Pupil Mental Health & Wellbeing policy statement

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Approved By	Headteacher
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Staff role responsible for review	Deputy Headteacher and Senior Mental Health Lead

This policy applies to all stakeholders within Ivel Valley School & College

Introduction

'*Our mental health is at least as important as our physical health. It strongly affects our daily lives – how they feel to us, as well as our ability to do the things we need and want to, including work, study, getting on with people and looking after ourselves and others.*' (Mental Health Foundation. 2023)

At Ivel Valley, we are committed to promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to all pupils, their families and members of staff. We recognise that evidence suggests that mental health problems may be higher in people with a learning disability than in those without a learning disability. Some studies suggest the rate of mental health problems in people with a learning disability is double that of the general population (Cooper, 2007; Emerson & Hatton, 2007; NICE, 2016). People with a learning disability may be particularly vulnerable to negative life events and might not have the mechanisms for coping with these. We already have a culture that encourages a nurturing, trauma and attachment-aware approach to working with young people, but we need to continually develop our understanding of what mental health and wellbeing means for our pupils and to work to ensure that they are accessing the right support.

The purpose of this policy

We value positive relationships at Ivel Valley and encourage our pupils to express their feelings, and are committed to really listening to what they want to tell us. Despite this, we know that mental health problems are not always recognised in people with learning disabilities. This policy aims to empower our staff to support pupil mental health & wellbeing as best as possible, understand the signs, understand the procedures in place if they have concerns, and ultimately to create a safe environment where everyone affected by mental health issues - whether it is directly or indirectly - feels listened to and supported.

Our aim is for all pupils to develop increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing through a range of both formal and informal teaching opportunities. We aim for pupils to develop their own values and attitudes towards relationships through the guidance of our school's communal values. Our core aims around pupil mental health and wellbeing are:

- We promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all children
- Pupils have a sense of belonging and feel safe.
- Pupils are supported by staff to feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems without feeling any stigma.
- Bullying is not tolerated

Mental health & wellbeing teaching

At Ivel Valley, all staff receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep pupils safe. Training opportunities for individual staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our professional development offer and will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more pupils.

As with all areas of the curriculum, we believe in delivering an individualised and differentiated approach to learning for our pupils. Key points:

● We focus upon the 'Relationships' aspect of RSE from the moment a pupil arrives in our school, and relationships and positive interactions with others are central to the learning process throughout the school.

● We aim to provide an interactive learning environment, which is motivating and allows pupils to practise skills as well as to gain information and knowledge

● We strive to deliver a practical, kinaesthetic approach to learning and offer pupils many opportunities to practise their skills in real situations, both in school, and within the wider community

● The development of decision-making skills and assertiveness is promoted.

Signs and indicators of mental health or wellbeing issues

Signs that staff should be aware of are as follows:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Significant changes in eating / sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood - especially extreme lows or highs
- 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
- Avoiding physical exercise or getting changed secretively
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Staff aware of any significant changes or concerns regarding a pupil's mental health and wellbeing will record this on CPOMS and discuss with the relevant members of staff in order to work together with the family and professionals working with the pupil.

It is important that we maintain an open mind and professional curiosity about what might be causing mental health or wellbeing issues for pupils, as this *can* be a sign of abuse or neglect in some circumstances. If pupils disclose, or staff become aware of, any information that suggests that the pupil is at risk, staff must follow the safeguarding policy.

We consider pupil needs and the right support for them on a very individual basis, for example some pupils feel supported by keeping soft toys close to them. Pupils of all ages have a stable class team, so are able to build up trusting relationships.

At Ivel Valley, pupil mental health and wellbeing is supported by a broad team: the Mental health Lead, Safeguarding team, Positive Behaviour Support Team, Family Support Team. We also have staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders, who predominantly offer support to staff.

The Ivel Valley School and College website recommends various websites and contacts for support; the Family Support Team will often post useful contacts and organisations to families via Class Dojo.

The Family Support Team arrange regular check ins with identified pupils who need support in a number of areas within mental health wellbeing, in collaboration with the Positive Behaviour Support and Communication Support teams. They might use Zones of Regulation to identify how they are feeling and have developed support packs

with different tools to practise anxiety reducing strategies and talk through the pupils' concerns. This support offers pupils a consistent adult who sees them regularly, which in turns develops a trusting relationship.

Pupils with complex learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD)

At Ivel Valley we feel it is important to support *all* our pupils with their mental health and wellbeing, including pupils with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. Many pupils with CLDD have experience of being socially isolated, they may have significant and invasive medical interventions and medical regimes to follow. Due to physical needs they may experience pain and discomfort as well as have epilepsy. CLDD pupils can have medical difficulties and sensory regulation difficulties. Experiencing any of the previously mentioned difficulties alone can have a huge impact on a pupil's emotional wellbeing. If they also have difficulty communicating they may not be able to share how they are feeling or understand what is happening to them.

It is sometimes assumed that due to a pupil's low cognitive abilities, people with CLDD could not possibly experience mental health difficulties. At Ivel Valley School and College we presume that due to all of the above, it is highly likely that pupils with CLDD experience mental health difficulties. We will ensure that we are proactive in supporting them to be active and interested learners, comfortable within themselves and in control of their world where possible and sustain positive relationships.

Roles and responsibilities

The Senior Mental Health Lead will:

- Take strategic leadership for mental health & wellbeing support at Ivel Valley
- Champion and promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Raise awareness of mental health & wellbeing issues and support mechanisms across the Ivel Valley community
- Oversee the development of effective mental health and wellbeing provision in line with the government guidance for senior mental health leads
- Have oversight of support pathways in place, and raise any deficiencies with SLT
- Promote training and teaching tools to aid in the delivery of our mental health and wellbeing objectives and responsibilities to staff members, ensuring a consistent approach

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that there is a Senior Mental Health Lead in place, and that they have the capacity and support to carry out their role.

In addition, there is an allocated Governor with responsibility for Mental Health and Well Being within the Governing body. This governor liaises with the Senior Mental Health Lead, contributes to policies and actions and feeds back to the wider governing body.

Legal framework & statutory guidance:

Linked national guidance:

- Department for Education guidance in developing a whole school or college approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Linked policies:

- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- Looked After Children
- Personal Social Health Education (PSHE)
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).
- Safeguarding and Child Protection

Equalities & inclusion

This policy is adapted to recognise our pupils' varied SEND. Acknowledgement and open discussion of mental health supports an inclusive environment.

Safeguarding implications

Safeguarding is a priority at Ivel Valley School and College. We recognise that experiences of abuse, neglect and exploitation can impact a young person's mental health and wellbeing, and we know the importance of finding personalised support strategies for a young person who has experienced trauma.

Staff must be mindful that they are not trained mental health professionals, and encouraging a pupil to explore trauma beyond a safe, clinical environment can be dangerous.

Some pupils might have experienced a family member who has mental health difficulties and therefore they might find certain aspects difficult when discussing areas linked to mental health. Staff must be aware of individual backgrounds and provide sensitive support accordingly. Any concerns must be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Sustainability implications

Not applicable.