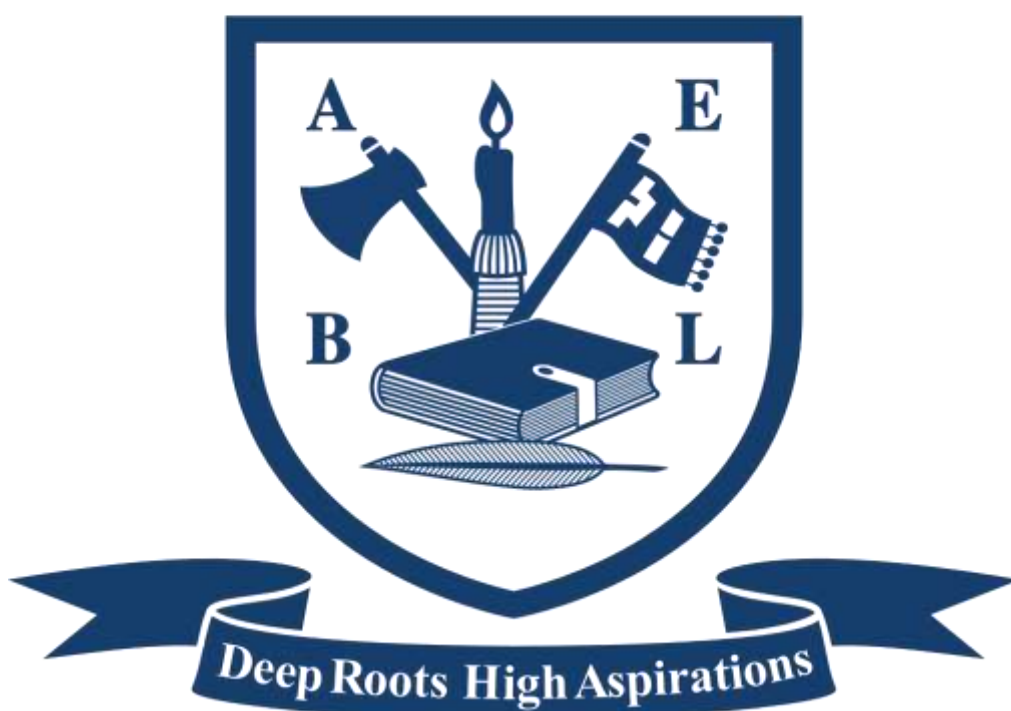


HIGH ASPIRATIONS

KNEBWORTH

Primary and Nursery School



Mental Health Policy

*This policy is reviewed on an annual basis
Next review date: November 2026*



RESPECT - RESPONSIBILITY - RESILIENCE

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Introduction

“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community” (World Health Organization 2024).

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being and it affects how we think, feel and act. Mental health is like a spectrum and many mental health disorders, such as anxiety, will be experienced as mild and transitory challenges for the child and their family. However, when a problem is particularly severe or persistent over time, or when a number of these difficulties are experienced at the same time, the child may need support and is often described as having mental health disorders. Mental health affects all aspects of a child’s development and therefore children need to be emotionally healthy to achieve their potential.

National Context

Over 50% of mental illnesses start before the age of 14. 1 in 6 children aged 7-16 years had a mental health problem in 2022, up from 1 in 10 before the pandemic. Schools are on the frontline when it comes to supporting children and young people’s mental wellbeing as staff are ideally placed to recognise and respond to early signs of mental health difficulties.

The government remains committed to the proposals set out in its response to Transforming children and young people’s mental health: a green paper (DfE, 2022)

Policy Statement

At Knebworth School we believe that every child should have *“Deep Roots and High Aspirations.”* As such, nurturing and supporting good mental health and wellbeing in our pupils and staff is a priority. Our school values of **Respect, Responsibility** and **Resilience** are embedded into every aspect of school life and we foster an open culture where every child is valued and has a voice. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. 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.

Policy Scope

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers, governors, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting children’s mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside other relevant school policies, including our policies on Behaviour, Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, SEND and PSHE/RSHE.

Policy Aims

- To promote the importance of good mental health
- To demonstrate our commitment to supporting all of our staff and children in the development of good mental health

- To be proactive rather than reactive, using a combination of whole school approaches and specialist targeted approaches to support and improve the mental health of all staff and pupils.

At Knebworth School we will support our children to:

- Help children to identify and understand their emotions and to realise the connection between feelings and behaviours
- Ensure children feel safe to share any concerns and worries
- Support children to form and maintain healthy relationships with children and adults
- Encourage children to be confident, respectful individuals
- Promote self-esteem and develop resilience and coping strategies

At Knebworth School we will promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all aspects of our school curriculum
- Celebrating each child for their uniqueness and worth
- Promoting our school values of **Respect, Responsibility** and **Resilience** and encouraging a sense of belonging and community
- Listening to our children's voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making
- Raising awareness amongst staff and pupils about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in children
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health
- Signpost and support parents/carers with mental health issues
- Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and providing support to any child that needs it

Key Staff Members

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the mental health of children and each other and to spot early warning signs of a possible mental health issue. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads: Miss Bains, Mrs Maynard (*maternity leave 2025-26*), Mrs Rajiah, Mrs Rix, Mrs Moss, Mrs Wallace-Poultney and Mrs Clayton

Pastoral Lead: Mrs Moss

Mental Health Lead: Mrs Rix (Senior Mental Health Lead trained 2024)

Mental Health Team: Mr Shostak, Mrs Taylor, Mrs Moss, Ms Salmon and Mrs Wallace-Poultney

SENCOs/Inclusion Managers: Mrs Rix and Mrs Rajiah

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a pupil, then in the first instance they should speak to the Mental Health Lead or Deputy Mental Health Lead.

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 one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

If the pupil presents a medical emergency, then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Mental Health Lead/ Deputy or other relevant staff.

You can also access toolkits and advice forums here;

<https://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/young-people3>

Mental Health Lead/Deputy's Role/MH Team Role

The Mental Health Lead, with the support from the deputies, is responsible for implementing a whole-school approach towards mental health to promote good mental wellbeing and resilience amongst pupils and staff. The MH team (key staff) meet each term and are responsible for:

- Overseeing the whole-school approach towards mental health and wellbeing, including how it is reflected in the design of behaviour policies, curriculum and pastoral support, how staff are supported with their own wellbeing and how pupils and parents/carers are engaged
- Supporting the identification of pupils at risk of, or showing signs of, mental ill health
- Gaining knowledge of the local mental health services and working with clear links with pupils' mental health services to refer pupils to NHS services where it is appropriate
- Co-ordinating the mental health needs of pupils and overseeing the delivery of interventions where these are being delivered in school
- Supporting staff in contact with pupils with mental health needs to help raise awareness and give all staff the confidence to work with pupils
- Overseeing the outcomes of interventions for pupils' education and wellbeing

Staff Wellbeing

At Knebworth School we know that teaching and working alongside children is an immensely rewarding profession. It also poses many challenges which can cause high levels of stress if not recognised and supported. At Knebworth School our staff mental health and wellbeing is a priority if we want them to continue to deliver the outstanding provision in place for our children.

At Knebworth School some of the ways we support all our staff is by:

- Promoting an open and honest culture where staff feel safe to discuss any issues or concerns
- Open door policy to SLT or MH or Inclusion team
- Drop-in informal wellbeing chats with Mr Shostak or another appropriate staff member i.e. Phase Leader
- Setting realistic time frames
- Good communication at all levels
- Drop-in sessions offered to staff by Nessie external professionals
- CPD offered to all staff
- Social events
- Signposting to external support when needed
- Wellbeing section and discussion time is now incorporated into the Performance Appraisals.

Staff can also access this website for quick tips on looking after themselves:

<https://www.annafreud.org/>

Whole School Approach

We take a whole school approach towards the mental health of our pupils. This means working with parents and carers and with other agencies and partners, where necessary. To ensure a whole school approach, the MH team meet each term.

Working with parents and carers

At Knebworth School we aim to work with parents to support the mental health of the children. We will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our school
- Signpost external support available

- Ensure that parents are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents

Working With Other Agencies and Partners

As part of our whole school approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our pupil's emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- The school nurse
- GP/Paediatricians/health visitor
- Step 2
- Educational psychologist
- CAMHS
- Counselling services
- Therapists
- Family support workers
- Behavioural support workers
- Integrated Services for Learning (ISL)
- Outreach specialist provision
- Families First - early help
- SPLD base
- DSPL 2

Supporting Peers

We understand that, when a child is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case by case basis, any peers that may need additional support. We will provide support in a one-on-one or group settings. These sessions will be guided by the pupil, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

Positive Approaches and Support Offered Within School

- Trusted adult/wellbeing mentor
- Internal mentoring and/or wellbeing check ins

- Referrals to external agencies – school nurse, Step 2, CAMHS, Wellbeing Team, Safe Space Counselling, ISL, NESSIE therapies
- Use of positive behaviour approaches and plans using the Protective Behaviours and Paul Dix- Relational Practice approach
- Trips out and enrichment opportunities inside and outside of school
- Opportunities for children, including the disadvantaged/underserved children, to be part of clubs around their interests
- Small Garden (inside and outside) for targeted children
- Systemic family work
- Rewards – Extra outdoor time with PE lead, class movie, board games with friends
- Parental involvement – celebration assemblies/tea or class dojo awards. Regular communications.
- Pupil voice
- Kindness Champions for on the playground
- Nurture Groups- focus on self and emotional regulation or building friendships (gardening club/Lego club)
- Pastoral support using play and art therapy principles or counselling principles ('My Time' / 'ELSA')
- Drawing and Talking intervention
- Class mindfulness
- Bright Stars for Year 4
- Just Talk- 5 ways to wellbeing intervention
- Zones of regulation check ins and interventions
- Heads Up Kids – social and emotional wellbeing programme (KS1/EYFS)
- Wellbeing scales – CORS, SDQs, emotional check in
- Circle time
- School values work- use of animals to represent core values and teddies in the younger years
- Breakfast club and soft starts to school
- One to one or group work on understanding early warning signs and coping strategies

Teaching about Mental Health

Our PSHE/RSHE curriculum is developed to give students the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy. This includes resilience techniques and training. We will regularly review our PHSE/RSHE curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they are meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We will also implement this into our curriculum at all stages to provide children with strategies to help keep them mentally well. From September 2024, KS1 staff have taken part in Heads Up Kids training and this social and emotional programme will be taught as a further way to explicitly teach children how to be mentally healthy and how to cope with social and emotional difficulties.

Identifying Needs and Early Warning Signs

All of our staff will be trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to children who need it, when they need it.

These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Leads or MH lead as appropriate. Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in mood
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope
- Secretive behaviour
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

- Attendance and absenteeism.
- Punctuality and lateness.
- Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may impact a child's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

Managing Disclosures

If a pupil discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it is necessary to keep the child safe, in line with our Child Protection policy.

Confidentiality

If a member of staff thinks it is necessary to pass on concerns about a pupil, either to somebody inside the school or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the pupil. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell
- What the staff member is going to disclose
- Why it's necessary for somebody else to be told
- When the contact will be

However, it may not be possible to gain the pupil's consent first, such as in the case of pupils who are at immediate risk. Protecting a pupil's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged a child to be at risk.

Training

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will also form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to keep children safe. The MH team will also receive relevant up to date training for their roles.

We will post all relevant information, and additional information, on our school website and/or wellbeing board in school so staff and parents/carers can learn more about children's mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with pupils.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every year. This is so that it remains up to date, useful, and relevant. We will also regularly review it in accordance with local and national policy change.