

## Pupil Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy (*draft October 2021*)

At Riverside School, we actively encourage confidence in pupils to enable them to flourish and achieve as individuals, nurturing their creative skills and learning to make a difference

(Riverside School Vision Statement)

### Intent

It is widely recognised that a child's emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development and learning as well as their physical and social health and their mental wellbeing in adulthood (DfE, 2021). Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs can be at higher risk of poor mental health and this can be more difficult to identify in pupils with SEND.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are part of everyday life. At Riverside it is our intention to ensure our school is an environment in which the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all our pupils can flourish. This policy establishes that we consistently employ the following principles that promote and protect all pupils. This evidence-based approach, provided by the DfE and Public Health England supports a whole-school implementation of mental health and wellbeing:

- Leadership, management and governors that support and champion efforts to promote emotional health and wellbeing at all levels across the school
  - An ethos and environment that promote respect and value diversity
  - Curriculum, teaching and learning that promote resilience and support social and emotional learning
  - Enabling student voice to influence decisions so pupils feel listened to
  - Staff development to support their own health and wellbeing and that of pupils
  - Identifying the needs of pupils and monitoring the impact of interventions
  - Working with parents, families and carers to reach the best outcome for pupils
  - Targeted support and appropriate referrals to ensure all pupils have a voice
- (Public Health England and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (2015))

In order to support us to deliver these principles, we recognise the importance of implementing the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families' framework, the NHS 5 Steps to Wellbeing.

All staff, including governors, are committed to supporting the mental health of our pupils. A whole-school approach where wellbeing is communicated within and across the community has a positive impact on parents and carers and other stakeholders including teachers and support staff. This instils a feeling of belonging to, inclusion in and liking of school for all pupils. At Riverside, we believe creating an ethos and environment that supports positive behaviour for learning and for successful relationships, provides pupils with an emotionally secure and safe environment in which to grow and learn.

We believe that when pupils feel valued and have their feelings validated, this builds their self-esteem. When we increase pupil self-esteem and work hard to ensure their additional needs are met, pupils are more motivated to attend to learning, achieve and attain highly and use their experiences to make safe, enjoyable and healthy choices in life.

We know that when pupils are encouraged and supported to believe in their capacity to make good choices and exert a level of control over their behaviour using appropriate, supportive strategies, they can flourish as individuals and as members of the wider community. This builds resilience and self-efficacy and helps pupils believe they can succeed at tasks in the future.

We are committed to working collaboratively with parents. To help them support their children's mental health and emotional wellbeing, we make them aware of the resources available within our school and how they can access further support where needed. Our Home School Link Worker (HSLW) delivers regular training and supports parents to implement strategies and theories they have learned about, within the home setting. Training aims to reduce parental anxiety through learning about, understanding and implementing positive parenting and behaviour strategies within the home.

We work closely with the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) to support parents and carers who may be struggling with managing a child with anxiety or excessive worry. Teachers keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in the PSHE areas of topic and share ideas and links via the home learning platform for extending and exploring this learning at home.

#### Cultural Capital

We know many of our pupils are disadvantaged and more vulnerable to being deprived of opportunities their mainstream peers may access more easily. At Riverside, we want our pupils to learn about and experience things that for many are outside their daily experience. In particular, we want our pupils to have fun, increase their opportunities to develop resilience, and progress and achieve success through taking part in a diverse range of experiences. We encourage all our pupils to communicate how they feel about different activities and experiences and help them build on their prior experiences. We encourage them to be curious, explore and try new things to enable them to make choices that are enjoyable, safe and healthy to prepare them for the next steps in their learning and development.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy, our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, our PSHE Policy, our PE/Outdoor Education Policy and our Teaching and Learning Policy.

## Implementation

Teaching the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum, delivered through Topic.

The content of PSHE taught within Topic is determined by the specific needs of pupils and is delivered within the PSHE Association Guidelines: Core Theme 1 - Health and Wellbeing. This ensures mental health and emotional wellbeing is taught in a safe and sensitive manner appropriate to the needs of pupils. If there is a concern that a pupil is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures are followed. Advice and intervention may also then be sought by CAMHS and other outside agencies.

Where appropriate, we may adapt and make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing, for example:

- Emotional Literacy Scales
- Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire
- The Boxall Profile

However, where it is more meaningful we will develop assessment approaches tailored to the particular needs of pupils. We may use anecdotal evidence, feedback from parents and regular observations of pupils recorded in pupil wellbeing scrapbooks and our wellbeing board, and evidence gathered through IEP recording sheets.

In line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, all staff have a responsibility to report issues of a pastoral nature as well as safeguarding concerns. Pastoral concerns are recorded on CPOMS to track the safety as well as the wellbeing of all pupils including their approach to learning, changes in mood or behaviour, family circumstances and other concerns that may be linked to or affect pupil wellbeing.

### Role of the Senior Mental Health Lead

- To work in close collaboration with mental health services including the MHST and where needed, directly with CAMHS
- To participate in and contribute to the Mental Health forum with colleagues from other special school settings, the MHST, EMHPs and CAMHS
- To work closely with CAMHS and the MHST to ensure that where needed, pupils are supported to access evidence-based interventions appropriate to their needs
- To work collaboratively with teachers to complete assessments and referrals to agencies best-placed to support pupils needing additional support and specialist interventions
- To ensure autism best practice training is delivered and implemented across the school, including the Autism Education Trust (AET) tiered training as appropriate

- To work closely with intervention support staff to deliver or facilitate the delivery of evidence-based interventions to individual pupils where needed
- To deliver or facilitate the delivery of training for all staff as appropriate and to increase their awareness of emotional health and wellbeing
- To continue to develop whole-school initiatives that support self-regulation and self-help strategies, e.g. Zones of Regulation, in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists
- To seek advice about how to most effectively support pupils presenting with different mental health needs
- To continue to complete training and remain up to date with services and interventions being offered by external agencies:
  - To continually update and improve awareness of the roles and remits of different external services
  - To keep up to date with and continue to improve understanding of evidence-based practices

Pupils: whole school (see appendices for our Play at Riverside document)

- All pupils have a wellbeing IEP and progress towards their target is recorded weekly in IEP scrapbooks.
- Pupils with autism and/or communication difficulties who are at the earliest stages of play, progress through the Play at Riverside document. This document is sequential and aims to enable pupils to move from solitary or parallel play to interactive play. This supports pupils to develop specific skills that help them build and maintain relationships as well as encouraging purposeful engagement and the development of self-esteem. Adults provide a range of resources and equipment that motivate the individual learner.
  - Our pupils start at Riverside with a range of experiences in learning and play. Most pupils in KS1 and some pupils in KS2 progress through the Play at Riverside document.
  - Most pupils in KS2 work towards targets based on the NHS 5 Steps to Wellbeing programme
    - Connecting with others
    - Being physically active
    - Learning new skills
    - Giving to others (including things I must do)
    - Paying attention to the present moment (mindfulness)
- Our school day and curriculum have been redesigned to include opportunities for pupils to continue learning outdoors for significant parts of the day.
  - Where appropriate, classes are split in Maths and English lessons so that approximately half the class are continuing and embedding

their learning outdoors through activities linked to lesson objectives.

- Communication systems are embedded across the school. Regular training on autism best practice is delivered to ensure appropriate visuals, systems and structures are in place to lower anxiety in pupils and for pupils to communicate how they are feeling. Where a pupil is not yet able to identify their feelings, adults label these and provide opportunities for pupils to self-regulate and respond to their feelings in a safe and appropriate way.
- Pupil voice/wellbeing champions
- pupil council

#### Whole school (see appendices for AET training)

At Riverside we support pupils to:

- identify and talk about feelings, e.g. by using feelings boards in all classes, through assemblies and our curriculum, or using CAT-kit or Zones of Regulation
- understand how feelings change
- understand how feelings affect behaviours and how to manage 'big' feelings
- express their feelings in an appropriate manner
- use strategies to manage their feelings and to learn to understand the effect of feelings on behaviour
- understand the link between mental and physical health and learn self-regulation techniques to improve their own mental wellbeing
- manage change, including transition to secondary school
- identify and talk about emotions

We promote the AET autism awareness in schools

#### Targeted Support (see appendices for CAT-kit, Zones of Regulation, MHST overview)

At Riverside, we know everyone experiences life challenges that can make them vulnerable and that at times pupils may need additional emotional support. Whilst everyone has a responsibility for the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all pupils, there are periods when some pupils may need specific, targeted approaches. As part of our targeted provision we work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including specialised interventions for pupils with co-occurring or long-term difficulties including attachment disorder. These may include:

- Occupational Therapists
- Educational Psychology services
- CAMHS
- Counselling services
- Children's Services and Early Help Hub
- Therapists

Specific interventions may include:

- Counselling
- Play Therapy
- Drawing and Talking Therapy
- Zones of Regulation
- Cognitive Affective Training (CAT-kit)
- Referral to and input from the Mental Health Support Team (MHST)
- Delivery of additional training from CAMHS and the MHST to intervention staff, which may include:
  - o an overview of common mental health issues in children
  - o overcoming childhood anxiety
  - o autism and mental health
  - o resilience
  - o supporting children with separation anxiety
- Intervention staff may also support individual pupils by:
  - o spending quality 1:1 or small group time with them, for example having a drink and chat
  - o helping them through recent difficulties and trauma
- Delivery of mental health and emotional wellbeing support for parents by the MHST. This may include:
  - o the 'overcoming anxiety' parent course

## Parents

- Our HSLW works closely with parents to:
  - o help them support the positive mental health of their children
  - o support them to know who they can talk to or what to do if they have concerns about their child's mental health
  - o deliver training that supports them to understand their child's behaviour and how they can respond to their child's differing or changing needs.
  - o make it easier for them to access and benefit from support from other parents through parent forums and social media platforms
- works collaboratively with the MHST to ensure current thinking and best practice surrounding MHEW are delivered to parents in the most appropriate way for individual families and that they are supported to remain resilient through difficult times
- HSLW support and training may include:
  - o intensive 1:1 support sessions with parents and families
  - o signposting and supporting applications to Early Help Hub
  - o signposting to charities that advocate whole family wellbeing including sibling-support programmes and experiences
  - o parent-led intervention courses for anxiety which we adapt in collaboration with the MHST to suit the needs of our pupils and parents.
  - o Family Links Nurturing Programme (FLNP)

- Timid to Tiger
- Early Birds
- Overcoming Anxiety Parent courses (MHST)

### Impact

#### Ethos:

- At Riverside School:
  - pupils feel safe when they are greeted in the morning by adults who are pleased to see them and they develop trusting relationships with both adults and peers
  - pupils learn to understand their emotions and feelings
  - pupils develop an understanding that everyone experiences different feelings and emotions and that there are things we can do to help ourselves feel better
  - pupils make choices and communicate wants and needs through appropriate communication systems
  - pupils are able to exert a level of autonomy and feel safe in a highly structured environment
  - pupils feel comfortable about sharing concerns or worries
  - pupils form, build and maintain relationships with adults and their peers
  - pupils experience feeling good and function well as an important part of a wider community
  - pupils develop confidence and self-esteem
  - pupils develop self-belief and know they are important
  - pupils develop emotional resilience and manage setbacks by trying new things and persisting at difficult tasks
  - pupils want to share their successes with adults at school and at home

#### A mentally healthy environment:

- At Riverside School, pupils:
  - experience a sense of belonging
  - learn to exert a level of control over their behaviour through our Red and Green Choice system
  - know they have a voice and have opportunities to participate in decision-making
  - enjoy celebrating their academic and non-academic achievements through weekly whole school achievement assemblies
  - develop a sense of worth by taking responsibility for themselves and others
  - benefit from opportunities to reflect on their choices and behaviour
  - access appropriate support that meets their needs

## Cultural Capital

- Pupils follow a curriculum that ignites curiosity and inspires them to learn and explore the world around them. Pupils enjoy taking part in:
  - Bouldering
  - Swimming
  - Horse riding
  - Yoga
  - Year 6 residential
  - Personalised reward charts that may include treat time such as trips to the local shop
  - Riverside's Got Talent
  - Arts Week
  - Family Light Walk on bonfire night
  - Celebrating festivals by holding festival days, e.g. Diwali, Harvest, Vaisakhi, Chinese New Year
  - County or nationwide initiatives such as Walktober

## Zones of Regulation

The Zones of Regulation support pupils to build awareness of the way they are feeling inside and to recognise the tools they can use to develop appropriate strategies for managing different situations and regulating their behaviour within these zones.

Pupils learn to categorise the different ways we feel and states of alertness into four coloured zones and learn the skills needed to utilise strategies for self-regulation, self-care and overall wellness. These may include strategies for mindfulness, sensory integration, movement and thinking that support mental wellbeing and a healthy connection with others.

The Zones of Regulation use neutral, non-judgemental language around how a pupil is feeling and reassure pupils that all feelings are valid and okay. They provide a systematic approach for self-regulation to move pupils towards more independent regulation to support their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Pupils may take part in sessions with our Speech and Language Therapist to build a personal toolkit of resources they can use to help them manage their feelings. They will be supported to use this toolkit in class to help them self-regulate and manage their feelings in an appropriate and safe way.

## Drawing and Talking Therapy

Drawing and Talking therapy is a twelve-week programme designed to support pupils with emotional difficulties to express their feelings through drawing. It aims to help pupils develop their skills in recognising thoughts and feelings and managing their responses to these within the safe and supportive school environment.

Weekly one-to-one sessions, aimed at increasing pupil emotional wellbeing and self-esteem are delivered by intervention staff and support pupils to explore strategies to develop their emotional skills and respond appropriately to their feelings.

Sessions last up to 30 minutes and offer a safe space for pupils to draw whilst exploring and answering questions about what they have drawn. They offer an opportunity for pupils to express any worries or preoccupations through their drawing creating a process that develops a feeling of control and power over events and feelings.

## Cat-Kit

The CAT-kit offers a model that helps structure conversations with an emphasis on the pupil's perspective. It is designed to examine a pupil's self-perception and level of introspection. Through the use of different visual resources, the pupil's awareness of how their thoughts, feelings and actions all interact. This awareness is important to help pupils develop appropriate social and emotional skills and to build positive self-awareness and self-esteem.

## Autism best practice that includes Autism Education Trust (AET) training

Training focuses on increasing staff understanding that pupils with autism will experience differences in three key areas that can lead to differences in the ways they interact and develop relationships:

- Social understanding and communication
- Flexibility, information processing, and understanding
- Sensory processing and integration

Both the strengths and challenges that might arise from these differences are considered within training. This helps staff to:

- understand the importance of getting to know the pupil as an individual
- approach autism as a difference rather than as a disorder or impairment
- understand the importance of identifying the strengths and needs of autistic pupils
- understand how the three areas of difference can affect autistic pupils

- appreciate how important it is to listen to and learn from the perspectives of autistic pupils in order to support their learning
- reflect on and implement adjustments and adaptations to support autistic pupils with their learning