



School focus: Promoting mental health & well being.

What do we mean by mental health?

Mental Health is something we all have. Your mental health affects how you feel, think and act. It refers to your emotional, psychological and social well being. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

The definition of mental health by the NHS is that *'it is a positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment'*.

Good mental health means being generally able to think, feel and react in the ways that you need and want to live your life.

So why is this a focus for this year?

Mental health is talked about so much more than ever before. The Government has written papers about it and is funding training for Senior Mental Health Leads in every school, research is extensive, the NHS have reported a 43% increase in mental health disorders in young people, but why? I would just like you to listen to this statement

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.

That's an alarming statistic and this figure rises when including older children, averaging 1 in 6 of all children aged 5 to 16 years. Sadly the teenage suicide rate is the highest it has been for 30 years.

So what can we do to help?

We work with children every day so how we build supportive relationships, create a nurturing environment and support children in regulating and normalising their feelings makes a huge difference. But it all starts with the well being and mental health of those educating the children You! Working in education can be physically and emotionally draining with many different tasks and demands, it is so important that staff look after their mental health, as well as their physical.

We will ensure that	Why?	How?
Our school culture allows for mental health to be spoken about openly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research shows that children and young people who feel that their voices are heard have higher levels of self-esteem. ● A sense of belonging is positively associated with mental health and achievement. ● Positive teacher-child relationships have been shown to contribute to pupils' attendance, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide high quality health and wellbeing education lessons (through our CPSHE units). ● A safe, calming and supportive environment which challenges the stigma of mental illness and labelling. ● A whole school approach which promotes inclusion and belonging. ● <i>'Every interaction is an intervention'</i> - Staff dialogue, body language and tone support children to feel important and valued members of the class/school.

	<p>attainment, psychological engagement and reduced disruptive behaviours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A trained Senior Mental Health Lead to support wellbeing. ● Creation of a mental health support team to monitor the impact of wellbeing interventions. ● CAMHS support on site through the Educational Mental Health Practitioner (once a week) ● SLT who help champion efforts to promote mental health and wellbeing. ● Pupil voice is encouraged, welcomed and valued. ● Worry boxes and 'go to' staff members if required. ● Governors hold school leaders accountable on promoting mental wellbeing.
<p>Staff recognise the risk factors and what to do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving children's mental health before they reach adulthood has potential to improve life chances. ● Children with mental health difficulties often go an average of 10 years before getting help. Early identification and intervention is crucial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All staff are responsible for the well being and mental health of every pupil. ● Follow safeguarding procedures ● Staff are aware of the different factors that could influence a child's well being through training: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vulnerable children: SEND, child criminal exploitation, illness, race/racism, gender identity, LGBTQ+, looked after children, refugee & asylum seeker children 2. Home based factors: child abuse/neglect, domestic violence, poor parental mental health, parental substance abuse, poverty & unemployment, living conditions/environment, young carers 3. School based factors: academic stress, bullying, transitions, peer pressure, relationships & belonging, exclusions 4. Lifestyle factors: Body image, diet, internet & social media, puberty, sleep patterns
<p>Staff use strategies to reinforce a positive inner voice for each child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Valuing the contributions of a child increases a their sense of empowerment, positive emotions and connection with others. ● Children can have a negative internal narrative that has become so automatic that they do not even recognise it. They also can't articulate it so it presents as behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our mantra: <i>'The words you use to a child become their inner voice'</i> ● Staff training - character education & equality ● Use affirmations in class & assemblies ● Build self esteem through specific positive praise ● Adults empower children by reinforcing strengths - talking to the child about what skills they have to deal with a situation so they start to use skills instead of behaviour. ● Celebrating successes, outside of academic achievement, through 'Being Brilliant' assemblies and rewards. ● 'Proud to be me' mantra and displays, alongside our many books about body image, promote positive messages.

<p>Children are supported to understand and regulate their emotions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individuals with anxiety or depression have greater difficulty managing their emotions because they tend to rely on ineffective self-regulation skills. ● Critical thinking is needed for effective problem-solving skills, which is important in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use talk time sessions and opportunities throughout the day for children to develop their critical thinking skills (last year's target). ● The '<i>Name it to tame it</i>' approach - children are encouraged to name the emotion they are feeling. Younger children have visuals to support them. ● Staff to model their own healthy mental well being practices ● Use the Nurture Room and our outdoor areas as calm areas to regulate emotions ● Follow the Behaviour policy ● Identify individual needs and monitor the impact of intervention and strategies.
<p>We counter risk factors as much as we can</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk factors come in many forms and can be the result of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the child's individual characteristics (e.g. communication difficulties, SEND etc) 2. being exposed to traumatic experiences (e.g. abuse, domestic violence, bullying etc.) 3. changes in relationships within families or friends (e.g. divorce, separation, loss etc.) 4. broader society (e.g. discrimination and poverty etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zero tolerance on bullying and name calling ● Use a restorative approach to deal with behaviour incidents and emotional coaching to establish 'connection before correction'. ● Support the development of empathy through our equality library, assemblies and promoting our school values. Empathy plays an important part in enabling students to support each other and resolve conflict. It is central to reducing bullying. ● Family support worker to work with vulnerable families ● Online safety is taught throughout the year so children can understand how to be safe and protected against cyber bullying and harmful content (see national focus)
<p>We work with all stakeholders and external agencies</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive relationships with parents/carers ● On admission, every parent signs to uphold Maryland's commitment to equality and promoting a harmonious environment. ● Parent workshops/drop ins with the Educational Mental Health Practitioner from CAMHS. ● Draw effectively on external agencies for support. ● DSL's to make referrals if needed ● Feedback to governors who hold senior leaders accountable.

lessons and assemblies are regular and robust. Unfortunately it is not just the children, we also have examples of adults in our community who have fallen for 'scams' inadvertently on the internet, so this education is for all of us.

Of course, the internet and social media have many advantages and by focusing on the dangers we should not lose sight of what it has to offer. When our children become adults they will require internet literacy in most careers they choose to follow. However, there is a correlation between social media use and poor mental health through cyber bullying, poor self esteem, grooming, self harm and body image. In a recent survey 67% of teenagers report feeling worse about their own lives and their self esteem as they compare their lives with the filtered "realities" they see on social media.

Here are some facts:

- Grooming can be tragic. There are many examples of teenage suicide and self harm. In 2023, we learnt of the 15 year old girl who committed suicide from accessing hours of self harm, pornography and suicide ideation from her school Ipad (KCSIE, 2023).
- 4.9 billion people globally in 2023 access the internet with 25% of all Infant children owning a smartphone (Ofcom).
- Over 50% of under 13s were using social media, despite most of the big platforms having rules requiring that users are over 13+. One of the UK's largest mobile network providers (EE), advises parents against giving a smartphone to Primary-aged children.
- Fake news, deep fakes (creating fake events or images of people) and **disinformation** goes viral with little or no thought about its source or authenticity. Fake news is extremely harmful as it easily spreads hate content that can become part of a child's worldview. Also once someone engages with the content online, the more likely they are to see similar content due to algorithms. This is known as '**echo chambers**' which is the experience of seeing only one type of content. This compounds negative views and even mistreatment of people who are different from them or, in extreme cases, lead to radicalisation.

How do we teach our children to challenge misinformation, disinformation and fake news?

The youngest person charged with violent disorder as a result of the riots in July was just 12 years old. The Education Secretary announced that English, ICT and maths are among the lessons that will be used to 'arm' pupils against online conspiracy theories. She stated that critical thinking skills that enable identifying misinformation and disinformation online should start **as young as five**. The government will be conducting a curriculum review starting in September 2024 and will develop plans to embed critical thinking skills.



So, as a school, we have a duty to ensure our children are **resilient** in all aspects to the pitfalls of social media and have an understanding of the regulations attached to using websites and platforms.

What will we do to ensure our pupils and families are using social media and AI in a safe way?

We will ensure that	How?
<p>Maryland has a clear and robust policy with regards to social media and AI for both staff and pupils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff are held accountable for appropriate social media use in the staff Code of Conduct (section 8, Acceptable use of technology). ● The behaviour policy for pupils states that ‘the school may sanction pupils for conduct outside the school premises, including online conduct’. ● Organise a summit meeting to plan actions for the current academic year to ensure the behaviour & online safety policies are robust, monitored and enacted.
<p>Children are digitally/ media literate and able to safely navigate social media and online chats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide high quality digital literacy lessons which equip children with the tools they need to be able to decode messages, assess influences of these messages on thoughts, opinions and behaviour and how to stay safe online. ● Use of BBC Bitesize ‘The Other Side of the Story’ to understand and check facts and opinions and explore what a conspiracy theory is. ● Develop children’s critical thinking skills through Talk Time and any opportunities throughout the day. Critical thinking skills are key to navigating digital space safely and being able to identify ‘fake news’. Encourage children to ask questions confidently. ● Teachers timetable a 10 minute session once a week to discuss ‘Wake Up Wednesday’ topics
<p>Parents and families have knowledge on how they can reduce their child’s exposure to online risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops and drop ins available for parent and carers to build confidence with using social media and AI ● ‘Wake Up Wednesday’ continues to be sent to all parents/carers which provides easy-to-follow and useful guides to online games, apps and devices, outlining related risks and suggesting ways to help children avoid them. ● Online safety agreement is explained and signed by parents on admission
<p>Pupils and all stakeholders know the advantages and disadvantages to using social media and AI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers discuss with children about Wake Up Wednesday (timetable/assembly) ● Subject lead, the Mental Health Team, SLT and linked Governor keep up to date with research and statistics on the impact and trends of social media and AI. ● Stakeholders understand the impact of social media and AI on mental health and wellbeing through training, lessons (pupils), assemblies and staff updates.

3. International worldwide focus - Sustainability and Efficiency

Global Warming - Revisiting climate change

We have taught children to understand the impact of **climate change** and how it is affecting wildlife and people all over the world

We will continue with these lessons ensuring children understand how certain species are suffering more than others, e.g polar animals – whose icy natural habitat is melting in the warmer temperatures – are particularly at risk. A more recent phenomenon is that animals who live in the wild are having their habitat cut down or destroyed by drought, fire or flooding. Rising sea levels and warmer oceans have impacted on some, e.g. sea turtles. We must continue to teach about this relentlessly and instil a passion for tackling climate change.

Things come very easily in the eyes of a young child, but they need to know how global warming is impacting on the people who grow our food and what food shortages could mean for our country. Farming communities, especially in developing countries, are facing higher temperatures, increased rain, floods and droughts which will impact on availability here.

We will teach this through:

- critical thinking quick 10 minute sessions regularly
- half termly assemblies from the Sustainability lead and SLT
- class assemblies to showcase learning
- storytime, videos and the Sustainability corner 'reading spot'
- the lead teacher for sustainability will monitor that this value is being enacted through conversation and curriculum
- Eco-warriors' presentations

Sustainability and Efficiency and Educational opportunities

In May 2024 the school lost its water supply and had to be closed for nearly 2 days. This was an unfortunate way to learn about the value of water, especially if 500 pupils need to flush the toilets during the day! Some children had no idea about local sources of utilities such as water. We realised that children did not know where water comes from and why it had stopped.

The school has received awards and recognition locally and nationally, from winning the Newham Green Champions Award to being mentioned in National education magazines.

Not only children, but adults often take resources for granted, e.g. electrical items being left on. The message that resources and utilities cost a great deal of money, are not infinite and are precious and crucial to life, must be stressed continually. Children need to learn about reservoirs and pumping stations to gain appreciation for the background works and effort to provide them with an easier way of life.

We will ensure that children know:

- a) the local sources of energy (water, electricity) in relation to their home and also the school.

How will we do this?

- 1) Embed 10 minute critical thinking sessions 'Talk Time' weekly on sustainability
- 2) Half-termly assemblies organised by the Sustainability Lead and Eco-warriors
- 3) Classes will ensure they do a weekly visit to the external areas of the school. What does the polytunnel teach us about biodiversity and self-efficiency, lessons for the future?
- 4) Experience a 'low energy day' - planned and monitored by the Eco-warriors. E.g. no lights, no IWB, no use of projector during assemblies.
- 5) Compare meter readings between a normal day and a 'low energy day'
- 6) Children can report what they have learned about valuing key resources
- 7) by inviting representatives from energy and water companies to the school. Thames Water. British

- c) the processes of supplying utilities and the impact on our communities.
- d) that saving energy saves money
- e) that practising sustainability will impact not only on the economics for the future, but also on the practices for producing energy around the world
- f) and understand natural power sources, such as wind and solar
- g) and be aware of heat and cool emitting appliances around the school and their power usage
- h) that water from the hose pipe is coming from the 'mains' which is clean drinking water - collecting rainwater would be better for the plants and other outdoor activities that do not require water that has been filtered.

Gas

- 8) Monitoring bills and usage with school energy team
- 9) Look at schools own solar panels and finding out about the technology
- 10) Home-school project on water usage /Water usage project in school e.g. watering plants using only water from the water butts and how much money can the school save on a weekly/ monthly basis.