

Pupil Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

By placing wellbeing at the centre of all that we do, pupils are taught to manage their differences and flourish as individuals.

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 and know they are 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))*

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 and 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, learn and achieve. This policy stands alongside our Teaching and Learning Policy to ensure we are

tracking and recording the impact of both Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing and learning.

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 experience a sense of belonging 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 and to keeping them informed about how we are supporting their child's wellbeing. We ensure parents are aware of the resources available within our school and of how they can access further support where needed to reduce their own anxiety when supporting their children. Parents are signposted to information and updates on how we are supporting their child in school, through the 'Wellbeing For All' area on our school website. We work in partnership with the Mental Health Support Team to offer therapeutic input and share our knowledge and experience to support parents to make meaningful connections with their children.

Our Home School Link Worker (HSLW) delivers regular training that promotes understanding of behaviour as communication and parents are supported to implement positive parenting and theory-based behaviour strategies within the home setting. We provide additional targeted support for pupils and families through our family-support assistants, discussion with the Senior Mental Health Lead, the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) and with parents and families. We work closely with the MHST to provide help for parents and carers who may be supporting a child with anxiety or excessive worry.

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 experiences. In particular, we want our pupils to have fun, develop resilience, and progress and achieve success through taking part in a diverse range of activities. We encourage all our pupils to communicate how they feel about different activities and pursuits and help them build on their prior experiences. We encourage them to be

curious, to explore and try new things and enable them to make choices that are enjoyable, safe and healthy. This prepares them for the next steps in their learning and development and we celebrate their achievements in school and with parents.

This policy should be read alongside our Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy, our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, our PSHE Policy, our PE/Outdoor Education Policy, our Teaching and Learning Policy and our Play and Interaction Policy.

Implementation

We teach the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves mentally and physically healthy and safe through discreet PSHE lessons based on the National SEND Framework. This ensures mental health and emotional wellbeing is taught in a safe and sensitive manner appropriate to the understanding and needs of pupils.

All pupils work towards Wellbeing IEP targets. Progress is recorded weekly, and photo evidence is displayed on our wellbeing board as a reference for all pupils. Progress is reported on during Annual Review meetings.

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 impact pupil wellbeing.

Our Service Level Agreement with the local Educational Psychology Service, enables staff and parents to access advice and expertise that enhances our pupil provision.

Role of the Senior Mental Health Lead

- To work in close collaboration with Educational Psychology Services and mental health services including the MHST and CAMHS to seek advice on effectively supporting pupils presenting with different mental health needs and ensure they can access appropriate, evidence-based interventions
- To participate in and contribute to the Specialist Mental Health Forum with colleagues from other special schools, and clinical professionals from the MHST and CAMHS and Educational Psychology Services
- To work collaboratively with teachers to complete assessments and referrals to agencies best placed to provide for 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 higher level support staff to facilitate or support with the delivery of evidence-based interventions to individual pupils where needed
- To deliver or facilitate the delivery of training for staff as appropriate and to increase their awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing
- To continue to develop and monitor the impact of individual and whole-school initiatives that support self-regulation and self-help strategies, e.g. Zones of Regulation, in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists
- To continue to complete training and remain up to date with services and interventions being offered by external agencies:
 - To keep up to date with and improve awareness of the roles and remits of external services
 - To keep up to date with and continue to improve understanding of evidence-based practice

Pupils: whole school (see appendices for our Play and Interaction at Riverside skills profile)

- All pupils have a wellbeing IEP and progress towards their target is recorded weekly.
- All pupils progress through the Play and Interaction at Riverside skills profile and all Wellbeing IEPs are taken from this. This sequential profile supports pupils to develop the skills they need to move from solitary or parallel play to interactive, cooperative play, and to move towards being able to communicate how they feel about play and friendships. This supports pupils to develop crucial life skills that help them build and maintain positive relationships and to experience the sense of belonging and feeling of wellbeing this can bring.
- Our pupils start at Riverside with a range of experiences in learning and play and adults provide a range of activities and resources that motivate the individual learner, many of which are 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 delivery of our curriculum include opportunities for pupils to continue and extend their learning outdoors for significant parts of the day. Where appropriate, classes are divided in maths and English lessons to allow pupils to generalise their learning outdoors.
- 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

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.

- Pupils are empowered to make decisions and voice their opinions using appropriate strategies, including communication and visual supports as appropriate
- Our Pupil Council provides pupils with the opportunity to express their opinions and to experience a sense of belonging through thinking about and meeting their needs and the needs of others.

Whole school (see appendices for AET training)

At Riverside, we support pupils to:

- identify and communicate how they are feeling, e.g. by using feelings boards available in all classes, through assemblies and our curriculum, or by using specialist interventions such as Drawing and Talking, CAT-kit or Zones of Regulation
- understand how feelings change
- understand how feelings affect behaviours and how to manage 'big' feelings
- use strategies and self-regulation strategies to manage their feelings and to learn to understand the effect of feelings on behaviour
- express their feelings in an appropriate manner
- understand the link between mental and physical health and learn 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 (see appendices)

- The school and classroom environments are highly organised and structured to increase predictability and independence and lower pupil anxiety over understanding of expectations. Whole school signposting, use of visual supports and individual systems support all pupils to navigate their environment with increasing independence and to feel able and motivated to complete adult-directed tasks.
- Adults use verbal instructions supported by visuals for key commands to support pupil understanding and lower anxiety. When needed, language may be reduced to key words and processing time is given to ensure pupils have time to process and respond appropriately to expectations, requests and demands. Language is supported using visuals.
- Appropriate Blank Language is used with all pupils to support their understanding of verbal language and to give them best chance of responding successfully. Spoken language may be reduced further to lower anxiety when a pupil is distressed or dysregulated.

- Individual Support Plan are in place for several pupils. These ensure adult language and responses are consistent.

Targeted Support (see appendices for CAT-kit, Zones of Regulation, Drama Therapy, Drawing and Talking, counselling, and autism best-practice)

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 times when pupils may need specific, targeted approaches.

As part of our targeted provision we work with other agencies to support pupil emotional health and wellbeing including specialised interventions. These may include:

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

Specific interventions may include:

- Counselling
- Drama 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 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
- 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

Parents

- Our HSLW:
 - oversees the work our family support workers carry out with pupils and their families

- works closely with parents to:
 - help them support the positive mental health of their children
 - support them to know who they can talk to or what to do if they have concerns about their child's mental health
 - deliver training that supports them to understand their child's behaviour and how they can respond to their child's differing or changing needs
 - make it easier for them to access and benefit from support from other parents through parent forums and social media platforms
 - help them remain resilient through difficult times
- HSLW support and training may include:
 - intensive 1:1 support sessions with parents and families
 - support from our school family support assistants
 - signposting and supporting referrals to Early Help Hub
 - signposting and support to access charities that advocate whole family wellbeing including sibling-support programmes and experiences
 - parent-led intervention courses for anxiety which we adapt in collaboration with the MHST to suit the needs of our pupils and parents
 - Family Links Nurturing Programme (FLNP)
 - Timid to Tiger
 - Early Birds
 - Early Birds Plus

Impact

Ethos:

- At Riverside School:
 - pupils feel a sense of belonging when they are greeted in the morning by adults who are pleased to see them
 - pupils feel safe within the systems and structures embedded across the school
 - pupils develop trusting relationships with both adults and peers and feel safe
 - 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 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 achieve a sense of belonging when they 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 celebrate 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
 - 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. They experience a sense of belonging and achievement through taking part in activities with their peers, families, governors and the wider community. These may include:
 - 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
 - Celebrating festival days, e.g. Diwali, Harvest, Vaisakhi, Chinese New Year
 - County or nationwide initiatives such as Walktober

Appendices

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 may include 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 to support their learning
- reflect on and implement adjustments and adaptations to support autistic pupils with their learning

Drama Therapy

Dramatherapy uses aspects of creativity, including play, art, music, drama and storytelling/making. Individual sessions, which last up to 50 minutes are offered for at least twelve weeks and help pupils play out, understand and make sense of confusing and sometimes upsetting situations within a safe and therapeutic environment. During sessions, pupils are supported to talk, play and work creatively. Therapists may also use body language and gain information from external/internal distractions during sessions where a pupil does not appear to engage verbally or with enthusiasm. Therapists may monitor progress using a tracking tool such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, however they may instead use their professional judgement to monitor progress in other, more meaningful ways and share this as appropriate with parents and school.

Reviewed September 2024

Next review September 2025