



Merridale Primary School

Mental Health and Well Being

Policy

2022-2025

From our whole school Intent:

Our children are on a learning journey. Adults and pupils develop strong, supportive relationships to ensure all children flourish academically, socially and personally. We are “**Growing Together**”.

Policy Statement

At Merridale Primary School, we are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole school community (children, staff, parents and carers).

We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

We endeavour to ensure that children are able to successfully manage times of change and stress and aim to ensure that they are supported to reach their potential or to access help when they need it.

We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody’s business and that we all have a role to play.

Emotional health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people and staff to:

- feel confident in themselves.
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately.
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others.
- cope with the stresses of everyday life.
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve.

Teaching about mental health

At Merridale, we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a pro-active way to avoid problems arising.

We do this by:

- Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and well-being.
- Adhering to a positive, restorative approach to behaviour management.
- Helping children socially to form and maintain relationships. Promoting the values of kindness and respect.
- Helping children to feel comfortable about sharing any concerns or worries.
- Teaching children emotional skills and an awareness of mental health so that they understand their emotions and feelings better.
- Promoting self-esteem, respect and self-respect and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
- Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks.
- Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services, parents and carers.
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.
- Developing an open culture where it's normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging.
- Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
- Providing opportunities to reflect.
- Enabling access to appropriate support.
- Explicitly teaching about mental health and well-being through RHE for all year groups
- Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing week and access to information around the school

We pursue our aims through:

- Universal, whole school approaches
- Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement.
- Specialised, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties including attachment disorder.
- Nurture groups and sessions to focus on mental health, resilience and wellbeing.

Staff roles and responsibilities, including those with specific responsibility

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Key staff supporting Mental Health at Merridale Primary School

Named Senior Mental Health Lead – Laura Towle (Headteacher)

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Laura Towle (Headteacher)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads – Beverley Corbett and Sarah Byrne

Well-being leader: Rachel Hatton

SENCO: Nisha Tara

Learning Mentor: Beverley Corbett

Welfare Officer: Denise Worker

School Counsellor: Jess Spittle (Hope Services)

- Lead and work with all staff to co-ordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Work with the RHE leader re: teaching about mental health.
- Provide advice and support to staff and organises training and updates.
- Liaise with mental health services and makes individual referrals to them.

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our Jigsaw RHE curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort being taught as appropriate.

All classes make talking about feelings and worries a priority and give children regular opportunities to do this. Using Emotion Coaching techniques, staff invest time in exploring behaviours, worries and concerns to give children skills and strategies to manage their emotions and behaviours successfully.

Targeted support

The school will offer support through targeted approaches for individual pupils or groups of pupils which may include:

- Targeted sessions with Learning Mentor and Welfare Officer.
- Targeted therapy Dog weekly sessions
- Counselling sessions with the school's counsellor
- Sensory Circuit sessions and sensory snacks as needed
- Sensory toys (e.g. fidget toys) and chew toys as needed.
- Therapeutic activities including art, Lego and relaxation and mindfulness techniques.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of what support is available within our school and how to access further support.

Early Identification and Warning Signs

All staff will be vigilant in identifying a range of possible difficulties that may be contributing to a pupil's poor mental health, including:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning
- Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns
- Family circumstance
- Recent bereavement
- Health indicators

School staff may also 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 with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy), Learning Mentor or Welfare Officer as appropriate.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Talking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Disclosures by children and confidentiality

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount, and staff listen rather than advise. If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the School's Safeguarding procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency, then the School's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

Assessment, interventions and support

All concerns are reported to the designated adults within school and needs are assessed through a triage approach with SLT, class teachers and SENCO to ensure the child gets the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service, as quickly as possible.

Working with parents and carers.

Parents or carers can approach their child/children's class teacher if they have mental health concerns. This will be cascaded to the Senior Mental Health Lead for assessment.

To support parents and carers we will:

- Provide information online on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes.

- Share ideas about how parents and carers can support positive mental health in their children.
- Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics taught in RHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this at home.
- Organise workshops and presentations on mental health, anxiety, resilience and steps to wellbeing.

When a concern has been raised, teachers or the Mental Health Lead and SENDCO will:

- Contact parents to discuss the outcome of any assessment (Although there may be cases, parents and carers cannot be involved due to child protection issues.)
- Discuss any relevant referrals to external agencies.
- Signpost parents to further information or provide resources to take away.
- Create a chronology of actions and events.
- Agree mental health care and protection plan where appropriate including clear next steps.
- Discuss how parents can support their child through strategies or signposts to parenting support groups.

Working with specialist services

As part of our targeted provision, the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing. Children may be referred to one of the following services for additional support.

- Wolverhampton Outreach services
- Wolverhampton Inclusion Service
- Educational Psychology Services
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- School Nursing Service
- Wolverhampton Safeguarding Services
- School counsellor
- Strengthening Families workers

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.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be published on the school website - hard copies are available on request. The policy will be reviewed every three years.