Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy

Date Prepared: Sept 2026

Date to be reviewed: Sept 2027

This policy was written in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and professionals involved in mental health and wellbeing.

Policy Statement

At West Park School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff.

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

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

At our school we:

- help pupils to understand their emotions and feelings
- allow pupils to feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- guide pupils socially to form and maintain positive relationships
- promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they have valid opinions
- encourage children to be confident and 'dare to be different'
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging to a community
- Promoting pupil voice and providing opportunities to participate in decision-making
- Celebrating a number of academic and non-academic achievements
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others
- Providing opportunities and time to reflect
- Access to appropriate support that meets their needs

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

Scope

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding policy and our SEND policy in cases where pupils' mental health needs overlap with these influences. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the policies for Behaviour, Anti-bullying, and PSHE. It should also sit alongside child protection procedures.

Lead Members of Staff

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

- Gemma Roberts - Designated Mental Health Lead
- Katy – School Counsellor
- Deborah Sheffield - Designated Safeguarding Officer
- Amanda Greenwood – Deputy Safeguarding Officer
- David Sanderson – Pastoral Lead/Deputy Head
- Fiona Hawkins – Assistant Head – Head of Inclusion
- Tracey Fletcher – Wellbeing Officer

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs and relevance to the cohort being taught to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner.

Targeted support

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

- Early Intervention group work – e.g. Year 7 transition groups, exam stress groups, anxiety groups, anger management groups, group support for pupils with ASD, bereavement groups etc.
- Referral of pupils to 1:1 counselling sessions provided by the school with our in-house counsellor (Katy)

- 1:1 mentoring from the pastoral team – regular catch ups and a key person to work with
- Referral to Compass Changing Lives (NHS Service) for specialist support.
- Identified pupils invited to take part in external therapy sessions and groups (i.e. Love4Life, First Steps, EFD etc.).
- Signposting to appropriate services in the local area
- Drop-in 1:1 counselling sessions to support any pupil that needs urgent help and to assess and identify further support – provided by school counsellor.
- Pupils are able to email and self-refer themselves for counselling with the school counsellor.
- Thrive – access to the Thrive therapy room and 1:1 sessions with our fully trained Thrive practitioner.
- Mental Health Mondays – self-referral drop-in sessions that are available to all pupils every week (first break and second break in the Headspace Room).

The school will also make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing of pupils as appropriate e.g. pupil wellbeing questionnaires, pupil voice etc.

Signposting

We will always ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of what support is available within our school and how to access further specialised support. This information can also be found on the Mental Health and Wellbeing tab of the school's website – available for everyone to access. Click here - West Park School.

Booklets have also been distributed for staff, parents and pupils that will guide them to the correct support when needed.

Identifying needs and Warning Signs

All staff will be aware of the following (through regular CPD training sessions) that are aimed at identifying a range of possible difficulties in pupils including:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning
- Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns

- Family circumstances
- Recent bereavement
- Health indicators

School staff may also become aware of warning signs which indicate a student 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 the mental health lead as appropriate through our designated safeguarding software. Staff have been trained to log any concerns on our safeguarding software to alert the DSL straight away.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Talking or joking 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

Working with Parents

In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website - West Park School
- Share and signpost parents to access sources of further support via a booklet that has been designed by our school counsellor
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to if they have concerns about their child
- Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home
- Working with Bridge the Gap - we are offering a bespoke package of online materials for parents to access whenever they feel that they need help/support and we will also facilitate a combination of face to

face parent workshops(online and in-person) on topics such as exam stress and anxiety, self-harm and low mood throughout the school year.

The bespoke bundle of online support includes courses for parents on the following topics:

- Exploring anger
- Supporting an anxious child
- Grounding and soothing strategies
- Time for you: Wellbeing for adults
- Supporting child mental health: An in depth approach (content includes screen time, sleep. social media, crisis, self esteem etc.)

This platform has been developed by Bridge the Gap's team of multi-disciplinary professionals and is designed to arm parents and carers with the tools and knowledge to be able to help and support their child(ren). Once parents sign up, they will have access to these detailed courses and they will be able to work through them at their own pace. Information on how to access this platform is readily available on the school's website.

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing which include:

- The school nurse

  Love4Life
- Educational psychology services
- Behaviour support through the pastoral team
- Paediatricians
- CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers

- Therapists

Support For West Park Staff

West Park staff are continuously supported with their emotional wellbeing. The school creates an environment that hopefully encourages staff to talk freely about mental health and emotional wellbeing. Support for staff includes:

- Staff are routinely sent information on where they can access counselling services through Health Assured – 24/7 confidential support helpline, funded by the school.
- Signposting information for mental health support sent out on a regular basis.
- Open door policy with designated staff members.
- Staff social committee that organise staff events e.g. staff BBQs and Christmas celebrations.
- Gift of time – staff are able to have one extra day off a year for their own personal reasons.
- Information shared with staff during mental health week and other key focus areas.

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 and in-school training in order to enable them to keep students safe.

The MindEd learning portal provides free 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 to developing situations with one or more pupils.

Staff will also have the same access to the online courses provided by Bridge the Gap that they are also able to work through at their own pace.

Training for key pastoral staff provided by Compass.