Emotional wellbeing and Mental Health Policy

Tachbrook Nursery School

‘Happy, Healthy, High Expectations’

Reviewed: September 2024

Policy Statement

> *Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)*

At Tachbrook Nursery school, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and supporting the emotional wellbeing of all children, parents/carers and staff.

We have a kind and supportive ethos which values each individual and recognises them as part of the school community. Each individual's emotional and mental wellbeing has an impact on those around them, so it is important to make sure that everyone has the support they need.

We know that everyone can experience challenges in life that can make us vulnerable, and need extra support. We believe that positive mental health is everyone's business and we all have a role to play.

Scope

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Personal, Social and Emotional Development policy, Behaviour Management and Anti-bullying policies. It should also be read in conjunction with the Administration of Medication policy in cases where a child's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a child has an identified special educational need which impacts on their mental health. In some cases this policy may overlap with our safeguarding and child protection policy.

Safeguarding

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or emotional wellbeing of a child should speak to the SENDco in the first instance. If there is a fear that the child is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed alongside this. If the child 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.

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are taught every day at nursery as part of our Personal, Social and Emotional Development curriculum. As one of the prime areas of the Early Years Foundation stage, this is embedded in all of our teaching and learning and is the universal support that we give to all children.

We teach all children to:

- Understand their emotions and feelings better
- Feel comfortable sharing any worries or concerns
- Form and maintain relationships
- Have self-esteem and know that they count
- Be confident to be themselves

- Develop emotional resilience and manage setbacks.
- Manage everyday stress and keep well-regulated by using helpful strategies that children can eventually become independent with.

Some children may experience difficulties due to sudden life changes, such as bereavement, housing problems, separation/divorce, or due to more long term problems, such as attachment disorder. We will offer targeted support to those children and families that is based around their individual needs.

Trauma

Early experiences have a significant impact on the developing brains of babies and very young children. During this time, early interactions and relationships between babies and their parents/carers are crucial to healthy brain development. This is also influenced by trauma, experienced both within families and also within communities (for example where people are discriminated against because of their gender, ethnicity etc). We recognise the impact of trauma on children and their families and offer strategies to support them according to the ARC framework.

Individual Care Plans

Where a child is experiencing significant difficulties, it may be helpful to draw up an individual care plan. This may be for children causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a child's concerns/condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- How the staff team should support the child every day at Nursery

Any aims and strategies relating to this should be reflected in the child's Termly Review or SEND support Plan to ensure that the whole staff team is aware of the how the pupil should be supported.

Targeted support may also include:

- Circle time
- Friendship activities
- Resources for managing emotions and regulating own behaviour, e.g. incredible 5 point scales, traffic lights, Protective Behaviours etc.
- Extra home visits
- Team Around the Family Meetings
- Resilience planning (using a framework to plan support for a child across all of the areas of their daily life- based on research into resilience in children affected by trauma or difficult life events.)
- Trauma Informed Practice (an understanding of the ways in which exposure to trauma can affect a child's behaviour, wellbeing and learning; and research-based strategies which we would put into place to support such children).

Sometimes it may be appropriate to refer a child for external support from CAMHS. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the SENDco.

Possible warning signs of poor emotional wellbeing or mental health issues

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a child 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 SENDco. Possible warning signs might include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Aggressive play
- Lack of stranger danger/ inappropriately familiar with unknown adults
- Extreme separation anxiety
- Negative attention seeking behaviour
- Emotions very close to the surface
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Becoming withdrawn- socially and /or from play

Managing disclosures

A child may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a family member to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a child chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a family member to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the child's confidential file. 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

You can record any disclosures or any concerns on the Tachbrook safeguarding form, kept in the staff room.

This information should be shared with the SENDco (and DSL if the disclosure involves a potential safeguarding issue) who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

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

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

We should never share information about a child without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, although if we feel the child is at risk of some physical or emotional harm, the information must always be shared with the DSL, who will advise what will happen next.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the SENDco. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the child, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support.
If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed if we think they pose a danger to the child, but the designated safeguarding lead must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

We recognise that parents are often under stress and suffering from difficulties themselves, so it is essential that we take this into account in order to best support the children. We take a non-judgemental approach that sees emotional and mental health difficulties in their systemic context within families and groups. Our Mental Health First aider is trained to offer parents initial support for their own mental health and pathways to further support if needed.

We will support parents by:

- Recognising any needs they may have that are impacting on their own and/or their child's mental health and wellbeing.
- Highlighting sources of support for parents, both within and outside of the school.
- Offering support if they have concerns about their child
- Sharing ideas about how to promote positive mental health in their children
- Making any referrals necessary to ensure good mental health for their children.
- Signposting parents to any referrals they may need.

Signposting

- We will ensure that staff and parents/carers are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community.
- We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the cloakroom and staff room.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our targeted support, the school will work together with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing. These may include:

- Educational psychology
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Social workers

- Therapists
- Child development service

Staff roles and needs

When working with children and families it is essential that we are:

- Friendly
- Non-judgemental
- Welcoming
- Good listeners
- Able to explain why we say and do things
- Respectful
- Supportive of parents/carers to understand the consequences of their actions on their children- what works well and what doesn't work so well.
- Transparent- never colluding with a behaviour that puts a child at risk of poor mental health or emotional wellbeing
- Compassionate- letting parents/carers know that we are advocates for them and their children.

We recognise that staff play a crucial role in supporting all children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. It is essential that staff are supported by the school in this work, as it can sometimes be challenging. In addition to this, staff may also have issues arising in their personal lives that may cause them to need extra support and which may impact on their ability to support the children.

For this reason we will promote a school culture of support and openness, so that staff feel able to ask for the support that they need, when they need it. Our Mental Health First aider is trained to offer staff initial support for their own mental health and pathways to further support if needed.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe.

The MindEd learning portal[1] provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students.

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

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in June 2025.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.

1