

# Applecroft School



## Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

<b>Person Responsible:</b>	<b>Assistant Headteacher</b>
<b>Review Cycle:</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Date of Issue:</b>	<b>May 2026</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>May 2027</b>

# Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

## 1) Introduction:

### **School Vision:**

'To be a positive and inspiring community that nurtures each individual and empowers leaders for life'.

### **School Mission Statement:**

'Nurturing Potential, Inspiring Minds, Changing Lives'

### **School Values:**

- Ambition and Leadership
- Kindness and Supportiveness
- Respect and Honesty
- Determination and Resilience

## 2) Policy Statement:

At Applecroft, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community; pupils, staff, parents and carers, and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health.

We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. Persistent mental health problems may lead to pupils having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice identifies Social, Emotional and Mental Health as one of the four areas of Special Educational Need.

All children go through ups and downs through their school career and some face significant life events. Current NHS data indicates that approximately 20% of children and young people aged 8 to 16 have probable mental health needs. These needs can have an enormous impact on their quality of life, relationships and academic achievement.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that "in order to help their pupils succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy".

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 pupil's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role in school is to ensure that they are able to manage times of change and stress, be resilient, are supported to reach their potential and access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that pupils learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues and where they can go if they need help and support.

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

- all pupils are valued
- pupils have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- pupils feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma
- positive mental health is promoted and valued
- bullying is not tolerated.

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing and we have a separate policy dedicated to this.

### **3) Aims:**

This policy aims to outline:

- how we promote positive mental health
- how we prevent mental health problems
- how we identify and support pupils with mental health needs
- how we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent mental health problems getting worse
- key information about some common mental health problems
- where parents, staff and pupils can get advice and support

### **4) Definition of Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Mental health is "a state of wellbeing 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 Organization)

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people to:

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve

## **5) A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health:**

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help pupils become more resilient, be happy and successful and to work in a proactive way to prevent problems before they arise. We do this by:

- creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
- adhering to Herts Therapeutic Thinking approach to behaviour management.
- focusing on the 5 steps to wellbeing.
- helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
- promoting self-esteem and ensuring children understand their importance in the World.
- helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks.
- teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
- identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services, parents and carers.
- supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.
- developing an open culture where it's normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
- providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- providing opportunities to reflect.
- enabling access to appropriate support.
- mental Health and RSE for all year groups
- mental health assemblies
- wellbeing and Mental Health week and access to information around the school
- workshops for parents and carers
- small intervention groups/1:1 direct work to focus on emotions, mental health, resilience, and wellbeing.
- children to be aware that they can drop in and see a designated adult if they are anxious or worried about a certain situation/issue.

## **6) Roles and Responsibilities:**

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote this in and out of their classrooms.

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that pupils with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

All staff understand possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems. These can include: a physical long-term illness, having a parent who has

mental health difficulties, death, and loss such as the loss of friendships, a family breakdown and bullying. The staff also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, positive communication, developing problem-solving skills, a sense of worth or belonging and emotional literacy.

#### **Key staff supporting Mental Health at Applecroft:**

Named Mental Health Lead - Ruth Johnson (Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion and Wellbeing)

Pastoral Lead - Katie Hildreth

Mental Health First Aider - Ruth Johnson

There are clear links with the Behaviour & Discipline Policy because we believe that behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, is likely to be related to an unmet mental health need. We consider behaviour to be a message.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the school environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to pupils with mental health needs and their families.

#### **7) Supporting Pupils' Positive Mental Health:**

We believe we have a key role in promoting pupils' positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Applecroft has developed a range of strategies and approaches including;

##### Pupil-led Activities

- campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health e.g. Children's Mental Health Week

##### Transition Support

- transition Workshops and support across Year 6 in the Summer Term and other opportunities for relevant mental health workshops for pupils / staff / parent / carers throughout the year
- transition meetings with parent/carers, pupils and relevant staff
- yearly transition photos for all children
- transition passports/one-page profiles available for all staff to be aware of vulnerable children's needs
- key adults might support secondary school visits with vulnerable pupils

##### Class Activities

- worry boxes and monsters
- emotional bank accounts
- mindfulness and breathing/meditation in class
- sporting activities
- class rewards e.g. house points, marbles in a jar

##### Whole School

- Mental Health Wellbeing focus threading throughout the school ethos and PSHE curriculum

- Anna Freud Schools in Mind resources
- encouraging positives relationships so children can be aware of Trusted Adults around them and where to find support
- Daily Mile
- using the power of reading to explore themes and learn about emotions, difference, loss, bullying, change, resilience, etc.
- displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support both within and outside school
- After school clubs e.g. choir, sporting clubs, cookery

### Small Group Activities

- small friendship, social skills groups
- lunch Club support
- breakout rooms/areas for those children who are finding the classroom overwhelming

### Teaching about Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

At Applecroft, we teach children about mental health and emotional wellbeing through our curriculum.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery & Reception) we follow the statutory framework that sets out the standards to make sure that children aged from birth to 5 learn, develop and are kept safe. 'Personal, Social and Emotional Development' (PSED) is a prime area of learning which we support and deliver through both 'adult directed tasks' and 'continuous provision'.

In Key Stage 1 & 2 (Years 1-6) children learn about mental health and emotional wellbeing through our PSHE curriculum which we deliver through EC Publishing's PSHE scheme. More information can be found on the [PSHE section](#) of the school website.

We teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help pupils to be more resilient, understand about mental health and help reduce the stigma of mental health problems. We support this using other resources such as those from Mentally Healthy Schools, The Anna Freud Centre and using Zones of Regulation.

Our approach is to:

- provide a safe environment to enable pupils to express themselves and be listened to
- provide key and trusted adults with an emphasis on relationships • ensure the welfare and safety of pupils as paramount
- identify appropriate support for pupils based on their needs
- involve parents and carers when their child needs support
- involve pupils in the care and support they have
- monitor, review and evaluate the support with pupils and keep parents and carers updated

### **8) Early Identification**

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible and provide a prompt response. We do this in different ways including:

- identifying individuals that might need support

- being an Attachment Aware School
- working with the Family Link Support Worker who is often the first point of contact with families seeking support
- home visits in EYFS to identify needs
- analysing behaviour, exclusions, attendance and behaviour incidents
- pupil voice
- staff report concerns about individual pupils to the line manager and Designated Safeguarding Team
- worry boxes in each class for pupils to raise concerns which are checked by the class teacher
- DSL post box for pupils to raise concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead
- weekly staff briefing for staff to be informed of updates of individual children
- gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
- parental meetings
- enabling pupils to raise concerns to class teacher and support staff
- enabling parents and carers to raise concerns through the school class teacher or to any member of staff - we have an 'Open Door Policy'
- meetings with outside support services such as CAMHS, SALT, ASD, Mentoring/ Counselling or Educational Psychologist

All staff have had training on the protective and risk factors (see Appendix 1), types of mental health needs (see Appendix 2) and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the appropriate Phase Leader, the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion and Wellbeing and/or a DSL.

These signs might include:

- non-verbal behaviour
- isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- lowering academic achievement
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- an increase in lateness or absenteeism
- not wanting to do P.E. or get changed for P.E.
- drug or alcohol misuse
- physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- rapid weight loss or gain
- secretive behaviour

Staff are aware that mental health needs such as anxiety might appear as noncompliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the school's child protection procedures are followed. A risk assessment and plan will be made.

### **Disclosures by Pupils**

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgmental to pupils who verbally disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of pupils is paramount and staff listen rather than advise. Staff will not promise a pupil that they will keep a disclosure secret.

Staff also recognise persistent and unusual non-verbal disclosures in behaviours in line with the NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) recommendation that behaviour may be an unmet need or message.

Staff will always follow our school's safeguarding policy and pass on all concerns to the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion and Wellbeing and/or Designated Safeguarding Team and these concerns will be recorded in order to provide appropriate support to the pupil.

### **Confidentiality**

All disclosures are recorded and held on the pupil's confidential CPOMS file, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

### **Assessment, Interventions and Support**

All concerns are reported on CPOMS to the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion and Wellbeing /Designated Safeguarding Team and recorded. We then implement our assessment system based on levels of need to ensure that pupils get the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating. The Safeguarding Team regularly reviews all processes. All staff are trained to use CPOMS. We recognise that just like physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing can vary at any given time and is fluid and changes, there are no absolutes.

### **9) Working with Specialist Services**

In some cases a pupil's social emotional mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, school refusal and other complex needs. We make links with a range of specialist services, such as CAMHS and the school nurse, and have regular contact with the services to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring the pupils' provision.

### **10) Involving Parents and Carers**

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the social emotional mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting their children with mental health needs.

To support parents and carers:

- we organise and signpost to workshops accessing expertise from services such as Nessie, Space, ADDVance
- we provide information and signposting to organisations on our websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes
- we have an Open-Door policy
- we support parents and carers with children with mental health needs through sensitive and supportive regular meetings and signposting

When a concern has been raised the school will:

- contact parents and carers and meet with them
- in most cases parents and carers will be involved in decisions regarding their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as child protection issues.
- offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- be available for follow up calls
- make a record of the meeting
- agree an action plan
- discuss how the parents and carers can support their child
- keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions

Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger.

We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. Pupils are our primary concern, and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority. We also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs

### **11) Involving Pupils**

We seek pupils' views and feedback about our approach and whole school mental health activities through pupil voice, surveys and class questions

We have a small group of pupils from Years 2-6 who make up our Pupil Wellbeing Team. They can take feedback and suggestions from their class to be shared and discussed with the rest of the team. They also act as buddies for new pupils who join Applecroft.

### **12) Supporting the Social and Emotional Needs of Pupils**

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in pupils and know what to do and where to get help (see Appendix 2).

Those staff with a specific responsibility have more specialised training and where possible access to supervision from mental health professionals.

Staff training to raise awareness of social emotional and mental health wellbeing topics have been accessed through The Anna Freud Centre and Place2Be. We also provide 'in-house' training from

the Safeguarding Team on topics such as Adverse Childhood Experiences, attachment needs and behaviour.

## Protective and Risk Factors

	<b>Risk factors</b>	<b>Protective factors</b>
<b>In the child</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic influences</li> <li>• Low IQ and learning disabilities</li> <li>• Specific development delay or neuro-diversity</li> <li>• Communication difficulties</li> <li>• Difficult temperament</li> <li>• Physical illness</li> <li>• Academic failure</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure attachment experience</li> <li>• Outgoing temperament as an infant</li> <li>• Good communication skills, sociability</li> <li>• Being a planner and having a belief in control</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• A positive attitude</li> <li>• Experiences of success and achievement</li> <li>• Faith or spirituality</li> <li>• Capacity to reflect</li> </ul>
<b>In the family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overt parental conflict including domestic violence</li> <li>• Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted)</li> <li>• Inconsistent or unclear discipline</li> <li>• Hostile and rejecting relationships</li> <li>• Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs</li> <li>• Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect</li> <li>• Parental psychiatric illness</li> <li>• Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder</li> <li>• Death and loss – including loss of friendship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult)</li> <li>• Affection</li> <li>• Clear, consistent discipline</li> <li>• Support for education</li> <li>• Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord</li> </ul>

	<b>Risk factors</b>	<b>Protective factors</b>
<b>In the school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying including online (cyber)</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships</li> <li>• Deviant peer influences</li> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Peer on peer abuse</li> <li>• Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear policies on behaviour and bullying</li> <li>• Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct)</li> <li>• 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems</li> <li>• A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health</li> <li>• Good pupil to teacher/school staff relationships</li> <li>• Positive classroom management</li> <li>• A sense of belonging</li> <li>• Positive peer influences</li> <li>• Positive friendships</li> <li>• Effective safeguarding and Child Protection policies.</li> <li>• An effective early help process</li> <li>• Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working</li> <li>• Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to can raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively</li> </ul>
<b>In the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic disadvantage</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation</li> <li>• Other significant life events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider supportive network</li> <li>• Good housing</li> <li>• High standard of living</li> <li>• High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying</li> <li>• Opportunities for valued social roles</li> <li>• Range of sport/leisure activities</li> </ul>

### Where to get information and support

#### *Guidance and Advice Documents:*

[Mental health and behaviour in schools](#) - advice for schools, Department for Education (2018)

[Teacher guidance: teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing](#), PSHE Association, Funded by the Department for Education (2021)

[Keeping children safe in education](#) - statutory guidance for schools and colleges, Department for Education (2025)

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#) - statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England, Department for Education (2014)

[Healthy child programme](#) - a recommended framework of universal and progressive services for children and young people to promote optimal health and wellbeing, Department of Health (2023)

[Future in mind - promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#) - a report produced by the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce to examine how to improve mental health services for children and young people, Department of Health (2015)

[NICE guidance on social, emotional and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education](#), National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2022)

[What works in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and responding to mental health problems in schools?](#) - advice for schools and framework document written by Professor Katherine Weare, National Children's Bureau (2015)

#### *For general information and support:*

[www.justtalkherts.org](http://www.justtalkherts.org) young people's emotional wellbeing information and signposting to help in Hertfordshire

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) advice and support on mental health problems

[www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk) (e-learning)

[www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk) tackles the stigma of mental health

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org) challenges attitudes towards mental health

#### *For support on specific mental health needs:*

Anxiety UK [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk) OCD UK [www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

Eating Disorders [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

National Self-Harm Network [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

Self-Harm [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK - PAPYRUS: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)