

John Hunt Academy



Mental Health Policy

Approved by: Mrs A Good & Miss L Devlin **Date:** 05/01/2026

Last reviewed on: 05/01/2026

Next review due by: 05/01/2028

Policy Statement

Mental health is 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.

(World Health Organization)

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and our children. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable individuals.

By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for children affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors and should be read in conjunction with our SEND policy where a child has an identified special educational need.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and children.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health.
- Provide support to staff working with children with mental health issues.
- Provide support to children suffering with their mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers.

Lead Members of Staff

All staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of children.

Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Designated Safeguarding Leads

- Alison Good
- Lisa Devlin
- Joanne Glass
- Heidi Proctor
- Rachel Kirkby
- Alison Good - Mental Health Lead
- Heidi Chapman - Pastoral Lead
- CPD - CPD Lead
- Georgia Travers- RSHE Lead
- Joanne Glass, Laura Proctor - SENCOs

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a child should speak to any DSL in the first instance. If there is a fear that the child is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the DSLs.

Individual Care Plans

It is helpful to draw up an individual care plan for a child causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be co-produced with child, their parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a child's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

Teaching about Mental Health

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental RSHE curriculum.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we are teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling children to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We will follow the RSHE SCARF programme to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We have a selection of leaflets covering a wide range of mental health areas that parents can access as a starting point. At Parents Evenings, we have a mental health stand available and our Pastoral Lead, Heidi Chapman is available most days to discuss any concerns.

We will signpost parents and children to a range of sources of support.

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a 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 communicate their concerns with any of the DSLs.

Possible warning signs 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
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing, e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Managing disclosures

A child may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a child chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

All disclosures should be recorded on their CPOMs file.

This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation

This log will be discussed with the DSLs at their weekly meeting and agree next steps will be decided and added to the CPOMs log.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a child, we will tell them:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually a DSL as this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the child. Appropriate sharing of information also ensures continuity of care in our absence and provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the child and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSLs must be involved immediately.

Working with Parents/Carers

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach.

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and they may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them information to take away where possible, as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that we are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. We should finish each meeting with agreed next step and keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's CPOMS record.

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health.

In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues with them.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get support about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our Mental Health Policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular parents evenings.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in RSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home.

Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other.

In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one-to-one or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing/saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- 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.

We will host or signpost staff who wish to learn more about mental health.

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 students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host additional 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 Alison Good or Lisa Devlin who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum.

It is next due for review in Jan 2028.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to Alison Good at office@johnhunt.notts.sch.uk