



*Elmley Dray
School*

Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Policy

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1.0 Policy statement

At Elmley Dray School we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all learners (children and vulnerable adults), their families and members of staff, governors (PAT) and directors. Our open culture allows learners' voices to be heard, and through the use of effective policies and procedures we ensure a safe and supportive environment for all affected - both directly and indirectly - by mental health issues. Elmley Dray School focuses its thoughts on the mental health and emotional wellbeing needs of our learners. Our commitment to the value of each individual is paramount as each individual has different challenges. Elmley Dray School promotes the best interests of the child and young person; the right to the very best possible health, care and education on health and wellbeing and that the educational provision that we offer develops the personality, talents and abilities of each of our learners. (UN Convention on the rights of the child, Articles 3, 24 and 29).

2.0 Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff – including non-teaching, governors and directors – outlining Elmley Dray School's approach to promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing.

It should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

3.0 Policy Aims

- Promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and learners.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Enable staff to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental ill health in learners.
- Enable staff to understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide the right support to learners with mental health issues, and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support.
- Develop resilience amongst learners and raise awareness of resilience building techniques.
- Raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues, and that they too, are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing; instilling a culture of staff and learner welfare, where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around school.

4.0 Key staff members

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

- Teachers and Teaching Assistants all act as supportive Wellbeing Staff
- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Emily Hollis MBE, and Gemma Connolly, Sian Bailey and Hayley Furnell as Deputy DSL
- Mental Health First Aider, Emily Hollis MBE
- Senior Mental Health Leader, Emily Hollis MBE

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of learners, in the first instance they should speak to the DSL.

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

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

5.0 Individual risk assessments

When a learner has been identified as having cause for concern, has received a diagnosis of a mental health issue, or is receiving support either through CAMHS or other organisation, it is recommended that an individual risk assessment should be drawn up. The development of the risk assessment should involve the learner, parents/carers, and relevant professionals.

Suggested elements of this plan include:

- Details of the learner's situation/condition/diagnosis
- Special requirements or strategies, and necessary precautions
- Signs to look for and what we're trying to avoid
- Medication and any side effects
- Who to contact in an emergency

6.0 Teaching about mental health

The skills, knowledge and understanding our learners need to keep themselves - and others - physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE and RSHE curriculum.

We will follow the guidance issued by the PSHE Association, <https://pshe-association.org.uk/topics/mental-health>, to prepare us to teach about mental health and emotional health safely and sensitively, incorporating this into our curriculum at all stages is a good opportunity to promote learners' wellbeing through the

development of healthy coping strategies and an understanding of learners' own emotions as well as those of other people.

Additionally, we will use such lessons as a vehicle for providing learners who do develop difficulties with strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as supporting learners to support any of their friends who are facing challenges.

Learners who are 16+ and follow the GCSE psychology curriculum, are also taught about additional mental health conditions, as well as the symptoms and different treatments available, whilst challenging mental health stereotypes. Elmley Dray offers the Suicide Awareness Course as well as Mental Health and Wellbeing Courses which support learners to make positive decisions about their own Mental Health through awareness (See Elmley Dray Introduction Booklet).

7.0 Signposting

Elmley Dray School ensures that staff, learners and parents/carers are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school, each classroom has a designated "regulation zone" where learners can safely go if they need to remove themselves from their work or the situation they are in, which simultaneously alerts staff that an individual needs support. Within the classroom, there is information available for the learners, including tips and coping methods. The Zones of Regulation are used with all learners, which is displayed in each classroom, as well as on each learners' desk, allowing them to indicate which zone they are in. A larger, visual version of this is also available in the wellbeing room for use in 1:1 sessions with a wellbeing practitioner. Elmley Dray also shares and displays, through our communication channels, newsletters, social media and website, relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure learners understand:

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

8.0 Sources of support at school and in the local community

School based support

Sensory room

The sensory room is a specially designed safe space, which combines a range of stimuli to help individuals develop and engage their senses. This resource is for learners to use as a small group or as individuals as part of their lesson or during 1:1 wellbeing sessions. This resource can also be accessed on a “when needed” basis. Learners are all made aware of the sensory room upon enrollment at Elmley Dray.

Quiet & sensory garden

The quiet and sensory garden is a place for our young people to retreat to during a wellbeing session, breaktime or during the day when they need a break from the classroom environment. It allows learners to develop and engage their senses in an outdoor space.

Zones of regulation within the classroom

The zones of regulation is a social-emotional learning tool that allows learners to develop self-regulation. It can be used by all learners at Elmley Dray, both in the classroom, and within wellbeing sessions. Learners are made aware of, and taught how to use the Zone of Regulation tool upon enrollment at Elmley Dray.

Wellbeing room

The wellbeing room is a safe space, monitored by wellbeing staff, where learners can access their 1:1 sessions, or speak in private to a member of staff. All learners have access to this resource, regardless of whether or not wellbeing is a need indicated on their EHCP. Learners are made aware of this resource upon enrollment at Elmley Dray School. Should a member of staff feel a referral needs to be made to wellbeing for a learner, they should first complete this on MyConcern. The DSL will review the concern and if internal wellbeing support is deemed appropriate, allocate this as the next step.

Sensory Circuits

Sensory circuits are set up daily and are a form of sensory integration intervention. It involves a sequence of physical activities that are designed to alert, organise and calm the child in that order. All learners have access to sensory circuits on a daily basis, with additional sessions in place for those who have this stated on their EHCP. Learners at Elmley Dray are introduced to sensory circuits upon enrollment at the provision.

Local Support

In Kent, there are a range of organisations and groups offering support, including the NELFT partnership, a group of providers specialising in children and young people’s mental health wellbeing. These partners deliver accessible support to children, young people and their families, whilst working with professionals to reduce the range of mental health issues through prevention, intervention, training and participation.

<https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-kent-children-young-peoples-mental-health/>

9.0 Warning Signs

Staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a learner 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 DSL.

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
- 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

10.0 Targeted support

We recognise some children and young people 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 parents/carers with a mental illness and those living in households experiencing domestic violence.

We work closely with their teams in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of school-aged children and are equipped to work at community, family and individual levels. Their skills cover identifying issues early, determining potential risks and providing early intervention to prevent issues escalating.

We ensure timely and effective identification of learners 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 Children's Services, CAMHS and other agencies services to follow various protocols including assessment and referral;
- Identifying and assessing in line with the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT), children who are showing early signs of anxiety, emotional distress, or behavioural problems;

- Discussing options for tackling these problems with the child and their parents/carers. 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 CAMHS, so that emotional, social and behavioural problems can be dealt with as soon as they occur;
- Provide young people with clear and consistent information about the opportunities available for them to discuss personal issues and emotional concerns. Any support offered should take account of local community and education policies and protocols regarding confidentiality;
- Provide young people with opportunities to build relationships, particularly those who may find it difficult to seek support when they need it; and
- The identification, assessment, and support of young carers under the statutory duties outlined in the Children & Families Act 2014.

11.0 Managing disclosures

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

All disclosures should be recorded confidentially on MyConcern, including:

- Date
- Name of member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Nature of the disclosure & main points from the conversation/observation.
- Factual information only, no opinions should be included in the statement.

This information will be shared with the DSL(s).

12.0 Confidentiality

If a member of staff feels it is necessary to pass on concerns about a learner to either someone within or outside of the school, then this will be first discussed with the learner. 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 from the learner first, however, there may be instances when information must be shared, such as learners up to the age of 16 who are in danger of 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 for the learner. This also ensures continuity of care should staff absence occur and provides opportunities for ideas and support.

Parents/carers will be informed, unless a learner gives us reason to believe that they are at risk, or there are child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection procedures should be followed.

13.0 Whole school approach

13.1 Working with parents/carers

If it is deemed appropriate to inform parents there are questions to consider first:

- Can we meet with the parents/carers face-to-face?
- Where should the meeting take place – some parents are uncomfortable in school premises so consider a neutral venue if appropriate.
- Who should be present – learners, staff, parents etc.?
- What are the aims of the meeting and expected outcomes?

We are mindful that for a parent, hearing about their concerns we have with their child, 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 record of the meeting and points discussed/agreed are added to the learner's record and risk assessment updated if appropriate.

13.2 Supporting parents/carers

We recognise the family plays a key role in influencing children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing; we will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote emotional health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring all parents/carers are aware of and have access to promoting social and emotional wellbeing and preventing mental health issues;

- Highlighting sources of information and support about common mental health issues through our communication channels (website, newsletters etc.);
- Offering support to help parents/carers develop their parenting skills. This may involve providing information or offering small, group-based programmes run by community nurses (such as school nurses and health visitors) or other appropriately trained health or education practitioners; and
- 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 costs, transport and childcare. We recognise this might involve liaison with family support agencies.

14.0 Supporting Peers

When a learner is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who may want to support but do not know how. To keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the learner 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 needs 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

15.0 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 learners safe. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.

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 learners. As part of all staff's induction at Elmley Dray, they are required to complete the following course with the National College: Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of autistic learners.

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 DSL(s) who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

16.0 Linked Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, and associated policies and procedures.

Version control - Approval and review

Version No.	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Change	Review Period
1	Hayley Furnell	October 2024	Initial policy approved	Annually
1.1	Hayley Furnell	August 2025	Annual review	Annually
1.2	Hayley Furnell	December 2025	Updated to include additional DDSL	Annually



Hayley Furnell, Director,
on behalf of the Elmley Dray School

Dated: December 2025

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