FEDERATION OF GORING AND STOKE ROW CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Policy reviewed and agreed by:	Teaching, Learning and Inclusion Committee
Date:	November 2026
Next review:	November 2029

1. Statement of intent

The Federation of Goring and Stoke Row Church of England Primary Schools is committed to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for every member of our school community. This includes pupils, staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders. We recognise that mental health is part of overall health and wellbeing and that everyone can experience periods of difficulty.

We aim to provide a secure, welcoming, happy, healthy and inclusive environment in which children can enjoy their childhood, develop confidence, build positive relationships, manage challenges, seek help when needed and participate fully in school life. Our Christian ethos places value on kindness, respect, belonging, individuality, courage, perseverance, service and supporting one another through challenging times.

2. Scope

This policy sets out the Federation's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, recognising emerging concerns, responding to disclosures, assessing risk and providing appropriate support. It is intended to guide all staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff, governors and those working with pupils through extended or pastoral provision.

The policy recognises the distinction between normal emotional experiences and mental ill health. Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions. Their role is to notice concerns, respond supportively, follow safeguarding procedures, record concerns appropriately and seek advice from the designated staff.

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3. Aims

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all pupils and staff.
- Create a culture of wellbeing, inclusion, kindness and belonging.
- Increase understanding and awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Help pupils understand and name their emotions and develop healthy coping strategies.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment in which pupils can talk about worries and seek help.
- Support pupil voice and enable children to contribute to approaches that affect their wellbeing.
- Celebrate pupils' achievements and strengths in school and beyond the classroom.
- Support staff to recognise early warning signs and respond appropriately.
- Provide graduated, individualised support for pupils experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing difficulties.
- Work collaboratively with parents/carers and, where appropriate, external professionals.
- Support pupils who are affected by a friend's or family member's mental health difficulties.
- Promote the mental health and wellbeing of staff and recognise the emotional demands of supporting pupils.

4. Principles

- Mental health and wellbeing are everyone's responsibility.
- Prevention and early identification are central to our approach.
- All feelings and emotional states are recognised without stigma; support focuses on helping children understand and manage them safely.
- Support is proportionate, graduated and based on the individual child's needs.
- The safety and welfare of the child comes first.
- Pupils should be listened to calmly, respectfully and without judgement.
- Confidentiality is limited by safeguarding and the need to share information appropriately.
- Parents/carers are partners in supporting children unless there is a safeguarding reason why information should not be shared.
- Staff should seek guidance from a senior leader or designated safeguarding lead when responding to a significant concern.
- Mental health support should complement, not replace, appropriate medical, specialist or safeguarding intervention.

5. Whole-School Promotion of Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Federation promotes wellbeing through universal provision and through targeted support where children need additional help. Examples drawn from the existing school approaches include:

- PSHE and RSE teaching, including emotional literacy, healthy choices, coping strategies, relationships and help-seeking.
- Assemblies, class reflection time, prayer and opportunities for reflection.
- Zones of Regulation / feelings check-ins to help children identify and communicate how they are feeling.
- A safe classroom culture where children can talk about worries and feelings.
- Circle time, social skills groups and supported peer relationships.

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- Positive feedback, recognition and celebration of achievements.
- Sport, outdoor learning, Forest School, creativity, music, performances and extra-curricular activities.
- Giving pupils responsibilities, such as through pupil groups, and opportunities for pupil voice.
- Transition support, particularly at key points of change.
- Pastoral interventions where appropriate.
- Regulation and movement activities.
- A supportive school environment and positive relationships between pupils and adults.
- Information and signposting for children and parents/carers.
- Staff training and access to advice when concerns arise.

6. Identifying and Monitoring Concerns

Staff should be alert to changes in a child's presentation, behaviour, relationships, attendance, learning or physical wellbeing. One sign alone does not necessarily indicate a mental health difficulty; patterns, changes from the child's usual presentation and the wider context should be considered.

- Changes in mood, energy or activity level.
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Increased social isolation or withdrawal.
- Changes in academic engagement or attainment.
- Changes in personal hygiene or appearance.
- Poor attendance, punctuality or increasing absence.
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, failure or excessive anxiety.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Changes in clothing, including unexpectedly covering parts of the body.
- Avoiding PE or changing clothes in a markedly secretive way.
- Repeated physical pain or nausea without an obvious cause.
- Physical injuries that appear unexplained or self-inflicted.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide.
- Other significant changes in behaviour, relationships or functioning.

Where the school uses a feelings register or Zones of Regulation check-in, staff should use this as one source of information rather than as a diagnostic tool. Children who indicate that they are struggling should be given an appropriate opportunity to talk with a trusted adult.

7. Responding to Disclosures

A pupil may disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff. Staff should:

1. Remain calm, supportive and non-judgemental.
2. Listen carefully and allow the pupil time to speak.
3. Use open, simple questions only where necessary to clarify what has been said; do not investigate or attempt to diagnose.
4. Focus first on the pupil's emotional and physical safety.
5. Explain honestly that information cannot always be kept secret.
6. Explain who may need to know, what may be shared and why.

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7. Pass the concern promptly to the DSL/DDSL and/or SENDCO accordance with the circumstances.
8. Record the disclosure accurately and promptly on CPOMS.

8. Supporting Pupils – Graduated Approach

Where a pupil is identified as having a mental health or wellbeing need, the school will use a graduated, case-by-case approach:

1. Assess and understand the pupil's needs, strengths, protective factors and level of risk.
2. Agree an appropriate support plan with the pupil and parent/carer where appropriate.
3. Implement the agreed actions and interventions.
4. Review progress and adapt support as necessary.

8.1 Universal / baseline support

All pupils should have access to the universal approaches described in Section 5, including PSHE, reflection, emotional literacy, opportunities for pupil voice, pastoral support and signposting.

8.2 Targeted support

Depending on individual need and availability, targeted support may include:

- Pastoral support through class teachers and key stage or pastoral leads.
- Nurture or social skills groups.
- Adapted timetable or reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Play-based or therapeutic support where commissioned or otherwise available.
- Local early-help provision, for example strengths and needs.
- Additional transition support.
- An individual support/care plan where this would benefit the pupil.

8.3 Individual support/care plans

Where appropriate and in consultation with parents/carers, a pupil may be placed onto the SEN register for social, emotional mental health (SEMH) and the Federation may create an individual support plan with the pupil, parent/carer and relevant professionals.

- The pupil's identified needs and relevant triggers.
- Early warning signs and signs that the pupil is becoming distressed or dysregulated.
- Strengths, protective factors and preferred strategies.
- Specific educational, social and emotional support.
- The level and frequency of support required.
- Who will provide support and who needs to be aware.
- Any relevant medical information or medication, where applicable and appropriately recorded.
- Review arrangements and indicators of progress.

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9. Responding to Acute or Significant Mental Health Risk

Immediate danger

If a pupil is seriously injured, experiencing an acute mental health crisis or presents an immediate risk of serious harm, follow emergency procedures, including calling 999 or accessing A&E where required, and inform parents/carers unless there is a safeguarding reason not to.

For high or significant risk, the existing process includes:

- Accessing the pupil's immediate safety and providing appropriate first aid or immediate support.
- Informing the DSL and recording the concern.
- Contacting parents/carers unless there is a safeguarding reason not to.
- Discussing concerns with parents/carers and recommending appropriate medical support such as contacting the GP where indicated.
- Considering referral/involvement of CAMHS, social care or other relevant professionals.
- Agreeing school-based support and reviewing it when the pupil returns to school following a significant incident.

10. Working with Parents and Carers

- Encourage parents/carers to tell the school about relevant mental health or wellbeing concerns so that appropriate support can be considered.
- Inform parents/carers when the school has concerns about their child, unless a safeguarding concern means that this would not be appropriate.
- Where possible, discuss significant concerns face to face or through another appropriate two-way conversation.
- Give parents/carers time to process information and ask questions.
- Agree clear next steps and record the discussion appropriately.
- Signpost parents/carers to relevant information, services and local support.
- Share information about mental health topics covered through PSHE and suggest ways learning can be reinforced at home.
- Consider a follow-up conversation where ongoing support is required.

11. Teaching About Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are taught through the Federation's PSHE/RSE curriculum and wider curriculum and pastoral provision. Teaching should be developmentally appropriate and responsive to the needs of each cohort.

- Understanding and naming emotions.
- Healthy coping and regulation strategies.
- Positive relationships and belonging.
- Keeping physically and mentally safe.
- Understanding when and how to ask for help.

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- Challenging stigma and misconceptions.
- Recognising that seeking help is a strength.
- Developing confidence, resilience, responsibility and empathy.

12. Signposting and External Support

The Federation will make appropriate sources of support visible to pupils, staff and parents/carers. Depending on the circumstances, support may include the GP, school nurse team, pediatric services, early-help services, and reputable mental health charities.

Where school-based support is not sufficient, the Federation may make or encourage and support parents/carers to make an external referral to CAMHS, as appropriate.

13. Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Federation recognises that supporting pupils experiencing mental health difficulties can be emotionally demanding. We aim to provide a pleasant, supportive working environment and to take staff wellbeing concerns seriously.

- Provide access to appropriate pastoral and line-management support.
- Ensure staff are not left as the sole person responsible for a pupil's mental health needs.
- Encourage staff to share concerns with an appropriate colleague rather than carrying them alone.
- Provide relevant training and CPD.
- Use supervision, debriefing or other appropriate support following significant incidents.
- Signpost staff to appropriate sources of professional or wellbeing support where required.

14. Training

All staff should receive regular training in recognising and responding to mental health and wellbeing concerns as part of the Federation's safeguarding and professional development arrangements. Additional CPD should be considered where staff require more in-depth knowledge or where emerging needs within the school community make this appropriate.

- Understanding common mental health and emotional wellbeing needs.
- Recognising warning signs.
- Responding appropriately to disclosures.
- Understanding confidentiality and information sharing.
- Knowing the Federation's risk and escalation processes.
- Knowing when and how to seek advice or make an external referral.

15. Safeguarding and Mental Health

Mental health concerns can coexist with safeguarding concerns. Where a pupil's disclosure or presentation gives staff reason to believe that there may be abuse, neglect, exploitation or another child protection concern, the Federation's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy must be followed immediately. Mental health concerns must never be used to explain away or minimise safeguarding indicators.

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16. Equality, Inclusion and SEND

The Federation recognises that mental health and wellbeing needs can present differently for different children. Support will take account of age, communication needs, SEND, developmental stage, culture, family circumstances and other relevant factors. Reasonable adjustments and SEND processes should be considered where appropriate.

17. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Federation will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through staff feedback, pupil voice, pastoral and safeguarding records, review of support plans and relevant wellbeing information. Governors will provide appropriate oversight through the relevant committee.

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, and sooner where there are changes to legislation, national or local guidance, personnel, referral pathways or the needs of the Federation.

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