

Yorke Mead Primary School
Emotional Health and Wellbeing
How We Support Our Pupils
September 2025



Our School Vision Statement
BRINGING LEARNING to LIFE

We are a school dedicated to creating an environment where children are able to grow into happy, well-rounded individuals with a love of learning through which they can achieve to the best of their abilities.

We want our pupils to enter the wider world as

- o Happy, positive individuals*
- o Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution*
- o Confident, resilient, healthy & life-long learners.*

DARE TO...

D - Determination

A - Ambition

R - Resilience

E – Enjoyment

T - Trust

O - Openness

Government guidance, Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, 2015, informed us that one in ten children and young people aged 5 to 16 have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and around one in seven has less severe problems. This national criteria (updated Nov 2018) states: "**All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes: preventing impairment of children's health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.**"

A healthy school actively seeks to promote emotional health and well-being alongside physical health, and helps pupils to understand their feelings. At Yorke Mead we work towards positive Emotional/Mental Health and Wellbeing in the whole of our school community, for adults as well as children.

Emotional/mental health and wellbeing promotes school success and improvement by:

- helping pupils and staff feel happier, more confident and more motivated
- contributing positively to priorities such as enhancing teaching and learning, raising standards, promoting social inclusion and improving behaviour and attendance
- involving pupils more fully in the operation of the school
- helping to meet legal, ethical and curricular obligations Emotional health and wellbeing is central to the Every Child Matters strategy.

Yorke Mead is committed to supporting Mental Well being is reflected in the high priority given to the Mental Health Lead Role. There are two Mental Health Leads (MHL) at the school:

- Lucille Pollard - MHL with key responsibility on whole school approaches to support children in *thriving and coping*.
- Fran Elliott – MHL with key responsibility to support children *getting help and getting more help*.

The MHLs work in close partnership with the School SENDCo and Pastoral staff to provide the mental health and well being team.

Recognition of Mental Health Problems in Children

Mental health problems affect many people and most schools will have pupils who need some mental health support. It is now widely recognised that certain types of Special Educational Need (SEN) result in an increased likelihood of mental health problems e.g. children with autism are significantly more likely to experience conditions such as anxiety. (Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools Nov 2018).

This updated guidance also highlights the increased likelihood of Children in Need (CIN), Children supported by a social worker, Looked After Children (LAC) and previously Looked after children (Post LAC) to have SEN and to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues. This includes struggles with forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (shame, sadness, anxiety, anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. The guidance reminds professionals that CIN may be living in very chaotic circumstances, and be suffering or at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation. They may also have less support outside of school. The impact of these circumstances can have wide ranging impact on children's behavior, their interpersonal behavior and emotional state.

Factors that put children at risk

Research has shown there are a number of risk factors that relate to developing mental health problems. Risk factors are cumulative.

Factors that make children more resilient

'In order to promote positive mental health, it is important that schools have an understanding of the protective factors that enable pupils to be resilient when they encounter problems and challenges.' (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Nov 2018). At Yorke Mead school we have developed a range of policies and practice to

ensure children are well supported. This policy should be read in conjunction with Emotional Well-being and PSHE, Adopted Children, Behaviour for Learning and An Attachment Aware School.

Table 1: Risk and protective factors that are believed to be associated with mental health outcomes (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Nov 2018).

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	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

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and other events that impact on children

Yorke Mead primary school has undertaken extensive training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and staff in school understand the impact of these.

When difficult events happen in children's lives it is important schools support pupils. We are acutely aware of children who have experienced key life events including:

- **loss or separation** – resulting from death, parental separation, divorce, hospitalisation, friendship issues, family conflict, deployment of a parent in the armed forces etc.
- **life changes** – birth of a sibling, moving house, changing schools including transition to secondary school etc.
- **traumatic experience** – abuse, neglect, domestic violence, bullying, accidents, injuries, parental abandonment, member of the household being in prison, parent with a mental health condition, growing up in a household with adults experiencing drug or alcohol use problems. etc.

Staff recognise the cumulative impact of these on children's emotional well being.

In 2020 Yorke Mead were involved in the Hertfordshire Attachment Project. This built on work from 2016 when Yorke Mead took part in a government pilot aimed at establishing greater links between schools and CAMHS services. Part of this focused on the role schools play in both supporting pupils and preventing mental health issues occurring for children. Since this the school has continued to ensure policies and practice supports the positive mental wellbeing of children and staff.

The Yorke Mead core values are purposely selected with the support of children's emotional development as much in mind as their academic and physical development.

The Hertfordshire CAMHS service has recently reviewed its structure and is moving away from the old tiered model to utilise the THRIVE model developed by the Anna Freud Centre. This paper explains how Yorke Mead is supporting our pupils in order to enable them to THRIVE. We have adopted the Thrive headings to reflect the model. It is important to understand that the descriptions of need at each level that we are adopting are not the CAMHS descriptions. They simply reflect the different tiers of support available for children in our school. Children will not necessarily progress through the tiers or levels, but the descriptions help us to identify the levels of need individuals have. Parents who have identified any concern or anxiety for their child are encouraged to meet with the Head teacher, who is also the mental health lead, to discuss concerns and are helped in moving forward with either internal support or external support.

The Thrive Model



Thriving

For some children 'thriving' seems to just happen, however in truth these children have simply developed strategies that others need to be directly taught. These strategies can be kept in their personal toolkits so they can draw on these when they are needed. At Yorke Mead we would like all of our children to 'thrive' and to support this we have adopted the following universal strategies that all Yorke Mead children are entitled to:

- **Jigsaw PSHE Curriculum:** The Jigsaw PSHE scheme is used across the school to deliver a comprehensive PSHE curriculum. Through PSHE, children are supported and prepared for their future lives in an ever-changing world, learning to understand and value themselves or others, develop resilience and to understand how they relate to others in this world.
- **Mindful Core Practise:** Using the practise developed from the MindUP Curriculum created by The Goldie Hawn Foundation, children at Yorke Mead experience daily mindful practice. At least three

sessions a day support the children to calm their thoughts and be ready for the classroom and their learning; these sessions are led by the children. Additional sessions may be added if the teacher feels the children need these.

- **Understanding our brains and its functions in emotion and behaviour:** Children at Yorke Mead are taught about the main parts and functions of the human brain and understand the role the brain plays in our behaviours. Each day the children participate in the mindful core breathing exercises, at least three times a day, preparing them for their learning and helping them emotionally regulate themselves.
- **Emotion Coaching and understanding that all emotions are natural:** All staff at Yorke Mead are trained in Emotion Coaching.

“Emotion Coaching is about helping children and young people to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them” (John Gottman, 1997)

Emotion coaching is about helping children to become more aware of their emotions and to manage their own feelings particularly during instances of misbehaviour. It entails validating children's emotions, setting limits and problem-solving with the child to develop more effective behavioural strategies so that they have a strategy to call upon next time something similar happens. Emotion coaching techniques instil the tools that will help children to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour. It creates an ethos of positive learning behaviour and gives practitioners the confidence to de-escalate situations when behaviour is challenging.

- **Philosophy for Children (P4C):** P4C is about getting children to think and communicate well; to think better for themselves. By working as a community the children learn to value and respect the opinions of others as well as their own, and understand that it is appropriate that people can hold different opinions. This gives them confidence in their own opinions and reduces anxiety about thinking and feeling differently to those around you; all of which supports the developments of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- **Forest Schools** – Time spent outdoors has been shown to improve well-being by reducing stress and anxiety. Our commitment to Forest School aims to promote the holistic development the children, fostering resilient, confident and creative learners. Forest School offers the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- **My World and Me/Talk About Sessions:** Children who are finding things difficult receive focused work to help them develop the understanding and resilience required to manage the events that are happening now and their future lives may bring. These programmes allows all children to develop their resilience and optimism, and is focused on improving children’s well being and reducing their anxiety.

Coping

At Yorke Mead this grouping would be children, young people and families adjusting to life circumstances, with mild or temporary difficulties, where the best intervention is within the community with the possible addition of self-support.

The THRIVE model of provision adopted by the Anna Freud Centre would suggest that this provision should be provided within education or community settings, with education often (though not always) the lead provider and educational language (a language of wellness) as the key language used.

At Yorke Mead to support children in coping we offer the following in addition to the universal strategies described in the section on thriving.

- **Key Worker:** Children who are struggling to cope with changes in their lives are allocated a keyworker. This keyworker may be a TA in their class or one of our pastoral team, and will touch base regularly with the child.
- **Group Intervention Support:** Some children require more intense teaching of social skills or opportunities to explore their own emotions. This could include circle of friends' type activities or simply time out of class focused on emotional work in a smaller group with children who have similar needs such as our Caring Hearts group, quiet children etc.
- **Family Support Work:** When a family is managing change or difficult times, parents are given access to the family support worker employed by the school. This support worker is part of the South West Herts Partnership.
- **Safe Space:** The school has two dedicated 'safe spaces', though there is also recognition that children may identify their own safe spaces. One of the dedicated areas created is a sensory garden for any child who needs a little time out. This quiet, calm place has a swing chair, gentle wind chimes, water features, a school pet and selection of scented plants all of which support self-regulation. The other space is the pastoral room located off the dining room.

Getting Help

At Yorke Mead this grouping comprises those children, young people and families who would benefit from more support and intervention as the issues concerning them are not as temporary or are more intense. In addition to the support listed above we may offer the following to children and parents.

- **Brick Club** – This is a structured intervention used to support children who struggle to understand that people will have different ideas and approaches to create the same end product. The programme particularly helps children with ASD needs/ tendencies, supports speech and language needs and those who need to behave in a 'controlling' way.
- **Drawing and Talking** – This is a therapeutic intervention delivered by a trained staff member. The session provides a safe space for children to explore their emotions and feelings.
- **Developing a Sense of Self (Strength Cards/ Identity Work)** – Some children who have developed very low self-esteem need to develop a much stronger understanding and recognition of the strengths they have and their understanding of their own likes and dislikes.
- **Zones of Regulation** - This is to support children develop understanding of their emotions.
- **Identity Work** – Sessions to support self-awareness and self confidence in children.
- **Talk About Sessions** – These are usually group sessions with the aim being to build empathy and understanding for others in the group as well as allowing and encouraging children to talk about their own feelings.
- **My World and Me Sessions** – These may be check-ins or the full programme and are aimed at helping children make sense of their world. These may follow a change in their lived experiences such as family separation or a recent diagnosis. The check-ins are at a lower level and may be used in stead of or following the full programme.

Getting More Help

At Yorke Mead this would comprise children who have emotional needs that are preventing them from thriving and accessing learning. These are children whom we recognize need support beyond what could normally be offered by educational professionals. This includes:

- **Play therapy/ Art therapy referrals:** At Yorke Mead we buy in Play Therapy Support and Art Therapy for our children, allowing us to decide the most appropriate support for the child. The play/art therapists will offer intense support for a period usually up to 12 weeks, working closely with the parents as part of the process.
- **Referral to Specialist Services for Emotional Support:** Children who are really struggling emotionally may be referred to specialist services within the Hertfordshire Team. These include referral to Chessbrook Reflect & Re-launch sessions, Acorn behaviour hub or Thriving Families if the concerns are environmental in origin.
- **Family First Assessment:** The Families First (previously known as CAF) process may be used to support families in sharing communication between services. Not all children supported by a 'families first' process will be experiencing significant emotional needs, but the process proves a useful tool for professionals to come together and share information.

Getting Risk Support

This level would involve a referral to specialist mental health services such as CAMHS. It may also include referral to The Acorn Centre should the individual emotional needs be presented through significant behaviour issues, and may be in need of the support of more specialist teaching/schooling.

Should any children present with significant needs or support at the levels above have not proved successful the Mental Health Lead will seek the advice of Mental Health Support Services.

Working with Parents

We understand the importance of working with parents to support the children. The school secretary acts as a key point of call for parents, focusing on establishing a trusting relationship with parents from the onset. This is a key element of the work we do and helps build the trust and relationship between home and school necessary for children to be effectively supported. We have also introduced a series of parental engagement events, looking to support parents with specific aspects of their child's wellbeing and mental health.

References/ Useful Publications

- Future in Mind 2015
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools 2015 and 2018.

- Appendix 1

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