

Forest Fields Primary and Nursery School



Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

September 2025

Approved at the meeting of the Governing Board held on: 23rd

September 2025

Signed: James Verran

Position: Chair of Governors

Date to be reviewed: September 2026

Intent

At Forest Fields Primary School, we are committed to supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils. Our aim is to equip children with essential life skills that enable them to become healthy, independent and responsible members of society.

We have a supportive and caring ethos and our approach is respectful and kind, where each individual and contribution is valued.

At our school we know that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. A number of children may have suffered childhood trauma and could have attachment issues. We take the view that positive mental health is everybody's business and that we all have a role to play.

Implementation

At our school we:

- help children to understand their emotions and feelings
- help children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or worries
- help children socially to form and maintain relationships
- promote self-esteem and ensure children know that they count
- encourage children to be confident
- help children to develop emotional resilience and to manage setbacks

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

- promoting our core values; to be ready, resilient, resourceful, reflective and respectful and encouraging a sense of belonging
- promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making (School Council)
- celebrating academic and non-academic achievements (Rewards system and achievement assemblies)
- providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others (sports leaders and school council)
- Providing opportunities to reflect
- access to appropriate support that meets their needs

Teaching

The aim of teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information that they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. It should enable them to recognise what is normal for them and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

Physical health and mental wellbeing are interlinked, and it is important that pupils understand that good physical health contributes to good mental wellbeing, and vice versa.

Effective teaching should aim to reduce stigma attached to health issues, in particular those to do with mental wellbeing. At Forest Fields we will promote an atmosphere that encourages openness. This will mean that pupils feel they can check their understanding and seek any necessary help and advice as they gain knowledge about how to promote good health and wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing is embedded in the school ethos and the SRE and PHSE curriculums. We use the SCARF programme. We pursue our aims through:

- Universal, whole school approaches teaching the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves mentally healthy and safe through the SRE and PHSE curriculum (SCARF)
- Support for pupils going through recent difficulties including bereavement (ELSA)
- Specialized, targeted approaches aimed at pupils with more complex or long-term difficulties including attachment disorder, e.g.
- Circle time approaches or activities
- Targeted use of PHSE resources
- Managing feelings resources
- ELSA support groups
- Therapeutic activities including art, Lego and relaxation and mindfulness techniques

The computing curriculum covers e-safety, with progression in the content to reflect the different and escalating risks that young people face as they get older. This includes how to use technology safely, responsibly, respectfully and securely, how to keep personal information private, and where to go for help and support.

The PE curriculum aims to ensure that pupils develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities, are physically active for sustained periods of time, engage in competitive sport and activities and lead healthy, active lives that promote mental health and wellbeing.

Identifying needs and warning signs

Indications of possible difficulties may include:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Relationships
- Approach to learning
- Physical indicators
- Negative behaviour patterns
- Family circumstances
- Recent bereavement
- Health indicators

These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to the child protection and safeguarding lead or the emotional wellbeing lead as appropriate.

Possible warning signs include:

- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Filtering and Monitoring

Whilst considering our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, governing bodies should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks from the school's or college's IT system. As part of this process, governing bodies should ensure their school or college has appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place and regularly review their effectiveness. We use Schools IT as our filtering system, and we use Smoothwall for our monitoring system. They should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified. Governing bodies should consider the age range of their children, the number of children, how often they access the IT system and the proportionality of costs verses safeguarding risks

Working with Families

In order to support families, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing on our school website
- Share and follow parents to access sources of further support e.g. through workshops
- Ensure that all families are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their child
- Make our emotional wellbeing and mental health policy easily accessible to families
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children
- Keep families informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PHSE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Working with other agencies and partners

As part of our targeted provision the school will work with other agencies to support children's emotional health and wellbeing including:

- The school nurse
- Educational psychology services
- Behaviour support
- Paediatricians

- CAMHs (child and adolescent mental health service)
- Counselling services
- Family support workers
- Therapists

Assessment

The school will make use of resources to assess and track wellbeing as appropriate including:

- Strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- R2i resources
- Emotional literacy scales
- Self-evaluations

The Environment

This policy should be read in conjunction with our SEND and LAC policy in cases where pupils mental health needs overlap with these. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies for Behaviour, Anti-bullying, PSHE and SRE policies. It should also sit along child protection procedures.

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Shahida Chowdhury, Katie Hayden and Jo Lawson – Safeguarding/child protection LDSLs
- Katie Hayden – Deputy Head, Behaviour, Mental Health
- Jo Lawson – SEND, Mental Health First Aider

Monitoring and review

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of what support is available within our school and how to access further support.

Governors are also invited to monitor the effectiveness of the school through a variety of other activities including learning walks and classroom observations as per the Monitoring and Evaluation framework in the School Improvement Plan.

PHSE curriculum

At Forest Fields PHSE is taught through the SCARF programme of resources. SCARF is designed to provide structured opportunities in every lesson to practise and enhance the five skills associated with emotional literacy (self-awareness, social skills, empathy, motivation and managing feelings). These opportunities are vital for children's development, their understanding of themselves and others and in promoting a sense of wellbeing.