

# PORG International School Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Prepared by:	Barbora Gazdova	Date: September 2020
Last update by:	Barbora Gazdova	Date: September 2022
Approved by:	Dagmar Dluhosova	

## Introduction

It is widely recognised that children's emotional health and well-being influence their cognitive development and learning and their physical, social, health and mental wellbeing into adulthood.

We understand that every one of us may experience challenges in life, which may make us feel vulnerable and impact on our mental health and well-being and where additional support to improve our mental health may be helpful.

We believe that all children, young people and adults have the right to be educated and work in an environment that supports and promotes positive mental health for everybody.

## Ethos

We believe that the physical, social and emotional environment in which our staff and pupils spend significant time affects physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. We also believe that this environment may impact achievement. Therefore, our relationships are critical in promoting wellbeing and in helping to engender a sense of belonging to and liking our school.

All schools should be within a learning environment that promotes and enhances positive mental health and where teaching staff and pupils can thrive.

We will;

- Create an ethos and provide conditions that support positive behaviours for learning and for successful relationships.
- Provide an emotionally secure and safe environment that prevents any form of bullying or violence.
- Provide an environment where children feel empowered to talk about their feelings and concerns, whether it be related to learning, school or home.

We believe that a mentally healthy environment is a place where the whole school community:

- is involved in promoting positive mental health
- is valued for the role it plays in promoting positive mental health
- contributes towards the ethos of the school
- fosters positive relationships across staff, pupils' parents/carers & community
- practices a safety culture
- is emotionally safe, preventing bullying and violence.

## Aim

At PORG International School, we promote positive mental health and emotional well-being for all staff and pupils. We increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues. Staff are able to identify and respond to early warning signs of mental problems in pupils. Staff understand how and when to access support when working with young people with mental health issues.

PORG International School staff provide the right support to pupils with mental health issues and know where to signpost them and their parents/carers for specific support. We develop resilience amongst pupils and raise awareness of resilience-building techniques. We raise awareness amongst staff and gain recognition from SLT that staff may have mental health issues and that they are supported in relation to looking after their wellbeing, instilling a culture of staff and pupil welfare where everyone is aware of signs and symptoms with effective signposting underpinned by behaviour and welfare around the school.

## Publication

This Policy is updated every 2 years as a minimum and is published to all staff and volunteers. The PORG International School Mental Health and Wellbeing policy is available to school personnel, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents on the school website.

## Overview of this policy

- Defining mental health.
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Supporting children's positive mental health.
- Teaching about mental health and wellbeing.
- Staff support and training.
- Link with other policies.

## Defining mental health

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

## Roles and responsibilities

We believe that all staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and understanding 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 of mental health problems and ensure that children with mental health needs get early intervention and the support they need.

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

We recognise 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 provide support to children with mental health needs and their families.

## Leaders and staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of children, any staff member concerned about a child's mental health or wellbeing should speak to the principal in the first instance. 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 the Designated Child Lead. If the child presents a medical emergency, then the standard procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

## Pastoral lead

The Pastoral Lead works with other staff to coordinate whole school activities to promote positive mental health and well-being.

The Pastoral lead collaborate with PSHE Lead, DSL and all staff.

## School psychologist

The school psychologist is a uniquely qualified member of school teams that support pupils' and students' ability to learn. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behaviour, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviourally, and emotionally. The school psychologist works with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community.

## Children

When a child is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case-by-case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one-to-one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the child who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- what it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- how friends can best support
- things friends should avoid doing/saying, which may inadvertently cause upset
- warning signs that their friend needs help (e.g. signs of relapse).

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- where and how to access support for themselves
- safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

### Parents and carers

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions (on a case-by-case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the child, and other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking a follow-up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with the agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

Parents are always very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to and how to get about this if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents.
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings.

## Supporting children's positive mental health

We believe the school has 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.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach PSHE safely and sensitively.

### Pupil-led activities

- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
- Peer mentoring – children work together to solve problems and plan session where identified adults mentor a designated child.
- Friendship Squad – a lunchtime group supporting younger children at lunchtime.
- Individual transition plans for children identified as feeling anxious regarding the change.

### Class activities

- Dojos, a mechanism where children can be praised for effort applied, tasks achieved, and a collaborative attitude are given freely and work towards public praise.
- Worry boxes - where children can anonymously share worries or concerns in class and select the adult they wish to talk to
- Mental health teaching programmes, e.g. based on cognitive behavioural therapy
- Circle times

## Whole school activities

- Displays and information around the school about positive mental health and where to go for help and support.
- Teamwork challenge - Pastoral Lead runs this club to promote integrity and reliance on each other.
- Sleepovers - the Pastoral Lead organizes sleepovers which part is running breakfasts.
- Assemblies - including certificates linked to school values, best seats in the house, attendance rewards and other rewards.

Through PSHE, we teach the knowledge and social and emotional skills that will help children to be more resilient, understand mental health and be less affected by the stigma of mental health problems.

## Teaching about mental health and wellbeing

Our PORG International School developmental PSHE curriculum includes the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our children to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the particular needs of the cohort being taught, but there will always be an emphasis on enabling children to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

## Staff support and training

All staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep children safe.

We will host relevant information on our virtual learning environment for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The EduCare learning portal provides online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Additional CPD training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and will be



supported throughout the year when it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more children.

## Link with other policies

- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Online safety
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

### IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Pastoral Lead	Deivis Rojas	rivera@porg.cz
DLS	Katerina Mlcochova	mlcochova@porg.cz
School psychologist	Jana Sklenarova	sklenarova@porg.cz
Principal	Barbora Gazdova	gazdova@porg.cz
Proprietor	Dagmar Dluhosova	dluhosova@porg.cz