



Chatham Nursery School Mental Health and Well Being Policy

Mission Statement

Our nursery school community is dedicated to teaching every child to be a happy, confident and independent learner. We create a caring, inclusive and enriching environment where each child feels safe, supported and valued.

Policy statement

At Chatham Nursery School we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for our whole school community. This includes all children, their families, members of staff and governors. Our child centred approach places children's well being at the heart of all we do. In addition, we aim to foster a happy and supportive workplace environment, which gives a high priority to staff wellbeing, enabling them to have a good work/life balance. We aim to do all this through the use of effective policies and procedures, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all affected by mental health issues, whether directly or indirectly.

Policy Aims

- Instill a culture of school community care, where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms that someone may be struggling with their mental health and well being.
- Raise awareness and acceptance that anyone may experience poor mental health and wellbeing at different points in their lives, and that in our school they are accepted and will be supported.
- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all adults and children.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in children and adults.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with children and adults with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to children and adults with mental health issues, knowing where to signpost them and their families for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst children and adults, raising awareness of resilience building techniques.

Key staff members

This policy aims to ensure all staff take responsibility to promote the mental health of our community, however key members of staff have specific roles to play:

- Overarching Federation Safeguarding Lead: Andrea Connearn
- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Francesca Turner
- SENCO: Sara Atkinson & Rachel Rodick
- Mental Health Lead: Rachel Rodick

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child, in the first instance they should speak to the class teacher, who may then involve the people named above.

If there is a concern that the child is high risk or in danger of immediate harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed.

If the child presents as a high-risk medical emergency, relevant procedures should be followed, including involving the emergency services if necessary.

In the case of an adult causing concern, this will be managed on a case by case basis, maintaining confidentiality.

Children - Screening and Individual Care Plans

At Chatham this year we have introduced the Leuven Scales of Well Being and Involvement to assess how children are doing with their mental health and well-being. We screen on entry, at a mid-point in the year and at the end of the year. Key people will use these scales to identify a child who may need some extra support, and will plan provision for that child based on their knowledge of child development, and on the child's needs and interests. Sometimes, once they have made a secure attachment with their key person, and that key person is tailoring experiences for that child, their well-being may improve markedly.

When a child has been identified as causing concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it is recommended that an Individual Care Plan should be drawn up. The development of the plan should involve the child, parents, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the child's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency
- The role of the school and specific staff

Children - Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our children need to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are part of our Early Years curriculum.

We follow the Department for Education Early Years Foundation Stage Programmes of Study to teach about mental and emotional health, safely, sensitively and in an age appropriate way.

Incorporating this into our curriculum in lots of ways helps to promote children's wellbeing through the development of healthy coping strategies and an increasing understanding of children's own emotions, as well as those of other people.

Signposting

We will ensure that adults, and families are aware of the support and services available to them and/or their children and how they can access these services.

We will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events within the school (noticeboards, staff rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (Tapestry, school website).

The aim of this is to ensure adults and children in our school community understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why this could help
- What is likely to happen next

Whole school approach

Children

We have a strong and embedded key person system where each child has their own grown up to form an attachment with, who gets to know them and their family very well. The key person will be alert to any signs that a child's mental health and well-being may be suffering. They may plan particular activities and experiences to support a child, liaising with the family and signposting to other services, if necessary, e.g., Little Seedlings.

Families

As we welcome our families into our school community, we aim to build warm and trusting relationships with them. This embedded in our ethos and practice and followed by the office staff, room based staff and head teacher. Often families will confide in us when they are struggling and we will offer support e.g. meeting with them to provide a listening ear and support, or signposting to agencies that might help.

Staff

We know that staff mental health and well-being will be best served by working in an environment where Staff feel valued and supported, enjoy coming to work, feel part of a team and have a good work/life balance. We aim to foster an atmosphere where staff are able to share if they are struggling and will receive support. Staff have termly supervision sessions, where there is opportunity to discuss well-being and gain support. There may be times when a referral to Occupational Health or Counselling may be offered.

Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate an adult or child 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 alert the appropriate people named in section 4.

Possible warning signs, which all staff should be aware of include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- Unwillingness to get changed e.g. if a top has got wet
- Lateness to, or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Targeted support

We recognise some children and adults are at greater risk of experiencing poorer mental health. For example, those who are in care, young carers, those who have had previous access to CAMHS, those living with family members with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing financial hardship, substance abuse and/or domestic abuse.

We ensure timely and effective identification of children and adults who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services by:

- Providing specific help for those children most at risk (or already showing signs) of social, emotional, and behavioural problems
- Working closely with Liverpool City Council Children's Services, Liverpool CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral
- Identifying and assessing children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems in line with the Family Help Assessment Tool.
- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their families.
- Agree an Individual Care Plan as the first stage of a 'stepped care' approach
- Providing a range of interventions that have been proven to be effective, according to the child's needs
- Ensure young people have access to pastoral care and support, as well as specialist services, including Liverpool CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur
- Provide children with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it

Managing disclosures

If a child or adult chooses to disclose concerns about themselves to a friend or to any member of staff, the response will be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information will be shared with one of the appropriate people named in section 4.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a child or an adult to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the child or adult. We will tell them:

- Who we are going to tell
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them
- When we're going to tell them

Ideally, consent should be gained first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, e.g. due to the very young age of our children who are in danger of harm, or if there concerns an adult may self harm.

It is important to also safeguard staff emotional wellbeing. By sharing disclosures with a colleague, this ensures one single member of staff isn't solely responsible. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

If a child gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, then the child protection policy will be followed.

Working with families

If we need to meet with families over a child's mental health and well being, there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Who should be present – children, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their child's issues can be upsetting and distressing. They may therefore respond in various ways which we should be prepared for and allow time for the parent to reflect and come to terms with the situation.

Signposting parents to other sources of information and support can be helpful in these instances. At the end of the meeting, lines of communication should be kept open should the parents have further questions or concerns. Booking a follow-up meeting or phone call might be beneficial at this stage.

Ensure a written record of the meeting is made and points discussed/agree are added to the pupil's record and an Individual Care Plan created if appropriate.

Supporting parents

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children's emotional health and wellbeing, especially due to the very young age of our children Our primary aim is therefore to work in partnership with families to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health problems

- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (Website, Tapestry etc.);
- Offering support to help parents or carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners
- Ensuring parents, carers and other family members living in disadvantaged circumstances are given the support they need to participate fully in activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing. This will include support to participate in any parenting sessions, by offering a range of times for the sessions or providing help with transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

Peer Support

When a child or adult is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for friends, staff and colleagues who may want to support but do not know how best to do this. The right support will look different depending on the age and specific issues being experienced, but it is useful to consider the following principles:

- What it is helpful to know and what should not be told?
- How can others support?
- Things as friends we should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that a friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, those providing support may need support themselves with:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

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 training to enable them to keep children safe. Two of our staff have been trained in ROAR Early Years approach to supporting children's mental health.

We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. 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 developing situations with one or more children.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Head of School, Francesca Turner who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy Review

This policy was ratified on **26th November 2025** and will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is **November 2027**.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes. Any personnel changes will be implemented immediately.