



GESHER SCHOOL
ENGAGE EMPOWER EDUCATE

Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Happiness Policy

Date	Review Date	Coordinator	Nominated Governor
March 2021	March 2022	Christopher Gurney	Laurel Freedman

1. Why Mental Health and Wellbeing Is Important

At Gesher, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (children, staff, volunteers, governors, parents and carers), and recognise how important mental health and emotional wellbeing is to our lives in just the same way as physical health. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can affect their learning and achievement. All children go through ups and downs during their school career and some face significant life events. According to the NHS Digital survey "Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017", about 1 in 8 children aged 5 to 16 have a diagnosable mental health need and these can have an enormous impact on quality of life, relationships and academic achievement. In many cases it is life-limiting. Children with SEN are even more vulnerable, and the statistics for mental health needs are considerably higher.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "in order to help their children succeed schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy". Schools can be a place for children and young people to experience a nurturing and supportive environment that has the potential to develop self-esteem and give positive experiences for overcoming adversity and building resilience. For some, school will be a place of respite from difficult home lives and offer positive role models and relationships, which are critical in promoting children's wellbeing and can help engender a sense of belonging and community.

Our role at Gesher is to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress, and that they are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support. At Gesher, our mission statement is to engage, empower and educate our children, staff, parents, families and carers around the area of emotional health and resilience so that they have the skills and confidence to cope with and enjoy everyday life.

Our aim is to help develop the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems and to be a school where:

- all children are valued
- children have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma
- positive mental health is promoted and valued
- bullying is not tolerated

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and wellbeing. All of our staff work incredibly hard and are committed

to ensuring the children at Gesher flourish and reach their full potential. The hours can be long, the workload can be heavy and staff may encounter children, families and carers who have a number of complex issues in their lives. The education and mental health sectors are statistically both high-burnout industries, with staff recruitment and retention being very challenging. To address this at Gesher, we want to ensure that our staff's mental health, wellbeing and happiness is supported thoroughly and that they feel appreciated and valued - happy and fulfilled staff will benefit our pupils and community.

Supporting the wider school community of Gesher families and carers is also extremely important. Creating tailored support strategies around each and every child at Gesher enables us to develop a whole team approach, of which the family is also a part of. We ensure that we listen to their needs and help them to feel heard, helping to build important links between home and school. We believe it is beneficial to empower the family to voice their ideas and opinions, and subsequently for us to communicate effectively with them to promote their child's learning and educational experience.

2. Purpose of The Policy

This policy sets out:

- how we promote positive mental health
- how we prevent mental health problems
- how we identify and support children with mental health needs
- how we train and support all staff to understand mental health issues and spot early warning signs to help prevent or address mental health problems
- key information about some common mental health problems
- where parents, staff and children can get further advice and support

3. Definition of Mental Health And Wellbeing

We use the World Health Organisation's (2019) definition of mental health and wellbeing:

“a state...in which every individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want all children/young people to:

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve

4. How The Policy Developed and Who Was Consulted

The development of this policy was led by our Lead for Wellbeing in conjunction with our Wellbeing, Mental Health and Happiness Sub-Committee. The views and opinions of our staff, families and pupils were also taken into consideration when consulted through a variety of workshops, discussions groups, and consultations.

5. Links to Other Policies

This policy links to our policies on Safeguarding, Accessibility, Anti-Bullying, SEND and Equalities. Links with the School's Behaviour Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, is a key form of communication and may be particularly helpful in identifying an as-of-yet unmet mental health need.

6. A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health

We take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health that aims to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to prevent problems before they arise.

This encompasses seven aspects:

1. Creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
2. Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
3. Helping children to be resilient learners.
4. Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
5. Early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
6. Effectively working with parents and carers via a whole team approach.
7. Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues. We therefore aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of these issues.

7. Staff Roles and Responsibilities, Including Those With Specific Responsibility

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get the early intervention and the support they need.

All staff should understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems, such as: physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, belonging to a minority group, differences in gender and sexuality, death and loss (including loss of friendships), family breakdown and bullying. They should also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills, a sense of worth and belonging, and emotional literacy.

We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the School environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that provide support to children with mental health needs and their families.

Sources of relevant support include:

- our own Senior Leadership Team
- our Safeguarding Leads
- our Wellbeing Lead, who works with other staff to co-ordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing
- our dramatherapist, who conducts regular sessions and termly overviews for all pupils
- our Educational Psychologist, who provides advice, training and support to staff, pupils and their families
- our SENDCo, who help ensure the appropriate provision (including mental health support) is provided for all the pupils at Gesher
- our Occupational Therapist
- our Speech and Language Therapist

- our subcommittee for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Happiness, consisting of School Governors and relevant staff members

8. Supporting Children's Positive Mental Health

We believe that school has a key role in promoting children's positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches including:

Pupil-Led Activities

- Pupil self-expression day once a month, wherein the children can dress however they choose
- Pupil Voice – regular opportunities are given for the pupils to share how they are feeling or lead an activity of their choosing, i.e. planning drama club, becoming the class teacher for the morning

Class Activities

- Middah Slips – opportunities for staff to recognise and acknowledge the positive impact of a specific pupil's actions
- Storytime with the dramatherapist focussing on emotional wellbeing themes.
- Yoga and mindfulness scheduled within the timetable
- Timetabled relaxation time within the sensory room, with further opportunities to access it when needed
- Zones of Regulation posters and tools to help children recognise their emotional state
- Circle Time with the school SENDCO for the older classes to reflect and discuss social and moral issues

Whole School

- The school ethos is "Love thy neighbour as thyself" and this is actively encouraged within all aspects of school life
- Celebration assemblies every Friday, where certificates are awarded and pupils are celebrated
- Displays and information around the School about positive mental health and where to go for help and support
- Weekly PSHE assembly exploring specific themes and concepts

- Warm and Fuzzy Board for anybody to recognise a positive attribute within themselves
- Regular access to the Forest Area for nature-based lessons
- Mindfulness library for both pupils and staff
- Support groups and workshops for parents and extended family members
- Mitzvah Tree – a way of recognising positive moments outside of the school environment and encouraging parents to take the time to acknowledge these

Small Group Activities

- Lego Therapy / Thera-Build sessions
- Dramatherapy tailored to the specific needs of each pupil
- Social and Communication groups run by the therapy team

Teaching About Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- Through PSHEE we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help children to be more resilient, understand about mental health and be less affected by the stigma of mental health problems
- Within our British Values curriculum, we ensure that we teach about accepting and understanding differences, including gender identity, sexual orientation, racial diversity and disabilities
- As a faith school, we ensure all children feel a sense of belonging and relate emotional wellbeing to Jewish values
- Active commitment to further developing a wellbeing-focussed strand of the curriculum to provide a strong foundation for learning about mental health

Staff Support

- Half-termly work discussion groups for all staff within their professional peer groups
- Professional external supervision for therapists and SLT
- A staff wellbeing programme including:
 - Termly team building activities outside of school hours
 - Protected time monthly for wellbeing-based activities as a staffing body
 - Birthday cards and gifts for all staff
 - Wellbeing-themed INSETS to promote self-care and team unity

- Discounted exercise programme on-site run by professional trainers
- Free counselling and advice service for all permanent staff
- Opportunities for flexible PPA locations for teachers and therapists
- No e-mails after 7pm or on weekends
- Weekly staff appreciation award
- The Mensch Box – opportunities for staff to acknowledge positive contributions from their colleagues

EYFS & Key Stage 1 Children Learn:

- to recognise, name and describe feelings including good and not so good feelings
- simple strategies for managing feelings
- how their behaviour affects other people
- about empathy and understanding other people's feelings
- to cooperate and problem solve
- to motivate themselves and persevere
- how to calm down
- about change and loss and the associated feelings (including moving home, losing toys, pets or friends)
- who to go to if they are worried
- about different types of teasing and bullying, that these are wrong and unacceptable
- how to resist teasing or bullying, if they experience or witness it, whom to go to and how to get help

Key Stage 2 Children Learn:

- what positively and negatively affects their mental and emotional health (including the media)
- positive and healthy coping strategies
- about good and not so good feelings
- to describe the range and intensity of their feelings to others
- to recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of feelings in others

- to recognise that they may experience conflicting emotions and when they might need to listen to their emotions or overcome them
- about resilience
- how to motivate themselves and bounce back if they fail at something
- how to empathise and be supportive of others
- about change, including transitions (between Key Stages and schools), loss, separation, divorce and bereavement
- about the consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including online bullying, prejudice-based language), as well as how to respond and ask for help if they are victims of this themselves
- about the importance of talking to someone and how to get help

9. Identifying, Referring and Supporting Children With Mental Health Needs

Our Approach

- Provide a safe environment to enable children to express themselves and be listened to
- Ensure the welfare and safety of children are paramount
- Identify appropriate support for children based on their needs
- Involve parents and carers when their child needs support
- Involve children in the care and support they have
- Use intrinsic motivators, reflective practise and restorative justice to address behavioural concerns
- Monitor, review and evaluate the support with children and keep parents and carers updated

Early Identification

Our identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible to prevent things getting worse. We do this in different ways including:

- Analysing behaviour, exclusions, visits to the medical room, and attendance

- Ongoing sessions and termly overview of mental health and wellbeing for each pupil to be provided by school Dramatherapist
- Staff report concerns about individual children to the relevant lead persons, and use CPOMS to log behavioural concerns
- Regular opportunities for staff to raise concerns with the core mental health support team (EP, Dramatherapist and Wellbeing Lead)
- A parental information and health questionnaire on entry to the School
- Gathering information from a previous school at transfer
- Ongoing child observations and parent meetings with the EP
- Termly parent/teacher meetings
- Enabling children to raise concerns to any member of staff
- Enabling parents and carers to raise concerns to any member of staff

Staff at Geshar are trained to recognise and understand the different types of needs that our children may present with, including specific mental health challenges or issues that may impact upon their overall wellbeing. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the Wellbeing Lead, EP or the SENDCO. These signs might include:

- Isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- Falling academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Staff are aware that mental health needs, such as anxiety, might appear as non-compliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with

attention or hyperactivity. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm (either to their physical or mental wellbeing), then the School's child protection procedures are followed. If there is a medical emergency, then the School's procedures for medical emergencies are followed.

Disclosures by Children and Confidentiality

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgemental to children who disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of our children is paramount and staff listen rather than advise.

Assessment, Interventions and Support

All disclosures are recorded via CPOMS, passed on to the Wellbeing Lead, and held on the pupil's confidential file, including date, name of pupil and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

<p>Need</p> <p><i>(the level of need is based on ongoing assessments by the Dramatherapist, EP, and class teacher, alongside further input from SLT, the SENDCo and the team working with the children. Feedback from pupils and families is also taken into consideration)</i></p>	<p>Evidence-based Intervention and Support</p> <p><i>(the kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents and children)</i></p>	<p>Monitoring</p>
<p>Highest need</p>	<p>CAMHS-assessment, 1:1 or family support or treatment, consultation with school staff and other agencies.</p> <p>Other external agency support.</p> <p>Emergency annual review.</p>	<p>All children in the school will have targeted personalised support, and will have an Individual Education and Therapy Plan drawn up setting out:</p> <p>The needs of the child.</p> <p>How the pupil will be supported.</p>

Some need	<p>Increased therapeutic input.</p> <p>Observation and assessment by EP.</p> <p>Small group intervention, i.e. social skills group, Lego club.</p>	<p>Actions to provide that support.</p> <p>The IETPs will be shared with parents and will be created in conjunction with therapists and teachers. The plan and interventions are monitored, reviewed and evaluated termly to assess the impact.</p>
Low need	General support from school staff, communication with home, targeted input within Dramatherapy sessions.	

Children are all informed that school staff are available to speak to at any point, specifically the Dramatherapist and Wellbeing Lead, to support with their emotional wellbeing.

Support for friends

We recognise that when a pupil is experiencing mental health problems it can be challenging for their friends, who often want to help them but are not sure the best thing to do and can also be emotionally affected. In the case of mental health challenges such as eating disorders and self-harm, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping strategies from each other, and we will consider on a case by case basis what support might be appropriate including one-to-one and group support. We will involve the pupil who is suffering and their parents, and consider what is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told, how they can best support, things they should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset and warning signs that their friend needs help. We will also make information available about where and how to access information and support for themselves, and healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions that they may be feeling.

Working with specialist services to get swift access to the right specialist support and treatment

In some cases, a pupil's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. Examples of mental health needs that might need further specialist input include anxiety, depression, self-harm and eating disorders. We have access to a range of specialist services and during the support will have regular contact with the service to review the impact and progress of such interventions. School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the Wellbeing Lead, Safeguarding Lead or the SENDCO following the assessment process and in consultation with the pupil and their parents and carers. 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.

Main Specialist Service	Referral Process
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Accessed through GP/school/family referral
Educational Psychologist	Accessed through school
Dramatherapy	Accessed through school
Art Therapy	Accessed through school
Young Minds	Accessed through parent/self-referral
Jami	Accessed through school/family referral
Gendered Intelligence	Direct contact with charity either through school or family
Local Authority local offer	Accessed via Local Authority partnerships

10. Involving Parents and Carers

Promoting mental health

We recognise the important role parents and carers have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting children who do have mental health needs.

During the admissions process, we emphasise how the wellbeing of our pupils is prioritised and we discuss how we support this throughout the school. This is further reinforced when parents join the school during their initial welcome meeting, which includes a discussion on the importance of positive mental health for learning. We ask parents to inform us of any mental health needs their child has and any issues that they think might have an impact on their child's mental health and wellbeing. It is very helpful if parents and carers can share information with the School so that we can better support their child from the outset. All information will be treated in confidence.

To support parents and carers, we follow the core Gesher values:

Engage - we organise a range of activities such as workshops run by our therapy team, and social afternoons that help with relationship building. These are also provided for extended family members such as grandparents and siblings.

Empower – we ensure there are regular opportunities and avenues for the parents to communicate their experiences and challenges, and we provide a holistic team support network to help them feel empowered in addressing these issues.

Educate - we provide information and websites on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes. We help parents to have a better understanding of mental health issues and how they link to SEN so as to better support both themselves and their children outside of school.

Supporting parents and carers with children with mental health needs

We are aware that parents and carers react in different ways to knowing their child has a mental health problem and we will be sensitive and supportive. We also aim to reassure by explaining that mental health problems are not unusual or uncommon, that the school has experience of working with similar issues, and that help and advice are available.

When a concern has been raised, the School will:

- Contact parents and carers and meet with them (in almost all cases, parents and carers will be involved in their children's interventions, although there may be circumstances when this may not happen, such as where child protection issues are identified)
- Offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- Be available for follow up conversations
- Make a record of the meeting
- Discuss how the parents and carers can support their child
- Keep parents and carers up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions provided

Parents and carers will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger and children may choose to tell their parents and carers themselves. We give children the option of informing their parents and carers about their mental health needs for themselves or of accompanying and supporting them to do so. Whilst we will always endeavour to support children with mental health needs in school, we are also conscious that we may not necessarily have the appropriate resources in which to do so as we are not set-up to deal with more complex SEMH needs, and that the presentation of such needs could severely impact the rest of the cohort. As such, we may call an Emergency Annual Review to address mental health problems that we feel we are unable to support with.

We make every effort to support parents and carers to access services where appropriate. Our primary concern is the children, and in the rare event that parents and carers are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority. We also provide information for parents and carers to access support for their own mental health needs.

11. Supporting and Training Staff

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in children, and know what to do and where to get help. Our Wellbeing Lead and SENDCO are qualified "mental health first aiders" so as to be able to respond to needs on-site as and when required.

Supporting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school and we actively promote opportunities to maintain a health work life balance and wellbeing. This is done through a variety of initiatives such as our comprehensive wellbeing programme and regular INSETs focussing on wellbeing. Staff also have access to professional supervision, peer work discussion groups, and a private counselling service that is provided free-of-charge.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

The mental health and wellbeing policy is on the school website and copies are available from the school office. All members of staff are required to read the policy prior to starting work at Geshher.

The policy is monitored annually by the Wellbeing, Mental Health and Happiness sub-committee, which consists of the Wellbeing Lead and school governors.