



The Russell School Mental Health Strategy

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Strategy Status	Recommended
Review Cycle	Annually
Date written/last review	May 2023
Date of next review	May 2024

CONTENTS PAGE	
Page 2	Emotional Health and Wellbeing at The Russell School
Page 7	How we support our pupil's wellbeing
Page 10	How we support our staff's wellbeing
Page 14	How we support our parent and carer's wellbeing

Key Staff:

Mental Health Lead: Ms Clarke

ELSA: Ms Knight

ELSA: Ms Povey

SENCo: Ms McCann

Mental Health First Aider: Position to be filled

Safeguarding Team

DSL: Ms James Acting Head teacher (new Head teacher from September 2023)

Deputy Safeguarding: Ms Youness, Ms Mead, Ms Clarke

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing at The Russell Primary School

Definitions of mental health

The Mental Health Foundation describes mental health as,

‘A positive sense of well-being which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life. People in good mental health have the ability to recover effectively from illness, change or misfortune.’

Good mental health is more than the absence of mental illness.

NICE Guidelines says

‘Mental wellbeing is a dynamic state in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society.’

At The Russell we recognise that mental wellbeing is a continuum and we all experience episodes of poor emotional health and wellbeing during our

lives, whether we have a diagnosis of a mental health illness or whether we generally experience good mental health.

We believe that mental health is a basic human right, it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development. Therefore everyone at The Russell has a responsibility to promote positive mental health, and to understand about the protective and risk factors for mental health.

Some children and young people 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 are supported in class and highlighted for intervention where appropriate.

As staff we are aware of **possible risk factors** that might make some of our children and adults even more likely to experience mental health or emotional wellbeing needs. These risk factors include physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships and family breakdown, attachment trauma and domestic violence.

Being Curious

In The Russell it is the responsibility of all adults to be curious when they notice a change in a child or adult's behaviour and interactions. The School's Relationship policy ensures a child's behaviour is seen as a form of communication and requires all adults to be curious and open minded to the possible causes and reasons for behaviours. Where this is a safeguarding concern against a child, all members of staff, both in the classroom, and in the wider school, report this **immediately** to a member of the safeguarding team and complete a 'CPOMS' entry. Where there is a safeguarding concern regarding an adult, this too should be reported to the DSL. All adults in school follow the 'Staff Grievance' policy.

If there are any concerns about a child's mental health and emotional wellbeing, which are not safeguarding, report these to the child's class teacher as well as completing a CPOMS entry alerting the class teacher,

Mental Health Lead, SENCo and Headteacher. When there are concerns regarding a member of staff's emotional wellbeing, we encourage openness and an environment of mutual support. We ensure staff are approached and given opportunities to talk and access support.

Why do we need this strategy?

Our Pupils

At The Russell, we aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for our whole school community (pupils, staff, parents and carers), and recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing have the same importance as physical health. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can impact upon their learning and achievement.

Our role in school is to provide a safe environment where we support our pupils to become more resilient, to understand and regulate emotions including managing times of stress, change and upset. Our role is also to support our pupils in their understanding of what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, and what they can do for themselves when they are experiencing a particular emotion.

Our aim is to help develop their understanding of the protective factors which build resilience to mental health problems. We aim to maintain an ethos where:

- all pupils are valued
- pupils have a sense of belonging and feel safe
- pupils are able to communicate and feel listened to, with trusted adults, about their emotions
- positive mental health is promoted and valued.

Our Staff

In addition to children's wellbeing, we recognise the importance of promoting our staff's mental health and wellbeing. Our staff are our most important resource and are valued, supported and encouraged to develop

personally and professionally within a caring, purposeful school community.

We recognise that there is a direct link between the wellbeing of our staff and the wellbeing of our pupils, and that the culture and values of our school are determined by the extent to which staff work collaboratively towards our vision.

At The Russell, we believe that it is essential that all staff feel part of a supportive and valued team, have the opportunity to express their views and are supported to manage their workload within a culture that supports a healthy work-life balance.

Our aim is to be a school for our staff where:

- they are valued
- they are supported to build resilience to mental health problems
- they are supported to keep a healthy work-life balance
- they are supported to manage their family and work responsibilities
- positive mental health is promoted and valued
- we recognise and promote the importance of a happy team
- we ensure that there are effective methods of communication
- we take account of equality implications
- times of stress are noticed and staff are supported through it
- we learn from each other

Our Parents

At The Russell, we believe that it is essential that all parents and carers feel part of a supportive and valued community and have the opportunity to respectfully express their views and feel confident that they are being listened to.

Our aim is to be a school for our parents and carers where:

Parents and carers are key to understanding the child and this is supported

- parents and carers are encouraged to learn from each other and build support systems with other families
- parents and carers are supported to build resilience, particularly during times of transition or additional stress
- they feel valued members of our school community
- they feel that they are actively involved within their child's education
- they feel able to come to us for support
- they feel listened to and that their voice is heard.

How we support our pupil's wellbeing

The Russell Primary School offers a stepped model of care for our pupils.

Universal level:

Our universal provision is aimed at promoting positive mental health and wellbeing and acts as a preventative measure ensuring all pupils are shown how to maintain positive mental health. The universal provision consists of the following:

- Personal development is explicitly taught through our PSHE curriculum. Our PSHE curriculum follows a programme called 'Jigsaw'. This involves a weekly lesson and linked assemblies.
- A dedicated emotional wellbeing space in school called 'The Reef' which offers a safe space for children to have quiet time to regulate or a space to talk to a member of staff.
- 'Wellbeing Wednesday' assemblies are held weekly. This assembly teaches grounding techniques, breathing exercises and an opportunity for staff to carry out emotional check-ins with all pupils using a mood gauge or 'colour monster' poster. The assembly topics include understanding and recognising emotions, emotional regulation and growth mind-set.

- Emotional literacy is taught via the 'Colour Monster' Story. The 'Colour Monster' storybook uses five different colours to help children identify emotions, recognise their own emotional responses and develop a shared vocabulary about emotions. As children progress, they are encouraged to identify strategies for self-regulation linked to each coloured emotion.
- The Russell School has trauma-informed classrooms with Colour Monster thinking spaces which act as regulation stations. Worry Monsters are in each classroom encouraging pupils to talk and express their worries. Emotions Coaching techniques are used across the school
- A mental health first aider is available to assist all pupils and staff. (position currently vacant)
- The Russell School Relationship Policy ensures children are supported with a high level of empathy and instruction. All behaviours are seen as a form of communication. The Restorative Approach and Emotion Coaching techniques are used to support and instruct pupils through problems and disagreements. The Russell is a trauma informed calm environment where children are encouraged to share their worries and concerns
- Pupils are greeted warmly at the gate each morning.
- Pupils are given opportunities to stay active throughout the school day with the daily run, movement breaks and sensory circuits, PE and lunchtime sport clubs. The School has a dedicated member of staff who leads sports across the school.
- The school promotes sustainable and healthy methods of transport to school. Bike sheds are available for those who cycle or scooter to school and walking is encouraged.

- The pupils can access a healthy school lunch or are encouraged to bring a healthy school packed lunch. Pupils are encouraged to stay hydrated throughout the day.
- Parent consultations or drop-in consultations are offered to parents where pupils are displaying low mood and or anxiety. Where appropriate shared strategies are discussed and implemented with the pupils.
- Mental health and wellbeing is promoted on display boards around the school. The School has a wellbeing tree displaying the 5 ways to wellbeing, a growth mind-set display and an affirmation station encouraging positive self-talk.
- Every two years, the NSPCC will visit or provide our children with an assembly about 'keeping safe'. Children are informed about Child-Line and the importance of seeking help and support when they don't feel safe.
- The voice of the pupil is central to the provision offered at the Russell. Questionnaires, school council, the worry monster and weekly emotional check-ins allow staff to listen and respond to the needs of our pupils.
- The school delivers mental health awareness weeks or days such as the national 'Kids Mental Health Week' in February.
- The School has a strong anti-bullying ethos. The anti-bullying message is taught through assemblies and through PSHE lessons which offer opportunities for learning through role play and discussion. (See our school Anti-bullying Policy)
- Questionnaires, school council, pupil voice and learning walks throughout the academic year ensure that pupils have a voice which helps staff and governors respond to the needs of our pupils.

Targeted support

Our targeted provision is for children who require support beyond the universal offer.

Our ELSA, delivers tailored programmes of support either individually or as part of a group.

Key members of staff are trained in Emotional Related School Avoidance (ERSA). Where children are struggling with the transition between home and school, parents, pupils and staff will work together to implement and deliver an ERSA plan.

Referrals can be made to the Mental Health Schools Team (MHST) for:

- a group-based eight-week intervention or
- an assessment of need which may lead to a parent, family or pupil intervention.

‘Reflective spaces’ around a child, allow time for staff to meet, reflect and problem-solve as a team around a particular child’s needs.

A play therapy package can be delivered by a trainee therapist from a local college or university.

All staff have opportunities to discuss a child’s mental health in a supportive setting, one to one with the mental health lead, SENCO or ELSA.

A ‘soft start’ or breakfast can be provided to children who are struggling emotionally to enter the classroom or cope with the start of the school day.

Screen tools such as the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQ) and other assessment tools are used to identify need and tailor provision to the child. Post intervention assessments provide evidence of progress, outcomes and pupil voice.

Specialist support

When more specialist support is needed, pupils can be referred or signposted to external agencies such as:

CAMHS
School Nurse
Educational Psychologist
Emotional Health service
Music Therapist
Adoption Support Fund.
Local Charities

All referrals to these agencies are made with permission from parents.

How we support our staff's wellbeing

How do we support our staff's wellbeing?

Universal Offer

Mental health first aider (vacant position)
Access to Employee Assistance Programme
Regular staff meetings and TLA meetings
Staff Appraisals with wellbeing element
Information on how to support own mental health and wellbeing
Social staff events
Training and learning opportunities
Access to EISS consultations
Opportunities to work at home
No meetings weeks
Secured PPA
SLT commitment to constant reviewing of workload
Open conversations and open door policy
Ethos of care and respect
Staff team meetings
Staff check-ins

Targeted offer

Staff class team meetings to develop staff or pupil plans
Teachers Peer2Peer work
Teacher 'in class support' work
'Reflective spaces'
Regular check-ins

Specialist

Referrals to Occupational Health
Individual tailored support with agreed member of SLT
Reasonable adjustments
Access to Employee Assistance Programme

Staff are responsible for:

- Treating one another with empathy, respect and kindness.
- Taking care of their own health and safety at work and communicating with key staff where they need support.
- Being committed to the ethos of staff wellbeing.
- Be aware of the important part one plays in the bigger picture of the school and keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of colleagues.
- Valuing all members of staff in the school and acknowledging the important role that everyone takes.
- Contributing to the ethos and social aspects of school life where possible to build morale and effective team spirit.
- Developing and respecting shared areas where possible so that there is space to relax as well as appropriate work spaces.

As a school we are equally committed to promoting and maintaining the wellbeing and resilience of children, their families and staff.

Self-care

All adults that work with children have an abiding ethical imperative to engage in self-care.

Good self-care is sound prevention, guarding staff against severe or chronic distress and professional impairment. The Russell actively promotes a

culture of self-care amongst its staff. We believe it is important that all staff are supported to look after their own wellbeing. This is not only important for them as individuals, but also for the quality of input and care they give the children and their families/wider school community. This is helpfully illustrated by the oxygen mask analogy '**put your oxygen mask on first before helping others**'.

Staff are required to consider self-care and how they maintain their own wellbeing through appraisal meetings, their CPD and accessing, and attending reflective group sessions.



<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

General self-care pointers:

- Make personal and professional self-care a priority.
- Honestly assess your psychological and physical health. Focus on prevention rather than on simply remedying problems such as inactivity, over commitment or poor nutrition.
- Find time for activities that are personally restorative such as brisk walking or other forms of exercise, yoga, pleasure reading, journaling, meditation and massage.

- Avoid isolation. Identify sources of social support and use them. In addition to close family members and friends, sources of social support might include local groups.
- Establish and maintain professional connections that offer an opportunity to discuss the specific nature and stressors of your work. Consider when it may be helpful or necessary to tap into peer support groups or consultation. Pay attention to possible warning signs such as feelings of helplessness, emotional swings, tendency to ruminate, loss of empathy or disconnecting from family and friends.
- Develop realistic and reasonable expectations about work and your capabilities at any given time. Make appropriate accommodations or adjustments – such as seeking support before things become challenging.
- Pay attention to the need for balance in work, rest and play. Monitor carefully the substances (e.g. alcohol) and/or processes you use for relaxation or entertainment.
- Pursue opportunities for intellectual stimulation, including some outside your area of interests/occupation.
- Take steps to enhance your job satisfaction; utilise discussions with line managers and performance reviews.

Self-care activities should be tailored to your individual circumstances and needs. The pointers above are intended as healthy food for thought to help you develop a personal action plan that works for you.

As a school we acknowledge that the practice of promoting positive wellbeing and self-care is an ongoing endeavour and as such we have mechanisms in place to ensure that we review these regularly.

Resources

The Good Thinking website provides links and access to a range of mental well-being apps and resources for Londoners – <https://www.good-thinking.uk/>

Organisations offering support, advice and resources

Rethink Mental Illness - <https://www.rethink.org>

Mind Charity - <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Anxiety UK - <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>
Samaritans Charity - <https://www.samaritans.org>
Campaign Against Living Miserably - www.thecalmzone.net
Sue Ryder - <https://www.sueryder.org/>
Cruse Bereavement - <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

How to find a therapist?

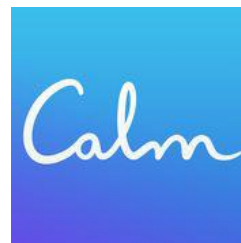
This section of the Mind website gives extensive information on the different types of psychotherapies and counselling available to individuals through NHS, charity and private practitioners.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapyand-counselling/how-to-find-a-therapist/>

Apps



Mindshift CBT



Calm



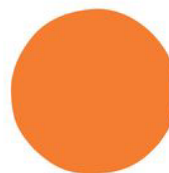
Stop Breathe Think



Oak



Sam



Headspace

How we support our parents and carers wellbeing

How do we support our parents' and carers' wellbeing?

Bi-weekly communication via the newsletter

Parent mails with signposting to events

Coffee mornings

Stay and play Nursery events

Wellbeing coffee mornings for EYFS

Parent workshops

Parent Reps who provide connection to the school

Open door policy to talk with class teachers about family well-being and mental health

Parent drop-in sessions with MHST team

SEND Parent teacher consultations

Parent buddy system

New arrivals strategy

New arrival meeting

What we need to do...

- Training for mental health first aider -appoint a member of staff
- Supervision for Head teacher DSLs
- Pupil voice questionnaires
- Staff training - spotting early warning signs of mental health