



SUSI EARNSHAW

School of Academics & Performing Arts

Last updated: August 2022	Next review: August 2024
Ratified by: Julia Hammond (Head)	Date: August 2023

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

At the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff.

Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage students to be open and we want each student to have their voice heard.

At our school, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support. At our school, positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

POLICY AIMS

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students.

We will always:

- Help children to understand their emotions and experiences better.

- Ensure our pupils feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries.
- Help children to form and maintain relationships.
- Encourage children to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem.
- Help children to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks.

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
- Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.
- Promoting our school values and encourages a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
- Promoting our students' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Celebrating each student for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected.
- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any pupil that needs it.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in pupils.
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

KEY STAFF MEMBERS

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students and each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

- **Mental Health Lead:** Melissa Gillespie (fully trained)
- **Our Designated Safeguarding Officers:** Julia Hammond (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and Megan McNamara (Deputy Safeguarding Lead)
- **Pastoral Staff:** Julia Hammond, Megan McNamara and Melissa Gillespie.
- **SENCO:** Megan McNamara and Louis Mclaughlin

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a pupil, then in the first instance they should speak to: Julia Hammond

If a child presents a medical emergency, then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

TEACHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Our PHSCE curriculum is developed to give pupils the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training.

We will regularly review our PHSCE curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they're meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We'll also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide pupils with strategies to help keep them mentally well.

SIGNPOSTING

We will ensure that all staff, pupils, and parents are aware of the support that's available in our school for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of school hours.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS

All of our staff will be trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to pupils who need it, when they need it.

These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officers as appropriate.

Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in mood.
- Talking and or joking about self-harm and or suicide.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

- Attendance and absenteeism.
- Punctuality and lateness.
- Changes in education attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

MANAGING DISCLOSURES

If a pupil discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it's necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If a member of staff thinks it's necessary to pass on concerns about a student, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the student. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell.
- What the staff member is going to disclose.
- Why it's necessary for somebody else to be told.
- When the contact will be.

However, it may not be possible to gain the student's consent first, such as in the case of pupils who are at immediate risk. Protecting a pupil's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our pupils. This means working with parents and carers and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

We aim to support parents as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school.
- Share and allow parents to access further support.
- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Give parents guidance about how they can support their child's/children's positive mental health.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health training our school staff receive.

WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our pupils' emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- The school nurse.
- Paediatricians.
- CAMHS.
- Counselling Services
- Therapists.
- Family support workers.
- Behavioural support workers.

SUPPORTING PEERS

We understand that, when a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

We will provide support in a class setting, and when needed, one-to-one will be offered. These sessions will be guided by the student, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

TRAINING

All staff will receive training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. Training records will be held in staff files.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our school website so staff can learn more about child mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with pupils.