



## Nene Education Trust Mental Health Policy

### Policy number 46

<b>Key Manager</b>	Director of School Improvement
<b>Ratified by TB</b>	June 2023
<b>Review Dates:</b>	Spring 2025
<b>Location of Policy:</b>	Trust wide
<b>Access to Policy:</b>	Open
<b>Policy Context:</b>	This Policy applies to all staff of the Trust and to those others offered access to such resources.

#### Revision History

Revision Date	Description	Sections Affected	Revised By	Approved By
20/06/2021	New Policy		DoPE	H R Committee
Summer 2023	Revised Policy	Whole trust approach to mental health  Staff Welfare  Suicide and self harm	Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead	

#### **Why mental health & well-being is essential**

Throughout the Nene Education Trust, our aim is to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole community; for children, staff, parents and carers. We recognise how significant mental health and emotional well-being is to our everyday lives, in the same way that physical health is. We realise that children's mental health is a vital component to overall wellbeing and may affect potential to learn and achieve. 1 in 6 children aged 5-16 is likely to have a mental health issues, according to

The Children's Society. In the last 3 years the likelihood of children developing a mental health issue has increased by 50% (The Children's Society, 2022)

Mental health issues can have a fundamental impact on quality of life, relationships and achievement. For vulnerable children these challenges can be both traumatic and life limiting.

Ours schools are a place for children and young people to experience a caring ethos, one in which every individual is wholeheartedly valued and listened to. We are committed to providing a nurturing and supportive environment that encourages children to develop self-esteem, to become resolute and have the potential to overcome adversity.

Staff across our Trust will help to ensure that children learn about, and maintain, positive mental health, that they are aware of what affects their own mental health and are able to recognise designated members of staff to approach if additional support is needed.

Our schools aim to help children develop resilience to mental health issues and be an organisation where:

- All children are valued;
- Children feel safe & part of a community;
- 'Voice of the child' is promoted, providing the opportunity for children to speak with trusted adults about their challenges;
- Appropriate support to meet needs is accessed;
- Positive mental health is encouraged;
- Academic and non-academic achievements are celebrated;
- Bullying (or any derogatory behaviour towards others) is not tolerated.

In addition to children's welfare, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being and throughout our trust, opportunities are available for all staff to access support should the need arise.

### **Definition of mental health & well-being**

The World Health Organisation states:

*'Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'* (WHO, 2022)

In promoting positive mental health and well-being within our schools we want all children to:

- Have the ability to build personal confidence;
- Have the ability to reflect;
- Realise self-worth and importance;
- Express their emotions appropriately;
- Build and maintain positive relationships with others;
- Cope with the anxieties of everyday life;
- Manage periods of stress and deal with episodes of change;
- Learn, achieve and reach their potential.

In developing this policy the following have been taken account of:

- Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing, Public Health England, 2021

- 5 Steps to Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools, Anna Freud Centre,
- State of the Nation: Children and Young People's Mental Health, DfE 2023
- Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools, DfE 2018

### **Purpose of this policy**

The Nene Education Trust aims to ensure children and young people are supported to understand mental health, to build personal resilience and to manage times of stress or anxiety.

This policy covers:

- How we promote positive mental health;
- How we prevent mental health challenges;
- How we identify and support those children with mental health needs;
- How we train and support staff to develop an understanding of mental health problems, to identify those children showing early warning signs and how they can help address mental health challenges;
- Provide information for parents to gain further advice and support.

### **A whole Trust approach to promoting positive mental health**

We take a Trust-wide approach to promoting positive mental health alongside the provision for effective social and emotional competencies associated with greater health, well-being and better achievement. Our main criteria for this are to:

- Trust Lead for Mental Health and Wellbeing with strategic responsibility for developing the mental health and wellbeing provision across the Trust;
- Create an ethos and environment that supports mental health and which everyone understands;
- Create learning environments that encompass social and emotional skills whilst providing an awareness of mental health;
- Help children to develop social relationships, to support peers and to encourage that they seek help when needed;
- Early identification of children who may have mental health needs and establish pathways to support their needs; this may include referral to specialist services;
- Effectively working alongside parents and carers to provide appropriate support;
- Regular staff training to develop and progress knowledge of mental health issues.

### **Exercise, Nutrition and Mental Health**

We recognise the important links between exercise and nutrition and the role they play in promoting positive mental health.

#### **Nutrition**

What we eat and drink affects how we feel, think and behave. The brain, just like other organs, requires different amounts of nutrients and water to remain healthy. For this reason, diet is a cornerstone of good mental health. In addition to this there is growing evidence that nutrition may play a vital role in the prevention, development and management of diagnosed mental health problems.

By ensuring diet and nutrition is taught across the age phases within the Trust, we ensure that children and young people are learning the importance of a healthy diet from a young age and also learn about making positive and healthy choices for mind and body wellbeing.

### **Exercise**

Physical activity has huge potential to enhance our wellbeing. Any activity that gets us moving and raises our heart rate increases our mental alertness, energy and positive mood. By participating in regular physical activity, we can increase our self-esteem, reduce stress and anxiety and even help prevent the development of mental health issues.

PE is an integral part of the curriculum in the Trust, with an emphasis placed on high quality teaching and coaching before, during and after school. Children and young people are encouraged to take part in lessons and out of school clubs to promote physical activity in a range of ways; competitive and non-competitive. Staff are also encouraged to access the sports facilities available, at a discounted rate, in order to look after their own health and wellbeing.

### **Staff roles and responsibilities towards supporting mental health**

We believe that all people in our organisation have a responsibility to promote positive mental health throughout our schools and to understand the protective factors and risks associated with mental health. Those children that require additional support will be identified by staff using skills to recognise the early warning signs of mental health. This will ensure that children suffering mental health challenges can gain the appropriate early intervention.

All staff understand the factors that may render some children more vulnerable to mental health challenges and these could be:

- Bereavement and loss;
- Physical long term illness or disability;
- Looking after family members, taking on the role of young carer;
- Parents with mental health issues;
- Friendship issues;
- Parental separation;
- Bullying;
- Challenges within the home environment.

Staff will also realise that protective factors exist that can safeguard children from adversity, such as:

- Promoting self-esteem;
- Developing communication skills;
- Problem solving skills;
- Self-worth and a sense of belonging;
- Emotional literacy;
- Resilience.

There are designated staff members in each of our schools that hold the relevant skills to manage support pathways for children. These individuals will aim to:

- Lead school activities that work to highlight positive mental health and well-being;
- Provide mental health advice and support to staff;
- Arrange training sessions and information updates for staff;
- Be the first point of contact with mental health services;
- Make referrals to professional agencies.

Whilst we recognise that many behaviours and challenges can be supported within the school environment, others may need more intensive support. We are fortunate that a range of organisations exist that afford support to children with mental health issues and their families.

See appendix 4 for named staff at Redwell.

### **Identifying, referring and supporting children with mental health needs**

Our Trust approach:

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to share their concerns and be listened to;
- Ensure the safety and welfare of children;
- Identify appropriate support packages for children, dependent on needs;
- Fully involve parents and carers with any interventions for their child;
- Ensure children are involved in the care and support they receive;
- Monitor, review and evaluate any support and ensure parents and carers are updated.

### **Early identification**

Within our Trust schools, we aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible, as a means to preventing issues getting worse. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing audit completed each year;
- Termly Pupil Progress Review meetings;
- Receiving information from previous school;
- Enabling children to share any concerns with a member of staff;
- Staff reporting of concerns to designated teams within school;
- Analysing behaviour, exclusions and attendance;
- A parental information and health questionnaire on entry to the school;
- A range of assessment and tracking tools including: strengths & difficulties questionnaire, The Boxall Profile assessment and others

All Trust staff are trained to understand and recognise protective and risk factors, types of mental health needs, (Appendix 1) and signs that may mean a pupil is experiencing mental health issues (Appendix 2). Any member of staff will pass their concerns to the school's SENCO, Lead for Inclusion, Designated Safeguarding Leads or Pastoral/Welfare Departments.

These signs may include:

- Becoming socially withdrawn and isolating from friends and family;
- Changes in mood or eating/sleeping habits;
- Falling academic levels;
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and failure;
- An increase in school lateness and absenteeism;
- Withdrawing from physical education or a reluctance to change for P.E. lessons;
- Wearing long sleeved clothing during warm periods;
- Talking about self-harm;
- Secretive behaviours;
- Substance misuse;
- Complaining of physical pain, headache or stomach ache, with no evident cause.

Staff receive an annual refresher session delivered by the Trust Lead for Mental Health and Wellbeing to ensure all staff are up to date and confident in understanding and utilising the protective and risk factors and different mental health needs.

If there is a concern regarding a child being in danger of immediate harm, the school's designated safeguarding team will follow Northamptonshire County Council's child protection procedures. Any medical emergencies will adhere to school's medical emergency procedures.

### **Disclosures by children and confidentiality**

When a child discloses a concern about themselves or a friend, our staff recognises the need to remain calm, supportive and non-judgemental. During any disclosure, staff will listen rather than advise, they will make it clear to children that the concern will be shared with the school's safeguarding team so an appropriate level of support can be offered to the pupil/s.

All disclosures are recorded confidentially, the details will include: name of child, date and time of incident, details of disclosure, member of staff that received the disclosure and next steps recommended.

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing mental health issues it can be challenging for their friends who can become emotionally affected. These circumstances will be reviewed on a case by case basis to assess the level of appropriate support that can be offered to friends.

### **Involving parents and carers**

As a trust we recognise the need to take an open and honest approach with parents and carers regarding their children's mental health and well-being and will always involve them when discussing support pathways.

To support parents and carers:

- We can provide information and websites on mental health and well-being;
- We host parenting programmes that are available to all parents and carers;
- We provide information on support pathways that can be accessed;
- We can facilitate regular family meetings, through an Early Help Assessment plan, to consider support and potential next steps, (Appendix 3).

When a concern has been raised, the school will:

- Contact parents and carers and arrange to meet;
- Offer information of places to seek additional support;
- Be available for follow up calls;
- Make a record of any meetings;
- Discuss how the parents and carers can best support their child;
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about support and interventions offered.

### **Working with specialist services, gaining access to be assessed for support**

In some cases a child's mental health needs will require specialist support due to more severe challenges, such as ongoing anxiety, depression or self-harm.

Our Trust schools have access to a range of support services and once a child has been accepted by an agency, we will have regular contact with the service to review the support package offered and to consider next steps. Referrals will only go ahead with the consent of the pupil and parent/carer and when it is the most appropriate support for the pupil's specific needs.

### **SEND and mental health**

Persistent mental health challenges could lead to children having significantly greater difficulty in learning than those of the same age. In some cases the child may benefit from being identified as

having a special educational need. Children and young people with an additional needs or learning difficulty are also 54% more likely to experience mental health issues.

### **Staff welfare**

Supporting and promoting the mental health and well-being of staff is essential to the continuance of a healthy school and we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance and well-being, such as the introduction of the Staff Charter and mindfulness sessions. Our staff can also access a counselling service through the Employee Assistance Program.

- 1) A confidential annual staff wellbeing survey conducted by an external provider, with actions created based on the feedback
- 2) Provide training for staff with responsibilities for mental health and wellbeing for all staff to embed the whole school culture of wellbeing for example: Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead annual refresher, CPD in staff meetings
- 3) Promote staff mental health and wellbeing e.g. through signposting to services and support, buddy system with colleagues, coaching conversations with line managers, drop-in sessions with the senior leadership team for staff who have any concerns about their mental health;
  - Dedicated space for staff to take some time out;
  - Encouraging a sense of community with non-work-related social activities;
  - Senior leadership modelling good working practices and self-care to encourage work/life balance.
- 4) Ensure support structures are clearly identified and signposted, for example:
  - ensuring that signage is clear and accessible, for example a noticeboard or screen in your staff areas;
  - signposting to mental health and wellbeing support in staff inductions, trainings, bulletins, and on staff intranet pages;
  - having clearly signposted areas for additional support and advice.

Targeted support for staff, particularly for those with responsibility for mental health, can include:

- Supervision;
- Professional coaching;
- Mental health training;
- Regular mandatory wellbeing check-in meetings for all staff using a peer-support model;
- Wellbeing events for staff, for example, regular yoga sessions;

Specialist support staff (particularly for those who may be struggling with their mental health) can include:

- Employee Assistance Programmes;
- Crisis support;
- Referrals to occupational health.

### **Suicide and Self Harm**

Suicide is defined as the deliberate act to intentionally end one's life (Mind, 2020). Nationally, 4.3% of overall suicides in 2021 were those aged 0-19 years. Samaritans recognise that suicide is a leading cause of death for young people in the United Kingdom (Samaritans, n.d.). Studies suggest that up to 135 people can be directly affected by a suicide (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022). People bereaved by suicide are more likely to experience poor mental health and have an increased risk of suicide themselves.

The Mind Charity describe self-harm as “when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences” (Mind, 2020). Self-harm can including cutting yourself; poisoning yourself; over-eating or under-eating; exercising excessively; biting yourself; picking or scratching at your skin; burning your skin; pulling your hair; getting into fights where you know you will get hurt.

As a Trust we are committed to suicide and self-harm awareness and prevention through education. A core part of this is our commitment to using the correct language to talk about suicide.

Issue	Problematic Language	Preferred Language
Presenting suicide as a desired outcome	'Successful suicide' 'Unsuccessful suicide'	'Died by suicide' 'Took their own life'
Associating suicide with crime or sin	'Committed suicide' 'Commit suicide' 'Completed suicide'	'Took their own life' 'Suicide death'
Sensationalising suicide	'Suicide epidemic'	'Increasing rates' 'Higher rates'
Language glamourising a suicide attempt	'Failed suicide' 'Suicide bid'	'Suicide attempt' 'Non-fatal attempt'
Gratuitous use of the term 'suicide'	'Political suicide' 'Suicide mission'	Refrain from using the term suicide out of context

(Postvention Support Package for Educational Establishments, 2023)

We work in partnership with the charity We Mind and Kelly Matters to deliver suicide awareness and prevention sessions as part of our wellness curriculum (age appropriate) and utilise their counselling service for support for vulnerable children, young people and staff as well as continuing professional development for staff.

**Appendix 1: Risk and protective factors** (taken from the Mental Health and Behaviour, DfE 2018)

	<b>Risk factors</b>	<b>Protective factors</b>
In the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic influences</li> <li>• Low IQ and learning disabilities</li> <li>• Specific development delay or neuro-diversity</li> <li>• Communication difficulties</li> <li>• Difficult temperament</li> <li>• Physical illness</li> <li>• Academic failure</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure attachment experience</li> <li>• Outgoing temperament as an infant</li> <li>• Good communication skills, sociability</li> <li>• Being a planner and having a belief in control</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• A positive attitude</li> <li>• Experiences of success and achievement</li> <li>• Faith or spirituality</li> <li>• Capacity to reflect</li> <li>• Good diet</li> <li>• Exercise</li> </ul>
In the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overt parental conflict including domestic violence</li> <li>• Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted)</li> <li>• Inconsistent or unclear discipline</li> <li>• Hostile and rejecting relationships</li> <li>• Failure to adapt to a child's changing need</li> <li>• Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect</li> <li>• Parental psychiatric illness</li> <li>• Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder</li> <li>• Death and loss – including loss of friendship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult)</li> <li>• Affection</li> <li>• Clear, consistent discipline</li> <li>• Support for education</li> <li>• Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord</li> </ul>
In the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying including online (cyber) Discrimination</li> <li>• Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships</li> <li>• Deviant peer influences</li> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Peer on peer abuse</li> <li>• Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear policies on behaviour and bullying</li> <li>• Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct)</li> <li>• 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems.</li> <li>• A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Good pupil to teacher/school staff relationships</li> <li>• Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging</li> <li>• Positive peer influences</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive friendships</li> <li>• Effective safeguarding and Child Protection policies.</li> <li>• An effective early help process Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working</li> <li>• Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to can raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively</li> <li>• Promote health eating and exercise</li> </ul>
In the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic disadvantage</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation</li> <li>• Other significant life events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider supportive network</li> <li>• Good housing</li> <li>• High standard of living</li> <li>• High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying</li> <li>• Opportunities for valued social role</li> <li>• Range of sport/leisure activities</li> </ul>

**Appendix 2 Mental health needs most commonly seen in school aged children**

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE November 2018

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/755135/Mental\\_health\\_and\\_behaviour\\_in\\_schools\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools_.pdf)

This covers aspects of mental health, such as:

- Anxiety and depression
- Attachment disorder
- Eating disorder
- Emotional disorders
- A.C.E. Adverse Childhood Events, (or other life changing events)

**Appendix 3 Where to get information and support**

For support on specific mental health needs:

Anxiety UK – [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

OCD UK – [www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

Eating Disorders – [www.beatearingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beatearingdisorders.org.uk)

National Self Harm Network – [www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

Suicide prevention – [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)  
Changing Minds - [www.nhft.nhs.uk/iapt](http://www.nhft.nhs.uk/iapt)

For general information and support:

Young people's mental health and well-being support – [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Advice and support for mental health issues – [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Tackles the stigma on mental health – [www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk)

Challenges attitudes towards mental health – [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

NHFT 0-19 Live chat - [www.nhft.nhs.uk/0-19](http://www.nhft.nhs.uk/0-19)

Local agencies:

Counselling support service for children – [www.servicesix.co.uk](http://www.servicesix.co.uk)

NHFT School nurse Chat health – 07507 329 600

Support for children and parents - [www.asknormen.co.uk](http://www.asknormen.co.uk)

For children living with or caring for someone who is addicted to drugs and/or alcohol -  
[www.familysupportlink.co.uk](http://www.familysupportlink.co.uk)

Used in conjunction with school, the Early Help Assessment process can support families with help from different appropriate agencies – [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Pages/early-help.aspx](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Pages/early-help.aspx)

The Anna Freud Centre has developed a free short animation and set of resources on the 'CARE' principle to encourage all staff to be Curious and Approachable; to Refer when necessary; and to show Empathy.

[Taking CARE to promote mental health in schools | CARE mental health | Anna Freud Centre](#)

#### **Appendix 4 Staff Roles and Responsibilities at Redwell**

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

Claire Head – Principal and DSL

Dulcie Sharpe – Vice Principal and DSL

Sara Nimmo – Assistant Principal and DSL

Fiona Hoskins – SENCo, DSL and Pastoral Team (Mental Health First Aider)

Sara Croot – DSL and Pastoral Team (Mental Health First Aider, ELSA)

Lauren McDonald – Pastoral Team (Wellbeing Champion Apprentice)

Committee Members – Zoe Casburn

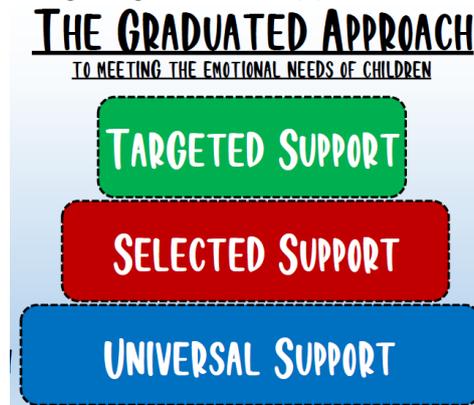
#### **Appendix 5 Early Identification at Redwell**

At Redwell we aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible, as a means to preventing issues getting worse. At Redwell we also offer:

- Virtual worry box
- Worry monsters in each class
- Pastoral message box
- Termly wellbeing assessment

- Use of leuven scales
- Zones of regulation check in boards and access to regulation stations
- Parents direct access to Pastoral Team through [pastoral@redwellprimary.co.uk](mailto:pastoral@redwellprimary.co.uk)

We will then offer support through a graduated approach for individual or groups of pupils.



#### **Appendix 6 Working with specialist services**

As part of our targeted provision, Redwell works closely with the following services:

- We Mind & Kelly Matters
- Sarah Agnes Foundation (counselling)
- School Nurse/0-19 Service
- SEND Specialist Support Service (SSS)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Service Six

#### **Appendix 7 Redwell approach to Staff Wellbeing**

At Redwell some of the ways we support staff wellbeing are:

- Consideration given for staff members to attend special family events e.g. children's assemblies etc.
- Employee assist programme
- Referrals to occupational health
- Termly PPA day
- Free tea and coffee
- Provision of a Redwell fleece and polo shirt
- CPD
- Open door policy
- Access to supervision
- Personalised appraisal process
- Mental health training
- Wellbeing events for staff

**This information should be read in conjunction with:**

Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy

SEND policy in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these

Behaviour policy

Anti-bullying policy

PSHE policy

Child Protection/Safeguarding policy