



Thames Ditton Infant School Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2026-27

Written By: Head Teacher/SENCo Approved

By: Full Governing Board Date

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Thames Ditton Infant School

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of staff, children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for children with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

At the heart of Thames Ditton Infant School community, we provide a nurturing environment where we prioritise emotional growth and wellbeing for every child, staff member and parent. Through fostering empathy, resilience and positive relationships, we empower individuals to flourish academically, socially and emotionally, ensuring a holistic wellbeing for all.

Why Mental Health and Well-Being is Important

At Thames Ditton Infant School, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for our whole school community including pupils, staff and families and we recognise how important mental health and emotional well-being is to each and every one of us. We recognise that children's mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can significantly affect their learning and achievement.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice identifies Social, Emotional and Mental Health as one of the four areas of Special Educational Need. A 2017 NHS survey of five to 19-year-olds found that one in eight young people had an identified mental disorder, with 5% of those interviewed meeting the criteria for two or more disorders. In the same survey, it was revealed that emotional disorders were the most common disorder among school-age children, with 8.1% suffering with anxiety, depression, mania or bipolar affective disorder. Meanwhile, 4.6% had some kind of behaviour disorder, whilst 1.6% had a hyperactivity disorder. Others will face significant life events throughout their school years.

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that: "in order to help their pupils succeed; schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy".

At Thames Ditton Infant School we believe that our role in school is to ensure that children are taught strategies to help them manage times of change and stress, to be resilient, to support them to reach their potential and access help when they need it.

Our aim is to be a school where:

- all children are valued
- all children know that they belong and feel safe
- children feel able to talk openly with trusted adults about their problems
- positive mental health is promoted and valued
- bullying is not tolerated

In addition to children's well-being, we recognise the importance of promoting staff mental health and well-being.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out:

- how we promote positive mental health
- how we prevent mental health problems
- how we identify and support pupils with mental health needs
- how we train and support all staff to spot and develop understanding of mental health issues
- key information about some common mental health problems
- where parents, staff and pupils can get advice and support

Definition of Mental Health and Well-Being

The World Health Organisation's definition of mental health (2018) says:

'Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life.'

Mental health and well-being is not just the absence of mental health problems.

We want all children at Thames Ditton Infant School to:

- feel confident in themselves
- be able to express a range of emotions appropriately
- be able to make and maintain positive relationships with others
- cope with the stresses of everyday life
- manage times of stress and be able to deal with change
- learn and achieve

Links to other Policies

This policy links to our policies on Child Protection and Safeguarding, Inclusion, Looked After Children, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour, Personal Social Health Education (PSHE), Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Links with the Behaviour Policy are especially important because behaviour, whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise, may be related to an unmet mental health need. We consider behaviour to be a non-verbal form of communication.

A Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health

Thames Ditton Infant School takes a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health. This includes the following areas:

- Creating a whole school ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience that the whole school community understands.
- Teaching children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need to.
- Helping develop children to be resilient learners.
- Teaching children to develop social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health
- The early identification of pupils who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services where necessary.
- Communicating and working closely with parents and carers.
- Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and resilience.

We also recognise the role that stigma can play in preventing understanding and awareness of mental health issues and aim to create an open and positive culture that encourages discussion and understanding of all aspects of mental health and wellbeing.

Roles and Responsibilities

Thames Ditton Infant School believes that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health from the very beginning of the children’s school journey, and to understand about protective and risk factors for mental health. Some children will require additional help and all staff should have the skills to look out for any early warning signs or problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get the early intervention and support that they need.

All staff understand about possible risk factors that might make some children more likely to experience problems; such a physical long-term illness, having a parent who has a mental health problem, death and loss, including loss of friendships, family breakdown and bullying. They also understand the factors that protect children from adversity, such as secure attachment, affection, self-esteem, communication and problem-solving skills and a sense of worth and belonging.

The school’s Wellbeing Team consists of:

| Name | Role (stakeholder link) |
|------------------|---|
| Elspeth Leach | Headteacher/DSL (SLT and Governors) |
| Monika Dennemont | Deputy Head Inclusion/SENDCo/DDSL (Support Staff) |
| Karen Lita | Mental Health First Aider/SEND Manager/The Nest/DDSL (The Nest staff) |
| Emma Gregory | Acorns Manager/HLTA/DDSL (Acorns Staff) |
| Sue Coulter | Office Manager/Staff Welfare Officer/DDSL (The Office/Resources Team) |
| Ali Ball | EYFS Lead/Class Teacher/ (Staff Governor) |
| Jo Langridge | PSHE Lead/Class Teacher (Wellbeing Champions) |
| Michelle Talboys | Mental Health First Aider/Home School Link Worker/ Emotional Support (Parents) |
| Erin Willson | Curriculum Governor |
| Emma Palmer | Safeguarding Governor |

The Wellbeing Team’s role is to:

- Meet termly to raise questions and make suggestions that will improve the wellbeing of all stakeholders within the context of school life.
- Represent and present stakeholders questions and suggestions at Wellbeing Team meetings
- Work collaboratively to achieve the Wellbeing priorities within the School Development Plan
- Provide advice and support to the stakeholders they represent
- Key members **that are also part of the Senior Leadership Team** are responsible for ensuring training and updates are delivered to all stakeholders
- Keeping the school community up-to-date with information about what support is available
- **Support the Senior Leadership Team to perform an annually review of Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy**

The school recognises that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the school environment, or with advice from external professionals. Some children will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and organisations that work within and with the school to provide support to pupils with mental health needs and their families. This may include:

- SENDCo support
- Safeguarding Team support
- Home School Link Worker support
- Emotional support
- Access to outside agencies: Specialist Teacher for Inclusive Practice, CAMHS, Outreach (Autism specialism)

Supporting Pupils' Positive Mental Health

At Thames Ditton Infant School we believe we have a key role in promoting children's positive mental health and helping to prevent mental health problems. Our school has developed a range of strategies and approaches, including:

Teacher and child-led Activities

- Themed days and weeks, including class assemblies, to raise awareness of mental health
- Assemblies
- Cultural calendar

Transition Support

- Support for vulnerable children, for example, small group work within emotional support sessions that may include Social Thinking, construction therapy, Drawing and Talking programme.
- Transition meetings with parent/carers, pupils and relevant staff
- Yearly one page profiles for vulnerable children
- One page profiles available for all staff to be aware of vulnerable children's needs
- Additional transition activities and visits for vulnerable children coming into Reception or moving on to Year 3. These include additional Key Stage 2 school visits with familiar staff where appropriate.
- Transition booklets for all children when changing year groups, with bespoke books created for vulnerable/SEND children.

Individual/small group support may be sought such as:

- Emotional Literacy sessions in small groups or individual
- FAGUS resources used to provide specific targets for vulnerable children
- Home School Link Worker support for identified vulnerable children and families
- Wellbeing Time out of class within the intervention or sensory/ meeting room

Class Activities may be used to support wellbeing

- Calm boxes
- Mindfulness and breathing/meditation in class (linked to Zones of Regulation, see appendix 2)
- Children's safeguarding poster (see appendix 3)
- How big is my problem approach (Year 2 classes)

Whole School

- PSHE and Social Thinking Curriculum
- Zones of regulation approach
- Collective worship themes
- Bubble cards
- Five finger check
- Access to Wellbeing Time or Pets in School

Our approach is to:

- provide a safe environment to allow children to express themselves and be listened to
- ensure the welfare and safety of children as our highest priority
- identify appropriate support for children based on their needs
- involve parents and carers when their child needs support
- involve children in the care and support they have
- monitor, review and evaluate the support with pupils and keep parents and carers updated

Early Identification

Thames Ditton Infant School's early identification system involves a range of processes. We aim to identify children with mental health needs as early as possible. We do this in different ways including:

- class teacher identification of children who might need additional support
- being part of the Surrey Compassionate Schools Community of Practice
- working towards maintaining principles achieved in the Wellbeing Award for Schools
- working with the School Office staff who are often the first point of contact with families seeking support
- family visits with class teacher at the very beginning of the Reception year to identify needs
- regularly monitoring and analysing behaviour incidents, bullying concerns, exclusions and attendance
- using FAGUS materials to track children identified as having difficulties
- pupil progress review meetings with class teacher and senior leadership team
- termly support plan arrangement meetings for SEND pupils with SENCo and class teachers
- weekly staff briefing for staff to raise concerns about individual children
- gathering information from a previous school at transfer or transition
- parent meetings
- enabling children to non-verbally raise concerns to class teacher and support staff through use of bubble card
- enabling parents and carers to raise concerns through the school class teacher or to any member of staff through class email or on the school gate/classroom door

All staff have had training on the protective and risk factors (see Appendix 1), types of mental health needs (see Appendix 2) and signs that might mean a pupil is experiencing mental health problems. Any member of staff concerned about a pupil will take this seriously and talk to the SENCO or Designated Safeguarding Team. These signs might include:

- non-verbal behaviour
- isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn
- changes in activity or mood or eating/sleeping habits
- lowering academic achievement
- talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- an increase in lateness or absenteeism
- not wanting to do PE or get changed for PE
- physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

Staff are aware that mental health needs such as anxiety might appear as noncompliant, disruptive or aggressive behaviour which could include problems with attention or hyperactivity. They are aware that all behaviour is a form of communication. This may be related to home problems, difficulties with learning, peer relationships or development.

If there is a concern that a pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the school's safeguarding procedures are followed.

Verbal Disclosures by Children

We recognise how important it is that staff are calm, supportive and non-judgmental to children who verbally disclose a concern about themselves or a friend. The emotional and physical safety of children is paramount and staff are aware of the importance to listen rather than advise. Staff are clear that the concern will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Confidentiality

All disclosures are recorded and held on the child’s CPOMS file, including date, name of child and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps.

Assessment, Interventions and Support

All concerns are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and recorded on CPOMS. The school will then implement our assessment system based on levels of need to ensure that children and families get the support they need, either from within the school or from an external specialist service. Our aim is to put in place interventions as early as possible to prevent problems escalating.

We recognise that just like physical health, mental health and emotional well-being can vary at any given time and is fluid and changes.

| <p>Need The level of need is based on discussions at the regular safeguarding/SEND reviews with key members of staff</p> | <p>Evidence-based Intervention and Support The kinds of intervention and support provided will be decided in consultation with key members of staff, parents and pupils</p> | <p>Monitoring</p> |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Highest need/some need</p> | <p>Referral for CAMHS-assessment, 1:1 or family support</p> <p>Consultation with school staff and other agencies</p> <p>School based emotional support</p> <p>Home School Link Worker support</p> <p>Educational Psychologist involvement</p> <p>External agency support e.g. STIP team providing Storytime intervention</p> <p>If the school, professionals and/or parents conclude that a statutory education, health and care assessment is required, we refer to the SEND policy and Surrey’s graduated response</p> <p>Early Help Referral and Children’s Services involvement if appropriate</p> | <p>All pupils needing targeted individualised support will have an Support Arrangement Plan drawn up setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The long and short term targets for the child • How the child will be supported • Actions to provide that support • Any special requirements <p>Parents will be involved in the agreeing and reviewing each plan. The plan and interventions are monitored, reviewed and evaluated termly to assess the impact</p> <p>Outside agency meetings and regular reviews and feedback with parents and school staff</p> |
| <p>Some need</p> | <p>Access to Emotional Support Therapy for 1:1 intervention or small group intervention e.g. Time to talk, circle of friends, construction therapy</p> <p>Early Help Referral and Children’s Services involvement if appropriate</p> | |
| <p>Lowest need</p> | <p>General support e.g. lunchtime support, class teacher/TA check in, adapted drop off arrangements.</p> | |

Working with Specialist Services to get swift access to the right Specialist Support and Treatment

In some case a child's mental health needs require support from a specialist service. These might include anxiety, depression, school refusal and other complex needs. Thames Ditton Infant School has established links with a range of specialist services e.g. Educational Psychologist, Emotional Therapy Support and have regular contact with the services to review the support and consider next steps, as part of monitoring provision. School referrals to a specialist service will be made by the SENCo following the assessment process and in consultation with the child's parents. Referrals will only go ahead with the consent of the parent.

| Specialist Service | Referral process |
|--|---|
| Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS), also known as Mindworks Surrey | Through SENCo, GP or parental referral |
| Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice | Accessed through SENCo |
| Freemantles Outreach | Accessed through SENCo |
| Home School Link Worker | Accessed through Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| ELSA support | Accessed through internal school referral process overseen by SENCo |
| Early Help Referral | Accessed through Safeguarding Team |

Involving Parents

We recognise the important role parents have in promoting and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children, and in particular supporting their children with mental health needs.

To support parents:

- we provide information and signposting to organisations on mental health issues and local wellbeing and parenting programmes e.g. Family Voice, Specialist Teacher for Inclusive Practice (STIP)
- the Home School Link Worker regularly supports parents with family and home based concerns
- the school has an Open Door Policy
- the school supports parents with children with mental health needs through sensitive and supportive regular meetings and signposting.

When a concern has been raised the school will:

- contact parents and carers and meet with them
- make sure that parents are aware of their children's interventions
- offer information to take away and places to seek further information
- be available for follow up calls
- make a record of the meeting
- where appropriate, agree actions and next steps
- discuss how the parents can support their child
- keep parents up to date and fully informed of decisions about the support and interventions

Parents will always be informed if their child is at risk of danger.

We make every effort to support parents to access services where appropriate. Children are our primary concern, and in the rare event that parents are not accessing services we will seek advice from the Local Authority. We also provide information for parents to access support for their own mental health needs e.g. through Family Voice Surrey.

Supporting and Training Staff

We want all staff to be confident in their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and to be able to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, identify mental health needs early in pupils and know what to do and where to get help.

Those staff with a specific responsibility have more specialised training and where possible access to supervision from the educational psychology team.

Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

At Thames Ditton Infant School, we recognise that staff wellbeing is central to providing high-quality care, education and safeguarding for our pupils. We are committed to creating a supportive, respectful and inclusive working environment where staff feel valued, listened to and able to seek support when needed.

We acknowledge that teaching and support roles can be emotionally demanding, and we aim to promote a culture where staff mental health and wellbeing is prioritised, protected and openly discussed without stigma.

How We Support Staff Wellbeing

The school supports staff wellbeing through:

- A positive and inclusive school culture underpinned by our school values.
- Clear communication and manageable expectations.
- Supportive leadership and line management, including regular check-ins and solution circles.
- Access to wellbeing resources, training and external support where appropriate.
- Opportunities for professional dialogue, reflection and supervision.
- Consideration of workload and work-life balance when planning initiatives, policies and expectations.
- Access to confidential support and signposting for staff experiencing difficulties.
- A strong safeguarding and inclusion culture where staff feel safe to raise concerns.

Staff are encouraged to speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Headteacher, or another trusted colleague if they are experiencing challenges that may be impacting their wellbeing.

Monitoring and Reviewing Staff Wellbeing

Staff wellbeing is actively monitored and reviewed through a range of formal and informal processes to ensure that support remains responsive and effective.

These include:

- **Regular staff wellbeing surveys**, termly, to gather staff voice, identify trends and inform action planning.
- **Opportunities for staff feedback** through staff meetings, briefings and individual discussions.
- **Performance management and appraisal meetings**, which include professional wellbeing and support needs.
- **Monitoring of staff absence and workload patterns**, used sensitively to identify where additional support may be needed.
- **Wellbeing Team and Senior Leadership Team discussions**, considering staff wellbeing alongside pupil wellbeing.
- **Governor oversight**, including Listening Sessions conducted by governors as part of safeguarding and wellbeing responsibilities.

Findings from these processes inform leadership decisions, staff support strategies and school improvement planning. Where concerns are identified, appropriate actions are taken, and support is reviewed regularly.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school is committed to continually reviewing and improving its approach to staff wellbeing. This policy, alongside staff feedback and wellbeing data, is reviewed annually by the Wellbeing Team and Senior Leadership Team, with findings shared with governors to ensure accountability and ongoing development.

Reviewing the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy

The Mental Health and Wellbeing policy will be kept under review by the Wellbeing Team.

Appendix 1: Risk and protective factors that are believed to be associated with mental health outcomes (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, Department for Education, 2018)

| | Risk factors | Protective factors |
|----------------------|--|--|
| In the child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic influences • Low IQ and learning disabilities • Specific development delay or neuro-diversity • Communication difficulties • Difficult temperament • Physical illness • Academic failure • Low self-esteem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure attachment experience • Outgoing temperament as an infant • Good communication skills, sociability • Being a planner and having a belief in control • Humour • A positive attitude • Experiences of success and achievement • Faith or spirituality • Capacity to reflect |
| In the family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt parental conflict including domestic violence • Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted) • Inconsistent or unclear discipline • Hostile and rejecting relationships • Failure to adapt to a child's changing needs • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect • Parental psychiatric illness • Parental criminality, alcoholism or personality disorder • Death and loss – including loss of friendship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult) • Affection • Clear, consistent discipline • Support for education • Supportive long term relationship or the absence of severe discord |

| | Risk factors | Protective factors |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| In the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying including online (cyber) • Discrimination • Breakdown in or lack of positive friendships • Deviant peer influences • Peer pressure • Peer on peer abuse • Poor pupil to teacher/school staff relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policies on behaviour and bullying • Staff behaviour policy (also known as code of conduct) • 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems • A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health • Good pupil to teacher/school staff relationships • Positive classroom management • A sense of belonging • Positive peer influences • Positive friendships • Effective safeguarding and Child Protection policies. • An effective early help process • Understand their role in and be part of effective multi-agency working • Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to can raise concerns about policies and processes, and know they will be dealt with fairly and effectively |
| In the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic disadvantage • Homelessness • Disaster, accidents, war or other overwhelming events • Discrimination • Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation • Other significant life events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider supportive network • Good housing • High standard of living • High morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying • Opportunities for valued social roles • Range of sport/leisure activities |

The ZONES of Regulation

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| | | | |
| Blue Zone Sad Bored Tired Sick | Green Zone Happy Focused Calm Proud | Yellow Zone Worried Frustrated Silly Excited | Red Zone overjoyed/Elated Panicked Angry Terrified |

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At school we are happy and safe.



Adults look after us.



They listen to us.



Don't be afraid to tell.



A worry could be from home, school, online or somewhere else.



We can use our 5 finger check and bubble cards.



Telling someone can help.



Adult's try to make things better.

Where to get information and support

Surrey specific links

<https://www.mindworks-surrey.org>

<https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org>

For general information and support on specific mental health needs

Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk

OCD UK www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance www.depressionalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk

Self-Harm www.selfharm.co.uk

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support www.youngminds.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk Champions young people's mental health and wellbeing

www.minded.org.uk Advice and support on mental health problems (e-learning)

www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health

www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health

Mentally healthy schools <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/>)