



## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

### 1.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

#### 1.1 Definitions:

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through to adulthood.

Wellbeing is the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. What one person feels is their perfect state of wellbeing may be completely different from another person. This is because we all have different goals, ambitions and personalities. Wellbeing is dynamic and can fluctuate over time in response to experiences, relationships and environmental factors.

#### 1.1 Vision and Philosophy:

At Queensway School, we are committed to the protection and promotion of good mental health and wellbeing for our whole-school school community – pupils, staff, parents / carers, governors, volunteers and visitors. We continuously endeavour to make improvements via the identification and implementation of positive processes and practices.

Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, by developing approaches tailored to the particular needs of their pupils and students. At Queensway School, we understand the importance of developing and implementing relevant support in a timely and effective manner. Our intent is to offer a safe and stable school environment for those directly and / or indirectly impacted by mental health difficulties and mental ill health. We recognise that mental health and wellbeing are closely linked to pupils' ability to engage with learning, build relationships and achieve their potential. Taking a coordinated, graduated and evidence-informed approach to mental health and wellbeing supports readiness to learn and promotes positive long-term outcomes.

Good mental health is important for helping children to develop and thrive.

Our approach to mental health and wellbeing is underpinned by our school values of respect, kindness and resilience, which shape how we support pupils, families and staff, how we respond to need, and how we create a safe, inclusive and compassionate school community.

#### 1.3 Aims and Objectives:

Our listening culture creates strong and trusting relationships and allows pupils' voices to be heard. We promote a culture of respect, where every individual's experience of mental health and wellbeing is acknowledged and valued.

Our aim is to provide an environment that is conducive to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of the whole school community. We strive to achieve this by developing and implementing practical, effective policies and procedures relevant to our school and developed in conjunction with pupils, their parents / carers, and link professionals (where applicable).

We will:

- Support our pupils to understand their emotions, through a Zones of Regulation approach that is integral to daily life in school
- Help children to manage change and adversity and develop resilience
- Provide an environment where our pupils feel able to openly discuss and reflect on their own experience of mental health and share concerns about themselves or others
- Encourage help-seeking behaviours and ensure pupils know who they can talk to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental health
- Model and promote kindness, ensuring pupils are treated with compassion and care during times of difficulty or vulnerability

We will promote a mentally healthy school environment by:

- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, helping to create inclusion
- Raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, and the ways in which mental health issues can manifest
- Giving pupils the opportunity to develop their self-esteem by taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Supporting staff to manage their own mental health and wellbeing
- Supporting staff to respond swiftly and effectively to any (early warning) signs of an emerging mental health problem in our whole school community
- Providing support to staff working with pupils with mental health needs / difficulties
- Giving all stakeholders access to relevant mental health support and resources, where possible
- Engaging in activities which promote positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience alongside a sense of belonging
- Recognising pupils' individual differences, ensuring all our children feel valued and respected
- Celebrating all achievements, both inside and outside the classroom
- Encouraging responsibility, helping pupils to develop age-appropriate understanding of their own wellbeing, recognise when they may need support, and seek help appropriately.

#### **1.4 Legal Basis and Key Guidance:**

This policy was written with regard to:

- The Equality Act, 2010
- The Data Protection Act, 2018
- Articles 3 and 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), 2015
- Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) guidance, updated 2025
- Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook. This specifies that schools should provide good education, supported by high-quality pastoral care. This includes making sure pupils know how to keep physically and mentally healthy.

This policy also aligns with good practice guidance in relation to whole-school approaches to mental health.

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## 2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across the school and for understanding the risk factors. Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should seek timely advice from a Designated Safeguarding Lead and / or the school's Mental Health Lead Practitioner. Key information and clear next step actions should be logged on the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS). In a case of acute mental health crisis, the procedure detailed in Appendix i of this document should be followed.

The Headteacher holds overall responsibility for ensuring that mental health and wellbeing are effectively supported across the school. The Mental Health Lead Practitioner, who is the Inclusion Manager, provides strategic oversight and coordination of mental health provision. They also support pupils where mental health needs intersect with special educational needs or disabilities, working closely with staff, families and external professionals as appropriate.

Early intervention to identify issues and provide effective support is crucial. The school role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing can be summarised as:

- **Prevention:** creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can effectively manage normal life stresses. This includes teaching pupils about mental wellbeing. (Please see section 6.0 for more information)
- **Identification:** recognising emerging issues as early and as accurately as possible
- **Early support:** helping pupils to participate in evidence-based early support and interventions
- **Access to specialist support:** working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment

The school recognises that mental health needs can be an indicator of, or increase vulnerability to, safeguarding risks, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, peer-on-peer harm and online safety risks. Where there are concerns that a pupil's mental health may place them at risk of harm, this will be treated as a safeguarding concern and responded to in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) provides oversight of cases where mental health needs may indicate safeguarding risk, ensuring appropriate thresholds are applied, risk is assessed effectively, and decisions regarding escalation or referral to external agencies are made in a timely and appropriate manner.

## 3.0 WARNING SIGNS AND IDENTIFICATION

At Queensway School we have clear systems and processes in place for early identification of mental health concerns. Staff are vigilant for warning signs that a pupil's mental health is deteriorating and will always take seriously any behaviours that could be indicative of a decline. These might include:

- Changes in mood or energy level
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Changes in attitude in lessons or academic progress / attainment
- Changes in level of personal hygiene
- Social isolation
- Poor attendance or punctuality
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, worthlessness or feeling like a failure

- Weight loss or gain
- Secretive behaviour
- Refusing to participate in P.E. or being secretive when changing clothes
- Physical pain or nausea with no obvious cause
- Physical injuries that appear self-inflicted
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

Staff recognise that warning signs may present differently depending on age, developmental level, culture or additional needs, and professional judgement will always be applied. Staff will approach identification and discussion of concerns with kindness and sensitivity, ensuring that pupils feel safe, respected and listened to.

If there is concern that a child is at immediate risk of harm, then the school's safeguarding procedures will be evoked. If a child presents with a medical emergency, staff will follow the school's procedures for medical emergencies.

There are a variety of tools that education settings can use as the basis for understanding and planning a response to pupils' mental health and wellbeing needs. These include the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). It is also recognised as good practice and as part of duty of care for schools to link with professional services / agencies as needed for specialist advice. (Please see section 6.0 for more information).

#### **4.0 WORKING WITH PARENTS / CARERS AND FAMILIES**

At Queensway School we are committed to ensuring that all families are heard when it comes to their children's mental health. This includes making sure parents / carers get support for their own mental health and wellbeing (if needed), and that our all our staff work in partnership (free from bias) with families.

We recognise and value the significant contribution made by parents / carers in supporting their child's time at school. We seek to establish and maintain strong partnerships with families and value opportunities to work in partnership.

Where appropriate, we will support families by signposting them to advice, resources and services that may benefit parental or family mental health and wellbeing. Communication will be transparent, sensitive and timely, recognising that discussions around mental health can be challenging.

We work in partnership with families in a spirit of mutual respect, recognising parents and carers as key partners while maintaining our professional responsibility to safeguard pupils and act in their best interests.

#### **5.0 TARGETED SUPPORT AND (AS NEEDED) REFERRALS**

Our whole school approach to supporting children's positive mental health will meet the needs of most of our pupils. We deliver a Zones of Regulation social emotional curriculum that is part of the daily provision for all our children and which helps to foster self-regulation and emotion understanding and control. Positive well-being is also promoted through our PSHE and wider curriculum, including the Coram Life Education's SCARF programme, which ensures we teach mental health and well-being issues in a safe, sensitive manner. We reinforce this through school activities and events such as circle time and themed assemblies.

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Overall, our key teaching themes are:- healthy coping strategies, challenging misconceptions around mental health, understanding own emotional states and keeping safe.

If a pupil is identified as having a mental health need, the school's Mental Health Lead Practitioner will work with the child's Teacher / teaching team to take a graduated and case-by-case approach. This will involve assessing the pupil's mental health needs, creating a plan to provide support, undertaking actions set out in the plan and reviewing the effectiveness of the support offered. We strongly believe in early intervention. Parents / carers will be consulted throughout the process and we will actively encourage parental involvement in all stages of support for a child. Where a child's needs are considerable, the decision may be taken to request support from external agencies / services.

Support will be proportionate, time-limited where appropriate, and regularly reviewed for impact. Parental involvement will be encouraged at all stages unless safeguarding considerations indicate otherwise.

In Oxfordshire, the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) can work in schools or with individual families to provide targeted support. This team comprises Education Mental Health Practitioners (EMHPs) alongside a range of other professionals. MHST provides early intervention support on some mental health and wellbeing issues.

The Oxfordshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) will accept referrals for children whose symptoms or distress and degree of social and / or functional impairment are severe. Usually, the duration of these difficulties should not be less than three months. All referrals made into CAMHS will be initially handled by the Single Point of Access (SPA) Team. A clinician will then assess and determine if intervention is necessary and, if so, they will formulate an appropriate plan to be discussed with the child's parent / carer.

School nurses and their teams have an important role to play in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating. Schools can make a referral to the School Nurse Team for a child or, alternatively, involvement can be via the family GP.

Counselling can be an effective form of targeted support for some pupils. At Queensway School, we have linked with Place2Be, a children's mental health charity with over 25 years' experience working with pupils, families and staff. Our Place2Be practitioner is in school for 2 days per week and provides mental health support through programmes of one-to-one counselling using evidence-based methods. A caseload waiting list is in operation for this provision. Additionally, there are Place2Talk lunch time sessions where children can self-refer themselves, and there is advice and resources for parents / carers to help support their child's wellbeing, accessible via the Place2Be website:

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/>

If further or additional support is needed, parents / carers could access this via the family GP or paediatrician (where applicable), as well as mental health charities such as Samaritans, Mind, Young Minds, and Kooth.

The school recognises the impact that online activity and digital environments can have on pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Where concerns arise, these will be considered alongside safeguarding risks and managed in line with the school's online safety and safeguarding policies.

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## 6.0 SUPPORTING PEERS

Watching a friend experience poor mental health could be extremely difficult for a child. Pupils may also be at risk of learning and developing unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. We will offer support to all pupils impacted by mental health directly and indirectly. This might include strategies that could be used to support friends, things to avoid doing / saying, warning signs to look out for and signposting the sources of additional (external) support.

Support for peers will be considered carefully to reduce the risk of emotional burden or unhealthy coping strategies developing. Pupil needs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and adapted as required.

Pupils are encouraged to show kindness and respect towards peers experiencing difficulties, while being supported to understand appropriate boundaries and when to involve a trusted adult.

## 7.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

We recognise how important it is for staff to be calm, supportive and non-judgmental with children who disclose a concern about themselves or another person. The emotional and physical safety of the child is paramount and staff will always listen rather than advise. Staff should not promise a pupil that they will keep a disclosure secret, instead they will be upfront about the limits of confidentiality. Information will be shared sensitively, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis, in line with safeguarding and data protection principles.

A disclosure cannot be kept secret because:

- Being the sole person responsible for a pupil's mental health could have a negative impact on the member of staff's own mental health and wellbeing
- The support put in place for the pupil will be dependent on the member of staff being at school
- Other staff members can share ideas on how to best support the pupil given the specific circumstances

Staff should always share disclosures with at least one appropriate colleague. This will usually be a Designated Safeguarding Lead. If information needs to be shared with other members of staff or external professionals, it will be done on a need-to-know basis. Before sharing information disclosed by a pupil with a third party, where possible, the member of staff will discuss it with the pupil and explain:

- Who they will share the information with
- What information they will share
- Why they need to share that information

Parents / carers will be informed unless there is a child protection concern. Please refer to the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## 8.0 TRAINING

At Queensway School we are committed to high quality, ongoing professional development on all aspects of emotional wellbeing and mental health. Our staff receive regular training linked to recognising and responding to mental health issues. Specialist training will be sought and initiated when necessary.

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Training ensures that all staff are able to recognise when mental health concerns may indicate an underlying safeguarding risk, understand the thresholds for action, and know how to respond appropriately in line with safeguarding procedures.

Training will be reviewed regularly to ensure staff remain confident in recognising concerns, understanding procedures and accessing appropriate support.

## 9.0 RELATED POLICIES

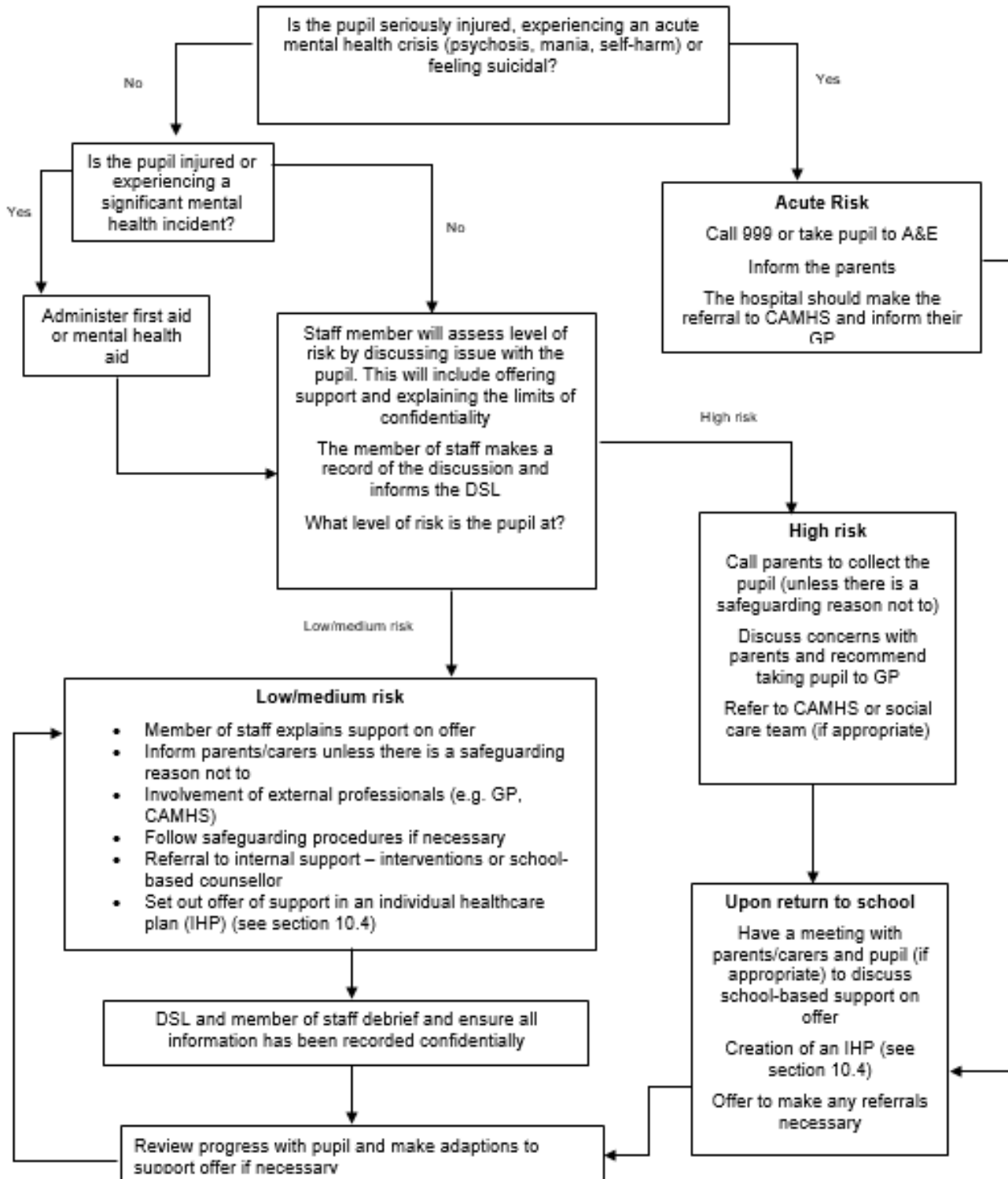
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Children We Care For Policy
- Drug Policy
- Equality Policy and Plan
- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety Policy Part 4
- Intimate Care Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Supporting Pupils with a Medical Condition Policy

## 10.0 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on behalf of the Quality of Education Committee.

Head Teacher ..... Date .....

**Appendix i: Procedure to follow in a case of acute mental health crisis**



Key: A&E = Accident and Emergency, DSL = Designated safeguarding Lead, GP = General Practitioner, CAMHS = Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, IHP = Individual Healthcare Plan