



## CROWLEES CE (C) J&I SCHOOL

### WELLBEING POLICY

#### Introduction

At Crowlees School, we recognise the important role good mental health plays in both academic achievement and personal development. To this end, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of all members of our school family.

At Crowlees we want our children, above all else, to be safe and happy. We recognise the importance of looking after and developing our mental health and provide education and support to enable children and adults to develop their wellbeing. Our curriculum is broad and rich to enable pupils to achieve across a wide range of subjects including art, music, drama and regular physical activity to help develop healthy and balanced minds. All children are taught throughout the curriculum and specifically in Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), about how to look after their mental and physical health and to develop positive life habits. Children are taught how to make healthy choices. Information is shared with parents. Our trained child counsellor is available two days a week to support individual children with issues such as bereavement, family break ups and difficulties, illness and a range of mental health concerns. Counselling can be accessed through self-referral from a pupil or requested by a parent or a teacher.

This policy briefly sets out how we support and develop the emotional health and wellbeing of children, staff and families.

#### Children

Children today are bombarded by messages on media. This starts at a very young age when they access phones, tablets and smart speakers, frequently without adult supervision. This constant stream of adverts, images, texts and animations can all combine to influence what our children think and feel about themselves and others. Whilst we firmly believe that technology will continue to evolve and remain at the heart of modern life and so should not be removed or presented negatively we also understand our obligation to teach children how to navigate it successfully. We do this in a number of ways:

- regular online safety reminders
- the presentation of and discussion around 'fake news' on the internet
- discrete PSHCE teaching, including standing up to bullying, positive self-image etc
- an anti-bullying charter created by the children
- unpicking fictional characters feelings and behaviours, in a bid to understand their motivations
- developing communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, to allow children to recognise their own, and others, emotions and behaviours
- developing resilience in the face of setbacks or failure
- promoting healthy lifestyles, which includes diet, exercise and relationships

#### Warning Signs

One of our school strengths is the strong relationships staff have with children. Any warning signs that a child may be having mental health issues is quickly picked up and disclosed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Warning signs may include:

- Physical signs of repeated self-harm (this includes hair or eyelash pulling, head banging and skin picking as well as deliberate cutting or wounding)
- Becoming withdrawn and refusing to join in with class/group tasks and games both during lessons and at break times
- Changes in activity and mood
- Slowing or stalling of academic progress
- Talking about or drawing images of self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of being a failure or loss of hope
- Regular complaints of physical pain or nausea with no evident causes
- Poor attendance or regular lateness

## Identification and Support

Once staff have identified a concern their first priority should be to talk to the child concerned, to gain a better understanding of the situation and the child's response. The class teacher should then discuss the issue with the child's parent or carer in the first instance and relay the findings to the DSL. An informal plan should be agreed such as additional one to one time in school with a trusted adult e.g. the school counsellor or a targeted intervention programme. If this is found to have limited effect or if the parent/carer wishes to escalate the process then a formal referral can be made to CAMHS for external support and advice. Parents must be made aware at this point that this service is heavily over-subscribed and that there will be a waiting period. Parents may also wish to visit their GP and raise their concerns about their child with them. While this will not speed up the referral process this simple action may support them in feeling they are doing something to help their child.

Any agreed plan that supports mental health has the same value and validity as one that supports learning and will BE fully implemented by named staff and reviewed in the agreed timescales.

## Families

We also wish to support parents and families with any mental health issues. Research suggests that parent's mental health is a significant factor in the development of children's mental health.

At our school we value the relationships we have with our families and our open door approach means many parents feel comfortable approaching staff when they are going through difficult times. We strive to support where we can and know this may be as informal as providing a non-judgemental listening ear, to signposting to local services, to making a formal referral to an external agency.

## Staff

The Governors of our school recognise their role in supporting staff mental health. They are committed to an open culture in which mental, physical and emotional wellbeing is taken seriously and in which staff are supported in order that they may seek any help and support they need.

Our school buys into the local authority *Employee Health Care* service. Staff can access this by either asking for a referral by the Head Teacher or self-referring using the form available on the wellbeing board in the staffroom. This display also provides information on how to access *CareFirst* telephone counselling support and reminds staff that their unions all provide emotional health and wellbeing support services.

## Work/life Balance

The Governing Body recognises and appreciates the commitment staff show to the development of the school and the support they give to our children and families. However, they also understand the need for staff to maintain a good work/life balance and are committed to keeping workload under regular review. Any staff member who is feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope should speak to the Head Teacher as soon as possible. **Staff should not view this as a sign of weakness or failure.** Self-care is not selfish and early support and intervention may be the difference in keeping the staff member in school, rather than having to take sick leave. Sensible attitudes to planning, preparation, marking and assessment are promoted at our school, as is staff adoption of a healthy lifestyle and taking time to rest, relax and rejuvenate during weekends and holidays. There is no expected arrival or departure time for staff, as long as contracted hours are fulfilled. Emails, both sending and answering, should be kept to 'office hours' and it is down to the staff member's discretion whether they choose to access work emails during weekends and holidays. However, should a clear emergency arise, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors will still contact staff regardless of time or day, usually by phone call, to keep them apprised of the situation.

Just as all staff have a responsibility for looking after the emotional health and wellbeing of our children and families, we also have a duty of care to look after each other. Staff should be sensitive to any unexplained changes in behaviour, appearance or attendance and be prepared to have an informal conversation about how that person's wellbeing is. Sometimes all a staff member needs is an opportunity to off-load to someone who will listen and not judge and this brings them back to their normal self. Sometimes more formal support is needed and at this point the staff member can be gently reminded about the local authority and union support in place to help them. Above all the staff member should be reassured that they have not always felt low, and so should have no reason to expect their mood will never improve.

If a staff member discloses to another staff member that they are having suicidal thoughts then it should be suggested that they go and speak to the Headteacher or School Counsellor, who can advise and support them in accessing the correct care.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding, Medical Needs and SEND policies in cases where mental health needs overlap with these. Other policies such as Behaviour, Attendance and PHSCE should also be considered as part of our school's Emotional Health and Wellbeing suite.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the rolling programme, or when changes to Government strategy dictate, if sooner.