

Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties Policy

(including provision for pupils with EHCP & support for Mental Health & Wellbeing)



Westbury House School

May 2025

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1 Aims

- 1.1 This is the policy on special educational needs and learning difficulties of Westbury House School.
- 1.2 The aims of this policy are as follows:
 - 1.2.1 to promote good practice in the detection and management of special educational needs (**SEN**)
 - 1.2.2 to explain the support the School can provide for children who have learning difficulties and the co-operation needed from parents
 - 1.2.3 to actively promote the well-being of pupils.

2 Scope and application

- 2.1 This policy applies to the whole School including the Early Years Foundation Stage (**EYFS**).

3 Regulatory framework

- 3.1 This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under:
 - 3.1.1 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
 - 3.1.2 Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, September 2025)
 - 3.1.3 Education and Skills Act 2008
 - 3.1.4 Childcare Act 2006
 - 3.1.5 Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - 3.1.6 Equality Act 2010; and
 - 3.1.7 Children and Families Act 2014.
- 3.2 This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:
 - 3.2.1 Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (DfE and Department for Health, January 2015) (**Code of Practice**)
- 3.3 The following School policies, procedures and resource materials are relevant to this policy:
 - 3.3.1 Equal Opportunities Policy
 - 3.3.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures
 - 3.3.3 Risk Assessment Policy for Pupil Welfare
 - 3.3.4 Anti-bullying Policy
 - 3.3.5 English as an Additional Language Policy
 - 3.3.6 Admissions policy

4 **Publication and availability**

- 4.1 This policy is published on the School website.
- 4.2 This policy is available in hard copy on request.
- 4.3 A copy of the policy is available for inspection from the School Secretary during the School day.
- 4.4 This policy can be made available in large print if required.

5 **Definitions**

- 5.1 Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:

- 5.1.1 References to **working days** mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.
- 5.1.2 References to an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** are references to a plan or programme designed for children with SEN to help them to get the most out of their education. An **IEP** builds on the curriculum that a child with learning difficulties or disabilities is following and sets out the strategies being used to meet that child's specific needs.
- 5.1.3 References to **Provision mapping** are references to provision maps used by the School as an efficient way of showing all the provision that the School makes which is additional to and different from that which is offered through the School's curriculum. The use of provision maps can help the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (**SENCo**) to maintain an overview of the programmes and interventions used with different groups of pupils and provide a basis for monitoring the levels of intervention.

5.2 **Special educational needs and learning difficulty**

- 5.2.1 Westbury House offers its pupils a challenging curriculum with high academic standards in order to prepare them successfully for entrance into a range of public schools. However, it sees its primary aim as offering the pupils a broad-based and liberal education to as many as can benefit from it. In order to achieve this end, Westbury House recognises that some of its pupils, though able, have been identified or subsequently identified as experiencing various types of SpLD (Specific Learning Difficulty). This means that, for those pupils, modifications to the teaching and learning process must be considered. In some cases, the SpLD can represent a real disability to learning. Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.
- 5.2.2 Children have a learning difficulty if they:
 - (a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
 - (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in mainstream schools.

(c) are under five and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or are likely to do so do when of compulsory school age if special educational provision is not made for the child.

5.2.3 A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language or form of language which is or has been spoken at home. However, children for whom English is an additional language will be provided with appropriate support. Please see the School's English as an Additional Language Policy.

5.2.4 A child who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have a "learning difficulty" in the legal sense of that expression; there will often be disparities in the speed with which children learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general acumen.

5.2.5 The expression "learning difficulty" covers a wide variety of conditions and may include those known as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, semantic processing difficulty and learning problems which result from social, emotional or mental health difficulties. The expression may also include those who have problems with their eyesight or hearing or who have an autistic spectrum disorder.

5.2.6 Learning difficulties may affect children who have a high IQ and academic ability as well as those of lower IQ and ability.

6 Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

6.1 The Proprietor has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy.

6.2 To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Proprietor has allocated the following tasks:

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	SENCo	As required, and at least annually
Monitoring the implementation of the policy, relevant risk assessments and any action taken in response and evaluating effectiveness	SENCo	As required, and at least annually
Maintaining up to date records of all information created in relation to the policy and its implementation as required by the GDPR	SENCo	As required, and at least annually
Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff,	SENCo	As required, and at least annually

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy		
Formal eviuew	Proprietor	As required and at least every 2 years

6.3 The School's SENCO has responsibility for:

- 6.3.1 ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of a child's special educational needs
- 6.3.2 advising and supporting other staff in the School
- 6.3.3 ensuring that appropriate IEPs are in place and effectively implemented
- 6.3.4 ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special education needs is collected, recorded and updated
- 6.3.5 undertaking any other appropriate duties in accordance with the Code of Practice.

7 Procedures

- 7.1 The School is a mainstream independent school with high academic standards. Even so, we carry out screening tests when teachers raise concerns/ the SENCo deems appropriate in order to detect signs of learning difficulties, where apparent from the test results.
- 7.2 The School's approach to the detection and management of learning difficulties will be guided by the Code of Practice. In general, the School's approach will be cautious so as not unnecessarily to run the risk of a child being labelled "dyslexic" when a later assessment might result in a different explanation for the difficulty.
- 7.3 It is essential that pupils who are experiencing difficulties have their needs identified quickly so that the appropriate provision can be made. If class teachers have concerns at any stage in a pupil's education regarding progress, they should discuss these without delay with the SENCo.
- 7.4 It is the responsibility of the subject or Form teacher to discuss in depth with the SENCo their concerns about their pupil. They must provide and have gathered supporting evidence e.g. recent exam grades, observations and tried and tested strategies, including differentiated activities. WHS has a referral form that teachers must complete to highlight key cause for concern (see appendix 3)
- 7.5 The SENCo will then observe the child/their work and decide if further investigation is needed or if the teacher needs to be providing a more differentiated approach to the child's learning. If this is the case, the SENCo will provide teaching tips for the class teacher. We have close links with parents at Westbury House, and the class teacher, at the earliest opportunity, should be the first person to alert the parents to concerns and enlist their active help and participation. If a child is not progressing with a more differentiated curriculum, the SENCo will provide an internal assessment.

7.6 Screening test

- 7.6.1 During Y1, and also where deemed appropriate where there is cause for concern, the School will carry out a (dyslexia) screening test on all pupils, the results of which will be reported to the pupil's parents.
- 7.6.2 The tests used are not diagnostic tests of a kind which an Educational Psychologist would carry out, and they are not infallible. The purpose of the tests is to detect circumstances which may need further investigation or a formal assessment. The cost of screening tests is included in the tuition fees.
- 7.6.3 If the outcome of a test or any other circumstances give us reason to think that a pupil may have a learning difficulty, we will report and consult with the pupil's parents as necessary and make recommendations.
- 7.6.4 Once a pupil is seen by SENCo, they will automatically be placed on the Learning Support Register. This does not automatically mean that the child has an identified diagnosis of SEN, but more that the school recognises a child may need extra support. The register has two strands: one for diagnosed children with a Special Educational Need and the other, which is fluid, for those children receiving 'additional support'. The registers are electronic, and all information is kept on the T drive, (confidential information is on the R drive). All staff have access to this register and are expected to be fully informed of any changes to existing provision or new pupils that are placed onto the register. Hard copy files of all LS pupils are kept in the SENCO's office work area.
- 7.6.5 If immediate support is not considered necessary, the pupil will be placed on a learning support monitor list. Staff and the SENCO will then regularly meet informally to ensure that progress is being made. If at any stage it is felt that a child who is being monitored does require support, the SENCO will implement this.

7.7 Formal assessment

- 7.7.1 If the test results indicate that a pupil may have a learning difficulty which ought to be assessed without delay, we will ask the pupil's parents to agree to the pupil being formally assessed by an Educational Psychologist. The School will ask the parents to agree to follow his / her recommendations unless there are persuasive reasons to the contrary.
- 7.7.2 The parents may consult an Educational psychologist of their own choice. The cost must be borne by the parents.

7.8 Learning support

- 7.8.1 If the screening test results indicate that a pupil may have a learning difficulty, but the circumstances are not such as to indicate an immediate formal assessment or a course of additional specialist teaching is required, the School may suggest that the pupil gives up one of the normal curriculum subjects and instead attends a small learning support group which will concentrate on developing skills such as phonics, spelling, maths and handwriting.
- 7.8.2 Learning support of this kind will be provided at no additional cost. However where a pupil requires additional learning support beyond what is normally provided as

part of the standard curriculum, the school may provide such support subject to availability and in consultation with parents. Please note that additional support, such as one-to-one sessions, specialist assessments, or external therapy services, may incur extra charges. These costs will be discussed with parents in advance, and any support provided will be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the pupil's needs effectively

7.8.3 The SENCO will organise a graduated response for support in the following ways:

- (a) Monitoring. Most children will have their needs met through teaching and classroom management as well as appropriate differentiation within the day-to-day learning. The SENCO will oversee this and monitor and review at half termly intervals. No teaching targets are necessary for these children.
- (b) Group work will be decided by the SENCO in liaison with Form tutors at the beginning of each half term for Maths and English. The maximum number of pupils that can currently be seen in a group is four.
- (c) One-to-one learning will be prioritised for those pupils who have a full EP Report or internal assessment and where this has been recommended by the SENCO due to the outcome of an internal assessment.
- (d) The SENCO can support other areas e.g., emotional wellbeing, behavioural problems, social skills, handwriting, spelling groups etc. These interventions will all be decided on a case-by-case scenario in liaison with the Form Tutor.
- (e) The school will work with or make referrals to external agencies where support is needed for the child that is outside the remit and resourcing levels of the school itself, for example support from CAMHs or Place 2B.

7.8.4 The pupil's progress and needs will be monitored and, if necessary, the School will recommend a formal assessment if the learning support does not appear to be meeting the pupil's needs.

7.9 External teaching

7.9.1 Parents may opt for additional specialist teaching outside the School, provided that the Head is satisfied with your child's safety and travel arrangements and also that the additional specialist teaching is at times which fit in with the remainder of the curriculum, timetable and community life of the School.

7.10 Examinations

7.10.1 Pupils who have been diagnosed as having a learning difficulty may be eligible for extra time and / or other 'access arrangements' to complete public examinations.

7.10.2 The criteria for pupils being allocated extra time has changed. The new criteria states that if a child has a standardised score in an assessment of 85 or above, they will no longer be automatically eligible to receive extra time. However, pupils may be entitled to 25% to 50% extra time if evidenced in an Educational Psychologist's report. Use of a laptop is a centre delegated access arrangement and may be in place if this is the pupil's usual way of working.

7.10.3 With respect to 11+, the current system in place for most Senior Schools is that parents are expected to liaise with their chosen schools regarding appropriate

access arrangements. It is the parents' responsibility to collate and send in the relevant paperwork to their chosen Senior School such as EP or Medical reports, before any pre-tests are carried out.

7.10.4 Parents are asked to liaise with their child's Form Tutor and/or the school's SENCo in good time with respect to this.

7.11 Information sharing and parent involvement

7.11.1 Parents are asked to provide the School with a copy of any report or recommendations which have been made in relation to special educational needs at their child's previous school or elsewhere within the last 12 months. Confidential information of this kind will only be shared within the School on a "need to know" basis.

7.11.2 The School will do all that is reasonable to report and consult with parents about their child's learning difficulties and to ensure that teachers are given any necessary information about a child's learning difficulties and that teaching practices are appropriate.

7.11.3 Parents will be informed by the SENCo of any changes in procedure relating to their child. A formal written report will be included with the official school reports. Teaching targets are written for those students who have an EP report with a current diagnosis and who are unable to access the curriculum at the same progress as their peers. These are reviewed twice a year, once in October and again in March/April. These targets are written with the pupils and class teachers. Copies of the targets are sent to teachers and teaching assistants. The parents are invited to attend a meeting to discuss progress the children are making against the teaching targets. A hardcopy will be kept in the pupil's file.

7.11.4 Any pupil without a formal diagnosis, but who is on the 'fluid' Learning Support Register, is monitored regularly; the Learning Support Coordinator tracks their progress on Classroom Monitor (where appropriate) and the SENCO discusses progress of children on the SEN registers with the SLT during their weekly meetings.

7.11.5 Parents should notify the School immediately if their child's progress or behaviour causes concern so that the School can devise and agree a strategy with the parents.

7.11.6 Parents bear the overall responsibility for taking decisions about the management of their child's learning difficulties. A parent who would prefer to have a formal assessment instead of additional specialist teaching or learning support should make arrangements accordingly with the School or outside, as appropriate. In these circumstances parents must ensure that the School is given copies of all advice and reports received.

7.12 Individual Education Plan/Provision Map

7.12.1 The SENCo will ensure that an appropriate IEP/Provision map is in place where required.

7.12.2 The IEP / Provision map will be prepared in consultation with the parents and, if appropriate, the pupil and will include:

- (a) the adjustments, interventions and support required to meet the outcomes identified for the pupil

- (b) the expected impact on the pupil's progress, development or behaviour, as appropriate; and
- (c) clear dates for review.
- (d)

7.12.3 In carrying out the review, the SENCo will consider:

- (a) the effectiveness of the support and interventions and their impact on the pupil's progress
- (b) the views of relevant teaching staff, the parents and, if appropriate, the pupil; and
- (c) any changes that are required to the support and outcomes set out for the pupil.

8 Education Health and Care Plans (EHC Plan)

- 8.1 Parents and the School have the right under section 36(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ask the local authority to make an assessment with a view to drawing up an EHC Plan. The School will always consult with parents before exercising this right. If the Local Authority refuses to make an assessment, the parents (but not the School) have a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).
- 8.2 Where a prospective pupil has an EHC Plan, the School will consult the parents and, where appropriate, the Local Authority to ensure that the provision specified in the EHC plan can be delivered by the School. The School will co-operate with the local authority to ensure that relevant reviews of EHC Plans are carried out as required.
- 8.3 Any additional services that are needed to meet the requirements of the EHC Plan will need to be charged to the Local Authority if the authority is responsible for the fees and our school is named in Section I of the EHC Plan. In all other circumstances charges will be made directly to parents unless the additional services can be considered to be a "reasonable adjustment" for which no charge will be made, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

9 Additional welfare needs

- 9.1 The School recognises that pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties may be at risk of being bullied. The School's anti-bullying policy makes it clear that bullying behaviour of any kind is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously.
- 9.2 If parents are concerned about their child's welfare they can approach the pupil's form teacher or the Pastoral Deputy Head to discuss their concerns in private at any time.
- 9.3 Additional barriers can exist when detecting the abuse or neglect of pupils with a special educational need or disability creating additional safeguarding challenges for those involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of this group of children. The School is mindful in particular that:
 - 9.3.1 assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the pupil's special educational need or disability without further exploration

- 9.3.2 pupils with a special education need or disability can be disproportionately impacted by bullying without outwardly showing any signs; and
- 9.3.3 there may be communication barriers which are difficult to overcome to identify whether action under this policy is required.
- 9.4 Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the School's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures.
- 9.5 **Disability**
 - 9.5.1 The School recognises that some pupils with special education needs or learning difficulties may also have a disability.
 - 9.5.2 The School will make all reasonable adjustments in order to afford opportunity to disabled pupils. However if, despite such adjustments, the School is unable to provide adequately for the pupil's needs, the School may decline to offer a place to a pupil or request that parents withdraw their child from the School (see 10 below).

10 **Arrangements for supporting pupil Mental Health & Wellbeing**

- 10.1 At WHS, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupils. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils, though:
 - 10.1.1 Promoting positive mental health in all staff and pupils
 - 10.1.2 Increasing understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
 - 10.1.3 Alerting staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
 - 10.1.4 Providing support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
 - 10.1.5 Providing support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers
- 10.2 Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, staff with a specific, relevant remit include: Mental Health Lead (the SENCo) , Designated Safeguard Leads and the Head.
- 10.3 Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the mental health lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officer, the head teacher or the designated governor. If the pupil 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.
- 10.4 Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the SENCo and/or DSL. **See Appendix 4 for further guidance.**

11 **Arrangements for supporting pupils who are looked after or previously looked after**

- 11.1 A termly 'Personal Education Plan' (PEP) meeting takes place which is attended by the Looked After Children (LACs), their guardians/foster parents, the SENCo and a representative

from the Local Authority. These meetings are used to review whether the needs of the looked after child are being met and to set realistic and achievable targets for the forthcoming term. Currently we have no pupils who receive Pupil Premium.

12 **Alternative arrangements**

- 12.1 We reserve the right, following consultation with you, to ask or require you to withdraw your child from the School if, in our opinion after **making all reasonable adjustments and exhausting appropriate strategies**:
- 12.1.1 your child is in need of a formal assessment, additional specialist teaching, learning support or medication to which you do not consent; and / or
 - 12.1.2 your child's learning difficulties require a level of support or medication which, in the professional judgment of the Head, the School is unable to provide, manage or arrange
 - 12.1.3 your child has special educational needs that make it unlikely he / she will be able to benefit sufficiently from the mainstream education and facilities which we provide.
- 12.2 In any of these circumstances we will do what is reasonable to help you to find an alternative placement which will provide your child with the necessary level of teaching and support.
- 12.3 Withdrawal of a pupil in these circumstances will not incur a charge to fees in lieu of notice. The deposit paid in respect of your child will be credited to your account.

13 **Training**

- 13.1 The School ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.
- 13.2 The level and frequency of training depends on role of the individual member of staff.
- 13.3 The School maintains written records of all staff training.

14 **Risk assessment**

- 14.1 Where a concern about a pupil's welfare is identified, the risks to that pupil's welfare will be assessed and appropriate action will be taken to reduce the risks identified.
- 14.2 The format of risk assessment may vary and may be included as part of the School's overall response to a welfare issue, including the use of individual pupil welfare plans (such as Behaviour, Healthcare and Education plans, as appropriate). Regardless of the form used, the School's approach to promoting pupil welfare will be systematic and pupil focused.
- 14.3 The Head has overall responsibility for ensuring that matters which affect pupil welfare are adequately risk assessed and for ensuring that the relevant findings are implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- 14.4 Day to day responsibility to carry out risk assessments under this policy will be delegated to the SENCo who has been properly trained in, and tasked with, carrying out the particular assessment.

15 Record keeping

- 15.1 All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.
- 15.2 The records created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School has a number of privacy notices which explain how the School will use personal data about pupils and parents. The privacy notices are published on the School's website. In addition, staff must ensure that they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy. This includes the School's data protection policy and information security policy.

16 Version control

Date of adoption of this policy	October 2020
Date of last review of this policy	May 2025
Date for next review of this policy	Summer 2026
Policy owner (SMT)	SENCo

Appendix 1 Report to parents: no learning difficulty indicated

Dear Parents

Year 1 screening for learning difficulties

I am pleased to tell you that the routine screening tests provided for all pupils in this year group have revealed no indication of a learning difficulty or other special educational need in the case of your child. The test used is the Nessy Online Dyslexia Screener.

These tests are indicative rather than diagnostic but we are reasonably confident in their results. These tests will, in any event, be repeated at the appropriate level at the next key stage or earlier if cause for concern arises.

There are two other matters that I should mention. The first is that the School needs to know as soon as possible if parents are at all concerned at any time about their child's progress or have reason to think that a particular learning difficulty exists. In these circumstances, please speak to your child's Form Tutor and write directly to me.

The second matter is that a learning difficulty can sometimes become apparent for the first time at secondary stage when the educational demands tend to increase. The cause of a learning difficulty is often inherited and for these reasons we need to know at this stage if either parent or any of their children or close relations have / had a learning difficulty.

A copy of our policy on learning difficulties is available to parents on written requests received via email to m.hardy@westburyhouse.surrey.sch.uk

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shortt
Deputy Head/SENCo

Appendix 2 Report to parents: possible learning difficulty indicated

Dear Parents

Y1 screening for learning difficulties

This is to let you know that during the routine screening tests which are carried out recently for all pupils in this year group, [**• name of pupil**]'s results indicated the possibility that [**• he / she**] may have a learning difficulty in the area of [**• please describe**]. The tests which we use are not diagnostic tests of a kind which an educational psychologist would carry out. Their purpose is to detect circumstances which may need further investigation or a formal assessment and they are not infallible. It may turn out that your child has no problem after all.

I enclose a copy of the School's policy on special educational needs and learning difficulties which I should be grateful if you would read carefully and keep with your records.

[**• My recommendation at this stage is that we try [**• learning support / additional specialist teaching**] for the remainder of this year and then assess [**• name of pupil**]'s needs again at that stage.]**

OR

[**• Because the test results were considerably below the levels normally to be expected of children of this age, my recommendation is that [**• name of pupil**] should be formally assessed by an educational psychologist.**]

I enclose some further details of the provision we can make for children who have certain kinds of learning difficulty. If [**• name of pupil**] turns out to have a learning difficulty which is formally diagnosed, we will need to co-operate closely so as to ensure that support is given at the right level.

Please contact me via email k.beel@westburyhouse.surrey.sch.uk for a convenient appointment if you would like to discuss the various choices in more detail. Otherwise, would you please write to me as soon as you can with your decision.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shortt
Deputy Head/SENCo

Appendix 3 Cause for concern referral form

Pupil's Name	
Pupil's Date of Birth	
Year Group	
Name of Staff Member completing the referral	
Date	

1. Please tick which area(s) of SEN is/are of concern for this pupil

- Cognition and Learning
- Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs

2. Briefly explain what difficulties they are experiencing in accessing the curriculum.

3. Briefly explain how you have differentiated the work for this pupil. (Give as much detail as possible explaining impact and outcomes)

4. Please detail any other factors which might be relevant i.e. recent conversations with parents.

5. What are you hoping to get from your referral? E.g. advice only, additional support for the child of concern, assessments.

Please send this form via both email and hard copy to the school. All recent internal exam grades, assessment marks and other evidence should be included in the referral.

Appendix 4: Further guidance for supporting pupil mental health & wellbeing

Risk Assessment for Pupil Welfare

It is helpful to draw up an individual risk assessment for pupils causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental RHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others. We will follow the 3D PSHE Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Supporting children's Positive Mental Health

We believe the school has a key role in promoting children's positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our School has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

Pupil-led activities

- Campaigns and collective worship to raise awareness of mental health
- Celebration Assemblies
- Peer Mentors
- Concerns box
- Rainbow bench

Transition programmes

- Transition Programme to secondary schools which, where possible includes School based counsellor (Place2Be) providing whole class sessions
- Police Awareness Programme- safety and awareness

Class activities

- Well-being sessions
- Brain breaks and movement breaks
- Mind Up lessons
- Zones of Regulation including designated 'Blue Zone'
- Values related activities in class e.g Art focus
- Collective worship during lunch or assembly
- Music workshops

Whole school

- Collective worship during whole school assembly
- Wellbeing week - whole school focus on doing things which make us feel good
- Displays and information around the School about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Small group and individual activities and interventions with trained ELSA including nurture sessions
- Calm, safe spaces within the school to carry out activities including dedicated SEN room

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school (and externally). We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil 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 to Annie Shortt , SENCo/ Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Managing disclosures

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

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

Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' For more information about how to handle mental health disclosures sensitively refer to the school's Safeguarding Policy.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on MyConcerns. 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 /Actions taken

This information should be shared with the mental health lead, who will offer support and advice about next steps.

Confidentiality

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

- 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 pupil without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with a senior member of staff and / or a parent, particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead, this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their child's mental health and wellbeing.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Designated Safeguarding Lead, must be informed immediately. If DSL is not available - contact should be made with Deputy DSL

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face at school ? *This is preferable.*
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website/Newsletters/ Place2Be counselling service for parents/carers
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in RHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told

- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

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 in order to enable them to keep pupils safe.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning training for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The EduCare portal provides 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 pupils.

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.

Useful links

Young Minds is one of the UK's leading charities for children and young people's mental health: <https://youngminds.org.uk>

Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families - a charity dedicated to providing training & support for child mental health services: <https://www.annafreud.org>

Place2Be is one of the UK's leading children's mental health charities: <https://www.place2be.org.uk>

Mind is the UK's leading mental health charity, offering a great deal of useful information on children's mental health: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Mentally Healthy Schools - Quality-assured information, advice and resources to help primary schools understand and promote children's mental health and wellbeing: <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk>

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) provide support to children and young people with a wide range of behavioural and emotional issues.

Now and Beyond is the UK's first mental health and wellbeing festival for schools in response to the pandemic's impact on an already urgent mental health crisis: <https://nowandbeyond.org.uk>

Education Support is a UK charity dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education staff in schools, colleges and universities: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk>

BoingBoing Resilience Framework