0 to 25'
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE (2019) 'Workload reduction toolkit'

### **Our aims**

Our key aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a school that:

- ensures all children and staff are valued.
- children and staff have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- children and staff 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.

### **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 members of our community 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.

### **Links to other policies**

This document links to our policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, Equalities, Peer on Peer Abuse, SEND, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and our Staff Code of Conduct. 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.

## **Supporting pupil's mental health and well-being**

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 both protective and risk factors. 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. Staff should be aware of possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, for example - physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, 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.

#### **Senior Mental Health Lead**

The role of the SMHL is to promote and lead the creation of a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely to occur, in order to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the school community and instil resilience in pupils. The SMHL will:

- Oversee the whole-school approach to mental health, including how this is reflected in policies, the curriculum and pastoral support, how staff are supported with their own mental health, and how the school engages pupils and parents with regards to pupils' mental health and awareness.
- Ensure that key staff are equipped with the knowledge and training required to identify pupils whose behaviour suggests they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.
- Raise awareness of mental health and well-being and employ an efficient referral processes in order to help pupils and staff access early support and interventions.
- Ensure the school works effectively with external agencies so that the school can provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment.
- Deploy resources (both financial and staffing) to provide support for pupils and staff with mental health difficulties.
- Identify where wellbeing concerns represent safeguarding concerns, and ensure that appropriate safeguarding referrals are made in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

## **Vulnerability team**

Our vulnerability team consists of the Headteacher (DSL and SMHL), Deputy Head teacher (SENDCo and DDSL) and our family support worker (DDSL). This team meets each week and reviews the provision and progress of pupils already accessing support or reviews referrals made by staff. Each referred child is discussed in detail and then support, based on a tiered approach, is acted upon.

- Tier 1: In class support from teacher and teaching assistant and light touch check in by one of this team.
- Tier 2: more specific work either through 1-1, small group or family support.
- Tier 3: referring family to external agency. This could include CAMHS, CAMHS CAST, Reach for Well-being, Educational Psychology for Everyone, Early Help or the School Nurse.
- Tier 4: Referral into Children's Services through Family Front Door.

The vulnerability team will:

- Collaborate (as SENDCO, headteacher and family support worker) to outline and strategically develop SEMH policies and provisions for the school.
- Plan a high standard of care to pupils who have SEMH difficulties.
- Review the deployment of the school's budget and other resources in order to effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEMH difficulties.
- Act as a key point of contact with external agencies, especially the mental health support services, LA support services and mental health support teams.
- Provide professional guidance to colleagues about mental health and work closely with staff members, parents and other agencies.
- Refer pupils with SEMH difficulties to external services, e.g. specialist children and young people's mental health services, to receive additional support where required.
- Oversee the outcomes of interventions on pupils' education and wellbeing.
- Liaise with parents of pupils with SEMH difficulties, where appropriate.
- Liaise with other schools, educational psychologists, health and social care professionals, and independent or voluntary bodies.

## **Teaching and Learning mental health and well-being lead:**

The Teaching and Learning mental health and well-being lead will:

- Support the promotion a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely to occur.
- Lead and support staff in delivering a curriculum which includes teaching pupils about mental health and well-being and reinforcing these messages in both the school's activities and its ethos.
- Lead and work with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and well-being (e.g. assemblies, mental health week, #helloyellow)
- Lead the PSHRE curriculum and support staff in their teaching about mental health.
- Provide advice and support to staff and organise training and updates, where relevant.

## **Supporting children's positive mental health**

The school utilises various strategies to support children's positive mental health and help to prevent mental health problems.

- A structured PSHRE curriculum which promotes good mental health, positive well-being and effective, safe relationships.
- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health. We take part in World mental health day and Children's mental health week.
- Well-being interventions led by either our family support worker or classroom based teaching assistants.

- Pupil mentor groups or 1:1 targeted work (led by our family support worker who is a Mental Health First Aider and ELSA trained).
- Playground Buddies – a lunchtime group supporting younger children at lunchtime.
- Kindness/compliments boards throughout the year.
- Well-being Champions – allocated roles in each key Stage 2 class.
- A transition programme (both to secondary schools and to the next year group) which includes vulnerable children having extra transition days.
- Praise boxes - a mechanism where children can be praised for certain duties, tasks or things they have done and have them celebrated in class.
- Worry boxes - a similar mechanism where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class.
- Feelings boards
- Circle time

### **Teaching about mental health and emotional well-being**

Through our PSHRE 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. We use Corum Scarf materials and then supplement this where necessary to meet the needs of the class.

#### **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

As part of our approach to the teaching of positive mental health we will:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are paramount.
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs.
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support.
- Involve children in the care and support they have.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated.

### **Early Identification**

Our identification system involves a range of processes and we aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse.

- We have a culture where children can share their worries or concerns with any adult and they know they will be listened to.
- We use worry boxes in each class for children to raise concerns, these are checked by the class teacher.
- Our Vulnerability team are a visible presence each lunchtime and can recognise changes in pupil behaviour or be available if a child wishes to talk.
- Staff report more significant concerns about individual children to the Vulnerability Team using a referral form – this is then discussed at weekly vulnerability meetings.
- Pupil progress review meetings (termly) allow an opportunity for staff to raise concerns.
- We gain information from parents through parental meetings and have an open door policy for parents to access teachers, the leadership team and the family support worker.

Staff are aware that signs a pupil maybe experiencing a mental health problem might include:

- 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 safeguarding 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. Staff make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with an appropriate person (one of the vulnerability team) in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil. All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential file, 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.

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

We have access to a range of specialist services (CAMHS, CAMHS CAST, Reach for Well-being, MentorLink, Educational Psychology for Everyone, The Children's Centre, Early Help or the School Nurse) and referrals to these services will be made by a member of the Vulnerability Team 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. During any external support we will be in regular contact with the service to review the support and consider next steps, this will be discussed as part of the weekly vulnerability meeting.

## **Supporting staff's mental health and well-being**

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and preventing stress is a major factor in maintaining the well-being of our school staff. In light of this, the school understands the importance of trying to reduce and deal with stress, and the factors that may cause our employees to become stressed.

The school recognises that individuals will react differently to stressful situations and become stressed by different situations and stimuli throughout their working lives. Because of this, it is important that staff understand the different factors that may cause themselves or their colleagues' stress.

The following sources of stress can often be attributed to work:

- Workload and work-life balance
- Accountability (including performance, testing, inspections)
- Fear of change and trying to cope with change
- Pastoral concerns relating to pupils – mental health, safeguarding, behavioural
- Relationships with colleagues or parents
- Harassment or bullying
- Lack of job security

The school recognises that home and personal lives can also prove stressful for staff; bereavement, separation, financial and family problems make people more vulnerable to stress at work. It is common that a combination of stress at home and work can make people particularly stressed. The school will strive to identify and deal with symptoms of stress quickly in order to maintain a healthy workplace. Warning signs may include:

### **Behavioural indicators**

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in eating habits
- Increased smoking or drinking
- Isolation from friends and family

## **Physical indicators**

- Tiredness
- Indigestion and nausea
- Headaches
- Aching muscles
- Heart palpitations

## **Mental indicators**

- Indecisiveness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Low self-esteem

## **Emotional indicators**

- Anger or irritability
- Anxiety
- Hypersensitivity
- Feeling drained and lethargic

## **Actions to support staff's positive mental health and well-being**

The school will utilise various strategies to support staff's positive mental health and well-being and help to prevent mental health problems.

- Promoting a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Developing a school climate that encourages staff to be open if they feel stressed, to take breaks and to have a full life outside of work.
- Ensuring the school's ethos reflects its commitment to reducing workload and creating a working environment that is focussed, purposeful and considers individuals' wellbeing.
- Actively trying to eliminate stressors in the school, e.g. by considering the format and quantity of information it requests from the SLT.
- Ensuring monitoring visits are strategic, focussed and reflective of its monitoring plan, and being clear with staff ahead of the visit about what the focus will be and the information that will be required from them.
- Ensuring meetings are purposeful, focussed, structured and relevant to the school development priorities.
- Reaching out to staff during difficult points in their personal lives, e.g. separation, bereavement, allowing sufficient time off and supporting them when they return to work.
- Ensuring staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and monitored.
- Recognising well-being and mental health issues and ensuring the headteacher puts measures in place to support staff wellbeing.
- Developing a sensitive performance management process that is linked to clear job specifications.
- Organising extra support for staff at times of increased stress, e.g. during Ofsted inspections.
- Encouraging staff to take advantage of any initiatives introduced to promote wellbeing and effective working.
- Regularly communicating with staff, encouraging them to be open when discussing stress.
- Making reasonable adjustments for members of staff who are struggling with long-term mental health issues.
- Completing an annual well-being audit and adapting and amending the school's approach following analysis.

- Demonstrating a commitment to the Education Staff well-being charter.
- Creating a well-being board, located in the staffroom, to share advice, guidance and strategies for managing stress and supporting well-being.
- Providing further support through a counselling service (currently the school utilises Alison Hill, well-being for you) for those staff who require it.

**Staff self-management**

Staff have a responsibility to support their own mental health and well-being and should speak to their colleagues and senior staff if they are struggling with their mental wellbeing, or feeling stressed in their personal lives or at work. Good practice includes:

- Promoting a positive, supportive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Managing their workload, and establishing and maintaining a healthy balance between work and life.
- Being open to discussing stress.
- Recognising the early signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves and their colleagues.
- Supporting co-workers if they become stressed, which may include practical assistance or emotional reassurance.
- Reporting honestly about their wellbeing and any incidents of stress, e.g. being overworked.
- Speaking to the headteacher about any concerns they may have regarding their workload, stress, or mental wellbeing - asking for help.
- Attending events and training opportunities which promote wellbeing and health.
- Not acting in a manner which endangers themselves or others.
- Reporting any concerns they have about their co-workers' stress and/or mental health to the headteacher.

**Staff Training**

Training needs are identified through school self-evaluation, staff review meetings, our safeguarding training cycle and priorities in the school development plan. Staff will receive training on protective and risk factors, types of mental health needs and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems.

Training for key staff (SMHL, members of the vulnerability team, teaching and learning mental health lead) has included Mental Health First Aid, ELSA, Anxiety and Emotionally Based School Avoidance, Mental Health Champions, Addressing self-harm in schools and Peer on Peer abuse.

**Monitoring and reviewing procedures**

The governing body will monitor the implementation and impact of this policy, which will be reviewed every two years. The Headteacher will provide the SLT and governors with necessary information and summaries of the impact of the policy on the practice of the school.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy.

Signed by:

Chair of Full Governing Body: .....

Date: .....

Head teacher: .....

Date: .....

Agreed at the FGB Meeting on: .....



# Your wellbeing matters. We have signed up to the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter to:



**Prioritise staff mental health**



**Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and others' wellbeing**



**Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage**



**Establish a clear communications policy**



**Give staff a voice in decision-making**



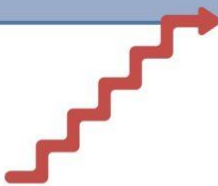
**Drive down unnecessary workload**



**Champion and enable flexible working**



**Create a good behaviour culture**



**Support staff to progress in their careers**



**Include a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health**



**Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing**

**Education Staff Wellbeing Charter**  
**For more information: [www.gov.uk/dfe](http://www.gov.uk/dfe)**